ASHEVILLE CITY BOARD OF EDUCATION WORK SESSION

Administrative Offices - Board Room
Monday, August 3, 2026 at 5:00 PM

BE IT REMEMBERED: The Asheville City Board of Education met in a regularly called session on Monday, August 3, 2026, at 5:00 PM at the Administrative Offices - Board Room at 85 Mountain Street, Asheville, North Carolina, where and when the following business was transacted.

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1. MEETING OPENING

1.1 CALL TO ORDER - Board Chair, Sarah Thornburg

5:04 PM

Equity Statement:*In Asheville City Schools we are committed to equity and anti-racist policies for all students and staff to learn and thrive. We recognize that our positions come with power, responsibility, and public service for the entire ACS community. We will model our commitment to equity through our practices and decisions. During this meeting, we invite a pause if harm has taken place, a moment to name the harm, and space to practice repair.*

Moment of Silence & Community Remembrance

Board Chair Thornburg called for a moment of silence in remembrance of Asheville City Schools graduates Marques Davis Jr. and Lamarius Jones, who tragically lost their lives, and in support of others who were injured in a recent act of community violence. The Board paused to extend its deepest condolences and support to the affected families and the broader school community.

1.2 QUORUM DETERMINATION - Board Chair, Sarah Thornburg

Sarah Thornburg
Rebecca Strimer
Pepi Acebo
Liza Kelly
Amy Ray - Absent
George Sieburg
Jesse Warren

1.3 APPROVAL OF AGENDA - Board Chair, Sarah Thornburg

Motion to Amend the Agenda and include three items for consensus at the end of the agenda. There is no formal vote required.

1. **Board Information Requests:** extensive information requests made by individual board members to the Superintendent will be evaluated by the full Board at the end of meetings to determine whether to formally direct staff to fulfill the request.
2. **Meeting Schedule Adjustment:** Added a discussion to reach consensus on rescheduling the November 9th meeting due to a conflict with the North Carolina School Board Association (NCSBA) Annual Conference.
3. Discuss the location of the September Board Retreat.

Moved by: Liza Kelly; seconded by: George Sieburg

Aye: George Sieburg, Sarah Thornburg, Rebecca Strimer, Jesse Warren, Liza Kelly, and Pepi Acebo

Absent: Amy Ray

The motion passed 6-0

2. POSSIBLE ACTION/CONSENT ITEMS FOR THE NEXT REGULAR BOARD MEETING

2.1 Student Releases to Buncombe County Schools - Tanya Presha, Special Assistant to the Superintendent

Consent

2.2 Beginning Teacher - Dr. Mark Dickerson, Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources, and April Collins, Director of Recruitment and Induction

Consent

Beginning Teacher Support Plan Memo

- **Presentation of State-Mandated Beginning Teacher Support Plan:** The Board reviewed updates to the Beginning Teacher Support Plan presented by April Collins, Director of Teacher Recruitment and Induction. The plan incorporates State Board of Education revisions defining Beginning Teacher levels (BT1–BT3) by classroom experience and adding DPI survey requirements.
- **Mentor Duties and Consent Agenda Placement:** Following discussion regarding mentor selection, workload, and Title II-funded stipends, the Board reached consensus to place the Beginning Teacher Support Plan on the upcoming consent agenda for approval. Future potential adjustments to mentor compensation or duties could be explored through district staffing workgroups and MCC input.
- **Information Request:** Staff will provide the Board with a three-year retention report on beginning teachers.

