

Board of Education Meeting

December 8, 2025

6:30 PM, in the Stearns Education Center Boardroom

Members Present: Chairman Ashworth, Vice-Chairman Mr. Covil, Ms. Allen, Ms. Gibbs, Ms. Page, Mr. Stich, Ms. Jackson.

Members Absent: None

Others: Superintendent Todd Murphy, Director of Curriculum and Instruction Jan Crump, Human Resource Specialist Tonya Odel, Director of Operations Brandon Schweitzer, Finance Officer Debbie Lovelace, and Attorney John Henning, Jr.

Call to Order and Welcome

Mr. Ashworth called the meeting to order at approximately 6:30 PM and welcomed all in attendance.

Pledge of Allegiance

Recognition of the 2025 Christmas Card Artists

Chairman Ashworth recognized two student artists whose artwork was selected for the 2025 Polk County Schools Christmas cards. The selected artwork was created by Jesse Bradley and Charlie Keller. Although neither student was able to attend the meeting, each will receive a commemorative Christmas ornament and a box of personalized Christmas cards. Board members were provided with a box containing a selection of both designs. Chairman Ashworth and Superintendent Murphy commended the students for their outstanding artwork.

PCMS Presentation

PCMS Principal Adam Dedmon introduced Teacher Paula McFarland, Teacher Assistant Jessica Conner, and Teacher Assistant Kelly Sparks to the Board. The team delivered a presentation on the Exceptional Eats Program at PCMS, accompanied by a slide presentation included with the electronic agenda. They provided an overview of the program's structure, daily operations, and the activities in which students participate. The Board dinner was prepared and provided by the Exceptional Eats Program.

Approval of November 10, 2025 Board Minutes (Action)

Chairman Ashworth called the Board's attention to a copy of the November 10, 2025 Board Minutes. Mr. Ashworth asked if there were any additions or corrections and there were none. Mr. Ashworth entertained a motion to approve minutes as presented. Mr. Stich made the motion to approve the minutes as presented. Ms. Page seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Annual Election of Board Chairman & Vice-Chair (Action)

Chairman Ashworth turned the gavel and meeting over to Superintendent Todd Murphy for the annual election of the Board Chair and Vice Chair. Mr. Murphy asked for nominations. Ms. Jackson made a motion to re-elect Mr. Ashworth as the Board Chairman. The motion was seconded by Mr. Stich, and it carried unanimously. Mr. Stich made a motion to re-elect Mr. Covil as the Vice-Chairman. The motion was seconded by Ms. Allen. The motion carried unanimously. Superintendent Murphy turned the gavel and meeting back over to Chairman Ashworth.

I. INSTRUCTIONAL

2026-2027 School Calendar – Todd Murphy (Information)

Superintendent Murphy presented the Board with a draft of the 2026–2027 school calendar. A proposed calendar will be presented at the January Board meeting.

Retesting - Angela Dufford (Information)

Accountability & Testing Coordinator Ms. Angela Dufford presented a retesting update to the Board. She reviewed the information previously included in the electronic agenda, which outlined changes made to retesting guidelines.

II. ADMINISTRATIVE

Audit Contract – Debbie Lovelace (Action)

Finance Officer Debbie Lovelace presented an Amendment to the Contract to Audit Accounts to the Board. The amendment was necessary due to the prior absence of an approved state budget. Chairman Ashworth requested a motion to approve the Amendment to the Contract to Audit Accounts. Ms. Gibbs made a motion to approve the Amendment to the Contract to Audit Accounts and Ms. Jackson seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously, 7-0.

2025-2026 Budget Amendment- Debbie Lovelace (Action)

Debbie Lovelace presented the budget amendment included in the agenda. Chairman Ashworth opened the floor for questions and there were none. Chairman Ashworth requested a motion to approve the budget amendment as submitted. Mr. Stich made the motion, and Ms. Page seconded. The motion passed unanimously, 7–0.

