

**Southeastern Cooperative Educational Programs
Joint Board Meeting Minutes**

January 27, 2026

The SECEP Joint Board convened on January 27, 2026, at 12:30 pm at the SECEP administrative office. Attending the meeting were:

Joint Board Members:

Mr. Norman Pool	Chesapeake City Public Schools	
Mr. Robert Holt	Franklin City Public Schools	Chairman
Ms. Tanya Bhasin*	Norfolk Public Schools	
Ms. Quniana Futrell*	Portsmouth Public Schools	
Dr. Jennifer Tindle*	Southampton County Public Schools	
Dr. Dawn Brittingham*	Suffolk Public Schools	
Ms. Kimberly Melnyk	Virginia Beach City Public Schools	Vice-Chair

Superintendents:

Dr. Dalphine Joppy	Chesapeake City Public Schools	Designee
Dr. Theo Cramer	Isle of Wight County Schools	
Dr. James Pohl	Norfolk Public Schools	Designee
Dr. Nicole Devries	Portsmouth Public Schools	Designee
Dr. Shonda Harris-Muhammed*	Southampton County Public Schools	
Dr. John Gordon	Suffolk Public Schools	
Dr. Donald Robertson	Virginia Beach City Public Schools	Executive Office

SECEP Staff:

Ms. Laura Armstrong	Executive Director
Dr. Angel Grant	Human Resources Generalist
Dr. Timothy Bostic	Assistant Director of Curriculum and Instruction
Dr. Christian Nierman	Assistant Director of Programs
Dr. Dwana White	Director of Human Resources

(*) Virtual

Call to Order:

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

Approval of Minutes:

Chairman Holt called for any modifications to the September 24, 2025, Joint Board Meeting minutes as presented. The minutes were approved unanimously with no changes.

Public Comments:

None.

Report of the Executive Officer:

Dr. Robertson, executive officer, reported that the superintendents' committee convened at 9:01 a.m. on January 27, 2026. The following superintendents and designees were present: Dr. Cramer, Dr. Pohl, Dr. Gordon, and Dr. Harris-Muhammed. Dr. Joppe and Dr. DeVries were present as designees for Chesapeake and Portsmouth. The FY27 budget proposal was a key topic. The approach to moving away from charging SECEP fees has been discussed at several meetings. The discontinuation of specific fees was agreed upon. Dr. Robertson recognized Ms. Armstrong and her team for continued progress in implementing the strategic plan and recommendations from the recent program review work supported by the Virginia Beach City Public Schools Office of Research and Evaluation.

Report of the Executive Director:

Ms. Armstrong provided an overview of topics in her report. She called for questions on enrollment and financial reports; none were raised. Ms. Armstrong reported on the rollout of the updated billing schedule. Tuition invoices are now being generated four times a year and are based on actuals. The updated schedule reduces the number of times invoices are sent out and the year-end true-ups that need to be completed before the end of the fiscal year.

Ms. Armstrong provided an update on Pathway to 2028 and the program review, noting that a crosswalk has been completed to align the strategic plan and the program review. Two focus areas were highlighted: (1) improvements to the TRAEP program, including expanded coaching supports (with emphasis on new teachers), a school counselor at each center to support student goal-setting and transition planning, and the addition of study carrels to increase structure and reduce distractions; and (2) development of an updated Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) among SECEP and divisions. Division directors reviewed the first draft with SECEP at their meeting last week. SECEP is collecting division-specific feedback. An update on progress will be provided at the March meeting.

Ms. Armstrong reported on safety and behavior initiatives, including a mandatory reporting refresher training presented at the principals' meeting. In turn, principals presented the refresher at staff meetings. This training will be added to the annual pre-service training.

The board was advised that an internal review of the seclusion and restraint policy and procedures has begun. The board will be updated in March for review in May. SECEP has identified the need to clarify that seclusion and restraint are not behavior management techniques, and to highlight proactive strategies and staff training. Additionally, SECEP has formed a Behavior Intervention Support Team (BIST) to provide enhanced behavioral support across centers; early requests and feedback have been positive.

Lastly, Ms. Armstrong presented the initial FY27 budget proposal. SECEP anticipates a third consecutive year of a rate freeze. Budget priorities include strengthening instruction and supports for the Virginia Literacy Act, recruitment and retention, and continued improvement in operational efficiency. Enrollment projections indicate increases in the Autism and EBICS programs, which are reflected in projected FTE numbers. Next steps include continued monitoring of the Governor's budget and ongoing collaboration with division finance and Norfolk Public Schools regarding compensation and benefits.

Joint Board Items for Discussion:

Election of officers was conducted. Results were as follows: Chair, Mr. Robert Holt (Franklin); Vice-Chair, Ms. Kimberly Melnyk (Virginia Beach); Executive Officer, Dr. Donald Robertson; Clerk of the Board, Ms.

Laura Armstrong; Deputy Clerk, Dr. Angel Grant; Agent, Norfolk Superintendent Dr. Pole; and Deputy Agent, Mr. Anthony Starks.

Closed Session:

At 12:15, Mr. Holt called for a motion to enter a Closed Session. Dr. Brittingham made the motion to deliberate on:

1. Discussion, consideration, or interviews of prospective candidates for employment, assignment, appointment, promotion, performance, demotion, salaries, discipline, or resignation of specific public officers, appointees, or employees, namely the personnel docket.
2. Consultation with legal counsel and briefings by staff members or consultants pertaining to actual or probable litigation, as permitted under Virginia Code. Ms. Futrell. The Board moved into closed session at 12:15 pm. The closed session concluded at 12:30 p.m.

The motion passed 8-0. Ms. Melnyk read the Certification of Closed Session. Mr. Poole made the motion, seconded by Ms. Bhasin. The motion passed, 8 –0.

The Joint Board reconvened at 12:30 p.m.

Personnel Report and Docket:

Dr. White reviewed the personnel report and docket. Chair Holt called for a vote on the personnel docket. Dr. Brittingham made the motion to approve the personnel docket which was seconded by Ms. Futrell. Motion passed 8-0.

Adjournment:

The meeting adjourned at 1:30.

Respectfully Submitted,



Laura Armstrong
Clerk of the Board

Approved:



Mr. Robert Holt
Chair