

Hamlet, North Carolina
January 14, 2025

The Richmond County Board of Education met in regular session on January 14, 2025, 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, Daryl Mason, Scotty Baldwin, and Bess Shuler.

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, Tracie Tuttle, Assistant Finance Officer, Cameron Whitley, Executive Director of Communications and Eva Dubuisson, Board Attorney. Dawn Jordan, Executive Director of Finance was absent.

Meeting Commencement

After noting that a quorum was present, Cory Satterfield, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 5:05 p.m. Ronald Tillman requested a Moment of Silence and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Approval of Minutes

On a motion by Jerry Ethridge, seconded by Scotty Baldwin, the open session minutes of December 5, 2024, unanimously approved.

NCSBA Recognitions

Dr. Tesha Isler announced the recognitions received by the NC School Board Association at the NCSBA Awards Ceremony, which was held on Tuesday, November 19, 2024. The awards are as follows:

- RSHS
 - 2nd Place High School Video Contest Winner (Yearbook)
 - Honorable Mention High School Video Contest (BETA)
- HMS
 - 1st Place Middle School Video Contest Winner
- WRES
 - 2nd Place Poster Contest Winner (Pablo Correa Montiel)
 - Honorable Mention Poster Contest (Noeli Correa Montiel)
- MAES
 - Honorable Mention Poster Contest (Brihanna Ramirez)
- LJB
 - Honorable Mention Poster Contest (Victoria Garcia)

Sports Conference Championship Winners

James Johnson, Athletic Director, recognized the winners of the fall conference championships in athletics. The winning teams were as follows:

- Middle School Girls' Track Team
- Rockingham Middle School Volleyball Team
- Richmond Senior High School Varsity Football Team

Winter Sports Participation

James Johnson, Athletic Director, presented data on Winter Sports participation for the 2024 season. Key highlights included:

- High School Participation:
 - Boys Basketball: 50 tryouts, 26 team members.
 - Girls Basketball: 27 tryouts, 22 team members.
 - Indoor Track: 14 girls and 22 boys participated.
 - Swimming: 9 boys and 11 girls on the teams.
 - Bowling: 11 boys and 7 girls participated.
 - Wrestling: 21 team members.
 - Cheerleading: 28 total participants.
- Middle School Participation:
 - Across four middle schools, 131 boys tried out for basketball, with 73 making the teams. For girls' basketball, there were 70 tryouts and 51 team members. Wrestling had 42 tryouts, resulting in 41 team members.

Athletic Supplement Proposal

- Athletic Supplement Proposal:
 - Current stipends for non-bracketed sports: Track and Field (\$3,169.92) and Wrestling (\$2,083.05).
 - Proposal: Align Soccer and Volleyball stipends with other bracketed sports and raise Wrestling stipends to match Track and Field.
 - Current stipends for bracketed sports: Baseball, Softball, and Basketball (\$3,823.46), Soccer (\$3,169.96), Volleyball (\$1,890.89).

James Johnson requested the board's approval for the revised athletic supplement proposal for, including retroactive pay for the 2024/2025 school year, to enhance competitiveness and standardize stipends based on objective criteria.

On a motion by Scotty Baldwin, seconded by Ronald Tillman, the board voted unanimously to approve the athletic supplement as presented, including the 2024/2025 school year retroactive pay.

K-12 Curriculum Updates

Dr. Kate Smith provided updates on the K-12 curriculum and district initiatives, including:

- Professional Development: A school-based professional development day is scheduled for February 19, allowing schools to address their specific needs.
- Cognia Survey: Being part of our Cognia accreditation, schools have completed another round of student engagement surveys to improve learning strategies and re-engage students based on their feedback.
- ML Community of Practice: The district's Community of Practice Team was recognized by DPI for effective strategies supporting multilingual learners (ML), with plans to share these practices regionally.
- EVAAS Training: Training is well underway, with Richmond County Schools focused on Goal 2: ensuring every school exceeds expected growth.
- STEM Initiatives: All elementary and middle schools now have robotics teams and are building a robotics program for students. Teams are currently practicing

after school as a club, constructing robots and obstacle courses with plans to compete in regional challenges this spring. This program, led by STEM Coordinator Jill Rogers, introduces Richmond County students to STEM concepts as early as second grade through engaging, critical-thinking activities outside the traditional classroom setting. Additionally, a drone soccer team is now underway, marking a completely new initiative for RCS. Special recognition was given to Kristen Britt and Jordan Willett at Rockingham Middle School, who were eager to start the program. In response, Ms. Rogers provided a drone soccer apparatus to their media center, enabling students to begin practicing. Dr. Smith expressed her enthusiasm for these new STEM opportunities.

