

The Rockbridge County School Board held their regular meeting on Tuesday, September 12, 2023, at the County of Rockbridge Administration Building.

Present: Chairman Neil Whitmore; Trustees Corey Berkstresser, Catie Brown Kathy Burant, Wendy Lovell; Superintendent Phillip Thompson, Clerk Rhonda Humphries.

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Whitmore called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

CHANGES TO THE AGENDA: None

STUDENT / STAFF RECOGNITION:

Ms. Suzanne Sheridan, CEO, Rockbridge Area Health Center provided information on School-Based Health Services. Other staff members present were: Marketing and Development; Denise Oinonen, Director of Behavioral Health; Raegan Paxton, Board Certified Behavioral Analyst; Mike Henry, Medical Director; Stuart Fargiano, Dental Director.

An overview of her presentation is as follows:

- **Mission Statement:** The mission of the Rockbridge Area Health Center is to promote and provide access to comprehensive, high quality and affordable health care to improve the health and well-being of our community.
- **Vision:** Our vision is to serve as a vital and caring Rockbridge area resource promoting and providing access to quality health care to build a healthier community.

▪ **Overview of the School-Based Health Center (SBHC):**

What is a School-Based Health Center?

- SBHCs are health clinics located in schools that provide preventive and primary care to students
- Services provided are determined by the community but most often include: health education, treatment of acute illnesses, management of chronic illnesses, and mental health services such as grief counseling, bullying, and suicide prevention
- SBHCs require a signed parental consent form before students can be provided services
- Work in partnership with the school nurse
- Work with, but do not replace, the child's physician
- Link to or serve as the child's medical home if they do not have one
- SBHCs are a recognized strategy for improving health based on a study by County Health Rankings and Roadmaps

Benefits of SBHCs:

- Provide health care to children who may not otherwise seek care
- Provide children with easier access to care
- Promote prevention and early intervention
- Help children stay healthy
- Give all children an equal chance to succeed in school!
- Studies by John Hopkins University, Emory University, Health Foundation of Greater Cincinnati, and others show that SBHCs:
 - Decrease absenteeism & tardiness
 - Reduce school discipline and behavior problems
 - Save money by reducing the number of visits to the ER for the wrong reasons

Principles of SBHCs:

- Respond to the community
- Support the school
- Promote collaborative relationships
- Focus on the student
- Advance health promotion
- Provide leadership and support for adolescent and child health

Why SBHCs?

- 54.6% of students at MRMS and 44.4% of students at RCHS are economically disadvantaged.
- In the most recent parent survey regarding school-based health services, close to 50% of parent respondents to the school-based health services survey indicated that there was need, and the parents would want, "counseling for emotional issues" available through a school-based health center.

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RAHC SBHC: Extensions of Current School Health Services:

- Does not replace school personnel; augments school health programs
- Brings community's resources to the school
- Addresses unique developmental needs of youth
- Serving children requires the expertise of all health, education & social service providers
- Services are available to all children as well as school faculty and staff.

Core Services:

- Comprehensive physical exams
- Risk screenings : GAPs, Bright Futures
- Diagnosis & treatment of minor injuries and illnesses
- Management of chronic conditions
- Lab tests
- Immunization campaigns
- Classroom/community health promotion
- Behavioral health counseling
- Telehealth services

SBHC standards include:

- Provider coverage at least three half-days per week
- 24 hour back up
- Parental consent
- Services provided to all students, regardless of ability to pay
- Compliance with all state, local, national regulations, laws, professional standards regarding health care services
- Would serve students from entire county
- Part time services to other schools based on needs including:
 - Immunization campaigns
 - Well Child exams
 - Oral health sealants/treatment
- Chairman Whitmore inquired if this is funded by a grant and for how long.
 - Ms. Sheridan stated that they have applied for a grant but it has not yet been awarded. The only change if funding is not awarded is the speed at which they can engage. Ms. Paxton and Dr. Henry are already working with the schools. It is anticipated that this would become part of their base funding to continue the program.
- Trustee Lovell stated that she is excited to have this in Rockbridge County Public Schools and asked if insurance influenced the program.
 - Ms. Sheridan stated that billing insurance is a key component; insurance and Medicaid are both key.

