

Henderson County Board of Public Education

MINUTES

March 9, 2026

The Henderson County Board of Public Education held a meeting on Monday, March 9, 2026 beginning at 4:00 pm, at 414 4th Avenue West, Hendersonville, NC. The meeting was accessible to the public via a livestream link at, <http://hcpsnc.org/live>.

Board Members Present: Amy Lynn Holt, *Chairperson*, Dr. Kathy Revis, *Vice Chairperson*; Beth Campbell; Stephanie Cantwell; Blair Craven; Shelia Dale; Alyssa Norman

Administrative Staff Present: Mark R. Garrett, Superintendent; Shannon Marlowe, Ed.D., Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum & Instruction; Scott Rhodes, Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources; Bernie Sochia, Chief Finance Officer; Carl Taylor, Chief Administrative Officer

Attorney Present: John Henning

Board Clerk: Tawana Clayton

CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Amy Lynn Holt called the meeting to order at approximately 4:00 p.m. Mrs. Holt requested everyone present to stand as the West Henderson High School Army JROTC presented the colors. Mrs. Holt led those in attendance in the pledge of allegiance.

MOMENT OF SILENT REFLECTION

Mrs. Holt asked those present to remain standing and take a moment of silent reflection.

AGENDA APPROVAL

Mrs. Amy Lynn Holt acknowledged receipt of the meeting agenda and called for a motion to approve it as presented. Mr. Blair Craven moved to approve the agenda as presented. Dr. Kathy Revis seconded the motion. *(Unanimously approved)*

STUDENT/STAFF RECOGNITIONS

Superintendent Mark Garrett and principals showcased the student recognitions this month.

Hendersonville Elementary School:

Out of approximately 60 3rd-5th graders across the Western Region, the top 6 science fair students at Hendersonville Elementary attended the Western Carolina University Science Fair. Three students have earned a spot to participate at the State Science Fair Competition at NC State University in March: Iris Boyer earned a 1st place award in Biological Sciences for "Osmosis Eggperiment"; Ginny Reyes earned a 1st place award in Engineering/Technology for "Is AI Smarter Than Battle of the Books?"; Ashby Marshall earned a 2nd place award in Earth/Environmental Sciences for "Who is Stopping on the Ecusta Trail Intersections (Cars, Bikes, Pedestrians)?"

Hendersonville High School:

Iver Hunt was recognized for being the 3A State Champion in High Jump at the NCHSAA Indoor track meet. Emory Freeman was recognized for being the 3A State Champion in the 55m hurdles at NCHSAA Indoor Track Meet, she placed 2nd in the high jump at NCHSAA Indoor Track Meet and 4th in the triple jump at NCHSAA Indoor Track Meet. Emory also received the 3A Indoor Track & Field State MVP award which is the first time it has been awarded to a Hendersonville High School athlete. Coaches: Caroline Meadows and Jerry Mahle

West Hendersonville High School:

The West Henderson JV Cheer team won the NCHSAA JV Non-Tumbling Gameday Division, and ended up with the 5th highest score of all Gameday style teams. Cheerleaders: Sadie Allen, Ava Allender, Kennedy Audibert, Tenley Collins, Lilly Hellman, Avery Hodge, Avery Jordan, Lauren Koch, Karlee McGaha, Aubrey Meadows,

Mia Murphy, Kadence Parton, Chloe Rhodes, Enslie Rogers, Macy Rowbotham, Halayna Settle, Rylee Wright. Coaches: Bree Hodge - Head Coach, Kippan Mills, Brandi Allen.

The West Henderson Varsity cheerleaders won back to back NCHSAA State Championships in the Varsity Coed Gameday Division, and ended the day with the 3rd highest score of the entire competition. Cheerleaders: Brett Dean, Gabby Hansen, Colee Higgins, Bella Holland, Isabella Irizarry, Bailey James, Allison Marra, Caleb Marshall, Annabell Mills, Marcella Montiel, Malia Morgan, Gabee Murphy, Emma Nelson, Libby Owenby, Maci Price, Cole Reasoner, Alyssa Ritchie, Tiare Settle, Elisa Singleton, Laurelai Taylor, Sarabeth Wilke, Annalise Youmans. Coaches: Bree Hodge - Head Coach, Kippan Mills, Brandi Allen

SCHOOL FEATURES – Flat Rock Middle School & Hendersonville Middle School

Each month, this spotlight will give the opportunity to showcase unique programs, traditions, and successes happening across all 23 of our schools.

Flat Rock Middle School - Weightlifting and Locker Rooms

Coach John McMillan, Coach Savannah Smith, and Coach K created a new weight room to provide multiple spaces for boys and girls to participate in fitness activities. For example, one girls' class might use the health room, another girls' class in the weight room, while boys use the gym or outdoor spaces—then rotate after nine weeks. This approach has increased participation and decreased disciplinary issues. Girls, in particular, are more comfortable exercising in a space separate from boys, which has encouraged more involvement.

