

Minutes of the Vance County Board of Education Meeting
March 9, 2026

The Vance County Board of Education met in regular session on March 9, 2026, at 6:00 p.m. in the Administrative Service Center Boardroom. Board members present were Mrs. Ayana F. Lewis, Chair, Mrs. Linda S. Cobb, Vice-Chair, Mrs. Gloria J. White, Dr. Omega T. Perry, Mr. Randy M. Oxendine, Mrs. Ruth M. Hartness, Mrs. Dorothy W. Gooche, 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. Rey Horner, Executive Director for Student Services, Mr. John Suther, Chief Finance Officer, Dr. Destiney Ross-Putney, Chief Officer of Instruction and Innovation, Mr. Kevin Perdue, Chief Operations, and Dr. Stephanie Ayscue, Executive Director of Secondary Education, Mrs. Marsha Abbott, Chief Technology Officer and Mrs. Jacqueline Batchelor-Crosson, Executive Director of Federal Programs & Elementary Education.

Mrs. Lewis called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. and welcomed everyone. A moment of silence was observed.

Approval of Minutes

Approval of the February 9, 2026 minutes was motioned by Mrs. Hartness and seconded by Mr. Oxendine, with a unanimous (7-0) vote.

Approval of Meeting Agenda

Approval of the meeting agenda and the following additions were motioned by Mrs. Cobb, and seconded by Mrs. White, the Board unanimously (7-0) approved the agenda with additions. The Board welcomed Leadership Vance to their meeting.

- Public Comments
- Audit Report Fiscal Year 2024-2025
- Personnel Addendum
- Transfers/Releases Revised

Recognitions/Announcements

Women's History Month

Mrs. Lewis shared a proclamation for the first female wrestler at a high school honoring her trailblazing, grit, and barrier-breaking achievements in a predominantly male sport. It recognizes her role in fostering gender equality, inspiring younger athletes, and paving the way for future girls' wrestling programs. Such a document highlights her determination in the face of adversity and her lasting legacy on the institution. LaNautica Johnson, a student at Vance County Early College, has etched her name in Viper history! With unmatched determination and true championship grit, LaNautica captured the first State Championship title in Viper history — a milestone moment for Viper Nation and our community. She is the 6A Women's State Champion in her wrestling weight class!! This victory isn't just a win on the scoreboard, it's a legacy moment. It represents dedication, sacrifice, and belief. From Regional Champion to State Champion, she has shown what it means to lead, to persevere, and to rise to the occasion when it matters most.

Vance County Board of Education
PROCLAMATION
HONORING LA'NAUTICA JOHNSON AND DECLARING
MARCH 9, 2026, AS
"LA'NAUTICA JOHNSON DAY" AT VANCE COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL

WHEREAS, La'Nautica Johnson has demonstrated exceptional courage, determination, and athletic ability as the first female student-athlete to compete on the Vance County High School Wrestling Team, and

WHEREAS, by breaking barriers in a traditionally male-dominated sport, La'Nautica Johnson has expanded opportunities for female athletes and redefined what is possible for young women at Vance County High School, and

WHEREAS, through her dedication, perseverance, and willingness to compete against both male and female wrestlers, La’Nautica Johnson has consistently demonstrated resilience, sportsmanship, and a commitment to excellence that has earned the respect of her teammates, coaches, and the greater school community, and

WHEREAS, La’Nautica Johnson's leadership and pioneering spirit played an instrumental role in the development and growth of girls' wrestling at Vance County High School, inspiring future generations of female athletes to pursue their passions and compete with confidence, and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT PROCLAIMED, that the Vance County Board of Education proudly recognizes La’Nautica Johnson for her historic accomplishments and lasting impact, and hereby designates March 9, 2026, as "La’Nautica Johnson Day" at Vance County High School, celebrating her as a trailblazer whose legacy will inspire students for years to come.

Vance County NAACP Community Impact Award

Mrs. Jennings shared that during the NAACP 81st annual banquet, Dr. Ross-Putney was honored with the Community Impact Award. This award recognizes those whose service, leadership and commitment has made a difference in support of our community. It celebrates those who demonstrate exceptional dedication to strength education through collaboration, efficacy, and volunteerism.

Arts in Our Schools Month

Mr. Andrew Markoch shared that the district is leading the way in celebrating the Arts in our Schools. New this year, is “Celebration of the Arts” that will allow VCS Art Team to impact 1200 students next week to enrich, engage and provide students with 90 minutes of experiences on Tuesday and Thursday through music and art.

