ASHEVILLE CITY BOARD OF EDUCATION REGULAR MEETING

Administrative Offices - Board Room

Monday, August 10, 2026 at 5:00 PM

BE IT REMEMBERED: The Asheville City Board of Education met in a regularly called session on Monday, August 10, 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.

Page

1. REGULAR MEETING

1.1 CALL TO ORDER - Board Chair, Sarah Thornburg

5:01 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.*

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 PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE - Board Chair, Sarah Thornburg

1.4 APPROVAL OF AGENDA - Board Chair, Sarah Thornburg

Motion to amend the agenda.

Draft Minutes: Motion by Board Member Pepi to remove the draft meeting minutes entirely from the agenda failed. A follow-up request to remove the draft minutes from the Consent Agenda for separate review passed (designated as Item 5.1).

Moved by: Pepi Acebo; seconded by: Liza Kelly

Aye: George Sieburg, Sarah Thornburg, Rebecca Strimer, and Jesse Warren

Nay: Liza Kelly and Pepi Acebo

Absent: Amy Ray

The motion passed 4-2

Agenda Release Compliance: Board Member Pepi Acebo requested the board clerk record that the meeting agenda was released on Friday afternoon, which did not meet the 4-day advance notice requirement specified by board policy.

Orchestra Program: Motion by Board Member Liza Kelly to amend the agenda to add a discussion regarding the Orchestra Program(designated as Item 5.2).

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. GOOD NEWS -Dr. Kim Dechant, Chief of Staff

1. Tracey Barrett, NC History Teacher of the Year!
2. Radio Free Europe - REM Benefit Show for AMS
3. Lauren Kaye, Educator of Excellence ARC Award!
4. FAFSA Completion
5. Summer Programming
6. Congratulations to John Moody, Asheville High Computer Science Teacher, who has been named a state finalist for the prestigious 2027 INCAT Teacher of the Year award!
7. Bring on the Joy! United for Youth Community Event
8. Congratulations to Rodney Workman! APP State Rhododendron Society
9. Welcome New Employees!

3. PUBLIC COMMENTS - Board Chair, Sarah Thornburg

Public Comment Guidelines

In-Person and Virtual Public Comment Guidelines can be found by clicking the link above.

The Board of Education greatly appreciates your interest in the Asheville City Schools (ACS) and we welcome your comments to the Board. Please be mindful of the following guidelines (per policy 2310):

Personnel and student matters are confidential and are therefore not appropriate for public comment. If you have a concern about an employee or a student matter, please contact or see the superintendent after the meeting.

3.1 In-Person Public Comment

1. Helen Charbonnpau
2. Jennifer A
3. James Nash
4. Stephanie Quinn

5. Allison Black
6. Beth Magill
7. Alan Williams
8. Jeff Thompson
9. Hughes Bailey
10. Eric Frahm
11. Sharon Price
12. Victoria Evan Abbene
13. Gayle Krauiee
14. Steven Honigberg
15. Daniel Shetley
16. Simone Johnston
17. Kate Bryant
18. Jenne Jaffe
19. Xavier Ferdon

4. CONSENT ITEMS - Board Chair, Sarah Thornburg

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

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

Beginning Teacher Support Plan Memo

4.3 2026-2027 Board of Education Meeting Schedule Change - Sarah Thornburg, Board Chair

Copy of Updated BOE: Meeting Schedule 2026-2027

4.4 Personnel Report - August

Motion to approve the Consent Items as presented.

