

Minutes of the Vance County Board of Education Retreat
October 22, 2025

The Vance County Board of Education met during their Board Retreat on October 22, 2025, at 10:00 a.m. at Clearview Baptist Church in Henderson NC. Board members present were Mrs. Dorothy W. Gooche, Chair, Mrs. Ayana F. Lewis, Vice-Chair, Mrs. Linda S. Cobb, Mrs. Gloria J. White, Dr. Omega T. Perry, Mr. Randy M. Oxendine, Mrs. Ruth M. Hartness. Senior staff present were Dr. Cindy Bennett, Superintendent, Ms. Chelsa Jennings, Chief Human Resources Officer, Mr. Rey Horner, Executive Director for Student Services, Mr. John Suther, Chief Finance Officer, and Dr. Destiney Ross-Putney, Chief Officer of Instruction and Innovation.

Mrs. Gooche called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. and turned the retreat over to Dr. Bennett.

Teambuilding

Mr. Oxendine had the group participate in the Willy Wonka Chocolate Factory – Cross a Chocolate River game. The game requires teamwork and creativity and can be played in 18 minutes. The required "human contact" is the collaboration and communication within the team to build the structure. Teams must use limited "marshmallow" props to cross a designated "river" (the floor) without touching the water. This exercise requires close communication and problem-solving as the team must keep the marshmallows moving and anchored.

Current Status of Schools – Accountability and Program Status

Dr. Edey Morris-Bryant and Ms. Erin Lewis from NCElevatED shared information on how Vance County Schools is receiving support. NCElevatED provides education consulting and leadership coaching, customized instructional support and school improvement and transformation. The district has received school leadership coaching, school improvement consultation, school team building, professional learning experiences, new teacher support, instructional support, science support and summer/fall leadership experiences. NC ElevatED has collaborated by providing beginning of year strategy planning meetings, monthly contacts with Dr. Ross-Putney and Dr. Crosson, presenting at the Leadership Learning Labs, worked with staff with middle school science, elementary math and science. They provide reports, reviews and updates, end of year summary reports and maintain weekly communication. Partnering with NCElevatED for the 2024-2025 school year has produced several schools to excel. VCMS exceeded growth and increased a letter grade, Pinkston Elementary exceeded growth, New Hope and Clarke Elementary Schools both met growth and Carver Elementary met growth and was top 50% for growth in NC. NC ElevatED will be working with all 16 schools for the 205-2025 school year and 4 schools has been selected for extended school improvement support.

Dr. Ross-Putney shared data on the district. 5 schools exceeded growth, 7 met growth and 4 did not meet growth. Vance is identified as a Low Performing District which means if more than 50% of its schools have received a School Performance Grade of D or F and a growth status of “Met” or “Not Met” for the reporting year. This designation is determined annually by the NC Department of Public Instruction based on a comprehensive evaluation that includes both academic achievement and student growth data.

Finance, Facilities and Future Options

Information was shared on discussing and analysis scenarios for preliminary staffing plans, enrollment, protocols, and facilities changes/modifications.

VCS vs. other Local Schools

Fiscal Year	VCS Students	Charter Students	Private Students	Homeschool Students
2026	4691	2247		
2025	4914	2112	665	504
2024	5097	2036	561	411

School Capacity Percentage

School	% at Capacity	Student Capacity	PMR 1 FY 26 w/PreK
Aycock	75.87	460	349
Carver	50.37	272	137
Clarke	65.37	589	385
Dabney	64.92	533	346
New Hope	45.70	256	117
EOY	50.75	335	170
Pinkston	75.08	329	247
EMR	69.53	512	356
LBY	52.94	313	197
Zeb Vance	70.79	428	303
VCHS	69.90	1,475	1,031
VCMS	49.36	1,319	651
VCEC	110.61	198	219
STEM	76.50	400	306
Advanced Academy	46.00	300	138
Vance Virtual Village			111

Total Cost to Keep Buildings Open

	Aycock	Carver	Clarke	Dabney	New Hope	EOY	Pinkston	EMR	LBY	Zeb
FY 25	304	308	311	314	340	346	356	360	375	380
	3,371,564	1,510,013	3,150,453	3,483,131	1,437,081	2,085,288	2,535,362	4,015,320	1,938,402	2,737,726
PMR 9	337	120	356	340	103	146	234	293	172	281
PPE	10,004	12,583	8,849	10,244	13,952	14,282	10,834	13,704	11,269	9,742

