

REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION OF THE COUNTY OF ROANE, HELD OCTOBER 21, 2025, AT 6:00 PM, AT ROANE COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL, SPENCER,

Present: Dennis Carpenter, Daris Harper, Jeffrey Mace, James Minney, Eileen Richardson

Absent: (none)

Meeting called to order by Jeffrey Mace (6:01 pm)

This meeting could be joined remotely. The public could join by calling 1-304-553-7794 and entering the provided conference ID or on Microsoft Teams using the provided link.

Presentations

1. Superintendent Spotlight

a. WEMS Tiger TV - Ashley Mills

Ms. Ashley Mills and students Jacob Parsons, Jordan Nichols, and Makynlee Patton from Walton Elementary Middle School presented their Tiger TV program, a student-led weekly news broadcast featuring announcements, weather, sports, and school events. The students shared how the project promotes communication and teamwork while keeping their school community informed. Board members commended the group for their creativity and professionalism.

2. Public Participation

Corrie Ota set the public participation sign-in sheet out at 5:45 pm and it was removed at 5:55 pm.

The following members of the public spoke:

Gabe Boggs, Justin Shears and Rachel Hays.

3. Policy 2322

a. Student Support Services - Counseling and Mental Health - Michelle Ash

Michelle Ash, Director of Student Support Services, presented an overview of the county's counseling and mental health programs, explaining that each school develops an annual counseling plan aligned with its mission and strategic goals, due by November 1. Counselors spend about 80% of their time serving students through individual and small group counseling, social-emotional lessons, and assessments, while also implementing required state trainings on topics such as suicide prevention, body safety, and substance abuse. Current supports include MOUs with OVP, KVC, Westbrook, and Mission West Virginia to provide therapy, training, and care coordination. The county's five counselors-Rebecca Lockhart, Sara Stricklen, Courtney Bowman, Melinda Parkins, and Jami Laughlin-were commended for their dedication and essential role in supporting student well-being.

b. Career and Technical Education Accreditation - Jennifer Hunt

Mrs. Hunt gave an update on the district's Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs, highlighting progress and goals for improvement. She reported that Roane County High School met or exceeded targets in participation (75.31%), concentration (34%), completion (19.55%), and work-based learning (10%), though performance fell slightly short at 62.22% compared to the 64% goal. Staffing endorsements reached 75%, below the 100% target. Current enrollment includes 106 students at Roane-Jackson Technical Center and 159 students in CTE courses at the high school, totaling 58.6% participation. Mrs. Hunt outlined plans to improve student outcomes

through NOCTI pretesting, stronger course pathways for completers, increased teacher certification, and expanded CTE opportunities at the middle school level.

4. Teacher of the Year and Service Personnel of the Year Recognition

Jackie Higginbotham, 1st Grade Teacher at Geary Elementary Middle School, was honored as the 2025 Roane County Schools Teacher of the Year, with recognition from the State Superintendent for her dedication and impact on students. Toney Deel, Custodian at Spencer Middle School, was named the 2025 Service Person of the Year. They were thanked for their service to Roane County Schools.

- a. Jackie Higginbotham, teacher, Geary Elementary Middle School
- b. Toney Deel, custodian, Spencer Middle School

Continuing Business

1. Update on Roane County Schools' State of Emergency

- a. Financial Update - Uriah Cummings, WVDE

Uriah Cummings, WVDE School Finance Officer, reported that the unaudited financial statements for FY25 showed a significant improvement from earlier projections. In February, the county had faced the possibility of a \$2.5 million deficit if no major adjustments were made. In response, the district implemented cost-saving measures, reduced certain services, and limited spending during the final months of the fiscal year. These actions helped stabilize the budget and mitigate the financial strain that had been anticipated earlier in the year.

As a result of these efforts, the final unaudited statements indicate the county ended the fiscal year with a deficit of approximately \$1.34 million-nearly half of the earlier projected shortfall. This amount has been reported to the West Virginia Department of Education and will undergo review by the county's independent audit firm. While still a deficit, officials described the outcome as positive news compared to earlier forecasts, crediting timely intervention and fiscal discipline for preventing the situation from worsening.