Ms. Sheridan stated that as roles are being defined, protocols are being developed. She noted that the school nurses are the "gate-keepers". She stated that, with parental consent, SBHC can examine a child and write prescriptions. She emphasized that this service will not replace the child's primary care provider and noted that there will be communication with the child's primary care doctor's office to provide transparency. There will be communication and assessments while the process is beginning and expressed appreciation for support from the school division.

- Superintendent Thompson stated that developing the protocols will take time. He reiterated that this service will not replace the RCPS nurses or a child's primary care provider.
- Ms. Oinonen stated that, in regards to behavioral health, there is a great need at Maury River Middle School and Rockbridge County High School. She stated that Ms. Paxton was formerly a school counselor at Maury River Middle School and already knows staff and students and will be working with students and their families.
- Chairman Whitmore inquired if the statistics for the economically disadvantaged in our area are typical for surrounding areas.
 - Ms. Sheridan stated that this is typical for a rural area such as Rockbridge County.
 - Superintendent Thompson stated that Rockbridge County is comparable to surrounding areas.

CONSENT AGENDA

Upon recommendation by Chairman Whitmore, motion by Trustee Burant, seconded by Trustee Lovell, the board approved the following items on the Consent Agenda:

- Minutes: 1) August 8, 2023 [Regular Meeting]; 2) August 23, 2023 [Joint Meeting with the Rockbridge County Board of Supervisors]
- Field Trip Requests
- Fundraiser Requests
- Applications for Use of Facilities
- Appointments and Resignations

Appointments**Professional Staff**

Daniel Taylor, Special Education Teacher, Maury River Middle School, effective September 13, 2023

Jennifer Barney, Art Teacher, Central Elementary School and Mountain View Elementary School, effective September 13, 2023

Britney Terry, Occupational Therapist, Division, effective September 18, 2023

Support Staff

Makenna Newell, Community School Grant Coordinator, Natural Bridge Elementary School, effective August 24, 2023

Food Service

Sandra Stallard

Linda Blackwell

Heather Murphy

Samantha Cramer

Susan Snyder

Car Driver

Spencer Kennon

Substitute

Caitlyn Whitesell

Lisa Clark

Lila Sandage

Shirley Richardson

Cora Chaney

Sarah Adair

Kurt Ellestad

Maddy Russell

Wendy Orrison

Jessica Hite

Allie Corero

Professional Staff Resignation

Amie Salmon, Art Teacher, Central Elementary School and Mountain View Elementary School, effective August 18, 2023

Support Staff Resignation

Joey Hostetter, Custodian, Central Elementary School, effective September 8, 2023

- Business Items

- Approved appropriation for renovations and additions for Rockbridge Innovation Center to Fund 70 in the amount of \$15,395,814.00.
- Approved appropriation for Mountain View Elementary School HVAC replacement carryover to Fund 70 in the of \$1,324,836.00.
- Approved appropriation for Fund 50 for new grants in the amount of \$1,038,674.58.
- Approved appropriation for Fund 50 for new grants in the amount of \$1,724,175.78.
- Approved Monthly Financials for September 12, 2023 in the amount of \$3,738,437.29

Trustee Burant expressed her appreciation to local businesses who invite students to visit for their field trips.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

One patron addressed the board in regards to concern of safety at Natural Bridge Elementary School. The patron stated that the School Resource Officer is not always there, which prompts concern for safety of students and staff. The patron also noted that the door is sometimes propped open, which is also of concern.

- Superintendent Thompson stated that the former School Resource Officer recently retired and that the position has not yet been filled by the Rockbridge County Sheriff's Office. He stated that he is working with Sherriff Funkhouser in regard to getting the position filled. He acknowledged the patron's concern and asked that if there is ever a concern to please reach out to the school principal.

