

Hamlet, North Carolina
October 8, 2024

The Richmond County Board of Education met in regular session on October 8, 2024, at 5:00 p.m. The meeting was held at the Central Office in Hamlet, North Carolina.

The members present: Cory Satterfield, Chairman, Sue Ormsby, Vice-Chairman, Jerry Ethridge, Ronald Tillman, Scotty Baldwin, Bess Shuler and Daryl Mason.

The administrators present: Dr. Joe Ferrell, Superintendent, Dr. Julian Carter, Associate Superintendent of Auxiliary Services of Operations and Athletics, Dr. Kate Smith, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction, Melvin Ingram, Assistant Superintendent of School Safety and Support Services, Dr. Tesha Isler, Executive Director of Human Resources, Dawn Jordan, Executive Director of Finance, Cameron Whitley, Executive Director of Communications and Eva Dubuisson, Board Attorney.

Meeting Commencement

After noting that a quorum was present, Cory Satterfield, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m. Scotty Baldwin, requested a Moment of Silence and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Approval of Minutes

On a motion by Jerry Ethridge, seconded by Daryl Mason, the minutes of September 10, 2024 (open and closed) meetings were unanimously approved.

Recognition of Inspiring Excellence Awards

Cameron Whitley introduced Joyce McRae, Principal of Richmond Senior High School, who presented plaques to two of her staff members: Jan Chappell and Ashleigh Larsen. Next, Cameron Whitley introduced Dr. Joey Moree, Principal of Ellerbe Middle School, who presented plaques to two of his staff members: Ashley Davis and Kelly Maree. These recipients were honored for their outstanding contributions and dedication to students and the school community.

2024-2025 Outstanding Elementary School Math Teacher

Talia Swiney, Director of K-12 Math & Science, recognized Kari Ross from LJ Bell Elementary School as the 2024-2025 Outstanding Elementary School Math Teacher. This prestigious award is presented by the North Carolina Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCCTM) in collaboration with the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI).

Recognition of Beginning Teachers

Dale Ann High recognized the following educators as 2024-2025 Beginning Teachers of the Year: Levi Marena (CMS), Jessica Tetter (FHES), Marquita Smith (WSES), Shalyn Rosser (WRES), Cherrellnea Davis (MAES), Summer Thompson (EMS), Kyra Wall (RSHS), Cortney Holmes-Webb (NGA), Houston Griffith (ERES), Darlene Sullivan (HMS), Jessi Graham (RMS), and Gibson McLaurin (MSES). These teachers have demonstrated dedication, and the hard work needed to ensure their students' success.

Finally, Dale Ann High ended on a high note by announcing Kyra Wall from RSHS as the district's 2024 Beginning Teacher of the Year. Kyra Wall was also presented with a \$500.00 check, generously donated by Champion Ford in Rockingham, NC.

Beginning Teacher Support Plan

Dale Ann High presented the Beginning Teacher Support Plan to the board, noting that while no updates were required to the policy, the plan had not been filed with DPI (Department of Public Instruction) for a few years. The district currently serves 94 beginning teachers in their first through third years. The policy outlines core standards and mandates an approved support plan on file. A plan has been submitted to DPI.

Key components of the plan include orientation, professional development, licensure support, mentoring, and evaluation. Mentors receive state-required training, and efforts are made to assign mentors within the same school building. Professional development is differentiated based on teacher feedback, and principals play a key role in the mentoring and induction program. Monthly support meetings are held for first-year teachers, with quarterly sessions for second- and third-year teachers.

The plan encourages third-year teachers to become mentors once they receive their continuing license.

On a motion by Scotty Baldwin, seconded by Bobbie Sue Ormsby, the board voted unanimously to approve the beginning teacher support plan as presented.

Construction Updates

Steven King presented an update on projects at Mineral Springs Elementary School, Fairview Heights Elementary School, and Richmond Senior High School.

- Richmond Senior High School
 - Exterior construction is in progress.
 - Second floor mechanical, electrical, and plumbing trades are performing rough-ins.
 - Project is on track, with completion expected by the end of January or early February.
- Mineral Springs Elementary School
 - A walk-through was completed with the architect and engineer on September 30.
 - Received a Certificate of Occupancy (CO) on October 4.
 - All identified items from the walk-through are scheduled for completion by October 11.
 - Tentative plans to move mobile classrooms to the new building during the weekend of October 19.
 - During the following week, mobile classrooms will be disconnected from power, water, sewer, intercoms, and fire alarm systems.
 - Five mobile classrooms will be removed: three are sold, and two were given to the Hamlet Police Department.

