



VIRGINIA BEACH CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS CHARTING THE COURSE

School Board Services

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Carolyn D. Weems, Vice Chair
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At-Large

Dr. Alveta J. Green
District 4

Kimberly A. Melnyk
District 2

Melinda J. Rogers
District 5

Donald E. Robertson Jr., Ph.D., Superintendent

School Board Regular Meeting MINUTES **Tuesday, September 23, 2025**

School Administration Building #6, Municipal Center
2512 George Mason Drive
P.O. Box 6038
Virginia Beach, VA 23456
(757) 263-1000

1. **Administrative, Informal, and Workshop:** Chair Brown convened the Administrative, Informal, and Workshop session at 3:30 p.m. on the 23rd day of September 2025. In addition to Superintendent Robertson, the following School Board Members were present in the School Administration Building #6, School Board Chamber: Chair Brown, Vice Chair Weems, Mr. Bohensiel, Mr. Callan, Mr. Cummings, Ms. Dwyer, Ms. Felton, Dr. Green, Ms. Melnyk, and Ms. Rogers. Mr. Culpepper was not in attendance.
 - A. **School Board Administrative Matters and Reports:** Chair Brown mentioned the October sign-up sheets for the annual VSBA Convention, one-to-one meetings with Superintendent Robertson and school visits with Ms. Rogers mentioned transportation challenges and the Zum Bus App. Dr. Green mentioned school safety plans; safety and security for School Board Meetings. Ms. Weems mentioned the Region 2 Recovery School Governing Board meeting last week. There will be upcoming visits scheduled for the Harbor Hope Center; Ms. Weems shared a sign-up sheet with the School Board Members. Ms. Felton mention the Air Show and STEM events; thanked all members and staff who helped at the event.
 - B. **Tri-Campus Additions Update:** Melisa Ingram, executive director, Office of Facilities Services, presented the School Board an update on CIP 1-028 Tri-Campus Additions, regarding the additions at Diamond Springs and Newtown Elementary Schools, for the reconfiguration of the Tri-Campus schools from three schools to two schools. The presentation outlined that Diamond Springs ES received a 7,400 square foot addition, bringing its total size to 105,200 square feet and accommodating 550 students (projected) in grades PK-1. The preliminary estimated cost for this addition was between \$6 million and \$7 million. Newtown ES received a larger addition of 22,300 square feet, resulting in a total size of 112,900 square feet and a projected enrollment of 740 students in grades 2-5, with an estimated cost ranging from \$16 million to \$18 million.

The estimated project timeline included planning and design from July to November 2025, followed by finalization of construction drawings through February 2026. The construction bidding process was scheduled for March 2026, with actual construction planned from June 2026 to December 2027. The move-in date for the new additions was projected for August 2028, aligning with the start of the 2028/29 school year, though earlier occupancy during winter break (December 2027-Janauary 2028) or spring break (April 2028) was considered possible.

After the presentation, a discussion followed with questions and comments regarding space at Newtown ES, bathroom space; rendered images of schools, additional classrooms, support spaces,

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restrooms; cost of projects; playground equipment; portables; keeping the B.F. Williams name in some capacity, and a suggestion of community input regarding retaining the name.

- C. Active Student Meal Debt: Rachel Amato, director, Office of Food Services, presented the School Board information regarding the challenges with unpaid student meal debt and the proposed action plans. The presentation outlined the district's commitment to protecting students' educational experiences, emphasizing that no student was denied a hot meal regardless of debt status. School board employees were prohibited from taking away meals, requiring students to perform chores, or identifying students with meal debt. All communications regarding meal debt were directed to parents, and students were not excluded from extracurricular activities due to unpaid meal balances, in accordance with Code of Virginia § 22.1-79.7. The total active student meal debt for the 2025/2026 school year amounted to \$258,041.24.

It was reported that over 21,600 students attended 38 Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) schools, where all received no-cost meals. Additionally, 13,600 students at non-CEP sites qualified for free and reduced-price meals, with the state waiving reduced-price meal charges for the year. As a result, more than half of the student population received no-cost meals.

Less than half of the student population was eligible to accrue meal debt, primarily consisting of families who either did not qualify for free or reduced meals or had not applied for benefits. Unpaid meal balances remained on student accounts and followed students as they transferred between schools. The Office of Food Services offered payment plans to families with excessive balances and accepted payments via debit/credit, cash, or check.