Moved by: Rebecca Strimer; seconded by: George Sieburg

Aye: George Sieburg, Sarah Thornburg, Rebecca Strimer, and Jesse Warren

Nay: Liza Kelly and Pepi Acebo

Absent: Amy Ray

The motion passed 4-2

5. ACTION ITEMS - Board Chair, Sarah Thornburg

5.1 Draft Minutes

WORK SESSION - Jun 01 2026 - Minutes

Closed Session Minutes - June 1, 2026

REGULAR MEETING - Jun 08 2026 - Minutes

SPECIAL CALLED OPEN MEETING with a CLOSED SESSION - Jun 29 2026 - Minutes

SPECIAL CALLED OPEN MEETING - Jun 30 2026 - Minutes

Motion on action item

Moved by: Rebecca Strimer; seconded by: George Sieburg

Aye: George Sieburg, Sarah Thornburg, Rebecca Strimer, and Jesse Warren

Nay: Liza Kelly and Pepi Acebo

Absent: Amy Ray

The motion passed 4-2

6. Discussion & Action on the Strings/Orchestra Program 8

August 2026 Superintendent's Board Report (3).pdf

- **Administrative Staff Review & Historical Context:**
  - District Leadership (Dr. Fehrman) provided a timeline and background regarding the strings program evaluation, which originally began in April 2025 due to low enrollment.
  - *Staffing Allotments:* Staffing allotment formulas earned ~6 FTE positions across middle and high school music programs, while 7 positions were currently staffed. Building principals exercised flexibility in allocating allotments. No request for additional allotment points for strings was made.
  - *Clarifications:* Administration clarified that the program was not eliminated to clear space for a different music program.
- **Board Discussion:**
  - *Personnel Concerns:* Board Member Pepi raised concerns about public discussion of confidential personnel information. Board Chair Thornburg advised against discussing specific employee personnel details in open session.
  - *Notice & Lead Time:* Board Member Pepi contended that late district notice regarding program changes hampered recruitment efforts for the upcoming year. Board Member Thornburg noted that public discussions and notice regarding the viability of the strings program had been ongoing for over a year.
  - *Allotment Formula Critiques:* Board Members Pepi and Liza Kelly raised concerns regarding the 1:150 allotment formula, arguing that averaging 50 students per class is unworkable for specialized electives like strings or art, and that student/programmatic needs should supersede strict formulas.
  - *Budgetary & Administrative Roles:* Board Member Rebecca noted that principals face difficult choices in stewarding fiscal resources when staffing above earned allotments, particularly when balancing classified staff compensation raises. Board Member Thornburg stressed that line-item operational scheduling and elective offerings fall under principal and administrative authority rather than direct board oversight.
  - *Program Interdependence & Arts Support:* Board Member Jesse expressed a

desire for community and school collaboration to integrate band and orchestra students. Board Members emphasized the critical role of arts education in student belonging and stressed the importance of disaggregating enrollment data to ensure equitable access across demographic groups.

Board Member Liza Kelly made a motion to maintain the orchestra/strings program at both the middle and high school levels for an additional year while leaning on community partnerships and exploring options to build long-term sustainability.

Moved by: Liza Kelly; seconded by: Pepi Acebo

Aye: George Sieburg, Liza Kelly, and Pepi Acebo

Nay: Sarah Thornburg, Rebecca Strimer, and Jesse Warren

Absent: Amy Ray

The motion failed to pass due to a tie vote (3-3, with 1 member absent). 3-3

Board Member Jesse clarified his opposition to mandating a full-year requirement on administration given mid-year scheduling constraints.

7. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT -Dr. Fehrman

August 2026 Superintendent's Board Report (3).pdf

Dr. Fehrman shared information on the following:

- **Strategic Plan Updates**
  - Vision Statement
  - Mission Statement
  - ACS Strategy Map
  - Cross-Functional Accountability Team (CFAT)
  - Priority Student Outcomes
- **2026-2031 Strategic Plan Quarterly Update Overview**
  - Phases of Implementation
  - Critical Initiatives
  - Implementation Highlights
- **EPIC Interns**
- **Current Vacancies**

8. BOARD CHAIR COMMENTS

Chair Thornburg shared the following:

- **Inter-Agency Quarterly Meetings:** The Chair reported that leadership (Chair, Vice Chair, and Superintendent/County Manager) from Asheville City Schools, Buncombe County Schools, and Buncombe County Commissioners will resume quarterly joint meetings to maintain ongoing communication and collaboration on funding allocations.
- **Condolences:** The Board extended condolences to the families of two district alumni who passed away in July, thanking district staff and board members who attended recent visitations and services.
- **Board Governance & Public/Personnel Complaints:**
  - **Policy Reference & Process:** Referenced Policy 1740 (Student and Parent Grievance Procedure), Policy 1742 (Responding to Complaints), and Policy 2120 (Code of Ethics

for School Board Members). The Chair clarified that as a governance body, the Board routes student, parent, and employee complaints directly to the Superintendent and district leadership rather than independently investigating or acting on individual personnel decisions.
    - **Confidentiality & Transparency:** Reaffirmed that student and personnel matters are strictly confidential by law and discussed solely in closed session. The Board and Superintendent will not address public comment or emails regarding individual employees in open session, though the Board remains committed to providing updates on accountability efforts where legally permissible.
- **Superintendent Evaluation & Strategic Alignment:**
    - **Leadership Transition:** Noted the Board's evolution alongside Superintendent Maggie Fehrman since her hiring in Summer 2023, transitioning from onboarding support to executing the district's comprehensive Strategic Plan.
    - **Evaluation Tool:** The Superintendent's annual evaluation will align directly with Strategic Plan goals, focusing on equitable student outcomes, school culture and climate, staff recruitment/retention, and sustainable financial/operational practices. Performance reviews will occur in closed session.

