CASWELL COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION MINUTES
February 10, 2025

The Caswell County Board of Education met in regular session on Monday, February 10, 2025, at 9:00 a.m. in the Administration Building of Caswell County Schools. Members present: Chairman Mel Battle, Vice Chair Joel Lillard, Vennie Beggarly, Lisa Johnson-Knight, Nicole McGhee, and Trudy Blackwell. Nicole Smith was absent. Others present include Superintendent JoAnna Gwynn, Austin Morris, David Useche, and Board Attorney Ron Bradsher. Connie Kimrey recorded the minutes. (*Note: Others may have been present but did not sign the roster or names were not legible*).

I. A. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Chair Mel Battle. Prior to the moment of silence, Chair Mel Battle acknowledged the recent loss of Nicole Smith's mother who passed away. A moment of silence was observed, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

I. B. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Trudy Blackwell moved, seconded by Lisa Johnson-Knight, to approve the minutes of the January 27, 2025, regular meeting, January 27, 2025 work session meeting and February 3, 2025 listening tour minutes as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

I. C. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

JoAnna Gwynn recommended approval of agenda as presented. Vennie Beggarly moved, seconded by Lisa Johnson-Knight, to approve the agenda as presented with addition of New Business, #5 – Wireless Devices recommended by Mel Battle. The motion carried unanimously.

I. D. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Superintendent JoAnna Gwynn recognized the following:

Deborah Roberson, BYSHS
Brian Stevens, BYSHS
Leslie Crowe, NL Dillard Middle
Latonga Trent, NL Dillard Middle
Hannah Chambers, North Elementary
Courtney Smith, North Elementary
William Hughes, South Elementary
Heather Norris, South Elementary

Board of Education recognitions from the North Carolina School Boards Association were made for the following:

Mel Battle, Bronze
Joel Lillard, Certificate of Merit
Nicole Smith, Certificate of Merit
Trudy Blackwell, Certificate of Achievement
Vennie Beggarly, Certificate of Advanced Achievement

I. E. PUBLIC COMMENTS

None at this time.

II. REPORTS

None at this time.

III. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- Beginning Teacher Support Plan

  Ms. Gwynn reviewed the plan.

  Mel Battle questioned who will work with teachers once the contract expires with Angela Martin. Austin Morris shared that we have the option to renew or extend the contract; however, if that does not occur that Tiffany Ramos (UNCG) or himself will work with teachers.

  Ms. Gwynn recommended approval of the Beginning Teacher Support Plan as presented. Trudy Blackwell moved, seconded by Nicole McGhee. The motion carried unanimously.

- 2025-2026 School Calendar

  Mel Battle shared the 25/26 school calendar was approved at the last meeting. Since that meeting a waiver has been filed by Representative Renee Price to coincide with the community college dates and will now go to the General Assembly.

  Also, it was shared that graduation for Bartlett Yancey Senior High School is scheduled for a Friday night. Mr. Battle wanted to make sure all members were aware as it was not brought to the board's attention.

  Ms. Gwynn shared that in talking with Mr. Stokes that having the graduation on Friday night would not have staff working past their regular hours and would be able to utilize the three teacher workdays. He noted that parents will be notified well in advance and will allow more time for post-graduation evening activities.

  Vennie Beggarly questioned the hours as staff will still be asked to work longer than normal on Friday as opposed to being there on Saturday. Concerns shared included the safety of students who may travel out of town after graduation with it being on a Friday night.

Trudy Blackwell shared that if the calendar committee has discussed with all involved and recommended it and all were good with it that she didn't see it as being an issue. Vennie Beggarly shared she was on the calendar committee and that it was not discussed. Mel Battle shared that many years ago it was held on a Friday night but was moved for various reasons and there are pros and cons to either date. The important thing is to make sure all parties are made aware of the change.

