

**SOUTHEASTERN COOPERATIVE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS JOINT
BOARD MEETING MINUTES
MARCH 26, 2025**

The SECEP Joint Board ("Board") convened on March 26, 2025, at 12:30 pm, at the SECEP Administrative office and virtually. Attending the meeting were:

JOINT BOARD MEMBERS:

Mr. Norman Pool	Chesapeake City Public Schools	Alternate
Mr. Robert Holt	Franklin City Public Schools	Chairman
Mr. John Collick	Isle of Wight County Schools	
Ms. Tanya Bhasin*	Norfolk Public Schools	
Ms. Cassandra Hobbs*	Southampton County Public Schools	
Dr. Dawn Brittingham*	Suffolk Public Schools	
Ms. Kimberly Melnyk	Virginia Beach City Public Schools	Vice-Chair

SUPERINTENDENTS:

Ms. Diane Edwards	Chesapeake City Public Schools	Designee
Dr. Theo Cramer	Isle of Wight County Schools	
Dr. Sharon Byrdsong	Norfolk Public Schools	
Dr. Elie Bracy	Portsmouth Public Schools	
Dr. John Gordon	Suffolk Public Schools	
Dr. Donald Robertson	Virginia Beach City Public Schools	Executive Officer

SECEP STAFF:

Ms. Laura Armstrong	Executive Director
Dr. Angel Grant	Human Resources Generalist
Dr. Timothy Bostic	Assistant Director of Curriculum, Instruction & PD
Dr. Christian Nierman	Assistant Director of Programs
Dr. Dwana White	Director of Human Resources
Ms. Edna Felton	Finance Coordinator

(*) Virtual

CALL TO ORDER:

Mr. Holt, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 12:30 pm.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

The January 29, 2024, minutes were approved as written.

COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC:

None.

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE OFFICER:

Program Evaluation: This evaluation aims to identify and highlight best practices while addressing areas needing improvement. The review is expected to be completed by the end of the school year, with findings to be presented to the board in September.

Division Fees: Superintendents designated a representative from each division to participate in the work group to examine division fees charged to SECEP. The goal is to ensure consistency and equity in cost-sharing. Recommendations will be presented at the September board meeting.

Legal Counsel: Legal representation of SECEP was also discussed. The superintendents directed Mrs. Armstrong to contact the Norfolk City Attorney's Office to explore developing a Memorandum of Understanding to provide legal consultation for routine matters to reduce reliance on external legal counsel.

Budget Proposal: The FY 26 budget proposal includes a 4.5% salary increase for SECEP employees to align with Norfolk Public Schools, the fiscal agent. Superintendents of all seven divisions have already finalized budgets and can absorb the increased fees needed to fund this raise. The superintendents recommend revising the proposed budget to freeze rates and reduce the salary increase. While this adjustment will not fully match Norfolk's raise, it will remain higher than the salary increases provided by other participating divisions.

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR:

Program Update: Events and action steps supporting strategic goals were highlighted. A monthly newsletter celebrating staff and student achievements was launched in February. Dr. Robert's tour of SECEP classroom visits was recognized. SECEP celebrated Read Across America by engaging students in activities such as story character dress-up day, inviting guest readers into classrooms, and providing books for students to take home. SECEP students in Suffolk and Western Tidewater held a science fair about how scientists learn about the world. Human Resources was successful in recruiting teacher assistants in hard-to-staff areas. Ongoing professional development has been offered virtually and in person by the strategic plan.

Enrollment and Finance Reports: No discussion.

Proposed FY 2026 Budget: A 1.03% decrease in the operating budget was proposed. Budget development priorities include Resources to continue implementing the strategic plan, improved outcomes on accountability measures, equity in resource allocation, and increased support in the human resources and finance departments. Rate increases and raises were discussed. As the superintendents' committee recommended, the board determined that the proposed budget will be revised based on priorities discussed at the meeting. A special call meeting will be held in April to review the revisions.

JOINT BOARD ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION:

Long Term Project Funds: Virginia Beach City Public Schools requested the use of \$3.5 million of the \$5.4 million fund balance to help cover the costs for students to attend SECEP for SY 2025-2026. A motion to approve the request was made by Mr. Pool and seconded by Dr. Brittingham. The motion carried. (Ayes 5, Nays 0, Abstentions 1).

Hiring Policy: SECEP proposed and updated a hiring policy to grant the Executive Director hiring authority for teachers and classified employees between meetings. The Superintendents'

committee will approve administrative hires. Employee actions will be included in the personnel report.

Deputy Clerk: Dr. Angel Grant will be Deputy Clerk of the Board. The meeting adjourned at 1:50 PM.

Respectfully Submitted

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Laura W. Armstrong".

Laura W. Armstrong
Clerk of the Board

APPROVED

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Mr. Robert Holt".

Mr. Robert Holt
Chairman