Two students shared their experiences with the new facilities, Taylin Marshall said she is now able to try new activities, including weightlifting, which she tried for the first time and really enjoyed. Avett Bishop shared that the new weight room has improved his physical abilities in football and wrestling, benefiting all students.

Hendersonville Middle School: Becoming Bearcats and Sources of Strength

Becoming Bearcats, now in its fourth year, pairs 8th-grade students with incoming 6th graders to help support a successful transition to middle school. Mentors meet their 6th-grade partners at the 6th Grade Academy, assisting them with navigating lockers, learning school routines, and becoming familiar with life at HMS. Meetings take place every other week during the first semester and once a month during the second semester. Through this program, 8th-grade mentors provide guidance on HMS expectations while fostering a welcoming and supportive school environment. Students enjoy building friendships across grade levels, helping ensure that no one feels alone and that the transition to middle school is a positive and smooth experience.

Sources of Strength, now in its first year at the school, is a peer leadership mentoring program led by April Groff, Kelly Deese, Bertha Collins, and the school counseling team. The program includes 57 eighth-grade students who serve as peer leaders, working to promote student well-being, strengthen connections among peers, and foster a strong sense of belonging within the school community. Through these efforts, the program also aims to help prevent negative outcomes by encouraging positive support networks. This year, student leaders successfully organized and led two school-wide campaigns.

BOARD MEMBERS' OBSERVATIONS

Mrs. Beth Campbell shared updates on the West Henderson NCTC results at the regional, state, and national levels. This past weekend they had their final performance of The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane at SETC nationals and ended as finalists.

Mrs. Stephanie Cantwell discussed her tour of North Henderson High School, highlighting the drone class. She also noted that the February 20th professional development day was a huge success.

Mrs. Amy Lynn Holt spoke about the new FFA chapter at Apple Valley Middle School, as well as her school tours at Sugarloaf, Apple Valley, and North during the Leadership Summit. She reflected on how special her time was and shared that she became emotional leaving Sugarloaf, impressed by the students' accomplishments.

Mrs. Shelia Dale talked about the FFA Chartering Ceremony at Apple Valley Middle School, emphasizing how meaningful it is to see older students mentoring younger students through both the North Henderson FFA and Apple Valley Middle School FFA programs. She also highlighted the presence of the State FFA charter and the National FFA president at the event.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

At 4:36 p.m. Mrs. Amy Lynn Holt opened the meeting for public comment. Six people addressed the Board. Public comments ended at 4:57 p.m. *No action was taken.*

CONSENT AGENDA

Mrs. Amy Lynn Holt cited the Board's receipt of the Consent Agenda presented for approval upon recommendation of the Superintendent. Prior to the meeting, Board members received documentation relative to the Consent Agenda as follows:

- A. Meeting Schedule
 - 1. HCBPE Regular Business Meeting [*Monday, April 13, 2026 4:00 p.m., (Closed Session at 3:00 pm Room 1A)(Boardroom)*]
- B. Minutes - February 9, 2026 (*Regular Business Meeting*)
- C. Personnel (*as presented in closed session*)
- D. Student Acceptances/Releases (*as presented in closed session*)
- E. Budget Amendment

Mr. Blair Craven moved that the Consent Agenda be approved as presented. Dr. Kathy Revis seconded the motion. (*Unanimously approved.*)

At 5:10 p.m. the Henderson County Board of Public Education called for a 10 minute recess. The meeting resumed at 5:20 p.m.

OLD BUSINESS

None

NEW BUSINESS

- A. Audit Report for 2024-2025 Fiscal Year – (*Mr. Bernie Sochia, Chief Finance Officer*)
Chief Finance Officer Bernie Sochia introduced Mr. Roger Warren, Gould Killian CPA Group, P.A. to present the 2024-2025 Audit Report. The financial statements, which include the Independent Auditors' Report (required by the Local Government Commission for all LEAs), present the results of operations and financial position of the Henderson County Board of Public Education as of June 30, 2025, and for the fiscal year then ended. The audit report contains an unqualified opinion on the Board's financial statements, and there were no questioned costs or reportable conditions.
- B. Action – Child Nutrition Update – (*Mr. Scott Rhodes, Assistant Superintendent*)
Assistant Superintendent Scott Rhodes presented the Board with an update on the Child Nutrition program. Mr. Rhodes reported that the program is currently trending toward a \$500,000 deficit. To address the deficit and support the program's long-term financial sustainability, administration is proposing a \$1.00 increase for both student and adult lunches and a \$0.50 increase for both student and adult breakfasts. Mr. Rhodes reviewed several factors contributing to the financial pressure on the program, including increased labor costs, rising food prices, and federal reimbursement rates. In addition to the proposed meal price increases, administration plans to reduce the number of Child Nutrition employees receiving benefits by approximately 25% through attrition, noting that this change will not impact any current Child Nutrition staff members. The proposed meal price increases would take effect beginning with the 2026–2027 school year.