- Phase three of the construction project will begin on November 4, focusing on a new service road connecting to the bus loop, providing access to the boiler, chiller, electrical systems, and fuel tanks.
 - Building dedication is scheduled for October 28.
 - Fairview Heights Elementary School
 - Walk-through completed with the engineer and architect.
 - Two major items need to be resolved for the Certificate of Occupancy:
 1. Grading issue with the sidewalk in front.
 2. Fire alarm needs to be tied in.
 - Project is near completion, with an expected completion date by the end of October or early November.
 - Change Order Number Nine
 - Six individual change orders from July, August, and September.
 1. Interior steel columns at Fairview Heights Elementary wrapped with framing, drywall, and paint for a finished look.
 2. Addition of two fire extinguisher cabinets for safety.
 3. Concrete added around the HVAC unit to maintain the area.
 4. Backflow preventer discharge spout added to the side of the building.
 5. Eight additional fire dampeners required by the fire marshal in the HVAC ductwork at Mineral Springs Elementary School.
 6. Ceiling added to the IT closet at Mineral Springs Elementary School.
- Total cost for these change orders: \$17,979.78.
- Since the project began in May 2023, total changes have only amounted to 2% of the contract value.

School Growth (Met and Exceeded)

Dr. Kate Smith recognized schools that either met or exceeded their expected growth for the 2023-24 school year, based on the EVOS model, which measures student academic growth over the year. The model compares student progress against predicted outcomes. When we refer to "met" and "exceeded" student growth, we are addressing how well students performed academically compared to expectations.

- Schools That Met Expected Growth
 - ☆ Ellerbe Middle School
 - ☆ Fairview Heights Elementary School
 - ☆ Mineral Springs Elementary School
 - ☆ Washington Street Elementary School
 - ☆ East Rockingham Elementary School
- Schools That Exceeded Expected Growth
 - ☆ Rockingham Middle School
 - ☆ Richmond Ninth Grade Academy
 - ☆ West Rockingham Elementary School
 - ☆ Hamlet Middle School
 - ☆ L.J. Bell Elementary School
 - ☆ Richmond Early College

Additionally, Monica Robinson, principal of Ashley Chapel Educational Center, was acknowledged for her leadership. Though Ashley Chapel follows an alternate growth

model and does not receive a "met growth" designation, the school has successfully transitioned from declining growth to maintaining.

Graduation Requirement Updates

Dr. Kate Smith presented updates on graduation requirements to the board, beginning with House Bill 259, which enforces two key changes:

1. Schools must offer a three-year course sequence for students aiming to graduate in three years.
2. Public School Units (PSUs) can no longer require more than the state minimum of 22 credits for graduation.

Richmond County Schools has implemented a three-year course sequence for 9th-grade students who choose to pursue early graduation, allowing them to complete high school in three years as juniors. Four students currently meet the criteria and have parental consent for this sequence, which includes all core courses and six electives. While the state provides a suggested course sequence, high school advisors will create personalized schedules based on student interest surveys and pathway information. A parent-signed consent form ensures clarity about what this track entails for students graduating as juniors.

Per House Bill 259, PSUs can no longer require more than 22 credits for graduation. Richmond County Schools, however, will continue scheduling students in alignment with their interests and needs through advisement. As part of the district's four-by-four block schedule, students will be scheduled for four courses in the fall and four in the spring.

Senate Bill 193 mandates that all students have an updated career development plan before being promoted to the 9th or 11th grade. This plan includes a self-assessment, pathway exploration, and course alignment with career interests. Students will complete a portfolio with a résumé, FAFSA submission, and documentation of postsecondary plans. Curriculum development coordinators, Jason Perakis and Cherie Young, under the guidance of Greg Norton (CTE Director), will ensure this is implemented using Major Clarity, the platform for career exploration.

A new policy in North Carolina allows students to earn an endorsement in the Arts on their high school diploma. To qualify, students must complete four arts courses, maintain a 3.0 GPA or higher, and log a minimum of 40 hours of arts-related activities outside of school. Richmond County Schools is collaborating with principals to identify activities that students can log as part of this requirement.