- Middle and High School Collaboration: Middle school students will visit Richmond Senior High School (RSHS) and Richmond Early College High School (REaCH) for early exposure to high school options and registration processes.
- Planning for HNRS and AP courses: RSHS is focusing on diversifying enrollment and improving pass rates in honors and AP courses, as identified through Cognia data.
- CCP Schedule Expansion: Starting in the 2025-2026 school year, seniors can spend 75% of their day in RCC courses, which means they will only have to take one block at RSHS as long as they have met specific criteria.
- Dropout Prevention: Arthur Gilliam, Dropout Prevention Coordinator, is implementing a new Mentor and Meet program with staff at RSHS and the Ninth Grade Academy (NGA). He has trained 15 staff at RSHS and 10 staff at (NGA) who have committed to supporting the most at-risk students with graduation.
- Evening Academy: The Evening Academy at Richmond Senior has seen success, with potential for up to 20 mid-year graduates.
- CTE Internships: Eleven internships are finishing their first semester. Seventeen internships are confirmed for the second semester and possibly eight more once the formal paperwork is finalized.
- Policy Updates:
 - Arts graduation requirements are being managed to ensure middle school students meet them before high school.
 - Computer science requirements will begin in the 2026-2027 school year.
 - A new citizenship endorsement is now available for students to earn on their diplomas. This opportunity is open to any interested 12th grade student. To earn the endorsement, students must take a 10-question test based on the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services site and answer at least six questions correctly. The test can be administered either orally or in writing. High school staff, in collaboration with the ML department and counselors, are selecting appropriate questions to ensure all students seeking this endorsement have the best opportunity to succeed.
 - Changes to the credit recovery policy will require numeric grades for non-elective courses starting in the 2025-2026 school year. Pass/fail grading will no longer be allowed.

Dr. Smith expressed appreciation for the efforts of teachers, administrators, and staff in enhancing student experiences and maintaining a focus on engagement and growth.

RCS 2024-2025 Summer Program Plan

Jennifer Taylor presented the 2024-2025 Summer Program Plan to the board, seeking approval for its implementation. She explained that the plan aims to provide additional instruction and give students the opportunity to retake End-of-Grade (EOG) and End-of-Course (EOC) assessments, helping them achieve proficiency.

Overview of the Summer Program Plan:

Eligibility Areas:

- EOG Math: Grades 3-8
- EOG Reading: Grades 4-8
- EOC Subjects: English II, Math 1, Math 3
- Exclusions: Grade 3 Reading EOG and new 2024-25 Science EOGs (Grades 5 and 8) and Biology EOC (results delayed).

Eligibility Criteria:

- Students scoring 1-2 scale points below proficiency (Level 3).
- Principal invitation.
- Parent/Guardian request.

Program Dates:

- Instructional Days: June 10-11, 2025
 - Elementary/Middle: 4 hours/day
 - High Schools: 2 hours/day
- Testing Days: June 12-13, 2025

Testing Procedures:

- Maintain standard testing security and protocols.
- Trained School Test Coordinator at each site.
- Ensure proper training, planning, and secure handling of materials.

Locations:

The program will be held at Elementary, Middle, and High Schools across the district, with Richmond Early College operating on a separate schedule.

Daily Schedule:

- Elementary/Middle: 8:00 am–12:00 pm (all days).
- High Schools (Instructional): 10:00 am–12:00 pm.
- High Schools (Test days): 8:00 am–12:00 pm.

Staffing:

- Site Coordinators at all sites.
- Test Coordinators for Elementary/Middle; combined role at High Schools.
- Teachers: 1-2 per grade/subject for Elementary/Middle; 2-4 per subject for High Schools.