School Social Workers Week

School Social Work Week is March 1-7, 2026 and this year’s theme, “**Unite to Ignite: Celebrating our Impact,**” highlights the vital role school social workers play in fostering connections, advocating for equity, and driving social and emotional growth. District social workers aid at the Vance Cares Center, located at Vance County Middle School, and any student or community member can access the center. Vance Cares offers free clothing, school supplies and home goods. There were 102 visits from January through February. We honor their commitment, compassion, and unwavering dedication to our students and schools.

Name	School
Juliet Black-Jasnosz	VCEC
Sharon Pettiford	Pinkston & Lead Social Worker
Kristen Tharpe-Rohring	LB Yancey & Zeb Vance
Monica Williams	Dabney
Marsha Harris	Advance Academy

Read Across Vance Week

Read Across America Week was celebrated from March 2-6 and it celebrates and reinforces the joy of reading. District staff participated by reading “The Very Hungry Caterpillar” to different kindergarten classes on March 5 and that evening the district held the 3rd Annual Read Across Vance Family event at Vance County Middle.

Maintenance Appreciation Day

Mr. Perdue shared that the maintenance staff keep our facilities clean, safe and comfortable for students to be ready for learning. From ground inspections and repairs to safety compliance and ensuring your building is up to code, maintenance workers are the unsung heroes in our workforce. Maintenance Worker Appreciation Day is March 6th. The Board and Mr. Perdue thanked district maintenance workers for their hard work and dedication.

NC School Public Relations Association (NCSPRA) Awards

The Vance County Board of Education recognized Aarika Sandlin and Grace Herndon for earning top honors from the NCSPRA during the annual Blue-Ribbon Awards ceremony held March 6, 2026. Vance County Schools received two gold awards for exceptional communication projects. One honored “Growing Healthy Futures: VCS Students Lead the Healthy Schools Garden Project,” which judges praised for its engaging footage and the way it captured students

actively participating in the experience. The second recognized “Love Henderson, Period: A Community United Against Litter,” a campaign commended for its strong strategy, thoughtful planning, broad community appeal, and original song. Both projects were made possible through strong collaboration. Sandra Wilkerson from the Henderson-Vance Chamber of Commerce helped coordinate the anti-litter campaign, and MaryLaura Christopher-Rubin played an integral role in the garden project.

Comments from the Public

Sharita Jones, Alexis Edmonds, and Jamie Chin expressed the petition for supplement increases for certified and classified staff to be added to the district’s budget resolution for 2026-2027.

Superintendent’s Report

The Fiscal Oversight Monthly Report was shared for information only.

Spring/Summer Event Updates

Dr. Bennett shared the 2026 Spring/Summer district events for March – August as information only.

2026-2027 School Calendars

The 2026-2027 school calendars were shared and recommended for approval.

Early Start Schools	First Day of School: 8/10/2026	Spring Break: March 9-12, 2027	Last Day of School: 5/20/27
Year-Round School	First Day of School: 8/10/2026	Spring Break: March 22-26, 2027	Last Day of School: 6/4/27
Traditional Schools	First Day of School: 8/24/2026	Spring Break: March 22-26, 2027	Last Day of School: 6/4/27

Upon motion by Mr. Oxendine and seconded by Mrs. White, the Board unanimously (7-0) approved the 2026-2027 school calendars.

Summer Schedule

Dr. Bennett is recommending a summer schedule (4 weeks) for 11–12-month employees beginning the week of Monday, June 29th and ending on Thursday, the week of July 30th. ASC hours will be 7:30-5:00 Monday-Thursday with a 30-minute lunch break or 8:00-5:00 with 2 hours leave each week. School offices will follow the same schedule as ASC. Custodial/Operations staff will work with Mr. Perdue to determine their daily schedule. Staff will obtain prior approval from their supervisor for any modifications to their weekly schedule. Staff who are approved for a week’s vacation will take the full 40 hours or 10 hours leave per day.

Upon motion by Mrs. White and seconded by Mrs. Hartness, the Board unanimously (7-0) approved the summer schedule.

School Consolidation

Vance County Schools leadership is recommending to the Board of Education that we consolidate New Hope Elementary with Dabney Elementary and Carver Elementary with EO Young Elementary. While this recommendation is driven by declining enrollment and funding challenges, our priority remains creating a stable, high-quality environment where every child can thrive. Both schools are underutilized, has high operational costs, and/or may need replacement due to its age and condition. Staff intent and student transfer forms have been submitted and accepted. Instructional resources and equipment will be inventoried along with events planned for a Walk down memory lane for each school. Below is the timeline of the consolidation and closure of the facilities.