Richmond County Schools partnered with Richmond Community College to offer certification programs for seniors. Two students have enrolled in the lineman program, five in the building and construction certification program, and three in the medical assisting pathway. The Richmond County Schools Educational Foundation funded the enrollment cost for the two students in the lineman program. Dr. Smith noted that Richmond Community College offers additional certification programs for students to explore.

Annual School Performance Report

Jennifer Taylor discussed the annual school performance report. Richmond County Schools showed modest gains in test results compared to last year, despite ongoing challenges. The slides presented focused on grade-level proficiency for test results, comparing 2023-24 data with both the 2022-23 recovery year and pre-COVID data from 2018-19.

- EOG Results (Grades 3-8)
 - Reading: A one-point overall gain, with grade 8 showing the largest increase and grade 3 seeing a slight decline.
 - Math: A one-point gain overall, with grade 6 approaching pre-COVID levels with a 95% recovery rate.
 - Science: Grade 8 science improved slightly, while grade 5 showed a small decline, with an 82% recovery rate to pre-COVID levels overall.
- EOC Results (High Schools)
 - The report included data for Richmond Senior High, Ashley Chapel, and the Ninth Grade Academy. The trend data over the past five years showed steady recovery, with a clear correlation between attendance and proficiency rates.
- Graduation Rates
 - Richmond County Schools' overall four-year graduation rate remained stable, with Richmond Senior High seeing a two-point increase.
 - Early College continued to demonstrate exemplary graduation outcomes.
 - Ashley Chapel, operating under an alternative accountability model, showed a dip in its three-year rate, but targeted support strategies are expected to increase this in future years.
- Challenges and Focus Areas
 - Attendance is strongly linked to proficiency, with higher attendance correlating with higher proficiency rates.
 - The district is maintaining achievement rates despite attendance challenges and is focusing on improving instructional frameworks, teacher development, and dropout prevention efforts.
 - Multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) are in place across all schools, with a focus on sustaining and growing these initiatives to support students academically.

Jennifer Taylor addressed that key areas of focus include decreasing dropout rates, enhancing mentoring programs, and providing students with additional pathways to graduate, such as the Evening Academy. The district will also continue monitoring data to support improvement in graduation rates and student retention across all schools. Overall, the 2023-24 academic year saw incremental improvements, with targeted strategies in place for continued growth.

The Confidence Program

Dr. Wendy Jordan shared information about *The Confidence Project*, a nonprofit founded by Richmond County native Mary Baldwin Morris and her daughter, Hannah Jane Lloyd. The organization provides hygiene kits to students in need, funded through grants. These kits include basic hygiene items like deodorant, toothpaste, toothbrushes,

shampoo, and even laundry detergent sheets, aimed at improving students' self-esteem and school attendance.

This year, the project targeted students at Cordova Middle School, Hamlet Middle School, and all migrant students in the district. The kits also included inspirational messages, and school counselors and nurses distributed them. Dr. Jordan mentioned that UNC Chapel Hill School of Social Work is involved in a research study to explore the correlation between improved school attendance and these kits. Though it's too early to draw conclusions, they are considering a student perception survey. Additionally, the Confidence Project provided feminine hygiene products through a "buy one, get one free" initiative, distributing them to schools as needed. Dr. Jordan expressed gratitude to the organization for supporting the district

Healthy Active Children Report

Dr. Wendy Jordan presented the Healthy Active Children report, which is an annual submission to the Department of Public Instruction (DPI). She noted that the report has expanded over the years, particularly following updates to the student wellness policy, Policy 6140. These updates were part of a triennial assessment aimed at improving compliance and performance. The report also includes the district's school-based mental health plan, suicide risk assessment protocol, and mental health training plan for staff, as required by legislation from 2019.

Dr. Jordan highlighted that the district's mental health and wellness plan is comprehensive, totaling 42 pages, and involves multiple staff members collaborating to support students' emotional well-being and social-emotional learning skills. She expressed pride in the district's progress, particularly in response to state-level evaluations. Richmond County Schools was one of only 12 districts statewide in 2022 to achieve the highest rating (blue), indicating full compliance and exceeding requirements. In 2023, this number grew to 25 districts, with Richmond County maintaining its blue rating.

Dr. Jordan shared that at a recent state School Health Advisory Council (SHAC) meeting, only two districts, including Richmond County, had no required changes or feedback to improve their submissions, further emphasizing the district's strong performance in supporting student health and wellness.