Support Services:

- Transportation: Bus routes provided by attendance zones.
- Meals:
 - Breakfast/Lunch: Provided at Elementary/Middle on all days.
 - Grab-and-go breakfast: Provided at High Schools on all days.
 - Lunch: Provided at High Schools on testing days only.

On a motion by Ronald Tillman, seconded by Jerry Ethridge the board voted unanimously to approve the 2024-2025 Summer Program 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.

- **Mineral Springs Elementary School**
 - New building in use for over two months; students and staff are excited to be out of the mobile classrooms.
 - Minor punch list items remaining (interior and exterior).
 - Service road construction ongoing; issue with underground utilities and utility pole relocation by Duke Energy.
 - Duke Energy will relocate the pole in the next couple of weeks, expected to take about two weeks to complete.
- **Fairview Heights Elementary School**
 - New gym in use for over a month; Coach McDonald and students are utilizing the space.
 - Interior and exterior punch list items still being addressed.
 - Canopy section needs to be reinstalled.
 - FHES building dedication on Friday, January 17th at 2:00 PM.
- **Richmond Senior High School**
 - Project began in June 2023.
 - Ongoing work on interior HVAC, electrical, plumbing, and sprinkler systems.
 - Roof complete, except for trim.
 - Bleachers, scoreboard, and wall pads ordered; drywall delivered, and installation will begin soon.
 - Gas, electrical, and sewer lines already installed.
 - Waiting on the waterline, including a new fire hydrant and domestic water for the building.

Rockingham Middle School Roof Bids

Steven King addressed the board regarding the need for a new roof at Rockingham Middle School. He explained that the roof on the section built in 2004 was made of synthetic slate shingles resembling traditional slate used on historical buildings. The manufacturer of the original material is no longer in business, prompting the decision to replace the roof with a more durable standing steel metal roof, which has a lifespan exceeding 50 years.

Steven King mentioned consultation with REI Engineering, which facilitated the project. Conversations with John Massey, Assistant City Manager, and Monty Crump, City Manager, revealed they experienced similar issues with the same roofing material on their building.

On January 8, 2025, at 2:00 PM, REI conducted a sealed bid opening at the maintenance department. Four bids were received:

- **Highest bid:** \$734,328 (Tecta America)
- **Second-highest bid:** \$680,000 (Southern Metal Systems, Inc.)
- **Third-highest bid:** \$665,000 (Interstate Roofing Co. Inc.)
- **Lowest bid:** \$509,640 (Davco Roofing & Sheet Metal, LLC)

REI verified the lowest bid with the contractor, Davco Roofing & Sheet Metal, LLC, and found the bid reliable. The also submitted Alternate 03, which includes replacing four semi-round copper louvers with Kynar-finished aluminum louvers matching the existing design. This alternate adds \$14,700 to the total cost, bringing the contract amount to

\$524,340. REI recommended moving forward with Davco, noting their reputation and experience. A manufacturer representative certifies the installation upon completion to ensure compliance with their standards.

Ronald Tillman asked about the warranty on the roofing project. In response, Steven King provided an example: If issues arise after two years, the manufacturer will coordinate with certified roofing companies to resolve the problems. He also noted these warranty details:

- Metal panel finish: 30 years
- Manufacturer's water-tight warranty: 20 years
- Workmanship warranty: 2 years

The project is expected to take approximately two months to complete.

On a motion by Bobbie Sue Ormsby, seconded by Ronald Tillman the board voted unanimously to approve the roofing bid for Rockingham Middle School as presented.