The district adhered to strict USDA regulations regarding unpaid meal charges and did not use food service funds to pay off student meal debt. Donations were accepted to help address negative balances, which could be sent to the city for collections if accounts became inactive due to graduation or transfers. The presentation also highlighted efforts to strengthen connections with families and the community through multi-layered communications and engagement initiatives. Families were reminded that meal benefit applications were confidential and required annually, with carryover eligibility expiring on October 8, 2025.

After the presentation, a discussion followed with questions and comments regarding completing forms for reduced and free food; communication with families regarding outstanding balances; collections by the City; process for making payments to students account; SchoolCafe application; student confidentiality; federal guidelines; donations for outstanding student balances; amount of total outstanding meal debt; CEP schools; food insecurity; and the Beach Bags program.

- D. Gifted Education in VBCPS: Crystal Wilkerson, Ed.D., director, Office of K-12 & Gifted Programs, provided the School Board information about Gifted Education in VBCPS. The presentation began by outlining the purpose, which was to review the gifted identification process, examine division-wide general intellectual aptitude (GIA) data, explain instructional approaches, highlight increased communication efforts, and discuss next steps for program enhancement.

The presentation referenced Virginia Code 8VAC20-40-60A.1, emphasizing that gifted student identification required annual screening, referrals from multiple sources, use of at least three different measures, review by a qualified team, notification of decisions, and provision of differentiated instruction by trained staff. VBCPS conducted universal screening for giftedness in grades 2 and 5. The

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application process incorporated quantitative and qualitative components, including teacher and Gifted Resource Teacher (GRT) information, student interviews (grades 6–12), academic performance, and standardized test scores.

Gifted services in VBCPS included talent development for grades K–2, and general intellectual aptitude and advanced learning opportunities for grades 3–12. Resource cluster models were implemented at elementary, middle, and high school levels. The presentation described the resource cluster models for elementary, middle, and high schools, noting that enrichment, extension, and advanced courses were provided. Gifted dance and visual arts programs were available for grades 3–8.

A review of data for grades 3–12 included demographic breakdowns and percentages of gifted students in various programs, such as home schools, Old Donation School, and the Plaza MYP Program. It was noted that, of the 347 students attending MYP, 88% were identified as GIA. The presentation outlined next steps, which included professional learning for all staff, in-depth training for gifted cluster teachers, and collaborative learning walks involving GRTs, cluster teachers, and Old Donation School staff.

After the presentation, a discussion followed with questions and comments regarding students taking a language in sixth grade; exploratory courses; gifted choices in high school; AP classes, weighted courses, and grade point average; transportation costs for programs; applications to the art program; differentiate instruction; funding for gifted programs; services for all gifted students; application components; cluster model; academies; dance and visual arts; percentages of gifted students; and teachers with gifted endorsements.

- E. Forecast of Regular School Board Meeting Agenda Topics: Second Quarter 2025-26 (October, November, December): Superintendent Robertson presented the School Board with the forecast of agenda topics to be presented at School Board meetings during the second quarter (October, November and December) of the 2025-2026 school year. The forecast is a planning tool for the School Board and is subject to change. It was noted that the following presentation needed to be added – Middle School Dual Language Immersion Recommendation (October 28 and November 10). A suggestion was made to receive information/feedback on the streaming of committee meetings and expand to other platforms.

2. **Closed Session:** There was no Closed Session during the Administrative, Informal, and Workshop session.
3. **School Board Recess:**
Chair Brown adjourned the Administrative, Informal, and Workshop session at 5:22 p.m.
4. **Formal Meeting (School Administration Building #6 – School Board Room) 6:00 p.m.**
5. **Call to Order and Roll Call:** Chair Brown convened the meeting of the School Board at the School Administration Building #6, School Board Chamber at 6:00 p.m. on the 23rd day of September 2025. In addition to Superintendent Robertson, the following School Board Members were present in the School Administration Building #6, School Board Chamber: Chair Brown, Vice Chair Weems, Mr. Bohlenstiel, Mr. Callan, Mr. Cummings, Ms. Dwyer, Ms. Felton, Dr. Green, Ms. Melnyk, and Ms. Rogers.
Mr. Culpepper was not in attendance.
6. **Moment of Silence followed by the Pledge of Allegiance:** After the Pledge of Allegiance, the Salem High School, Visual and Performing Arts Academy Vox Harmonia Ensemble.
7. **Student, Employee and Public Awards and Recognition**
 - A. School Resource Officer recognition – Kellam High School and Ocean Lakes High School: The Board recognized School Resource Officers Christopher Crescenzi (Kellam High School) and Cameron Kolmer (Ocean Lakes High School) for their swift actions in assisting a student in crisis, resulting in

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life-saving intervention and support. The Board commended the officers and supporting police units for their dedication and compassion in ensuring student safety.