Grant from Drug Endangered Family Task Force

Dr. Wendy Kelly Jordan presented information about the Drug Endangered Family Task Force Grant. She noted that she became involved in the task force in 2017-18, in response to the opioid crisis. Richmond County Schools is set to receive \$8.7 million over the next 18 years from the opioid settlement fund. Dr. Jordan oversees the distribution of these funds, which focus on prevention, recovery, and education.

Last year, her grant application was not approved, but this year, the task force was awarded \$60,000. The grant will fund youth mental health first aid training, targeting preK-12 students. This will involve training five staff members per school—nurses, counselors, social workers, and selected staff members who have strong relationships

with students. The first training session is scheduled for October 21, followed by two more in November, each being eight hours long.

Trained teams will provide micro professional development sessions (10-20 minutes) at faculty meetings to raise awareness about mental health indicators such as self-harm and drug references. The aim is to equip staff to recognize warning signs and take appropriate actions. Schools will tailor the training to their specific needs, with topics like cutting and suicidal ideation varying by location. Dr. Jordan will report the outcomes and impact to the task force, including the number of professional development sessions delivered and any staff engagement with the trained team members.

EC Contract

Dawn Jordan presented the following EC contract for board approval:

Contract Title	23-24 Cost	24-25 Cost	Increase	Decrease
Public Consulting Group	\$125,000.00	\$130,000.00	\$5,000.00	

On a motion by Scotty Baldwin, seconded by Bobbie Sue Ormsby the board voted unanimously to approve all ten EC contract as presented.

24-25 Budget Resolutions

Dawn Jordan presented the following 24-25 budget resolutions for board approval.

- State Funds
 - The budget appropriation has been revised from \$57,698,480 to \$57,724,818, representing an increase of \$26,334.
- Federal Funds
 - The appropriation amount in the current amended budget is \$11,953,945.81.
- Other Local Funds
 - The budget appropriation has been revised from \$3,175,731.91 to \$3,759,439.14, representing an increase of \$583,707.23.

On a motion by Jerry Ethridge, seconded by Daryl Mason the board voted unanimously to approve the budget resolution as presented.

Policies for Review

Melvin Ingram presented the following policies for a 30-day review.

Policy Numbers:

- 3410 Testing and Assessment Program
- 3420 Student Promotion and Accountability
- 3460 Graduation Requirements
- 4610 Fundraising Campaigns in the Schools

Field Trip Proposal

Melvin Ingram presented the board the following field trips.

- Hamlet Middle School – Beta Club Conference in Concord, NC – October 14-15, 2024
- Richmond Senior High School – Special Needs to McArthur Farms in Bennettsville, SC – October 15, 2024

- Richmond Senior High School – JROTC to learn about college life through the ROTC program in Orangeburg, SC – October 19, 2024
- L J Bell Elementary School – First Grade to McArthur Farms in Bennettsville, SC – October 22, 2024
- L J Bell Elementary School – Kindergarten to McArthur Farms in Bennettsville, SC – October 25, 2024
- Richmond Senior High School – JROTC Competition in Green Sea, SC – November 16, 2024
- Richmond Senior High School – RSHS graduates International Travel Program trip to Athens, Crete and Santorini – Summer 2027

Board Voting Delegates

Dr. Joe Ferrell informed the board that it is time to submit names for voting delegates for the NCSBA. Chairman Satterfield, Jerry Ethridge, Ronald Tillman, and Scotty Baldwin volunteered to be listed as potential delegates. The NCSBA's annual delegate meeting will take place at 4 p.m. on Monday, November 18, 2024, in Greensboro, NC, as part of the Annual Conference, which allows school boards to engage in NCSBA advocacy and decision-making.

On a motion by Bobbie Sue Ormsby, seconded by Bess Shuler, the board unanimously approved the above members to be listed as voting delegates.

Athletics Update

Dr. Julian Carter presented the Athletic updates, expressing excitement about the recent developments in the school district's athletic facilities. He shared a nostalgic reflection on his own time at Richmond Senior High School, recalling the school's strong foundation and excellent facilities when it first opened.

Dr. Carter acknowledged that while the school, now over 50 years old, has aged, significant efforts have been made by Dr. Ferrell and others to upgrade the athletic facilities. His presentation focused on Richmond Senior High School's athletic facility improvements over the past year, the challenges that remain, and athletic participation at both the high school and middle school levels.