School Transition Update

Dr. Julian Carter presented updates from the RCS Facilities Study, highlighting the following board-approved changes:

1. **Closing the Ninth Grade Academy (NGA):**
 - Students and staff will move to RSHS by Fall 2025.
 - Proposed renaming of the NGA facility to "Richmond Elementary School."
2. **Moving NGA Students and Staff to RSHS (Fall 2025):**
 - Human Resources to notify staff placements by June 1, 2025.
 - Redundant positions may require reassignment within the district.
 - Maintenance will oversee moving equipment and materials.
 - RSHS renovations include:
 - Three classrooms in the media center.
 - New office for a guidance counselor.
 - Additional classrooms in the gym and E Building.
 - Expansion of an art room and creation of an industrial technology classroom.
3. **Closing the James Building:**
 - Relocation of the Exceptional Children's Department to the NGA.
4. **Repurposing the NGA for Monroe Avenue Staff and Students (Fall 2026):**
 - Renovations planned during 2025-2026, including:
 - Painting, sidewalks, fencing, and playground installations.
 - Updates to Pre-K and K-5 classrooms and facilities.
 - Estimated costs include \$60,000 for painting and \$12,000 for fencing.
5. **Closing Monroe Avenue Elementary School:**
 - Staff to box materials at the end of the 2025-2026 school year.
 - Maintenance to coordinate moving to the NGA by June-July 2026.
 - Office staff to vacate and close the Monroe Avenue facility by June 30, 2026.

24-25 Budget Amendments

Tracie Tuttle, Assistant Finance Officer, presented the following 24-25 budget resolutions for board approval.

- State Funds
 - The budget appropriation has been revised from \$58,329,573.26 to \$58,731,866.26 representing an increase of \$402,313.00.
- Federal Funds
 - The budget appropriation has been revised from \$20,032,234.41 to \$21,961,216.41 representing an increase of \$1,928,982.00.
- Other Local Funds
 - The budget appropriation has been revised from \$4,213,241.67 to \$4,296,893.89 representing an increase of \$83,652.22.

On a motion by Jerry Ethridge, seconded by Bobbie Sue Ormsby the board voted unanimously to approve the budget resolution as presented.

Policies for Adoption

Melvin Ingram presented the conclusion of the 30-day review period, asking the board to adopt amendments for the following policies.

Policy Numbers:

- 2320 Remote Participation in Board Meetings
- 3225/4312/7320 Technology Responsible Use
- 3227/7322 Web Page Development
- 4334/5035/7345 Use of Unmanned Aircraft

On a motion by Ronald Tillman, seconded by Scotty Baldwin, the board voted unanimously to adopt policy amendments 2320, 3225/4312/7320, 3227/7322, and 4334/5035/7345.

Policies for Review

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

Policy Numbers:

- 4040/7310 Staff-Student Relations
- 4120 Domicile of Residence Requirements
- 4329/7311 Bullying and Harassing Behavior Prohibited
- 5022 Registered Sex Offenders

Field Trips

Melvin Ingram presented the field trips.

- Richmond Senior High School – Girls Track to Lynchburg, VA – January 11, 2025 – January 11, 2025
- Rockingham Middle School – BETA to Greensboro, NC – February 14, 2025 – February 15, 2025
- Richmond Senior High School – Chorus to New Bern, NC – January 30, 2025 – February 1, 2025
- Cordova Middle School – Skills USA to Greensboro, NC – April 8, 2025 – April 11, 2025
- Richmond Senior High School – African American/History Club to Charleston, SC – April 21, 2025 – April 23, 2025

PowerSchool Incident Update

Katherine Bendell, Director of Technology, updated the board on a cybersecurity breach involving PowerSchool, affecting student and teacher data across North Carolina Public Schools (PSUs) from Summer 2013 to the present. Key details include:

1. Threat actors accessed data on December 19, 2024. PowerSchool was notified on December 28 and worked with cybersecurity firms to contain the breach. Richmond County Schools were informed on January 10, 2025.
2. The breach, caused by compromised contractor credentials, affected all NC PSUs. Teacher Social Security numbers may have been impacted. No preventive actions by PSUs or DPI could have stopped the breach.
3. The incident is contained, data destroyed, and the Dark Web is being monitored by law enforcement.
4. PowerSchool will notify affected individuals, provide support resources, and classify compromised data for PSU leaders. Richmond County Schools will release a public statement and inform staff.

PowerSchool and DPI are managing notifications and implementing security measures to prevent future incidents. Updates will be provided as available.

Board Members Comments

Jerry Ethridge expressed his gratitude to Dr. Smith for her efforts in scheduling all school concerts on different days, which allowed him to attend most of them. He mentioned attending every school concert except the one at Mineral Springs Elementary School (MSES). He reached out to Angel Mabe, MSES Principal, to inquire about their concert schedule and learned that it was held during the day. During this conversation, he was also invited to see a special highlight at the school—a banner celebrating a \$100,000 grant for their playground, which he emphasized as a significant achievement.