9. ANNOUNCEMENTS/FUTURE MEETINGS -

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

10. ADJOURNMENT - Board Chair, Sarah Thornburg

7:09 PM

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

Strings Program

1. Examining the viability of the strings program started in April of 2025
2. Met with Strings Director in June 2025 to discuss ideas for supporting recruitment
    a. Reduced course load to provide during the day time for enhanced recruitment
    b. Additional resources offered to support efforts
3. Follow up meeting was held in July 2025
4. Check in was scheduled for October 2025, Strings Director was a no show and didn't requests to reschedule
5. Unaware of any additional efforts made to coordinate to grow the program
6. School Board also discussed this publicly during BOE meetings

Asheville Middle School Music Program Enrollment Numbers

Program	6th Grade	7th Grade	8th Grade	Total
Band	68	86	68	222
Chorus	49	18	30	97
Strings	14	13	12	39

High School Music Program Enrollment

Program	Enrolled Students
Chorus	35
Piano	22
Music Appreciation / History of Rock	43
Band Fall	164
Band Spring	160
Music Theory	11
Music Leadership	4
Rising Strings numbers for 26-27	14
Total	453

Music Department Staff

Middle School (4 positions)

- Band: Anna Bulluck and Tina Robinette
- Chorus: Kristin Mills McClellan
- Strings: Franklin Keel

High School (3 positions)

- Band: Joe Figliolo and Rodney Workman
- Chorus, Piano, and Music Appreciation: Jennifer Nicholson

Earned allotments for music teachers are 3.05 at AMS and 3.1 at AHS/SILSA, for a total allotment of 6.15, and we currently have 7 music teachers on staff between the two schools.

The decision to not offer strings was made in collaboration with both the high school and middle school principals.

Asheville City Schools

Superintendent's Report
August 2026



Strategic Plan Updates

Vision Statement

Our vision is to build a joyful, innovative district that supports individual success and strengthens our entire community. Our Cougar Pride is evident in the effective collaboration between students, interactive curriculum, and enriching environment that sets us up for success in school and the future. Through creativity, cultural uplift, and student leadership, we will create effective learning experiences for every student and faculty member in our district and beyond. Employing accessible policies, resources, and learning environments will provide clear pathways toward lifelong growth and success for all.



Mission Statement

Asheville City Schools is unified in our mission to ensure that every student feels they belong, engages in meaningful, challenging, and relevant learning experiences, and graduates on time with the skills, knowledge, and characteristics to pursue their passions and create positive change.



ACS Strategy Map



	1	2	3	4
FOCUS	**Climate and Culture**	**Student Outcomes**	**Staff Recruitment, Retention, and Development**	**Operations and Finance**
THEME	**Stronger Relationships, Stronger Public Schools, Stronger Community**	**Equitable Student Outcomes**	**Premier District For Exceptional Talent**	**Sustainable Stewardship for Student Success**
OBJECTIVE	Asheville City Schools will foster a culture of belonging through clear professional communication, consistent expectations, and authentic trust based relationships that engage and support students, staff, families, and community partners in strengthening student learning and well-being.	Every ACS scholar will demonstrate academic achievement through critical thinking, problem-solving, and clear communication as we eliminate performance disparities and close the achievement gap by implementing data driven, differentiated instruction and individualized interventions to ensure every student meets or exceeds grade level proficiency standards.	Asheville City Schools is committed to building and sustaining a diverse, high-caliber workforce. We attract, hire, and retain exceptional educators while fostering a culture where every employee can grow, lead, and advance within the district.	Build a sustainable, standardized, and resilient district operating model, supported by strong infrastructure, shared training and documentation, data-driven accountability, and strategic partnerships, to ensure consistent, reliable services for staff and students beyond reliance on individual roles.
CRITICAL INITIATIVES	1. **Trusting Relationships:** ACS will cultivate a culture of belonging by fostering authentic, trust-based relationships among students and staff, ensuring every individual feels valued, heard, and supported in a safe and inclusive learning environments. 2. **Communication:** We will establish and maintain consistent expectations with professional communication systems that promote alignment, trust, and engagement among students, staff, and the broader community.	1. **Character:** Every ACS scholar will develop habits, mindsets, and skills necessary for lifelong success. 2. **Mastery of Knowledge and Skills:** Every ACS scholar will demonstrate achievement through critical thinking, problem solving, and clear communication. 3. **High-Quality Work:** Every ACS scholar will produce high-quality work that reflects perseverance, critical thinking, and pride in their learning.	1. **Attract:** ACS will develop a robust compensation package for all employees and enhance our recruitment strategies. 2. **Advance:** ACS will build a comprehensive system that develops, supports, and sustains high-quality staff by creating clear pathways for professional opportunities, leadership, and long-term career success. 3. **Achieve**: We will create a high-impact, cohesive professional learning system that strengthens instructional practice, supports all staff, and positions ACS as a model district for professional learning.	1. **Strategic Resource Alignment**: We will implement a clear decision-making and reflection process to align funding and resources to district priorities, student essentials, and measurable impact on equitable student outcomes. 2. **Safety Infrastructure and Security Upgrades:** ACS will strengthen safety systems, security measures, and facility protections to support equitable, safe, and secure learning environments across the district. 3. **Facilities Needs Assessment Implementation:** We will use the outcomes of the Facility Needs Assessment to guide future facility and operational improvements based on need, sustainability, and equitable access.