Board Policy Updates (First Reading) - Brandon Schweitzer (Action)

Dr. Brandon Schweitzer presented to the Board the first reading, either adopting new or changing the current policy of, Policies 1310/4002 Parental Involvement, 1510/4200/7270 School Safety, 1710/4020/7230 Discrimination & Harassment Prohibited by Federal Law, 1720/4030/7235 Title IX Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Sex, 1725/4035/7236 Title IX Sexual Harassment-Prohibited Conduct & Reporting, 1726/4036//7237 Title IX Sexual Harassment Grievance Process, 1735/4329/7311 Bullying and Harassing Behavior Prohibited, 1740/4010 Student and Parent Grievance Procedure, 1750/7220 Grievance Procedure for Employees, 2125/7315 Confidential Information, 2302 Remote Participation in Board Meetings, 2342 Voting Methods, 3101 Dual Enrollment, 3210 Parental Inspection of and Objection to Instructional Materials, 3220 Technology in the Educational Program, 3225/4312/7320 Technology Responsible Use, 3226/4205 Internet Safety, 3320 School Trips, 3400 Evaluation of Student Progress, 3410 Testing and Assessment Program, 3420 Student Promotion & Accountability, 3460/3460R Graduation Requirements, 3510 Religious-Based Exemptions from School Programs, 3620 Extracurricular Activities & Student Organizations, 4023/7233 Pregnant and Parenting Students and Employees, 4050 Children of Military Families, 4040/7310 Staff-Student Relations, 4120 Domicile/Residence Requirements, 4240/7312 Child Abuse & Related Threats to Child Safety, 4320 Tobacco Products-Students, 4334/5035/7345 Use of Unmanned Aircraft (Drones), 5022 Registered Sex Offenders, 5023/6128/7268 (New) Emergency Administration of Naloxone, 5024/6127/7266 (NEW) Emergency Epinephrine Delivery Systems Auto-Injector Devices, 5026/7250 Smoking and Tobacco Products, 5070/7350 Public Records-Retention, Release, & Disposition, 5150/7313 (NEW) Reporting to External Agencies, 6120 Student Health

Services, 6125 Administering Medicines to Students, 6330 Insurance for Student Transportation Services, 6310 Organization of Student Transportation Services, 6340 Transportation Service/Vehicle Contracts, 7100 Recruitment & Selection of Personnel, 7130 Licensure, 8305 Federal Grant Administration, 8510 School Finance Officer, 9125 Participation by Minority Businesses, 1300 Governing Principle-Parental Involvement, 1500 Governing Principle-Safe, Orderly, and Inviting Environment, 1600 Governing Principle-Professional Development, 1700 Governing Principle-Removal of Barriers, 1742/5060 Responding to Complaints, 1760/7280 Prohibition Against Retaliation, 2302 Remote Participation in Board Meetings, 2500 Hearings Before the Board, 4130 Discretionary Admission, 4150 School Assignment, 4152 Unsafe School Choice Transfer, 4331 Assaults and Threats, 5071/7351 Electronically Stored Information Retention, 6200 Goals of School Nutrition Services, 6430 Purchasing Requirements, 6450 Purchase of Services, 7335, Employee Use of Social Media, 7340 Employee Dress & Appearance, 7425 School Administrator Contracts, 7650 Employee Travel & Expense Reimbursement, 9110 Use and Selection of Architects/Engineers, and 9210 Care & Maintenance of Grounds. Dr. Schweitzer reported that the policies were reviewed and discussed during the Policy Subcommittee meeting, and the committee has endorsed them for approval. He expressed his gratitude to the Subcommittee for their commitment, noting the multiple meetings and the meticulous attention to detail that the process required. Vice Chairman Covil also extended his thanks to Dr. Schweitzer for his time and dedication in updating the policies. Dr. Schweitzer stated that if first reading is approved tonight, the second reading will be presented at the January Board meeting. Chairman Ashworth entertained a motion to approve the aforementioned policies on first reading. Mr. Covil made a motion to approve the policies as presented on first reading and it was seconded by Ms. Allen. The Board Policy Updates first reading was approved by a vote of 7-0.