Mr. Blair Craven moved that the Henderson County Board of Public Education approve Child Nutrition Price Increases for the 2026-2027 school year as presented. Dr. Kathy Revis seconded the motion. Mrs. Beth Campbell opposed. Motion passed 6 to 1.

- C. Action – 2026 NCSBA Legislative Committee Service – (*Board Members*)
The NC School Boards Association's Board of Directors (BOD) invites each local school board to

nominate one of its members to serve as an at-large member on NCSBA's Legislative Committee. This individual should be nominated through a vote of the full board taken in open session and submitted by the end of March 2026. Mrs. Amy Lynn Holt, Chair of the Henderson County Board of Public Education, nominated Mrs. Stephanie Cantwell to serve on the North Carolina School Boards Association (NCSBA) Legislative Committee. The Henderson County Board of Public Education voted unanimously to support Mrs. Cantwell's nomination to serve on the NCSBA Legislative Committee.

D. Action – Purchases over \$90,000 (Chromebooks) – *(Mr. Bernie Sochia, Chief Finance Officer)*

Chief Finance Officer Bernie Sochia and Director of Technology Grant Adkins presented information regarding purchasing chromebooks. Pursuant to board policies 6420, Contracts with the Board, and 6430, Purchasing Requirements for Equipment, Materials, and Supplies, any purchases or contracts in excess of \$90,000 must be approved by the Board. A purchase from CDW-G was presented for approval. As discussed in the budget workshop, HCPS put the annual device replacement of chromebooks out to bid. Those bids were due Wednesday, March 4 and CDW was the lowest responsive responsible bidder and their document is attached here. The amount of the bid for 2,732 devices totals \$1,337,816.64. Funding for this will be entirely using local funds in the current allotment of MRTS and fund balance of budgets allocated for chromebooks replacement but saved through the use of ESSER funds.

Mr. Blair Craven moved that the Henderson County Board of Public Education approve the CDW-G purchase as presented. Mrs. Shelia Dale seconded the motion. *(Unanimously approved.)*

E. HCPS Device Protection Plan – *(Mr. Grant Adkins, Director of Technology)*

Director of Technology Grant Adkins presented information regarding the HCPS Device Protection Plan. Mr. Adkins discussed a proposal to transition to an internally managed device protection model. Under this proposal, Technology Services would replace the current outsourced insurance model with a district-managed plan designed to reduce costs for both the district and families, improve service response times, and better protect district assets. Mr. Adkins noted the financial inefficiency of the current outsourced model, explaining that during the 2025–2026 school year the third-party insurance company collected \$22,472.70 in premiums while paying out only \$3,773.00 in claims. He highlighted several key pillars of the proposed internal model, including reduced administrative burden, improved service response, greater affordability for families, and enhanced protection of the district's technology assets. The proposed cost of the plan is \$25.00 and would provide coverage for up to two accidental damage incidents per school year, theft, one damaged charger replacement, and manufacturing defects. The Board requested additional data in order to further consider whether the plan should be implemented as an opt-in program or as a universal fee, and plans to revisit the discussion at the April meeting.

BOARD/SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

A. Capital Update – *(Mr. Carl Taylor, Chief Administrative Officer)*

Chief Administrative Officer Carl Taylor provided the board with status updates on the construction and facility projects currently underway or planned in the near future:

- HCPS Projects
 - Phone System Transition - District - In Progress
 - Program and Conceptual Phasing Study - East Henderson - In Progress
 - Water Cutoff - East Henderson - In Progress
 - Pedestrian Bridge Replacement - Rugby - In Progress
 - Air Handler Unit Upgrade - West Henderson - In Progress
 - Classroom Unit Upgrade (X-1) - West Henderson - In Progress
- MRTS:
 - New Construction - Bus Garage
 - Architect: LS3P Associates
 - Construction Manager at-Risk: Edifice Construction
 - HVAC System - Atkinson - Awaiting DPI approval

- HVAC Controls Replacement - Sugarloaf, Middle Schools, NHHS, WHHS - In Progress
- Roofing - In Progress
 - Flat Rock (F-Hall)
 - East Henderson (C-Hall, Media Center)

No action was taken.

