

Minutes of the Vance County Board of Education Public Hearing
January 21, 2026

The Vance County Board of Education met in a public hearing session on January 21, 2026, at 6:00 p.m. in the Administrative Service Center Curriculum and Instruction room. 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 and Mr. Jerry Stainback, School Board Attorney. Senior staff present were Dr. Cindy Bennett, Superintendent, Mrs. Aarika Sandlin, Chief Officer of Communication and Innovative Support, Ms. Chelsa Jennings, Chief Human Resources Officer, Mr. Kevin Perdue, Chief Operations, Mr. Rey Horner, Executive Director for Student Services, Mr. John Suther, Chief Finance Officer, Mrs. Jacqueline Batchelor-Crosson, Executive Director of Federal Programs & Elementary Education, Dr. Destiney Ross-Putney, Chief Officer of Instruction and Innovation and Dr. Stephanie Ayscue, Executive Director of Secondary Education.

Mrs. Lewis called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. and welcomed everyone.

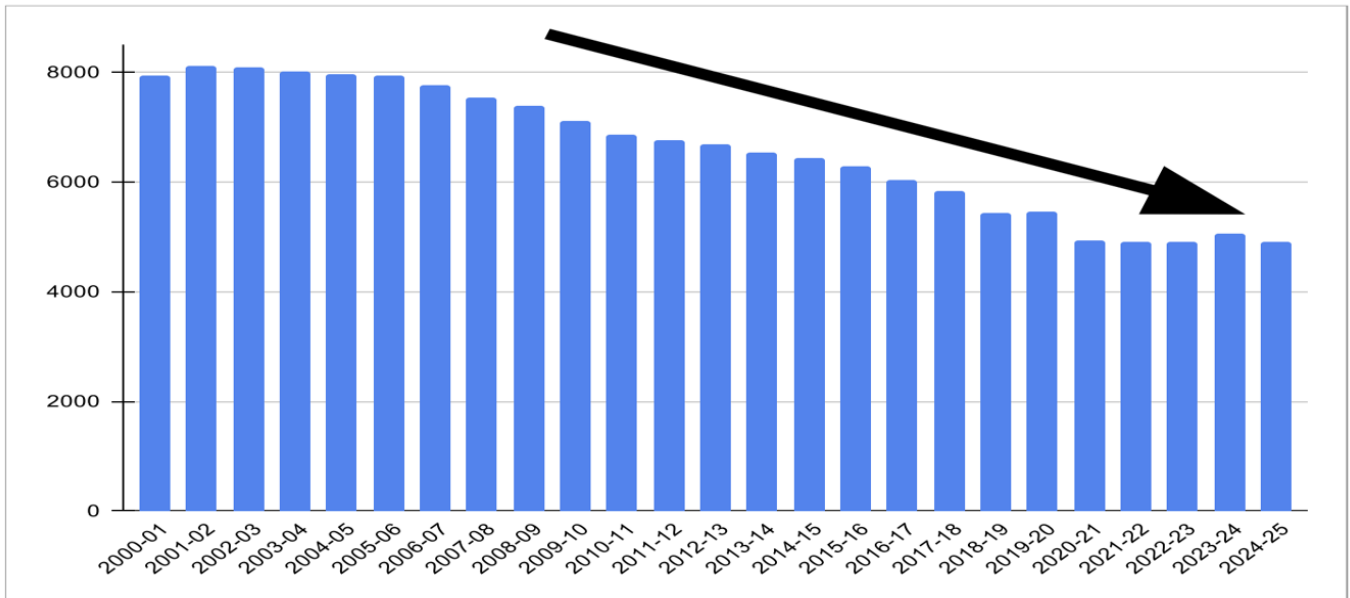
Mrs. Lewis shared that the purpose of this public hearing is to openly discuss the serious financial challenges facing the district and the potential impact those challenges may have on our schools including the possibilities of school closure. The Board wants to be clear from the onset, no decisions are being made on tonight. This meeting is about transparency, understanding and responsibility. The declining student enrollment, ongoing budget restraints and rising operational costs require the Board to examine options carefully so that we can sustain a strong and stable school system for all students. The Board appreciates the presence of the stakeholders this evening. We ask that all discussions be respectful and focused as we work through the difficulties by necessary conversations. Mrs. Lewis turned the meeting over to Dr. Bennett.

