

Column Recurring Title: Rooted and Growing: The Southampton Story

Column Author: Dr. Julie Thompson, SCPS Superintendent

Specific Article Title: “A New Chapter Begins”

Specific Article Due Date: August 31, 2026



Southampton County School Board Vice Chair Dr. Jennifer Tindle, School Board Chair Brandon Rodgers, Superintendent Dr. Julie Thompson, and Director of Operations Robbie Clements

There is something special about the beginning of a school year.

For me, it has always felt a little like the beginning of a new season – a time filled with possibility, anticipation, and the promise of what is still to come. Perhaps that is because, at heart, I will always be a high school English teacher and softball player and coach. I love a blank page. I love a new chapter. And I love watching students discover what they are capable of becoming.

This summer, I was given the opportunity to begin a new chapter of my own as the Superintendent of Southampton County Public Schools.

I am excited to serve as superintendent and to be part of this community at such an important time. My vision is simple: to build on our strengths, strengthen our systems, and ensure that every student in Southampton County feels that he or she belongs, is challenged to grow, and has the opportunity to succeed.

I look forward to working alongside our educators, families, businesses, community leaders, and, most importantly, our students to make Southampton County a place where we dream big and achieve even bigger.

Since June, I have had the privilege of meeting many of the people who make Southampton County special. I have visited our schools, met with educators and staff, talked with families and community members, and spent time getting to know our students. And as much as I have enjoyed those conversations, I know there are still many more people I need to meet. I look forward to seeing you at a school, an athletic event, a community gathering, or simply around town.

The past few weeks have been busy as we prepared for the 2026-27 school year. Our students, families, teachers, administrators, and staff have come together for meet and greets, open houses, orientations, home visits, professional learning, and celebrations.



“Meet and Greet” in the Riverdale Zone

We welcomed families at our elementary schools and at Southampton Middle and Southampton High. Our Back to School Bash brought students and families together, and our high school celebrated our seniors and welcomed our freshmen. Our educators spent several days preparing, learning, and collaborating so that they could begin the year ready to serve our students well.

One of my favorite days of the summer was Convocation. It was a wonderful opportunity to bring our entire school division together at Southampton High School. We heard opening remarks from School Board Chair Brandon Rodgers and me, along with an inspiring keynote speaker. We welcomed and recognized new administrators, teachers, and staff; honored employees celebrating milestones of 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, 30, 35, and 40 years of service to Southampton County Public Schools; celebrated our Teachers of the Year; and had fellowship together over a delicious lunch.



Dr. Thompson and Southampton County Teachers of the Year

We also spent time reaching out to some of our newest students and their families through our Rising Kindergarten, Grade 6, and Grade 9 student visits. Our administrators, teachers, and staff hopped on four school buses, and we drove around our county to stop at homes and have a quick “porch visit” with our students if they were home. Those connections matter. Before students can learn, they need to know that they belong.



Student Porch Visits - Our Meherrin Zone Team

And that is what I hope this column will be about.

“Rooted and Growing: The Southampton Story” will be a place where I can share weekly what is happening across our school division, celebrate the people who make SCPS special, explain the work we are doing, and occasionally reflect on what I am learning along the way.

We are fortunate to be rooted in a community with a proud history and strong traditions. But being rooted does not mean standing still.

We are rooted. We are growing. And together, we are writing the next chapter of the Southampton story.

I am grateful to be here. I am excited about what lies ahead. And I cannot wait to see what our students, and our entire Southampton community, will accomplish together.

This is our story. And we are just getting started.