- January 2026: Students, staff, and community notified of the beginning of the consolidation discussion
- January 13, 2026: Meetings with staff at Carver & New Hope Elementary Schools
- January 20, 2026: Meetings with staff at Carver & New Hope Elementary Schools
- January 21, 2026: Consolidation Public Hearing
- January 2026: New Hope & Carver staff members receive priority for transferring to other school positions
- January 2026: New Hope & Carver students select their school of choice for the 26-27 academic year
- June 2026: School year ends

- June 30, 2026: New Hope and Carver close
- August 2026: Students and staff start at new schools

Audit Report for Fiscal Year 2024-2025

The Audit report was recommended to be accepted for fiscal year 2024-2025.

Upon motion by Mrs. Cobb and seconded by Mrs. Gooche, the Board unanimously (7-0) accepted the Audit Report for Fiscal Year 2024-2025.

Board of Education Standing Committees

Personnel

Mr. Oxendine shared information from the February 3, 2026 meeting.

I. EMPLOYMENT RECOMMENDATION(S)

LOCATION	EMPLOYEE NAME	RACE/SEX	POSITION	EFFECTIVE DATE
Pinkston	Christine Hawkins	B/F	Tutor	2/23/26
Transportation	Antonio Perry	B/M	Bus Driver/Monitor	2/16/26
Transportation	Jamar Branch	B/M	Bus Driver/Monitor	2/26/26

II. RESIGNATION(S)

LOCATION	EMPLOYEE NAME	RACE/SEX	POSITION	EFFECTIVE DATE
Aycock	Katie Frazier	W/F	Reach Associate	4/03/26
Aycock	Ma Theresa Yanto	A/F	Teacher	4/06/26
Dabney	Sterling Kin	B/M	Teacher	11/30/26
VCHS	Nakitha Johnson	B/F	Bus Driver	2/27/26
Clarke	Lori Ann Lewis	B/F	Teacher	6/30/26
EO Young	Threasa McElhinney	B/F	Teacher	6/12/26
VCMS	Ashley Clark	W/F	Cafeteria Assistant	2/17/26

III. LEAVE(S) – For Information Only

LOCATION	EMPLOYEE NAME	RACE/SEX	LEAVE TYPE	POSITION	EFFECTIVE DATE
Aycock	Lillana Soto De Oro	P/F	FMLA	Teacher	1/12/26-1/30/26
Aycock	Ma Theresa Yanto	P/F	FMLA	Teacher	1/05/26-3/29/26
Pinkston	Marlou Fabruada	P/M	FMLA	Teacher	3/03/26-5/11/26
VCHS	Gloria Holden	B/F	FMLA	Teacher	11/07/25-2/09/26
ASC	Jennifer Smith	W/F	FMLA	Director	2/26//26-6/29/26
CFI	Patricia Burroughs	W/F	FMLA	Digital Learning & Innovation Spec.	3/04/26-5/27/26
Maintenance	Bryant Nelson	W/M	FMLA	Cafeteria Assistant	2/22/26-5/06/26
Maintenance	Chad Denton	B/M	FMLA	Grounds Crew	9/10/26-3/30/26
New Hope	Tina Moore	B/F	FMLA	Teacher	3/03/26-3/30/26
Pinkston	Mollie Terrell	B/F	FMLA	Cafeteria Assistant/Bus Driver	1/05/26-3/16/26
VCHS	Harden Richards	B/M	FMLA	Teacher	12/16/25-3/16/26

***Note:** Extended Medical Leave does not qualify as FMLA.

IV. SUBSTITUTE(S)

NEW LOCATION	EMPLOYEE NAME	RACE/SEX	POSITION	EFFECTIVE DATE
All Schools	Catherine Parham	B/F	Substitute	3/02/26
All Schools	Faith Davis	B/F	Substitute	3/04/26
All Schools	Ellen McAllister-Flack	B/F	Substitute	2/16/26
All Schools	Maria Escamilla Cruz	H/F	Substitute	2/23/26

V. RETIREMENT(S)

NEW LOCATION	EMPLOYEE NAME	RACE/SEX	POSITION	EFFECTIVE DATE
New Hope	Nettie Daves		Teacher	7/01/26
Zeb Vance	Angela Reid	B/F	Receptionist	7/01/26

Dabney	Cynthia Peace		Teacher Assistant/Bus Driver	8/01/26
LB Yancey	Sylvia Gregory		Custodian	7/01/26
VCMS	Sallie Nelson	B/F	Teacher	6/30/26

