

Board of Education Meeting
January 12, 2026
6:30 PM, at Stearns Education Center Boardroom

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

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 Chris Campbell

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

Student Presentation

Students from Polk County Early College delivered a presentation to the Board, accompanied by a slideshow included in the agenda. The presentation highlighted student community involvement, extracurricular activities, collaboration with other Early Colleges, and ongoing efforts to strengthen partnerships with Isothermal Community College. Polk County Early College students now have the opportunity to choose from more than 70 courses offered through Isothermal Community College.

Approval of December 12, 2025 Board Minutes (Action)

Chairman Ashworth called the Board's attention to a copy of the December 12, 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. Ms. Jackson made the motion to approve the minutes as presented. Ms. Gibbs seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Board Appreciation Month: Recognition of Polk County Board of Education - Superintendent Murphy

Mr. Murphy read a statement expressing the district's appreciation of the Board's valuable service and dedication to excellence. The Superintendent thanked the Board for what they do for Polk County Schools and Polk County's students.

I. INSTRUCTIONAL

Fall EOC Results – Angela Dufford (Information)

Ms. Dufford provided the Board with an overview of the fall End-of-Course (EOC) assessment results and briefly reviewed the presentation included with the agenda.

Programs and Partnerships- Linley Foster (Information)

Ms. Linley Foster addressed the Board regarding the holiday assistance program this year. The program supported approximately 60 families and 300 students, either through direct assistance or by connecting them with community

resources, with support from local churches, organizations, school staff, and individual donors. Ms. Foster recognized the contributions of Big Level Baptist Church, Coopers Gap Baptist Church, Mooresboro Church, Lake Lure Baptist Church, Mill Creek Church, Columbus Baptist Church, and Midway Baptist Church; the Tryon Rotary Club; the Polk County Sheriff's Office; Stearns staff and other school staff, and other individual donors.

2026-2027 School Calendar – Todd Murphy (Action)

Superintendent Murphy presented the 2026-2027 School Calendar as requested by the Board. Mr. Covil made a motion to approve the 2026-2027 as presented and it was seconded by Ms. Allen. The 2026-2027 school calendar was approved 7-0.

High Country STEM Initiative – Todd Murphy (Information)

The first District High Country STEM Initiative meeting was held on January 8, 2026. Mr. Murphy gave an update on the High-Country STEM Initiative. He met with representatives from High Country STEM and our district STEM Team to discuss the initiative. Leslie Rhinehart was chosen as our District Lead Representative. Superintendent Murphy spoke regarding the initiative and what is to come.

II. ADMINISTRATIVE

Nursing Updates – Courtney Edney (Information)

Lead School Nurse Courtney Edney delivered a presentation to the Board regarding measles, providing an overview of a brief slideshow that was electronically attached to the agenda.

Budget Amendment – Debbie Lovelace (Action)

Finance Officer 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. Ms. Allen made the motion, and Ms. Page seconded. The motion was approved 7-0.

2026-2027 Budget Calendar – Debbie Lovelace (Action)

Finance Officer Debbie Lovelace presented the 2026-2027 Budget Calendar to the Board for approval. Chairman Ashworth called for a motion regarding the 2026-2027 Budget Calendar. Ms. Page made the motion to approve the calendar as presented by Ms. Lovelace. Ms. Allen seconded the motion. The motion carried 7-0.

Policy Updates Second Reading - Brandon Schweitzer (Action)

Dr. Brandon Schweitzer presented to the Board the second 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 stated that these were the policies that were discussed in the previous meeting with no changes. Chairman Ashworth called for a motion to approve the policies. Ms. Page made a motion to approve the policies on second reading and it was seconded by Ms. Allen. The aforementioned policies were approved on second reading with a vote of 7-0.

PCHS Door Hardware Capital Project - Brandon Schweitzer (Action)

Dr. Brandon Schweitzer spoke to the Board regarding the PCHS Door Hardware Capital Project. He reviewed the proposed information. Dr. Schweitzer presented the bid tabulation and stated that Seven Oaks Doors and Hardware was the successful bidder at \$249,656.00, and he requested approval. Chairman Ashworth called for a motion to approve the proposed bid. Ms. Page made a motion to approve the bid as presented, which was seconded by Ms. Allen. The motion was approved unanimously.