CROSS-FUNCTIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY TEAM

- Stakeholders from a cross-section of areas in our community
- Quarterly Meetings to review progress on the strategic plan and student data
- Communication Support
- Members*
  - Bettie Teasley - AHS Parent / Policy Researcher
  - Sara Toohey - LSH Parent / Small Business Owner
  - Cice Weston - Christina Avey Learning Center
  - Jen/Landon Ward - UNCA / Parents
  - Dana French - AMS Parent / BC Helene Recovery Team
  - Kate Shem - AMS/SILSA Parent / FACS
  - Blair Johnston - AMS Principal
  - Chandra Robinson - CLX IA
  - Carson Bridges - ACAE
  - Tanya Presha - Special Assistant to the Superintendent
  - Maggie Fehrman - Superintendent
  - Copland Rudolph - ACSF
  - Chris Gordon - Retired ACS Educator
  - Ella Santos - HACA



**Students and several elected officials will join in September*

Priority Student Outcomes

Asheville City Schools

To advance the district's ambitious student outcome objective, we must hold ourselves accountable for advancing opportunities, access, and outcomes for every student by meeting these prioritized student outcomes.

Mastery of Knowledge and Skills

- Academic Achievemeng Goals

COLLEGE, CAREER, AND LIFE-READY (HQW)

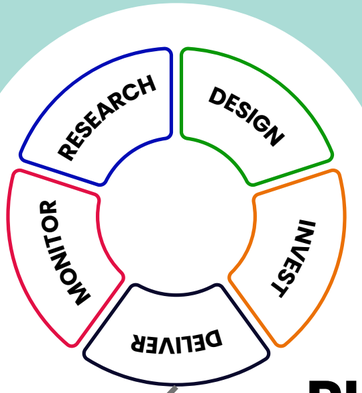
- College and Career readiness goals

CHARACTER

- Attendance and Discipline Goals

2026-2031 Strategic Plan
Quarterly Update Overview

Asheville City Schools



PHASES OF IMPLEMENTATION

RESEARCH
All strategic plan work begins with research to identify best practices and options for how to move the work forward.

DESIGN
After researching possible solutions and options, we use what we have learned to identify solutions that align with our mission, theory of action, and create a plan for impmlementation

INVEST
Projects identified as being in the “invest” phase are in the process of receiving allocated funding or hiring new staff to support the implementation.

DELIVER
Once a project is implemented in the district, we identify its status as “delivered”. Implementation may start with a pilot before moving to district-wide implementation

MONITOR
We will collect data and analyze results of all projects to assess implementation fidelity, impact results, and sustainability.

CRITICAL INITIATIVES

Critical Initiatives are the key projects that will be implemented to meet our strategic objectives.

IMPLEMENTATION HIGHLIGHTS

Each quarter, we will share highlights from our most current work and explain the impact we are having on students, families, schools, and our community.

2026-2031 Strategic Plan
Quarterly Update

Asheville City Schools



Climate and Culture

Trusting Relationships

Asheville City Schools will cultivate a culture of belonging by fostering authentic, trust-based relationships among students and staff, ensuring every individual feels valued, heard, and supported in a safe and inclusive learning environment.

RESEARCH AND DESIGN

- Descriptions of what the team is in the process of researching and designing

INVEST AND DELIVER

- Description of what investments are needed for the initiative and implementation kick off

MONITOR

- Initiatives that are being monitored and links to data collected on impact

QUARTER 1

SEPTEMBER

2026

EXAMPLE

EPIC Interns





CURRENT VACANCIES

EC	EC Inclusion Floater (Jones/Claxton) EC Resource Teacher (Hall Fletcher) EC Self-Contained Teacher (Asheville High) EC Behavior Support Teacher (Herring)
CTE	Early Childhood Education Teacher (Asheville High) Family and Consumer Science Education Teacher (Asheville High) Computer Science/Cyber Secruity (Asheville High) Marketing Education Teacher (Asheville High)
Technology	2-Digital Learning Coach (District) Media and Technology Assistant (AHS) Systems Admin II/Network Specialist (Central Office)
Dickson	Instructional Assistant
Hall Fletcher	5th Grade Teacher Instructional Assistant
Jones	Mathematics Instructional Support Specialist
William Randolph	Reading Interventionist (Part-Time) Middle School Math & Science Teacher (Middle School)


Discussion