Dr. Bennett recognized each Board member and shared that this is important information the Board and senior leadership with the district has researched and analyzed the data more than three months. The rationale for consolidation and closure of New Hope and Carver Elementary Schools is the enrollment history which is the determining factor. The stakeholders need to be clear that enrollment equals funding. Local districts receive federal, state and local funding. When considering state funding from the General Assembly, it's based upon a formula as it relates to enrollment. In the past 25 years, there has been a reduction in ADM of 3,034 students in Vance County Schools. All schools across NC is funded from the General Assembly based on ADM.

School Year	Avg Daily Membership (ADM)
2000-01	7947
2001-02	8112
2002-03	8102
2003-04	8007
2004-05	7972
2005-06	7948
2006-07	7764
2007-08	7548
2008-09	7380
2009-10	7109
2010-11	6868
2011-12	6757
2012-13	6680
2013-14	6538
2014-15	6449
2015-16	6296
2016-17	6027
2017-18	5831
2018-19	5433
2019-20	5449
2020-21	4922
2021-22	4906
2022-23	4897
2023-24	5069
2024-25	4913

All Vance County Schools had a steady decline in ADM but New Hope and Carver were studied more closely.

Historical Enrollment
School Year 2000-01 through 2024-25

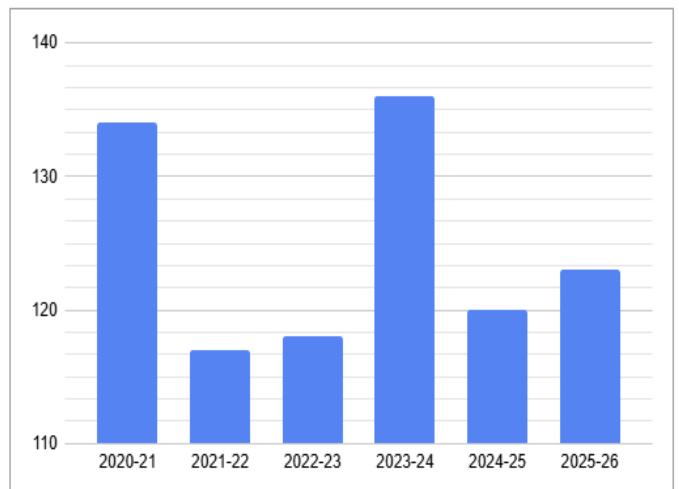
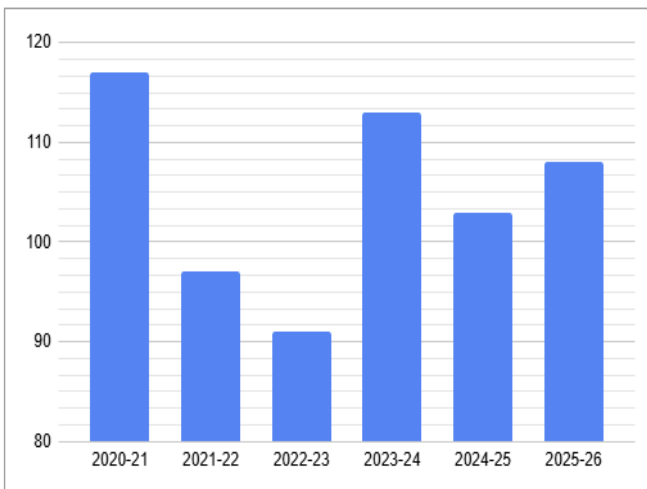


NEW HOPE ELEMENTARY ADM HISTORY

School Year	ADM
2020-21	117
2021-22	97
2022-23	91
2023-24	113
2024-25	103
2025-26	108

CARVER ELEMENTARY ADM HISTORY

School Year	ADM
2020-21	134
2021-22	117
2022-23	118
2023-24	136
2024-25	120
2025-26	123



The State provides the funding for principal's position in a school where there is a minimum of 100 students. If the ADM drops below 100 and the district wants to keep a principal in the building, the principal position will be funded from local funds instead of State funds.

Parents have more school options than before and some are enrolling into charters, private and home schools. Funds from the state flows through the district to the charter for Vance County students whose family may choose private school may apply for opportunity scholarships. Currently Vance County Schools is invoiced by twenty-seven charter schools. The Principal Monthly Report is verified by each school principal and below you will see that for 2026 the first month the district had 4,691 students and by the third month we had 4,801. The increase is because of students transitioning from other counties.