Ms. Gwynn shared that the calendar needs to be agreed upon as Infinite Campus needs dates by February 21st. The board was not in favor of changing it at this time until more information is received from the General Assembly. If a change occurs, the board may bring it back up for review for a vote to move the dates on the calendar and it was shared that this will affect other counties as well. Infinite Campus is statewide so changes will have to be adjusted pending a change at that time.

IV. NEW BUSINESS

1. Consent Agenda
   JoAnna Gwynn recommended approval of the consent agenda as presented. Trudy Blackwell moved, seconded by Nicole McGhee. The motion carried unanimously.

   Requests for Transfer

Byers, Levi	Caswell	to	Orange (1st)
Parker, Audrey	Caswell	to	Orange (3rd)

   Fundraising Request
   Oakwood Elementary – Jr BETA Club = Feb. 11th – 14th Candy Sale

2. Resolutions

   Mel Battle read aloud the resolution for Mabel Copeland. Trudy Blackwell moved, seconded by Joel Lillard. The motion carried unanimously.

   Trudy Blackwell read aloud the resolution for Mary Graves. Joel Lillard moved, seconded by Vennie Beggarly. The motion carried unanimously.

Resolution in Memorial and Appreciation of the Life of
Mabel Lucille Rainey Copeland

WHEREAS, Mabel Lucille Rainey Copeland, was born on November 19, 1932, and resided in Blanch, North Carolina for a majority of her life and currently resided in Greensboro, North Carolina, until the time of her death on January 22, 2025, and

WHEREAS, Mabel Copeland, was a faithful and loving mother, grandmother, great grandmother, sister, and friend and her family's welfare was her major and constant concern; and

WHEREAS, Mabel Copeland, was hired with Caswell County Schools in September of 1966 and served as a library aide and later as a teacher assistant and worked at Highrock Elementary and Oakwood Elementary. She served faithfully for 28 years and retired in July, 1994; and

WHEREAS, Mabel Copeland's professionalism and attention to detail in her role at Caswell County Schools as a Library Assistant and Teacher Assistant will be remembered by the countless staff members, students and individuals she impacted during her career in Caswell; and

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Caswell County Board of Education wishes to honor the memory of Mabel Copeland and expresses its sympathy to her family by causing a copy of this Resolution to be spread upon the official minutes of the Board of Education and a copy forwarded to the family.

This the 10th day of February 2025.

Resolution in Memorial and Appreciation of the Life of
Mary Fannie Henderson Graves

WHEREAS, Mary Henderson Graves, was born on November 17, 1940, and resided in Pelham, North Carolina, until the time of her death on January 25, 2025, and

WHEREAS, Mary Graves, was a faithful and loving wife, mother, sister, aunt, and friend and her family's welfare was her major and constant concern; and

WHEREAS, Mary Graves was educated in Caswell County and attended Caswell County Training School in Yanceyville. She furthered her education at Shaw University in Raleigh, North Carolina where she earned a Bachelor of Arts Degree in English and French. Mary began her career as a teacher in the Caswell County School System and after years of dedicated service, she pursued a Master's Degree in School Counseling, transitioning to the role of elementary school counselor. In this capacity, she provided numerous students with guidance and direction, fostering the healthy development of Caswell County's youth. She retired after 40 years of committed service; and

WHEREAS, Mary Graves was a devoted and active member of Red Hill Baptist Church from an early age. She served on various committees and auxiliaries including the Usher

Board, Culinary Committee, Missionary Circle, Church Clerk, Original By-Law Committee, Vacation Bible School Director, Scholarship Committee, and the Cedar Grove Association. Her dedication continued until her health declined; and

WHEREAS, Mary Graves's professionalism and attention to detail in her role at Caswell County Schools will be remembered by the countless staff members, students and individuals she impacted during her career in Caswell; and

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Caswell County Board of Education wishes to honor the memory of Mary Graves and expresses its sympathy to her family by causing a copy of this Resolution to be spread upon the official minutes of the Board of Education and a copy forwarded to the family.