Jerry also took a moment to reflect on the importance of acknowledging and remembering community losses. He specifically mentioned the families of Darrell McSween and Dozene Rush, as well as Austin Bryant, a former high school staff member, and Bill Linton, who worked with Wayne Stevens in the auto mechanic program. He expressed his sympathy and asked that their families be kept in everyone's thoughts.

Ronald Tillman requested that everyone keep Horace Green's family, as well as the families of all school district members who have passed away, in their thoughts.

Bobbie Sue Ormsby shared her enthusiasm for the progress of the Educational Foundation. She acknowledged the efforts of Dr. Ferrell and Jody Williamson, President of the Foundation, who created a video outlining a grant opportunity for Richmond County Schools (RCS). She encouraged everyone to watch the video, noting how the Foundation is actively working to attract and retain teachers.

Bobbie Sue highlighted a new grant initiative, "Empowering Educators." Through this program, every school will receive \$1,000, with the stipulation that teachers must apply for the grant. Each school will have one recipient, and the awarded funds will support the project outlined in their application. She also mentioned the continuation of scholarships at the high school level, with an expectation of surpassing last year's numbers.

Additionally, the Foundation is organizing a Clay Shoot fundraiser at DeWitt's on April 4. Bobbie Sue encouraged participation through volunteering, sponsorship, or attending the event. She emphasized the Foundation's progress, noting strong attendance at monthly meetings and the collective dedication to building future capacity and success.

Scotty Baldwin added to Bobby Sue's comments, mentioning that he attended the DeWitt Sporting Clay event last year. He noted that it was a first-class event and expressed how much he enjoyed it.

Superintendent's Report

Dr. Ferrell requested that Dr. Julian Carter share a special acknowledgment during the meeting. Dr. Carter recognized Ms. Casey Knight, who was in attendance, and expressed gratitude for her and her mother's outstanding support during the football season.

Dr. Carter highlighted the contributions of Ms. Knight, her mother, and the Rockingham Rescue Squad, who volunteered their time and resources to assist during football games. They brought the rescue squad's ambulance to the games, where their role was to stabilize individuals needing medical attention and, if necessary, transport them to FirstHealth Hospital at no cost.

Dr. Carter commended their generosity and dedication, noting that their efforts addressed the growing expense of having medical personnel on standby at games. He also emphasized their crucial assistance in caring for student-athletes and spectators, several of whom required medical attention during the season.

Dr. Carter extended a heartfelt thank-you to Ms. Knight, her mother, and the Rockingham Rescue Squad for their invaluable support in ensuring the safety and well-being of everyone at the events.

Dr. Ferrell reflected on his nearly two years at RCS, noting his positive experience as Superintendent in Camden and the difficult decision to leave a place where he was happy. However, as he observed the accomplishments at RCS, he expressed gratitude for the outstanding work being done across the district, including construction projects, curriculum initiatives, athletic improvements, and student recognition efforts.

He praised the entire team, for their contributions and highlighted the district as a great place to work. Dr. Ferrell also acknowledged January as Board of Education Appreciation Month, thanking board members for their support of students and staff.

Additionally, Dr. Ferrell noted upcoming events, including the Fairview Heights gym dedication on January 17 at 2:00 p.m., and the Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration over the weekend. He also reminded everyone that the school year's halfway point is January 16, with a workday scheduled for January 17.

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

On a motion by Daryl Mason, seconded by Bobby Sue Ormsby, the board voted unanimously to go into closed session at 6:47 p.m.

The board returned from closed session at 7:15 p.m.

Personnel Report

Dr. Tesha Isler presented the personnel report, and the addendum.

On a motion by Jerry Ethridge, seconded by Daryl Mason, the board voted unanimously to approve the personnel report and addendum as presented.

Adjournment

There being no further business, on a motion by Scotty Baldwin, seconded by Bobby Sue Ormsby, Chairman Satterfield adjourned the meeting at 7:16 p.m.