- b. Hearing Procedures - Howard Seufer, Bowles Rice

Howard Seufer of Bowles Rice gave an overview of the legal process for public hearings on proposed school closings and consolidations as required by West Virginia Code 18-5-13a and State Board Policy 6204, noting that one hearing must be held for each affected school before any board vote. He emphasized the importance of proper public notice, attendance by a quorum of board members, and accurate recording of proceedings. The hearings are intended solely for gathering input, with board members serving as listeners rather than respondents, and all questions directed to the Superintendent or designees. Seufer stressed the need to balance efficiency and transparency, explaining that many questions are repetitive and can often be addressed by referencing details in the official impact statement. He added that attendees may speak at multiple hearings if they wish and reiterated that hearings are subject to the same public access and decorum standards as board meetings. Each speaker will have a set time limit, and proceedings must be conducted in an orderly manner, with all input documented for submission to the State Board of Education. The final vote will be taken on November 6.

New Business for Consideration and Potential Action

1. 25-26 Second Month Certified Data Report

Enrollment declined from last year, with regular enrollment down 85 students and full-time equivalency (FTE) down 79, bringing the total to 1,537. Special education stayed nearly the same, Title I low-SES increased by 39, and homeless counts dropped by 24. Professional

staffing remained stable, but service personnel are 11 positions over formula limits, creating budget strain. Cuts cannot occur until personnel season, and next year's funding will be based on the current FTE. Original planning assumed 1,600 students, so deeper reductions may be needed, especially if closures accelerate enrollment loss.

2. Superintendent's Advisory Committee Members

As part of the strategic plan, the Superintendent created an Advisory Committee to gather input from diverse stakeholders. Members were nominated via a recommendation form and confirmed for participation. The committee will meet quarterly with email updates between sessions and focus on public perception, transparency, and strategic initiatives. Adult members include John Gray, Lora Matheney, Tye Ward, Dianna Carpenter, Jeff Tanner, Corena Dolan, Rachel Hays, Rick Mullen, Fred Hammack, Justin Shears, Holly Terrell, and Cari Ward, with a few pending confirmations. Student representatives from Roane County High School include seniors Thomas McIntyre, Emma Sloan, Lexi Mitchell; juniors Braxton Nichols, Anna Hayes, Natalie Mertz; sophomores Shaylee Burr, Nola Parsons; and freshmen Arabella Smith, Hayden Rector, Katherine Stump Cohen. Middle and elementary schools will provide informal student groups. The committee's purpose is to share perceptions, advise on initiatives, and strengthen climate, culture, and community engagement.

3. Superintendent's Quarterly Report

The Superintendent presented her quarterly report, highlighting departmental accomplishments and upcoming priorities. She noted that the district's state of emergency, declared in July due to a general fund deficit, continues to guide fiscal recovery efforts. The Finance Department has improved reporting timelines, and while the deficit has lessened, close monitoring of expenditures and revenues remains essential. Principals and departments are seeking savings, supported by strong grant management and continued "red line" budget oversight under state guidance.

She also reported progress in facilities and maintenance through cost-saving and safety initiatives, as well as professional growth among staff taking on new roles. The Superintendent added that schools have shown gains in achievement, attendance, and community engagement, including Spencer Elementary's removal from CSI status, and emphasized ongoing efforts toward efficiency, accountability, and next steps in the district's consolidation process.

4. 25-26 Board Meeting Dates - Second Half

Monthly regular board meeting dates were set for January - June 2026:

January - 8th and 22nd

February - 5th and 19th

March - 12th and 26th

April - 2nd and 23rd

May - 14th and 28th

June - 11th and 25th

A statutory meeting was also set for April 15th to set the levy rates.