This the 10th day of February 2025.

3. Metal Detectors

Joel Lillard asked for this to be discussed sharing that other school districts have made addendums to their policies. He expressed concern that some of our schools are not using the metal detectors noting a lot of money was spent for us not to have a procedure that is being consistently used.

Discussion took place regarding various schools and locations of the metal detectors.

Mel Battle directed JoAnna Gwynn to look at school by school and see what all are doing and report back to the board and review the policies of surrounding districts that were shared and bring something back for the board to review.

4. Board of Education Listening Tours

Discussion took place on the first tour which was held at NL Dillard on February 3, 2025. Concerns were shared with 60% of students on a third-grade reading level. This was very disturbing and questioned why students are being promoted if they are not deserving. Are we truly doing the students justice to promote if they are not deserving. Ms. Gwynn shared that reading is important and adopting a curriculum that everyone can use is crucial. She felt that with the systems and directors currently in place we will begin to see gains but noted there are deficits and it will take time.

Other concerns included the stability noting that there have been various changes in administration and no consistency. Other concerns including the struggle to find afterschool tutors. Ms. Gwynn shared that the administration is working on other strategies for tutoring as well as reaching out to retirees. She shared that Title I funding is available for tutors.

Trudy Blackwell mentioned having a listening tour for parents and community stakeholders. Discussion took place and it was agreed to have a meeting on two possible nights in March at 6:00 p.m. at the Central Office Large PD Room.

5. Wireless Devices

Mel Battle discussed information he received on wireless devices. A copy was shared with all board members. He noted that we will have to see what the General Assembly decides but the suggestion is to not allow cell phones in the schools. Currently students are allowed to have them out during lunch, after school and on the bus.

Discussion took place on this topic. Lisa Johnson-Knight expressed concerns shared that having phones out at lunch prevents students from communicating with each other and they do not know how to socialize with each other.

Nicole McGhee shared we may need to be more creative in how we utilize cell phones and noted they are not going away.

The main issue currently is that the cell phone policy is not being enforced. There are guidelines that the board has approved; however, if the policy is not being enforced it is doing no good. The same applies for teachers noting they should not be on their phone for personal use and they should be setting the example. It was suggested that perhaps a survey to staff regarding the cell phone policy be done to gain input on what will help teachers with the issues they are having. Joel Lillard shared that the recent policy was made based on principal input but felt that 90% of our staff are not happy with the decision.

Mel Battle shared that the decision is with the general assembly but wanted board members to be aware of this.

David Useche shared that teachers use their cell phones frequently for their job noting that many apps are loaded on their phone that they use in the classroom.

V. SUPERINTENDENT UPDATES

Ms. Gwynn shared updates on the following:

- Kindergarten Registration
  Joel Lillard questioned if students miss three days how will this factor in to their hours of instructional time.
- Bartlett Yancey Sr. High School has decided to explore another location for the prom and shared it will be held at the Hodges venue on Allison Road. An insurance charge of $300 will be secured by the high school. It was shared the cost for the facility was waived so there is no fee for using this venue. No price increase

will be incurred for students who attend the prom. Principal Lance Stokes met with Finance Director Brook Underwood to discuss the insurance.

- Summer Learning will be held at Oakwood Elementary.
- Emily Reagan has been accepted into the Principal Fellows Program with UNC.

VI. ATTORNEYS REPORT

None.