VI. TRANSFER/PROMOTION(S)

NEW LOCATION	EMPLOYEE NAME	NEW POSITION	OLD POSITION/LOCATION		EFFECTIVE DATE
Maintenance	William Ellis	Maintenance Technician	Bus Driver	Transportation	3/9/26
Clarke	Michelle Wells	Autism Coordinator	Teacher/Autism Coordinator	Clarke	2/23/26
Vance Virtual	Natonna Robinson	Student Support Spec.	Teacher	Zeb Vance	2/16/26

The district has 37 current vacancies. The employee absence report for January – February showed a total of 411 absences across the district with 323 absences filled. Six schools recorded fewer than ten staff absences during the period using Instructional Support Assistant (ISAs): VCEC, STEM, VCMS, AA, Zeb Vance and New Hope. There are five employees holding a Permit to Teach license who have been informed that if they remain with the district beyond 6/30/26 and do not secure licensure, they may be transitioned to substitute pay. An international teacher report was shared on those teachers whose work visas have expired or approaching expiration and how the potential staffing could impact the district. There is an opportunity to sponsor EC Teachers, using grant funds, secured by Dr. Natashalynn Snipes.

Upon motion by Mr. Oxendine and seconded by Mrs. White, the Board unanimously (7-0) approved the personnel summary and addendum.

Curriculum

Dr. Ross-Putney shared information from the February 26, 2026 meeting. A total of 224 contact hours were logged with 284 staff members earning CEU credits for the month of January. The inaugural Teacher-Led professional development conference was held on February 16 at VCHS with approximately 500 educators engaging in 84 teacher-led sessions. The NC Educator Effectiveness System (NCEES) launched a new professional learning interface and features that are identical to Unified Talent and eventually will be replaced. The platform provides access to hundreds of self-paced learning modules at no additional cost to the district and staff will continue to have access to their learning records. The migration will be complete by the summer of 2026. Read to Achieve (RtA) literacy intervention data reports focused on students who were invited to attend the 2025 summer reading intervention program. Some students know how to read but struggle with reading fluency and have been assigned tutors during the school day or after school. Students to receive additional support if needed. The 2026-2027 school calendars were presented for approval. An update on the district's Bullying Protocol, highlighting the implementation of a new tracking process within Infinite Campus was shared. Step 1 is accessible to teachers, teacher assistants and administrators to document initial reports. Step 2 allows administrators and Student Services staff to add additional information and Step 3 generates the final report with submission history tracked by school year and date. After all required fields are completed the form is locked to maintain data integrity.

Community & Business Relations

Mrs. Gooche shared information from the February 26, 2026 meeting. Insights and analytics were shared on the district's social media platforms. The NC School Public Relations Association Blue Ribbon Awards event was rescheduled for March 6 and upcoming events were shared and listed below.

March 12 – NC Symphony at McGregor Hall
 March 17 – AIG District Family Night at CFI and Celebration of the Arts
 March 19 – Celebration of the Arts and ESL Virtual Family Engagement Night
 March 24 – Miss NC Visits Vance
 March 25 – Tiny House Grand Opening at VCHS
 March 26 – Experience Raleigh: Student Spotlight trip

New Business - None

Field Trip Request

Vance County High School will travel to Washington DC and Williamsburg VA to visit the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, The African American History Museum, The Pentagon and Busch Gardens Amusement Park. Thirty-five students from 9-12 grades will be chaperoned by 3 adults on April 14, 2026.

Upon motion by Mr. Oxendine and seconded by Mrs. Hartness, the Board unanimously (7-0) approved the Vance County High School April 14, 2026 field trip to Washington DC and Williamsburg VA.

Transfer Requests

Dr. Bennett presented three requests to transfer into the district and four to be released from the district.

Upon motion by Mrs. Hartness and seconded by Mr. Oxendine, the Board unanimously (7-0) approved the seven transfer/release requests.

Executive Session

Upon motion by Mrs. Lewis and seconded by Mrs. White, the Board voted unanimously (7-0) to go into closed session pursuant to the provisions of North Carolina General Statutes 143-318.11 for the purpose of approving executive session minutes and discussing legal, personnel, and property issues pursuant to subsection (a) of the said statute at 6:42 pm.

The Board returned to the open session at 7:01 p.m.

Being no further business, upon motion by Mr. Oxendine and seconded by Mrs. Lewis, the Board voted unanimously (7-0) to adjourn the meeting at 7:01 p.m.

BOARD CHAIR, AYANA F. LEWIS

SECRETARY, CINDY W. BENNETT