

The Rockbridge County School Board held their regular meeting on Tuesday, December 9, 2025, at the County of Rockbridge Administration Building.

Present: Chairman Kathy Burant; Trustees Corey Berkstresser, Catie Brown, Lenna Ojure, Neil Whitmore; Superintendent Phillip Thompson and Clerk Rhonda Humphries.

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Burant called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

CHANGES TO THE AGENDA: None

STUDENT / STAFF RECOGNITION:

VSBA Media Honor Roll:

- Doug Harwood, The Rockbridge Advocate
- Scotty Dransfield, Reporter, The News-Gazette

Superintendent Thompson introduced Ms. Holly Hall, Talent Search Director, and Ms. Jennifer Bodnar, Talent Search Counselor. TRIO Talent Search is a free educational program funded by a federal grant from the US Department of Education, through Mountain Gateway Community College. TRIO refers to the original three federal programs: Upward Bound, Talent Search, and Student Support Services. Educational Talent Search is funded to serve potential first-generation college students. The goal of the program is to encourage students to graduate from high school and pursue postsecondary education. The counselors in the program work in middle and high schools in the MGCC service area including schools in Alleghany, Bath and Rockbridge Counties, the cities of Covington, Buena Vista, and Lexington. Ms. Hall stated that 729 participants are served annually, which includes 7 middle and high schools, and 4 school divisions. Talent Search provides online tutoring via Brainfuse at no cost to Talent Search students. Talent Search students are invited to participate in college visits during the school year. Talent Search has recently begun hosting a Summer Road Trip open to juniors and seniors. The 2025 Summer Road Trip had 21 participants who visited Virginia Commonwealth University, the Virginia Beach oceanfront, the Virginia Aquarium, and Old Dominion University. This trip provides an opportunity for students to gain knowledge and valuable life skills. Ms. Hall stated that there have been calls to eliminate TRIO, but stated that there has been support from both sides and that she is hopeful that the program will not be eliminated. The program has been on the table previously for elimination but it has not happened.

- Chairman Burant reflected that this program is of great value to Rockbridge County Public Schools.

CONSENT AGENDA

Upon recommendation by Chairman Burant, motion by Trustee Berkstresser, seconded by Trustee Ojure, the board approved the following items on the Consent Agenda:

- Minutes: 1) November 11, 2025 [Regular Meeting]; 2) November 13, 2025 [Joint Meeting with Rockbridge County Board of Supervisors]; 3) November 17, 2025 [Discipline Committee Hearing]; 4) December 2, 2025 [Special Meeting]
- Field Trip Requests
- Fundraiser Requests
- Application for Use of Facilities
- Appointments and Resignations

Appointments

Professional Staff

Jessica Jones, Teacher, Maury River Middle School, effective January 5, 2026
Phynely Stores, Teacher, Natural Bridge Elementary School, effective January 5, 2026

Appointments

Support Staff

Jennifer Rattigan, Teacher Assistant, Fairfield Elementary School, effective December 15, 2025
Richard Jackson, Custodian, Central Elementary School, effective December 15, 2025

Substitutes

Danny Little
Caitlyn Whitesell
Callum Hyland
Christopher Doerfler
Christy Lamb
Nicole Wyant
Tiffani Tyree

Substitute Food Service

Jennifer Shanholtz
Debra Queen

Support Staff**Resignation**

Paul Brenner, Custodian, Rockbridge County High School, resigning effective November 14, 2025

Support Staff**Retirement**

Rhonda Humphries, School Board Clerk, Central Office, retiring effective end of the 2025-2026 school year

Carolyn Johnson, Maintenance Secretary, Central Office, retiring effective end of the 2025-2026 school year

- **Business Items**

- Approved authorization to the Treasurer of Rockbridge County to pay debt service in the amount of \$554,375.00 for duly appropriated debt service funds.
- Approved appropriations for two additional electrical hookups as part of the RCHS Ball Field in the amount of \$80,000.00.
- Approved authorization of the Treasurer of Rockbridge County to pay debt service in the amount of \$329,604.38 for duly appropriated debt service funds.
- Approved the authorization of the Finance Department of Rockbridge County Public Schools to wire debt service in the amount of \$344,372.00 for duly appropriated 2023 VPSA Bond funds.
- Approved appropriations to Fund 50 for news grants in the amount of \$383,343.00.
- Approved Monthly Financials in the amount of \$4,235,433.17.