8. **Adoption of the Agenda:** Chair Brown called for any modifications to the agenda as presented. Vice Chair Weems made the following modification – to move for the Consent Agenda, Item #14C – Budget Calendar to Action, Item #15B, to discuss in more detail. Without further modifications, Chair Brown called for a motion to approve the agenda as presented and modified. Mr. Cummings made the motion, seconded by Mr. Callan. Without discussion, Chair Brown called for a vote. The School Board Clerk announced there were ten (10) ayes in favor of the motion to approve the agenda as presented and modified: Chair Brown, Vice Chair Weems, Mr. Bohensiel, Mr. Callan, Mr. Cummings, Ms. Dwyer, Ms. Felton, Dr. Green, Ms. Melnyk, and Ms. Rogers. The motion passed, 10-0-0.
9. **Superintendent's Report** (second monthly meeting) **and recognitions** (first and second monthly meetings):
Superintendent's Report: Superintendent Robertson shared the following information: 1) The district welcomed about 400 new educators at orientation, highlighting their enthusiasm for joining Virginia Beach City Public Schools; 2) Over 7,000 attended the Back-to-School Care Fair, with significant community and partner support; thousands of backpacks, hundreds of vision screenings, vaccinations, and haircuts were provided. BayPort Credit Union was acknowledged as the platinum sponsor, and the event was hosted by the Office of Family and Community Engagement and the Virginia Beach Education Foundation; 3) The first day of school was energetic, with board members actively participating and school leaders setting expectations. New students at Bayside Middle School received an orientation and building tour; and 4) The annual PTA Leadership Training Institute and Volunteer Kickoff was held September 10, offering training and networking for PTA leaders and volunteers. The Superintendent thanked Citywide PTA President Tara Campbell and the Office of Family and Community Engagement for their support of parents and volunteers.
10. **Approval of Meeting Minutes**
 - A. August 27, 2025 Special School Board Meeting: Chair Brown called for any modifications to the August 27, 2025 special School Board Meeting minutes as presented. Hearing none, Chair Brown called for a motion to approve the August 27, 2025 minutes as presented. Ms. Dwyer made the motion, seconded by Mr. Cummings. Without discussion, Chair Brown called for a vote. The School Board Clerk announced there were ten (10) ayes in favor of the motion to approve the August 27, 2025 minutes as presented: Chair Brown, Vice Chair Weems, Mr. Bohensiel, Mr. Callan, Mr. Cummings, Ms. Dwyer, Ms. Felton, Dr. Green, Ms. Melnyk, and Ms. Rogers. The motion passed, 10-0-0.
 - B. September 9, 2025 Regular School Board Meeting: Chair Brown called for any modifications to the September 9, 2025, regular School Board Meeting minutes as presented. Hearing none, Chair Brown called for a motion to approve the September 9, 2025, minutes as presented. Ms. Dwyer made the motion, seconded by Mr. Callan. Without discussion, Chair Brown called for a vote. The School Board Clerk announced there were ten (10) ayes in favor of the motion to approve the September 9, 2025, minutes as presented: Chair Brown, Vice Chair Weems, Mr. Bohensiel, Mr. Callan, Mr. Cummings, Ms. Dwyer, Ms. Felton, Dr. Green, Ms. Melnyk, and Ms. Rogers. The motion passed, 10-0-0.
11. **Public Comments (until 8:00 p.m.)**

There were eight (8) in-person speakers (including two (2) student speakers). The topics included Dual Language Immersion Program; gifted classes and gifted education; DEI; ODS; gifted education for all students; school safety and safety training; healthcare; Open Enrollment; increased cost of premiums; budget; costs of a new school; partnerships; and CIP wants and needs.

The Public Comments concluded at 6:40 p.m.