BUDGET PLANNING:

Superintendent Thompson stated that the General Assembly has finished their work for FY24 but that the Governor has not signed the final document and is unsure of amendments that may be following. The calc tool should be available a week or so after the Governor signs the final budget. He stated that work has already begun on FY25 and there will be a need for a budget work session in October. He asked that board members be thinking of priorities for the budget.

- Trustee Lovell stated that this is the longest that localities have had to wait for the approved budget. She suggested that the division keep a running list of impacts on schools when there is a delay in adopting the budget. She also noted that there may be new legislators who may not be aware of the effects of a delay in approving the budget.
 - Superintendent Thompson concurred with her concerns and noted that it affects schools, localities, and other departments that offer support to the community.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Chairman Whitmore reported that the Ad Hoc Committee has met for the first time this year. The Chair and Vice-Chair of the Rockbridge County School Board and the Lexington City School Board meet on a regular basis to discuss ideas, trends, and needs of the community. The relationship between the two school divisions has provided enrichment and opportunities for our students that, individually and alone, the two divisions would have a difficult time doing. The work will continue to keep the partnership and work to make it better, especially in the face of all the current challenges. He provided the following data as provided by Superintendent Walters, Lexington City Public Schools, which reflects continuity and encouragement that Lexington City students continue at Rockbridge County High School.

- 30 Lexington City students graduated from Lylburn Downing Middle Schools 2022-23 and 28 of those students are enrolled as freshman students at Rockbridge County High School, which reflects continuity;
- 19 Lylburn Downing Middle School graduates reside in Rockbridge County and 18 of those students are enrolled as freshmen at Rockbridge County High School;
- 146 Lexington City students attend Rockbridge County High School;
- 941 students attend Rockbridge County High School.
- Trustee Burant stated that the other students moved away from the area.

Chairman Whitmore stated that, as of this date, the Rockbridge County Public Schools ADM is 2242 and the Lexington City Public Schools is ADM is 653. He noted that the number for Rockbridge County may change on a regular basis as people move in and out of the area.

- Trustee Burant stated that she continues to see the students of Lexington City as our students when attending Rockbridge County Public Schools, PK-12. She expressed her sentiment that to make a separation in students is difficult because no matter what grade they are in, they will attend Rockbridge County High School at some point in their educational career.
- Superintendent Thompson stated that he is proud of the good working relationship between the school board and Superintendent of Lexington City Schools.

INSTRUCTIONAL REPORT:

Ms. Lauren Fauber, Principal, Fairfield Elementary School, provided information on the UFLI Reading Program (University of Florida Literacy Institute Foundations – an explicit and systematic phonics program). She provided data reflecting research and an overview of how the program works with students, which included a sample of lesson planning and implementation support. A highlight of her presentation is as follows:

- Why UFLI?
 - Students' Needs
 - Virginia Literacy Act: By the 2024-2025 school year... Every student in kindergarten to grade three will receive core literacy instruction based in scientifically based reading research and evidence-based literacy instruction, as defined in the VLA.
 - Reading is a fundamental skill needed for success both in school and in life

- The UFLI program includes instruction in:
 - Phonemic awareness- Phoneme blending and segmenting practice
 - Accuracy and automaticity of grapheme-phoneme correspondences
 - Decoding and encoding of regular words
 - Decoding and encoding of irregular words
 - Reading, writing, and spelling utilizing connected text
- UFLI is:

Research-based	Complete lesson plans
Evidence-based	Supplemental resources
Explicit and systematic	Focuses on foundational knowledge and skills
Scope and sequence	Reflects the Science of Reading
Opportunities for spiral review	Provides essential background knowledge for teachers
- Mr. Timothy Martino, Assistant Superintendent, stated that the program looks different on all grade levels. He stated that it was a heavy lift because our brains as children are not wired to read and must not skip prerequisites. He stated that the team met on September 11, 2023. All the schools are doing great. Fairfield Elementary School began the initiative last year when a teacher was interested and requested the books. He stated that UFLI is a move to learners in the application phase of learning and that teachers are ahead of the game, in regards to the Virginia Literacy Act. The resources are free as the foundation is committed to literacy.
 - Ms. Fauber echoed that the initiative was very much teacher-driven.
- Trustee Burant inquired if each school has a team or if there is a division team.
 - Mr. Martino stated that there is a division team with a representative from each school.
- Ms. Fauber stated that phonics and spelling take the place of "Words Our Way". Teachers tried the program last year and found that students improved in remembering words with spelling and writing going hand in hand.