3. DISCUSSION ITEMS

3.1 Budget Updates - Heidi Kerns, Chief Financial Officer

FY 27 Budget Update

Budget and Payroll Updates 2026-2027 ACS Recommended Budget

- **Payroll & Compensation Schedules:**

    - Staff eligible for legislated pay raises will receive them in August. Employees with later contract start dates will receive their first checks in September.
    - Legislated bonuses for qualifying staff are scheduled for an October payout.
    - All district employees are now aligned on formalized salary schedules (temporary or permanent).
    - **Bonus Threshold Guidance:** Per state rules, the $65,000 threshold for bonus eligibility ($1,750 vs. $1,000) must be calculated using base pay plus local supplement. As a result, some staff may exceed the limit and receive the lower tier.
- **Hourly Classifications & Administrative Salary Scales:**
    - **Hourly Pay:** Adopted simplified, word-based titles for hourly salary tiers to eliminate state code confusion. Adjustments reflect a minimum 3% raise or a $1.00/hour increase across all positions.
    - **Principal & Central Office Schedules:** Principal schedules match state guidelines. Central Office adjustments reflect FLSA salaried-to-hourly transitions, phased-out tier levels, and a newly separated, legally required Finance Officer pay tier.
    - **Hold Harmless Track:** Staff on this track receive standard state annual raises (e.g., 3%) until experience step scales catch up to or exceed their salary.
    - **Stipends:** District stipends, including middle and high school athletic/coaching supplements, are undergoing further standardization.
- **State & Local Revenue Updates:**
    - **Local Tax Rate:** Buncombe County adjusted the ACS supplemental tax rate to 11.75 cents to offset revaluation shifts and maintain flat local revenue.
    - **State Allotments:** State funding allotments increased by over $2 million (projections ongoing to verify full coverage of raises). The State Teacher Supplement ($800–$900 per teacher) was restored for a June payout.
    - **Grants:** SILSA secured additional supplemental funding (PRC 055) for Cooperative Innovative High Schools (net gain of ~$170,000), funding a dual-enrollment liaison position hired via AB Tech. CEEP and Fresh Fruits & Veggies grants were re-awarded to Hall Fletcher and Ira B. Jones.
- **Legislative & Policy Adjustments:**
    - The State textbook commission and warehouse have been eliminated; instructional materials carryover will be capped after 3 years.
    - Legislative delays to principal growth-based pay changes (moving to semi-annual bonuses in January) are being mitigated locally by finance to prevent monthly check reductions.

RECOMMENDED BUDGET OVERVIEW

The Board reviewed key recommendations for the upcoming fiscal budget, which prioritizes staff compensation, benefits coverage, and targeted academic supports while maintaining operational stability:

- **Compensation & Raises:** Includes historic raises for beginning teachers, general

certified staff raises of 5.5%–18% (7%–19% including bonuses), a minimum $1.00/hour increase (3%+ raise) for non-certified staff with pay table corrections, and prorated October bonuses for all staff. Universal salary schedules and increased local supplements (frozen at 2026–2027 levels starting in 2027–2028) were also outlined.

- **Benefits & Staffing Allocations:** Covers state-mandated increases for health insurance ($8,500 to $8,925) and retirement contribution rates (24.67% to 26.10%). Staffing will continue using standard allotment formulas while adding strategic leadership-prioritized roles.
- **Academic Programs & Operations:** Directs funding toward expanded summer, afterschool, and Saturday school programs; maintains level funding for departmental/school supplies and contracts; and continues covering operational deficits in Preschool and School Nutrition programs.

ACADEMIC PROGRAMS & ELECTIVE STAFFING

Dr. Fehrman presented an update on academic elective programs and staffing models:

- **Orchestra Program Discontinuation:** Administration confirmed the discontinuation of the orchestra program due to unsustainable enrollment numbers, despite a minor increase (13–14 students) over the past year.
- **Staffing Rationale & Outreach:** Elective staffing relies on a baseline ratio of 1 teacher per 150 students, with extra allotments for music based on direct enrollment. Leadership is partnering with the Youth Symphony Orchestra to provide external music opportunities for affected students.

3.2 Board Calendar Review - Sarah Thornburg, Board Chair

- **September Retreat:** Review of Student Achievement Data *(Requested by Jesse)*.
- **September Work Session:** Staff Working Conditions Survey results *(Board)*; District Enrollment Report & Out-of-District policy review *(Requested by Pepi / Board)*.
- **October Meeting:** William Randolph School programming update *(Requested by Amy)*.
- **November Meeting:** Pre-K Program Expansion Plan *(Requested by Pepi)*.
- **December Work Session:** Swearing-in timeline and onboarding protocols for new Board members *(Board)*.
- **March Retreat:** Mid-year Student Achievement Data review *(Requested by Jesse)*.
- **Ongoing & Flexible Schedule:**
    - Instructional Framework & Screen Time Policies *(Requested by Liza & Pepi)*.
    - School Nutrition Operations & Contracting Options *(Requested by Liza)*.
    - Beginner Teacher Mentorship & Retention Quarterly Updates *(Requested by Jesse)*.
    - Joint Capital Advisory Committee County Updates *(Requested by George / Board)*.

3.3 School Mental Health Report and Plan - Kim Robinson, Executive Director of Student Services

ACS School Mental Health Plan Executive Summary

Kim Robinson presented the 2025–2026 Annual School Mental Health Plan:

- **State Framework & Compliance:** The plan outlines district frameworks for prevention, intervention, crisis response, and mental health service access. The required annual submission deadline to the state is September 15, along with three supplementary surveys.
- **Staff Mental Health Support:** District staff receive 4 free, confidential counseling sessions annually through the Employee Assistance Network (EAN) plus external clinician referrals. EAN serves 30–40 employees per year.
- **Service Providers & Staffing:**
    - *Active School Providers:* Appalachian (Asheville High School), Blue Ridge Health (Middle School), Thrive Mental Health (new contract), and MAHEC (High & Middle School; currently filling a clinician vacancy).
    - *Vacancies & Expansion:* Partner *Your Next Chapter* has a clinician vacancy; two additional providers are undergoing cabinet review.
    - *District Staffing:* An additional school social worker position is actively posted for immediate (ASAP) hire.
- **Community Violence Prevention Network:** ACS maintains active representation with the network (meeting monthly on Thursdays at *My Daddy Taught Me That*), collaborating with Umoja and community health workers to support students in and out of school.