VII. BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

- All board members expressed they enjoyed the first listening tour and felt it was very informative. Trudy Blackwell shared she would like to continue to ask parents to encourage their children to read. Nicole McGhee shared she wants to emphasize the positive and is still learning as a new board member and looks forward to gathering more information and is here to listen to concerns to make our system grow. Joel Lillard gave compliments to the two cafeteria staff workers at North Elementary last week who fed a large number as two employees were out sick. He happened to have lunch at school that day and noted they did a phenomenal job. Mel Batter shared that the tour has been enlightening and shared that no matter how small a concern is, it is important to that individual to have time for someone to stop and listen. Lisa Johnson-Knight shared that she visited Stoney Creek and enjoyed the science Fridays and shared the principal gave her a tour of the school. She also had lunch at Oakwood and enjoyed talking with the teachers. Several shared they are looking forward to the listening tours. Vennie Beggarly shared she felt the tours are a good idea and is showing our staff that the board really cares. She also shared that the local library offers a very good reading program and hoped that this is shared with our parents. Trudy Blackwell shared she attended a basketball game at the high school and noted it was a thriller. She gave a shout out to the team and coach and encouraged all to come out and support the team.

VIII. CLOSED SESSION

Joel Lillard made a motion to go into closed session for the purpose of considering a personnel action that involves an officer or employee of this Board (NC General Statute 143-318.11(a)(6); and for the purpose of discussing information that is privileged, confidential or not a public record (NC General Statute 143-318.11(a)(1) and to confer with legal counsel. Vennie Beggarly seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

IX. OPEN SESSION

Vennie Beggarly made a motion to return to open session. Joel Lillard seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

X. PERSONNEL LISTING

Ms. Gwynn recommended approval of the personnel listing as presented. Joel Lillard moved, seconded by Lisa Johnson-Knight , to approve the personnel listing as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

Resignations	
Bartlett Yancey Sr. High School	Jalen Baskerville, PE Teacher = Eff. 3/5/25
NL Dillard Middle School	Timothy Terry, Bus Driver = Eff. 1/31/25
Tutors / Substitutes	
	Melissa Walls = Sub. Teacher = Eff. 2/17/25
	Karen Self = Sub. Teacher = Eff. 2/17/25

A recess was taken at 11:40 a.m. The board visited Stoney Creek Elementary for lunch. They reconvened at 1:05 p.m.

XI. CLOSED SESSION

Trudy Blackwell made a motion to go into closed session for the purpose of considering a personnel action that involves an officer or employee of this Board (NC General Statute 143-318.11(a)(6); and for the purpose of discussing information that is privileged, confidential or not a public record (NC General Statute 143-318.11(a)(1) and to confer with legal counsel. Vennie Beggarly seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

XII. OPEN SESSION

Vennie Beggarly made a motion to return to open session. Trudy Blackwell seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

The board agreed to set up a listening tour for parents and community stakeholders on March 17, 2025 at 6:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. at the Central Office in the Large PD Room. A work session will be planned for March 24, 2025 at 3:30 p.m. to discuss feedback from all the listening tours.

Connie Kimrey was asked to make sure new board members are receiving information from the NCSBA.

Joel Lillard questioned the status on the federal funding and if anything will be affected.

Ms. Gwynn shared information regarding a letter being sent out to parents; however, it was suggested that the letter not be sent at this time.

Ms. Gwynn shared if the impending weather occurs tomorrow she would like to use a remote learning day and if continued through Wednesday, the February 19th optional workday will be used.

Joel Lillard moved, seconded by Vennie Beggarly, to approve the revised calendar dates as mentioned if needed based on inclement weather. The motion carried unanimously.

Joel Lillard asked that Ms. Gwynn get with Brook Underwood, Finance Director, to pull teacher supplements from surrounding counties and three comparable counties and have this information when she meets with the Interim County Manager on Tuesday. Mel Battle suggested to reach out to Ramona at the NCSBA also.

XIII. ADJOURN

Joel Lillard moved to adjourn the meeting at 2:00 p.m., Lisa Johnson-Knight seconded the motion and it carried unanimously. The motion carried unanimously.

The next regular meeting of the Board of Education will be held on February 24, 2025 at 5:30 p.m. in the Caswell County Schools Administration Building.

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Mel O. Battle
Chairman

JoAnna Gwynn
Superintendent