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12. Information

- A. Interim Financial Statements – June (unaudited); July and August 2025: Daniel Hopkins, director, Office of Business Services provided the School Board information on the interim financial statements. The interim presentation reviewed key aspects of the June financial statements. Revenues over budget were noted as positive, while expenditures were kept under budget. State revenue, comprising 47% of total funds, was received in scheduled installments, with some allocations starting later in the year. Sales tax collections affected State Basic Aid based on the Composite Index. Federal revenue timing remained unpredictable, and local revenue was transferred monthly by the City Treasurer. Other revenue sources were minor and variable. Most expenditures were payroll and benefits, distributed evenly, with year-end closing completed by August 15 to allow for accruals.

For the fiscal year ending June 30, 2025, actual revenues exceeded the budget by approximately \$10.7 million, driven by favorable results from state, federal, and other sources. Expenditures were favorable across all categories, leaving an unspent balance of \$27.8 million. After accounting for all adjustments and reversions, approximately \$38.1 million reversion back to the City. The school division's share of the revenue sharing surplus was about \$7.5 million. Budget staff began evaluating future uses for these funds, to be discussed at the October 14th School Board meeting. All figures are unaudited and subject to change. Interim statements for July and August were presented as required.

After the presentation, a discussion followed with questions and comments regarding challenges in budget planning; timeline for budget; budget amendments; and funds for compensation.

- B. Staffing Up for Success: 2025-2026 Opening of School Update: James S. Avila, Ed.D., coordinator of recruitment and retention, provided the School Board information on current first day of school vacancy totals compared to prior years, Human Resources' ongoing hiring efforts, and employee participation in the Tuition-Free Program, highlighting both improved staffing readiness and areas needing continued attention. The presentation reviewed instructional vacancies, noting that the total number had decreased over the past three years, with 14 vacancies reported for 2025-2026 compared to 25 in 2024-2025 and 36 in 2023-2024. These vacancies were distributed across elementary, middle, and high schools.

Special education vacancies were also addressed, with 13 positions open for 2025-2026, primarily at the elementary level[1](L3). The report covered non-instructional vacancies, indicating 35 full-time positions remained unfilled for 2025-2026, slightly down from the previous year. These included roles in elementary, middle, and high schools.

The presentation highlighted operational support roles, such as Custodian I, Cafeteria Assistant, and Transportation staff. Custodian I vacancies remained steady at 29, while Cafeteria Assistant vacancies dropped significantly from 55 in 2024-2025 to 21 in 2025-2026. Transportation roles showed a reduction in bus driver vacancies from 25 to 7, with bus assistant and trainee positions also reported. Additionally, the tuition-free program was summarized, showing growth in both employee and student participation over three years, with 116 employees and 159 students involved in 2025-2026.

After the presentation, a discussion followed with questions and comments regarding instructional and non-instructional vacancies; Special Education teachers; Tuition-Free Program; recruiting efforts; bus assistants; marketing campaign; background checks for bus drivers; and provisionally licensed teachers.

- 13. Return to public comments if needed:** As noted under Agenda Item #11, the Public Comments concluded at 6:40 p.m.

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14. Consent Agenda: Chair Brown read the following items on the Consent Agenda:

- A. Policy Review Committee (PRC) Recommendations: Recommended that the School Board approve recommendations regarding the amendment of certain policies as recommended by the Policy Review Committee at its August 27, 2025 meeting.
 - 1. Policy 3-23 Sale/Exchange/Lease/Disposal of Property: The PRC recommends minor formatting changes and adding language to align with other recent changes made to other policies, as well as to clarify the procedures outlined in this policy.
 - 2. Policy 3-25 Trust Funds: There are no recommended changes to this policy; it is being reviewed to conform to the 5-year review requirement.
 - 2. Policy 3-26 Investments: The PRC recommends updating the legal references.
 - 3. Policy 3-42 Financial Record Keeping of Individual School Funds: The PRC recommends updating the legal references.
 - 4. Policy 7-44 Awards to Students: The PRC recommends removing the Editor's Note to align with changes made to other policies.
- B. 403(b) Oversight Committee Membership: Recommended that the School Board approve the recommendation to add a Retiree Representative to the 403(b) Oversight Committee. The recommended retiree representative is Mr. Scott Zellner.
- C. Budget Calendar:
Note, item was moved to Action during the Adoption of the Agenda. See Agenda Item #8.