PUBLIC COMMENT: None

BUDGET PLANNING:

Dr. Jason Kirby, Chief Business Officer, reported that the Rockbridge County School Board held a Budget Work Session on Tuesday, December 2, 2025. December 16, 2025 is the day that the Governor's Budget should be released and will begin the budget process which will likely include changes until final budget is approved. There are positive factors such as the local composite index for Rockbridge County did go down a slight bit which should result in a bit more funding from the state and there is a potential for reduction in the employer rate for VRS which should equate to a 2% reduction which would be a nice savings for the school division. Priorities were also established at the Budget Work Session as follows: 1) employee salaries, to ensure that Rockbridge County remains competitive; 2) affordable cost of health insurance; 3) and non-personnel expenses which includes items that continue to rise in today's economy.

COMMITTEE REPORTS: None

INSTRUCTIONAL REPORT: None

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS:

Superintendent Thompson provided information on the 2026-2027 Calendar which reflects a good educational calendar for our students to help them to learn. This calendar encompasses elements that balance out for students and staff. This will be presented as an action item at the January board meeting.

Mr. Timothy Martino, Assistant Superintendent, provided the Rockbridge County High School Program of Studies. This will be presented as an action item at the January board meeting.
The proposed changes to the 2026-27 Program of Studies are as follows:

- Added Agribusiness Management
- Removed Computer Information Systems
- Removed Design, Media and Web Technologies
- Added Foundations of Business and Marketing
- Added Social Media Marketing
- Added Sports Marketing
- Added Sports Management
- Removed Communication Systems
- Renamed Nurse Aide I to Introduction to Health and Medical Sciences
- Renamed Nurse Aide II to Nurse Aide
- Renamed all Electronics classes to Robotics and Electronics
- Removed all Coop Classes as were incorporated into Internship
- Reworded description for Internships
- Added Plumbing and Electrical classes to Evening/Off Campus courses
- Updated Career Pathways Reference Guide to reflect course changes

Mr. Martino provided the Maury River Middle School Program of Studies. There are no proposed changes to the 2026-27 Program of Studies. This will be presented as an action item at the January board meeting.

Mr. Martino provided an update on the Division Literacy Plan and stated that the main mission and goal is the same as last year; the improvement of all literacy and how we go about it. He provided a brief overview of the plan. Ms. Lauren Fauber, Virginia Literacy Act Coordinator, and Tracy Hinty, Supervisor of Federal Programs, along with school leaders work together on this program. He stated that when adopting a core curriculum, the hope is to be fully implemented; this year two of a three-year program and the program is on track to be fully implemented by year three. Teachers have been conscious of this and have worked very hard. This will be presented as an action item at the January board meeting.

- Chairman Burant inquired if this document, in final form, will be available on the RCPS website.
 - Mr. Martino confirmed that the document will be available once final.

ACTION ITEMS: None

NEW BUSINESS:

Chairman Burant expressed her congratulations to Trustees Corey Berkstresser and Catie Brown for their re-election for another term and expressed her appreciation for their service.

SCHOOL BOARD

In correlation to “VSBA Take Your Legislator to School Month”, the Rockbridge County School Board will meet on Thursday, December 11, 2025 beginning at 10:00 AM for the purpose of providing a brief tour of the Rockbridge Innovation Center with Senator Chris Head, Delegate Terry Austin, and Delegate Ellen Campbell.

The next regular meeting of the Rockbridge County School Board will be held on Tuesday, January 13, 2026 / 5:30 PM / Location: County of Rockbridge Administration Building, 150 South Main Street, Lexington, Virginia.

ADJOURNMENT

Upon motion by Trustee Brown, seconded by Trustee Berkstresser, and passed by 5-0 vote, the meeting was adjourned at 6:12 p.m.


Kathy M. Burant, Chairman


Rhonda B. Humphries, Clerk of the Board