Mr. Randy Walters, Chief Operations Manager, provided an update on the Rockbridge Innovation Center. He stated that the project began forty-one days ago with demolition on August 2, 2023. He expressed appreciation to Dr. Craft and his team for working diligently on items such as the traffic flow, to scheduling and the list goes on, while noting that each day may bring a new obstacle. The staff and students have been very patient as work progresses. He stated that excavating and groundwork have begun in preparation for new construction; footers and groundwork are set to begin on September 13, 2023. There will be another construction update meeting on September 13, 2023, and he will provide an update at the next school board meeting.

- Mr. Paige Owens, Director of Technology and Career and Technical Education, stated that tents were set up as outdoor classrooms for lab projects. The tents are set up with access to temporary electricity and there are fans in place. He emphasized that the tents are used strictly as lab spaces. There are designated spaces within the school for classroom time. He stated that it is a testament to teachers and students to make this setup work.
 - Trustee Burant echoed her appreciation to Dr. Craft and staff for transitioning plans for renovation in coming together to make it happen.

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS: None

ACTION ITEMS:

Superintendent Thompson stated that the final contract was just executed with KNA Contractors for the Rockbridge Innovation Center. In a project such as this, the contractor is paid as work is completed. The pay application will not be ready until the construction meeting on September 13, 2023, because the contract was not finished until today. Superintendent Thompson requested that the board provide authorization, once the pay application has been submitted, with approval by Superintendent Thompson and Spectrum Design to move ahead and pay KNA contraction according to the approved pay application. This action will alleviate the need for a called school board meeting.

Upon recommendation by Chairman Whitmore, motion by Trustee Berkstresser, seconded by Trustee Lovell, the board voted 5-0, to approve the authorization for Contractor Payment.

Upon recommendation and motion by Chairman Whitmore and passed by a 5-0 roll call vote, the Board approved waiving the required thirty (30) days advance notice and agreed to vote on the renegotiated Superintendent's contract during this meeting.

Upon recommendation and motion by Chairman Whitmore, and passed by a 5-0 roll call vote, in recognition of Superintendent Thompson’s outstanding performance and with his concurrence, we terminate his current appointment and employment effective June 30, 2024, and concurrently appoint and employ him for a new term of four (4) years as division Superintendent beginning July 1, 2024, and ending June 30, 2028, and that we direct and authorize the Chair to execute the contract on behalf of the Board.”

- Superintendent Thompson stated that the year 2028 seems like a long time away. He stated that in the past seven years that he has been honored by being in the role of superintendent, the time has gone very quickly. He stated that he is looking forward to it and appreciates the confidence of the board and willingness to have him continue as superintendent for a little while longer. He greatly looks forward to continuing to serve the community in which he grew up and continue to make positive changes for the betterment of our children and our community.

NEW BUSINESS:

Trustee Berkstresser stated that the Rockbridge County Public Schools Foundation will hold the Third Annual Cornhole Tournament on September 18, 2023, from 12:00 PM to 4:00 PM at the Virginia Horse Center.

SCHOOL BOARD

The next regular meeting of the Rockbridge County School Board will be held on Tuesday, October 10, 2023 / 5:30 PM / Location: Maury River Middle School, 600 Waddell Street, Lexington, Virginia.

ADJOURNMENT

Upon motion by Trustee Lovell, seconded by Trustee Brown, and passed by 5-0 vote, the meeting was adjourned at 6:43 p.m.


Neil D. Whitmore, Chairman


Rhonda B. Humphries, Clerk of the Board