Total Utility Cost (Water, Sewer, Gas, Propane, Electric)

	Aycock	Carver	Clarke	Dabney	New Hope	EOY	Pinkston	EMR	LBY	Zeb
FY 25	304	308	311	314	340	346	356	360	375	380
	79,477	40,840	134,003	64,282	47,221	52,229	62,161	111,484	69,471	67,621
PPE	235.84	34.33	376.41	189.06	458.46	357.73	265.64	380.49	403.90	240.64

Staff Daily Rate of Pay + Benefit Cost

Department	1 Day	2 Days	3 Days	4 Days	5 Days
District-wide	42,751.07			171,004.28	213,755.35
Aycock	12,949.14			51,796.56	64,745.70
Carver	6,153.62			24,614.48	30,768.10
Clarke	15,892.04			63,568.17	79,460.21
Dabney	12,865.24			51,460.94	64,326.18
New Hope	5,889.10			23,556.40	29,445.50
EOY	7,965.72			31,862.87	39,828.58
Pinkston	12,598.99			50,395.98	62,994.97
EMR	18,047.03			72,188.13	90,235.16
LBY	8,281.86			33,127.42	41,409.28
Zeb Vance	13,101.81			52,407.24	65,509.05
VCMS	25,055.06			100,220.23	125,275.28
STEM	8,329.09			33,316.38	41,645.47
VCHS	38,851.49			155,406.98	194,257.47
VCEC	4,642.98			18,571.91	23,214.88
AA	5,206.33			20,825.32	26,031.64
V3A	3,599.99			14,399.96	17,999.95

Discipline Update

Data as of October 19, 2025 was shared on out of school suspensions. Clarke, VCMS, VCHS, EMR and Advanced Academy has a lot of suspensions. The district is working to solve behavior issues and one way is allowing the Vance County Recreation Department into the schools to work with Advance Academy students. Principals can suspend up to ten days but everything isn't suspension worthy. VCHS suspensions deal a lot with vaping and instead of suspending the student they can attend the dangers of vaping and tobacco class sponsored by the athletic association. The cell phone policy is a big problem from students at Advanced Academy but improving as the policy is regularly enforced.

	Aycock	Carver	Clarke	Dabney	EMR	EOY	LBY	Pinkston	Zeb	AA	STEM	VCEC	VCHS	VCMS
	2	3	17	1	12	1	3	2	7	46	2	2	95	117
Total # of Days	7	8	99	19	62	10	5	26	9	331	54	18	874	593

Examples of Alternative Consequences:

- VCHS is requiring students to take a course offered by the NC Athletic Association that deals with the dangers of vaping. After the course is finished, the student can print out a certificate of completion. This is in lieu of suspension.
- VCHS has suspended students for fighting and have assigned days less than 10 at home.
- Several schools are having counselors conference with students in lieu of assigning suspension days.
- Teen Court has been used in lieu of assigning suspension days.
- Mental Health referrals have been completed in lieu of suspension days.

Strategic Planning

Cabinet has met to start the 2025-2026 strategic planning revisions and updates. Review of the mission and vision and calibration of priorities were also discussed.

Succession Planning

Dr. Bennett shared that she has one year left on her contract and will notify the Board by February if she plans to retire or stay with the district. Dr. Bennett has 44 years of service with the State of North Carolina. If the Board decides to consolidate or reduction staff she is willing to stay until December 2026. There are a few staff interested in the superintendent position.

Open Discussion

Mrs. Lewis asked do principals adhere to action plans and Dr. Bennett shared that they all do by meeting with her 3 times a year to discuss end of year data and set priorities for the coming year. Mrs. Lewis also asked if MCLs are able to go into class to teach when there is a vacant position and Dr. Bennett shared that MCLS are teaching or coaching half days.

Being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 2:39 p.m.

BOARD CHAIR, DOROTHY W. GOOCHE

SECRETARY, CINDY W. BENNETT