4. INFORMATION ITEMS

4.1 **Contracts/MOUs** - Dr. Kim Dechant, Chief of Staff

4.2 First Read Policy - Dr. Kim Dechant, Chief of Staff

Policy Code: 1310/4002 Parental Involvement

Policy Code: 2330 Board Meeting Agenda

Policy Code 2340: Parliamentary Procedures

Policy Code 3225/4312/7320: Technology Responsible Use

Policy Code 4318: Use of Wireless Communication Devices

Policy Code 4130: Discretionary Admission

Policy Code 4342: Student Searches

Policy Code 5071/7351: Electronically Stored Information Retention

Policy Code 6220: Operation of School Nutrition Services

Policy Code 7130: Licensure

Policy Code 7325: Video and Audio Recordings by Employees

Information Only

Procedure Code: 6350-P Use of District Owned Vehicles

Procedure Code: 4140-P Admission of Foreign Exchange Students

The attendance procedure will be presented once updated and will be for information only.

4.3 Handling Information Requests from Board Members & Truancy Data - Board Chair, Sarah Thornburg

- **Policy & Process Review:** The Board discussed its established protocol regarding board member requests for information. If a request is deemed a major project, it requires a majority vote from the Board to direct Superintendent Fehrman and staff to allocate resources to fulfill it.
- **Specific Request:** Board Member Pepi requested detailed data regarding truancy charges (including school grade, EC statistics, demographics, and prior intervention processes).
- **Outcome:** The Board did not reach a majority to direct staff to generate the requested dataset. Instead, consensus was reached to have Superintendent Fehrman address attendance and truancy scope, data, and initiatives during the upcoming September board retreat.

4.4 November 9th Regular Meeting Date Adjustment - Board Chair, Sarah Thornburg

- **Conflict:** The regularly scheduled November 9th meeting conflicts with the North Carolina School Boards Association (NCSBA) Annual Conference (Nov 9–11).
- **Outcome:** Consensus was reached to move the November regular board meeting to November 16th. The Board will formally vote to amend the meeting calendar at its next meeting.

4.5 September 22nd Board Retreat Meeting Location - Dr. Maggie Fehrman, Superintendent

Discussion: Board members debated holding the September 22nd retreat off-site (Western Regional Education Service Alliance / WRESA) versus in the central office board room. Opinions varied regarding informal collaboration space off-site versus location predictability and live-streaming accessibility at the central office.

- **Outcome:** The Board confirmed by majority to proceed with the off-site location at Western Regional RESA as originally scheduled and advertised. In addition, school board candidates have been invited to attend.

5. CLOSED SESSION - Board Chair, Sarah Thornburg

7:36 PM

The Chair will entertain a motion for the Board of Education to enter into a closed session pursuant to G.S. 143-318.11 for the following purposes:

- **Under subsection (a)(1) to prevent the disclosure of privileged and confidential personnel information pursuant to G.S. 115C-319-321;**
- **Under subsection (a) (3) to discuss matters protected by the attorney-client privilege.**

AGENDA ITEMS

5.1 Personnel Report - August

5.2 Attorney Client Matters

6. FUTURE MEETINGS/ANNOUNCEMENTS -

Board Chair, Sarah Thornburg

Regular Meeting

Monday, August 10, 2026

Administrative Offices - Board Room

Work Session Meeting

Monday, August 31, 2026

Administrative Offices - Board Room

Regular Meeting

Monday, September 14, 2026

Administrative Offices - Board Room

Special Called Work Session Open Meeting -Board Retreat

Thursday, September 22, 2026

Western Region Education Service Alliance - WRESA

Building 200, Suite 206, Ridgefield Court

Asheville, NC 28806

Special Called Closed Session Meeting

Thursday, September 24, 2026

Administrative Offices - Training Room

2026-2027 ACS Board of Education Meeting Schedule

7. ADJOURNMENT - Board Chair, Sarah Thornburg

7:09 PM

7.1 Adjourn Meeting

Motion to adjourn the meeting.

Moved by: Rebecca Strimer; seconded by: George Sieburg

Dr. Maggie Fehrman

Dr. Maggie Fehrman,
Superintendent

Sarah Thornburg

Board Chair, or Designee

Asheville City Schools WORK SESSION, 03 Aug 2026