Grants and Community Partnerships – George Alley (Information)

George Alley presented to the Board on grants and community partnerships. The Polk County Community Foundation's grants budget for the 2024–2025 fiscal year totals approximately \$300,000. Additional grants and funding secured through other external sources total approximately \$1,015,250. Mr. Alley also highlighted the work of Grant Coordinator Cindy Riddle, commending her efforts and the arts integration initiatives she supports.

III. OLD BUSINESS

Needs Based Grant Update – Todd Murphy

Superintendent Murphy informed the Board that he received official notification from the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NC DPI) that Polk County Schools was not awarded a Needs-Based Grant. A total of 10 awards were granted from 92 applicants, with Polk County ranking 38th. Superintendent Murphy noted that while the outcome is disappointing, the district remains encouraged and hopeful that future circumstances will position Polk County Schools to receive some of the Needs-Based Grant funding.

IV. NEW BUSINESS

None

V. INFORMATION

Preschool Monthly Report

Pre-K Financial Report

September Head Start Policy Council Minutes

October Head Start Policy Council Minutes
Monthly Financial Report
Month-to-Date Credit Card Report

NCSBA OFFERED OPTIONAL BOARD TRAINING

2025/2026 NCSBA Video Library
Core Training- January 12, 2026 – Raleigh, NC
Advanced Leadership Series: Advocacy in Action – January 13, 2026 – Raleigh, NC
Advanced Leadership Series: Best Practices for Governance Teams – January 29, 2026-Raleigh, NC

VI. PUBLIC INPUT

There was no public input.

VII. CLOSED SESSION

Closed Session

At 7:03 PM, Mr. Ashworth entertained a motion to go into closed session for the purpose of discussing personnel. Ms. Gibbs made the motion to go into closed session, and it was seconded by Ms. Allen. The motion carried 7-0.

RETURN TO OPEN SESSION

Resumption of Regular Session: With all discussion concluded in closed session, Mr. Ashworth called for a motion to return to open session. At 8:10 pm, Mr. Stich made a motion to return to open session. Ms. Page seconded the motion. The motion carried 7-0.

Mr. Ashworth directed the Board’s attention to the personnel agenda items requiring Board approval. He then requested a motion regarding these recommendations. Mr. Covil moved to approve the recommendations of Superintendent Murphy and Human Resources Specialist Tonya Odel. Ms. Jackson seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously, 7–0.

Personnel Agenda						
Action						
Name	Position	School	Hometown	College	Licensure Area	Years Exp
Karen Black	Receptionist	PCHS	Lake Lure	Centenary University	N/A	N/A
Cynthia Gibson	Group Leader	TES	Columbus	N/A	N/A	N/A
Christopher Lee	Substitute	All	Cliffside	N/A	N/A	N/A
Tony McMinn	Assistant Principal	PCMS	Mill Spring	Gardner Web	Administration	22
Nathan Cox	Social Studies Teacher	PCHS	Forest City	Appalachian State	Pending	New
Carley Lawter	Teacher Assistant	SVE	Mill Spring	Gardner Web	N/A	N/A

Leave Items - Action				
Karen “Kaye” Hall	Title 1 Tutor	TES		Unpaid Medical Leave

Leave Items – For Information Only			
Name	Position	School	
Sherrie Huffman	School Counselor	PCMS	FMLA
Breeanna Powell	EC Teacher	Polk Central	FMLA
Maria Burnett	Food Service Manager	PCHS	FMLA
Marsha Cole	Food Service Manager	Sunny View	FMLA
Cindi Rhodes	Social Studies Teacher	PCHS	FMLA

VII. ADJOURNMENT

With no more business to come before the Board, Mr. Ashworth declared the meeting adjourned at 8:11 pm.

Mr. Ashworth, Board Chair

Todd Murphy, Board Secretary
TM/RC