VANCE COUNTY SCHOOLS COMPARED TO OTHER SCHOOL OPTIONS

FISCAL YEAR	VCS	CHARTERS	PRIVATE	HOME	TOTAL
2025	4913	2112	665	504	8194
2024	5069	2036	561	411	8077
2023	4897	2033	516	461	7907
2022	4906	2068	467	640	8081
2021	4922	2043	447	762	8174
2020	5271	2015	487	685	8458
2019	5433	2042	489	632	8596
2018	5831	1583	524	609	8547
2017	6027	1304	522	541	8394

2026 PMR1	4691	2320
2026 PMR2	4784	2269
2026 PMR3	4801	2263

Again, state funding follows the student and the district has seen a decrease of \$5 million in the past few years, not inclusive of federal grants.

State Funding History & Projection

	Allotted ADM	State Public School Funds Budget
FY2023-24	4984	\$52,316,060
FY2024-25	5103	\$53,715,750
FY2025-26	4957	\$53,507,732
FY2026-27**	4795	\$47,395,733

****Best 1 of 2 ADM that will be used for next year's state allotment**

Principals market their school to increase enrollment. The Board has studied the metrics like the age of the building capacity, number of students, travel routes, staff in facilities, reduction in force and furloughs. The Board is committed to not cutting salaries or positions. All employees will have job security with the same salary, but at a new school. Currently, the district has 29 staff vacancies and staff will have the opportunity to request a transfer to the school of their choice.

If New Hope is closed, the priority school is Dabney Elementary. If Carver is closed, the priority school is E.O. Young Elementary. Bus transportation will be provided by the district. Parents choosing to enroll students at any other site where space is available will need to complete a student transfer form and it will be the parent's responsibility to provide transportation to and from school.

Consolidation of the two schools would bring additional funding for student instructional programming, enhanced student services staff and music, arts, drama and STEM programs.

Public Comments

Mr. Blakely Bates asked has the Board considered the economical impacts on consolidation/closure and talks with the parents and community before these types of meetings are held; like a public hearing. The district needs to find more innovative ways to make sure all are inclusive and he shared that there is not enough public input and was disappointed with the decision making.

Mrs. Tracey Moseley asked what is going to happen to the New Hope School building and Dr. Bennett shared that if the Board decides to move forward with closing a facility, the County has the right to first refusal. If the County doesn't have a need for the facility, it comes back to the district to sell. Once sold the funds goes to the County and can be used by Vance County School for Capital improvement projects only.

Ms. Joann Evans shared that it's sad that schools are closing, but understand the logic. Education has changed and the district is not competitive enough to keep students and staff. Teaching is a service and public-schools students need great education as the charters and private school students.

Mrs. White thanked all for attending the public hearing and shared that the Board looked at different alternatives to keep the schools open. ADM determines a lot and if we don't do something then we will not be able to operate Vance County Schools. Lottery funds are for capital outlay projects and can't be used to pay salaries, bills, facility upkeep. She shared that it is a privilege to be a member on the Vance County Board of Education and we have heart for the community, children and employees in Vance County. This is a tough decision and we don't have the funds. We have great teachers and schools so go out and promote Vance County Schools.

Mr. William Purvis asked what are the recruiting efforts and Dr. Bennett shared that principals have marketing plans. The district has also provided CFI summer camps for homeschool students, offered classes to homeschool students, invited community in school buildings, offers tours of facilities to the Chamber of Commerce to promote the school system. Dr. Bennett also shared that the district has 20+ teachers who received a state academic performance bonuses for being the top 25% in the state. The County Commissioners has provided local supplements to teachers and staff also.

Mrs. Hartness shared that the Board has reviewed all the data and want to make the best decision for students.

Mrs. Lewis thanked all for the comments and the Board will thoughtfully consider everything that was said tonight. As Ms. White stated, it's not the Board's desire to close any school but if nothing is done we will not be able to sustain Vance County Schools. As a Board we do not take these conversations lightly. We recognize the schools are more than a building, they are the heart of our community. The goal tonight was for the community to hear information, ask thoughtful questions and ensure any future decisions are guided by data, fiscal responsibility and our commitment to students, families, staff and the community we serve. We appreciate the presence of our stakeholders.

Being no further business, upon motion by Mrs. Lewis, the meeting adjourned at 6:53 p.m.

BOARD CHAIR, AYANA F. LEWIS

SECRETARY, CINDY W. BENNETT