Student Transfer Request – Brandon Schweitzer (Action)

The Board agreed that there was no need to discuss the student transfer request further in closed session. Chairman Ashworth called for a motion to approve the student transfer request. Ms. Jackson made a motion to approve the student transfer requests as presented and it was seconded by Ms. Gibbs. The student transfer request was approved unanimously.

III. OLD BUSINESS

None

IV. NEW BUSINESS

Superintendent Murphy informed the Board that the School Transportation Department had recently completed its annual state inspection, noting that a lower score indicates a better result. The state average score was 33, while the Polk County Schools Transportation Department achieved a score of 13, ranking among the best in North Carolina. Superintendent Murphy recognized all department employees and expressed his sincere appreciation for their hard

work. Chairman Ashworth concurred and requested that Superintendent Murphy convey the Board's gratitude to the Transportation Department staff.

V. INFORMATION

Pre-School Monthly Report Presented to the Board
December Head Start 2025 Minutes
Pre-K Financial Report Presented to the Board
Monthly Financial Report Presented to the Board
Month to Date Credit Card Report Presented to the Board
Holiday-January 19, 2026

NCSBA OFFERED OPTIONAL BOARD TRAINING

2025/2026 NCSBA Video Library
Governance Webinar: Streamline Operations and Enhance Efficiency with Simbli - January 22, 2026
Advanced Leadership Series: Best Practices for Governance Teams - January 29, 2026 - Raleigh, NC
Board Leadership Seminar for Chairs, Vice Chairs, & Superintendents - February 12, 2026
2026 Summer Leadership Conference - June 15, 2026 - Wrightsville Beach

VI. PUBLIC INPUT

There was one community member who wished to offer public input. A verbatim account of public input and all open meeting Board discussion is available via digital audio recording.

VII. CLOSED SESSION

Closed Session

At 7:51 PM Mr. Ashworth entertained a motion to go into closed session for the purpose of discussing personnel. Ms. Page made the motion to go into closed session, and it was seconded by Ms. Allen. The motion carried 6-0.

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 8:22 pm, Ms. Page made a motion to return to open session. Ms. Gibbs seconded the motion. The motion carried 6-0.

Mr. Ashworth called the Board's attention to those matters on the personnel agenda that required Board approval. Mr. Ashworth asked the Board's pleasure in regard to a motion. Ms. Allen made the motion to approve the recommendations of the Superintendent and the Human Resource Specialist. Ms. Jackson seconded the motion. The motion carried 6-0.

Information:

Name	Position	School	
Valerie Barnes	Food Service	PCHS	Resigned
Terry Bishop	Receptionist	Stearns	Retiring
Maria Burnett	Food Service Manager	PCHS	FMLA
Lucas Cash	Teacher Assistant/Coach	PCHS	Resigned
Marsha Cole	Food Service Manager	Sunny View	FMLA
Mark Emory	Teacher Assistant/Coach	Transferring from PCMS TO PCHS	
Karen “Kaye” Hall	Title One Tutor	TES	FMLA
Sherrie Huffman	School Counselor	PCMS	FMLA
Breeanna Powell	EC Teacher	Polk Central	FMLA
Cindi Rhodes	Social Studies Teacher	PCHS	FMLA

Action:

Name	Position	School	Hometown	College	Licensure Area	Years Exp
James Jackson	Bus Driver	All	Columbus	N/A	N/A	N/A
Nichola Jarvis	Temporary Teacher Assistant	Saluda	Flat Rock	UNC Greensboro	N/A	N/A
Jason Jolley	Bus Driver	All	Tryon	N/A	N/A	N/A
Cora Laurens	School Counselor	Saluda/PCEC	Landrum	North Greenville	School Counselor	14
Susan McDade	Bus Monitor	All	Mill Spring	N/A	N/A	N/A
Jennifer Marques-Patterson	Interim 7 th Grade Social Studies Teacher	PCMS	Flat Rock	South Florida	Education	23
Elizabeth Miller-Mathews	Substitute	All	Mill Spring	N/A	N/A	N/A
Lisa Obermiller	Substitute	All	Saluda	N/A	N/A	N/A
Jeff Thomas	Substitute	PCHS	Saluda	N/A	N/A	N/A

VII. ADJOURNMENT

With no more business to come before the Board, Mr. Ashworth declared the meeting adjourned at 8:23 pm.

 Mr. Ashworth, Board Chair

 Todd Murphy, Board Secretary
 TM/RC