B. Financial Statements – *(Mr. Bernie Sochia, Chief Finance Officer)*

Chief Finance Officer Bernie Sochia presented the financial statements and results of operations of the Local Current Expense and Other Restricted Funds for the 2025-26 fiscal year as of February 28, 2026: Revenues received totaled \$30,562,844 and expenditures made totaled \$25,031,258. For the year, revenues are \$71,950 more and expenditures are \$91,230 more than last year at this point. Through eight months (67% of the fiscal year) expenditures are at 61% of the budgeted amount.

2. Results operations of the Enterprise Funds for the 2025-26 fiscal year as of January 31, 2026:

- a. For Child Nutrition, revenues received of \$5,236,150 and expenditures made of \$5,252,285 resulted in a net deficit of \$16,134 for the year. This is a positive change of \$458,931 from this point last year.
- b. For Child Care, revenues received of \$691,053 and expenditures made of \$749,186 resulted in a net deficit of \$58,133 for the year. This is a positive change of \$135,193 from this point last year. *No action was taken.*

C. Strategic Plan Measures – *(Dr. Shannon Marlowe, Assistant Superintendent)*

Dr. Shannon Marlowe, Assistant Superintendent for Instructional Services presented the board with a Strategic Plan Measures Update and shared results of the HCPS Working Conditions Survey. The HCPS Strategic Plan Measures report details the progress of Henderson County Public Schools toward its 2024–2027 goals. Dr. Marlowe shared that the plan is organized into four core "Future-Ready" priorities: Priority One: Students: Focuses on graduation readiness and school growth. Notable progress includes a graduation rate increase to 93.5% for 2024–2025 and a district ranking of 26th in North Carolina. Priority Two: Professionals: Aims to make HCPS a leading regional employer. Hiring efficiency has improved, with classified positions filled in an average of 31 days and licensed positions in 27 days. Priority Three: Operations: Targets facility safety and efficiency. The district achieved a 100% transportation efficiency rating for 2024–2025 and completed its one-year facility maintenance plan. Priority Four: Community Relations & Partnerships: Tracks public engagement. Website traffic for "Newsroom" stories increased to nearly 40,000 visits, while social media engagement more than doubled to 300,100. Dr. Marlowe concluded with highlights from the February 2026 Working Conditions Survey, where 94.3% of staff agreed that the district is a "good place to work and learn," up from 93.7% the previous year. *No action was taken.*

D. Joint Facility Committee Meeting – *(Mr. Mark Garrett, Superintendent)*

Superintendent Mark Garrett shared information from the joint facility committee meeting with the county commissioners held on February 19, 2026. Superintendent Garrett discussed the Needs-Based Public School Capital Fund Capital Grants Program, noting that Henderson County is currently classified as a Tier 2 county on the economic tier system. This designation creates a limited window of opportunity for the district to apply for grant funding, specifically for improvements at East Henderson High School. The district has partnered with LS3P to review the property and develop cost estimates and plans, which were also shared with the Board of Commissioners. As a Tier 2 county, the required local match for the grant program is 15%. The program allows districts to request up to \$62 million for a high school project, \$52 million for a middle school, and \$42 million for an elementary school. LS3P is assisting the district in determining project scope, estimated costs, and the required local match. Administration also provided updates on the bus garage project, including a new rendering, and reviewed ongoing MRTS projects. The discussion provided an overview of current capital initiatives and the district's continued partnership with the county. *No action was taken.*

E. General Operations – *(Mr. Mark R. Garrett, Superintendent)*

Superintendent Mark Garrett shared upcoming dates and events shared:

Kindergarten Registration is open for the 2026-2027 school year - Ready to Shine - Class of 2039!

- March: Arts in our Schools Month
- March 9: Intersession begins; No school for students on Flex calendar.
- March 16-20: Spring Break for all Students and Staff
- April: School Library Month & Occupational Therapy Month
- April 4: National School Librarian Day
- April 6-10: National Assistant Principal's Week
- April 8: HCBPE School Tours, 10:00 a.m. at Hendersonville Elementary, Dana Elementary, Flat Rock Middle School
- April 9: Superintendent Teacher Advisory Council, Central Office, 3:30 p.m.
Superintendent Parent Advisory Council, Central Office, 5:30 p.m.
- April 11: HCPS Job Fair, 9:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m. at North Henderson High-(Hiring for all positions within the HCPS Family)
- April 16: NC Scholars Luncheon, 11:30 a.m., Blue Ridge Conference Hall
- April 23: 2025 HCEF Education Celebration, 5:30 p.m., Blue Ridge Community College
- April 24: Special Olympics of Henderson County Spring Games, 9:30 a.m. at East Henderson High School (rain date May 1st)

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Mr. Blair Craven moved that the meeting be adjourned. Mrs. Beth Campbell seconded the motion. *(Unanimously approved at 6:46 p.m.)*

Minutes approved: April 13, 2026