He began by discussing the upgrades to stadium seating, which were well-received by the public. The installation of 225 new seats was funded through a state athletic facility grant, leftover funds from parking fees, and capital outlay. Dr. Carter credited Brad Denson for helping secure these improvements.

Dr. Carter highlighted several key projects that were made possible by generous donations from community members and the booster club, including:

1. Renovations to utility buildings at the baseball and soccer fields, extending storage space for cheerleaders, and improving maintenance facilities.
2. The field house was repainted, the roof replaced, and other repairs completed to ensure functionality.

3. The old ISS building was transformed into a modern locker room for soccer players, featuring lockers, guest bathrooms, and a laundry area. Both boys and girls soccer teams will benefit from this upgrade.
4. The football locker room was renovated, with rotten awnings replaced, and improvements made to ensure safety and functionality.

Dr. Carter also mentioned the installation of a new sound system in the gym, benefiting multiple sports including volleyball and wrestling. He shared updates on the weight room currently under construction, which is being funded through ESSER funds and local resources. He explained that while the current weight room will remain in use, the new facility will greatly enhance training opportunities for student-athletes.

Looking ahead, Dr. Carter discussed the following planned projects for the 2024-2025 school year:

1. The aging track needs significant repairs to ensure safety for students.
2. Both fields require drainage improvements, surface renovations, and safety enhancements.
3. Unused bleachers from the Ninth Grade Academy will be relocated to middle school fields to improve seating capacity.

Dr. Carter emphasized the importance of maintaining equitable facilities for both boys and girls teams. He also mentioned the ongoing efforts to boost athletic participation across all schools. Richmond Senior High School saw 465 students try out for fall sports, with 420 making teams, while middle school participation reached 467 students, with 350 continuing on teams.

In conclusion, Dr. Carter expressed confidence in the future of the school district's athletic program, with ongoing improvements aimed at enhancing facilities and increasing student involvement in sports.

Board Members Comments

Jerry Ethridge shared that he had the opportunity to visit all the schools and observed that they appeared welcoming. However, he raised concerns about school zone speed limits after witnessing a bus speeding by, which shook his car. Ethridge noted the inconsistency in speed limit signs, at schools. He observed that some areas had flashing lights, while others had varying speed limits, and some schools had no speed limit signs at all. He stressed the need for consistent speed limits, particularly to protect children walking in school zones. Melvin Ingram shared that he had spoken to a Department of Transportation (DOT) representative about the issue. The DOT representative agreed to investigate the Hamlet Middle School area and potentially other schools to ensure consistency in speed enforcement. Ethridge believes that more enforcement is necessary, as speeding remains an issue, especially during drop-off and pick-up times.

Several board members discussed the idea of checking to see if flashing lights can be added in more school zones to capture drivers' attention. Ethridge also suggested painting school zone markings on the road to make drivers more aware when entering these areas.

Ethridge suggested adding seat cushions to the new seating at the football stadium, which several board members supported. Dr. Carter mentioned exploring the idea of renting seat cushions for next season but is still determining funding options. Chairman Satterfield recommended purchasing Raider seat cushions or utilizing one's people may already have.

Superintendent's Report

Dr. Ferrell provided the board with an enrollment report comparing this year's enrollment to last year's enrollment, as well as to the schools' capacities. This information will be revisited at the board work session on October 22 as part of the facilities discussion. He also reminded the board that it is Raider homecoming week, with a pep rally scheduled for Friday morning at 9:15 at Richmond Senior High School, early dismissal for the parade at 4:00 p.m., and the football game in the evening.

Cory Satterfield citing NCGS 143-318.11(a)(3),(6) requested a motion to go into closed session.

On a motion by Scotty Baldwin, seconded by Bess Shuler, the board voted unanimously to go into closed session at 6:58 p.m.

The board returned from closed session at 8:04 p.m.

Dr. Tesha Isler presented the personnel report, and the addendum. On a motion by Bobbie Sue Ormsby, seconded by Scotty Baldwin, the board voted unanimously to approve the personnel report and addendum as presented.

There being no further business, on a motion by Scotty Baldwin, seconded by Bess Shuler, Chairman Satterfield adjourned the meeting at 8:05 p.m.