After reading the items on the Consent Agenda, Chair Brown asked if there were any objections to voting on the Consent Agenda as presented. Hearing none, Chair Brown called for a motion to approve the Consent Agenda as presented. Ms. Dwyer made the motion, seconded by Vice Chair Weems. Chair Brown called for a vote. The School Board Clerk announced there were ten (10) ayes in favor of the motion to approve the Consent Agenda as presented: Chair Brown, Vice Chair Weems, Mr. Bohensiel, Mr. Callan, Mr. Cummings, Ms. Dwyer, Ms. Felton, Dr. Green, Ms. Melnyk, and Ms. Rogers. The motion passed, 10-0-0.

15. Action

- A. Personnel Report / Administrative Appointments: Chair Brown called for a motion to approve the September 23, 2025 personnel report and administrative appointments. Ms. Dwyer made the motion, seconded by Ms. Rogers, that the School Board approve the appointments, and the acceptance of the resignations, retirements and other employment actions as listed on the September 23, 2025 personnel report along with the administrative appointment as recommended by the Superintendent. Without discussion, Chair Brown called for a vote. The School Board Clerk announced there were ten (10) ayes in favor of the motion to approve the September 23, 2025 personnel report and administrative appointments: Chair Brown, Vice Chair Weems, Mr. Bohensiel, Mr. Callan, Mr. Cummings, Ms. Dwyer, Ms. Felton, Dr. Green, Ms. Melnyk, and Ms. Rogers. The motion passed, 10-0-0.

Superintendent Robertson mentioned the following appointments: **Aaron F. Arnold**, work-based learning specialist, as coordinator, work-based learning in the Office of Technical and Career Education; and **Frederick E. Franks**, division chief, Naval Criminal Investigative Service (NCIS), as coordinator, security and safe schools, in the Office of Security and Emergency Management.

- B. Budget Calendar: Note, item was moved from Consent during the Adoption of the Agenda. See Agenda Item #8. Chair Brown called for a motion to accept the budget calendar as presented. Mr. Cummings made the motion, seconded by Ms. Dwyer. Vice Chair Weems made a substitute motion to remove the budget workshop #3 on January 20 and budget workshop #9 on March 17. Ms. Melnyk seconded the

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substitute motion. A discussion followed regarding the substitute motion; number of budget meetings; engagement with the School Board to work on the budget; communicating with the School Board and public on the budget; challenging decisions to make; suggestion of a budget retreat; budget development; need time to make decisions on the budget; operational efficiency; and extra workshops planned into the budget calendar.

Vice Chair Weems amended the substitute motion to leave the dates of January 20 and March 17 on the budget calendar to be used tentatively as needed. The amendment to the substitute motion was seconded by Ms. Melnyk. There was a brief discussion regarding the budget meetings and the amount of information presented.

Without further discussion, Chair Brown called for a vote on the amended substitute motion to keep January 20 and March 17 on the calendar as special meetings to be determined or as needed. The School Board Clerk announced there were ten (10) ayes in favor of the amended substitute motion: Chair Brown, Vice Chair Weems, Mr. Bohenstiel, Mr. Callan, Mr. Cummings, Ms. Dwyer, Ms. Felton, Dr. Green, Ms. Melnyk, and Ms. Rogers. The motion passed, 10-0-0.

- 16. *Committee, Organization or Board Reports:*** Ms. Rogers mentioned the Mental Health Task Force had their first meeting and discussed working on goals. Mr. Bohenstiel mentioned cafeteria meals and discipline, and spending time at B. F. Williams. Ms. Melnyk mentioned the upcoming Governor's School for the Arts and SECEP meetings, and a reminder that if the School Board wanted to attend an event at the Governor's School to contact Ms. Melnyk. Dr. Green mentioned the meeting of the Access Foundation Board and shared the great resources Access provides, including Access Coordinators at the schools. Vice Chair Weems mentioned the PRC meeting scheduled for Wednesday, September 24 at 4:00 p.m. and the Audit committee meeting scheduled for Monday, September 29 at 4:00 p.m.
- 17. *Return to Administrative, Informal, Workshop or Closed Session matters:*** None.
- 18. *Adjournment:*** Chair Brown adjourned the meeting at 7:52 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Regina M. Toneatto, Clerk of the School Board

Approved:

Kathleen J. Brown, School Board Chair