5. Create After School SOAR positions (Grant Funded)

Motion by Dennis Carpenter and seconded by Daris Harper to approve. Motion carried. (9:10 pm)

- a. SOAR After School Lead Teacher

- b. SOAR After School Teacher
- c. SOAR After School Bus Driver

Consent Agenda - (Action)

Motion by James Minney and seconded by Daris Harper to approve the following consent agenda as recommended by Michelle Stellato, Superintendent. Motion carried. (9:36 pm)

- 1. Approval of minutes of regular board meeting on October 7, 2025
- 2. Finance
 - a. Transfers/supplements to the budget
 - b. Payments of bills as submitted; pre-approval to release checks not to exceed \$20,000 prior to the next board meeting
 - c. Financial Reports
- 3. Policies
- 4. Contract(s) / Bid(s) / Agreement(s)
 - a. Mountain State ESC MOU for bus driver training

- Withdrawn b.-----Faith Christian Academy MOU with RCHS for FBLA trip
- c. Nathaniel Perry - Contract for Technology Infrastructure Repair
 - d. 1 Student transportation contract

- 5. Field Trips
 - a. RCHS FBLA to Stonewall Resort in Roanoke, WV for Fall Leadership Conference (11/20/25-11/21/25)
 - b. WEMS 7th and 8th grade to The Greenbrier Bunker in White Sulphur Springs, WV (11/13/25)
- 6. Volunteers
 - a. Spencer Elementary School
 - i. Cindy Johnson and Julie Garrett
- 7. Student Transfers
 - a. 1 student transfer from Calhoun County Schools

Personnel Consent Agenda - (Action)

Motion by Dennis Carpenter and seconded by Eileen Richardson to approve the following personnel items as recommended by Michelle Stellato, Superintendent. Motion carried. (9:37 pm)

- 1. Resignation(s)
 - a. Howard, William - Assistant Coach, Boys Basketball (Spencer Middle School), effective September 26, 2025
 - b. Howard, William - Coach, Baseball (Spencer Middle School), effective September 26, 2025
 - c. Pauley, Mark - Digital Family Engagement Coordinator (Spencer Elementary School), effective October 16, 2025
 - d. O'Connell, Ian - Teacher / Music (Walton Elementary / Middle School), effective October 20, 2025
 - e. Wellings, Payton - LPN / Aide II (Spencer Middle School), effective October 28,

2025

2. Retirement(s)
 - a. Mullen, Richard - Bus Operator (Bus #24) (RCS - Operations), effective December 31, 2025
 - b. Mullen, Richard - Mechanic (multi-classified with Bus Operator) (RCS - Operations), effective December 31, 2025
3. New Employment(s)
 - a. Sinclair, Nancy - Aide / ECCAT (Spencer Elementary School), effective October 22, 2025
4. Extracurricular(s)
 - a. Smith, James - Assistant Coach, Girls Basketball (Auxiliary) (Walton Elementary / Middle School), effective October 22, 2025

Reports of Committees

1. Roane Jackson Technical Center Administrative Council (10/21/2025)

The brick has arrived and work has started on laying it, even though it's not the expected type. The team is eager to finish before bad weather. Students of the Month were recognized today: AM group included Ashton Harris, Lacey Whiting, Jace Miller, and Ava Martin; PM group included Cameron Pickens, Noah Smith, and Josie Cox. Preparations for building roof replacement are underway. A "Tech or Treat" event is scheduled for October 30, 2025, from 5-7 PM, and details will be shared on social media.

Superintendent's Remarks

October is Principal Appreciation Month. Principals were recognized for their service to our students.

As a reminder, public comment submissions for the hearing must include 6 copies and be received at the central office by Friday at noon. Upcoming public hearings (all at 5:00 PM) are scheduled as follows:

Oct 27 - Walton Elementary Middle School

Oct 28 - Geary Elementary Middle School

Oct 29 - Spencer Elementary School

Nov 3 - Spencer Middle School

Nov 4 - Roane County High School

Adjournment

1. Adjourn until the special board meeting on Monday, October 27, 2025, at 5:00 pm at Walton Elementary Middle School. The next regular board meeting is on Thursday, November 6, 2025, at 6:00 pm at Roane County High School.

Motion by Daris Harper and seconded by Eileen Richardson to approve. Motion carried. (9:41 pm)