Highland County School Board

Tentative Agenda

Thursday, November 13, 2025
Virtual / HHS Library
Closed Session - 6:00 p.m. ~ Business Meeting - 7:00 p.m.

1. CALL TO ORDER

A. Call to Order
B. Announcement and vote to enter closed session
Under the Code of Virginia § 2.2-3711, public bodies may hold closed sessions to discuss, consider, or interview of prospective candidates for employment; to discuss or consider admission or disciplinary matters; discuss or consider the acquisition or disposition of publicly held real property; protect the privacy of individuals in personal matters; or consultation with legal counsel.

2. CLOSED SESSION

3. OPENING

A. Reconvene from Closed Session
B. Moment of Silence
C. Pledge of Allegiance — *FFA*
D. Approval of the Agenda

4. SPECIAL RECOGNITIONS AND/OR PRESENTATIONS

A. FFA National Convention — *FFA*
B. Green House Update — *Mrs. Neil*
C. SOL Scores — *Mr. Lane*

5. PUBLIC COMMENT

Citizens are welcome to address the Board. Each individual speaker will be allowed three minutes for remarks and group representatives will be allowed five minutes. Issues or concerns involving personnel matters or naming individuals are not appropriate for the public comment setting.

6. ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

A. Elementary School Update — *Mr. Johnson*
B. High School Update — *Mr. Good*
C. Superintendent's Update — *Dr. Nycum*

7. CONSENT AGENDA*

A. Payment of November 13, 2025 - Vendor Bills
B. Approval of Board Meeting Minutes – October 9, 2025
C. Personnel Report

All School Board meetings may be recorded for accuracy of the minutes.

The HIGHLAND COUNTY School Board is committed to nondiscrimination with regards to sex, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, race, color, national origin, disability, religion, ancestry, age, marital status, pregnancy, childbirth or related medical conditions, military status, genetic information or any other characteristic protected by law. This commitment prevails in all of its policies and practices concerning staff, students, educational programs and services, and individuals and entities with whom the Board does business.

8. INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

A. HCEA Update

B. Calendar Items

- Friday, November 14th – Middle School Dance at 7pm
- Friday, November 21st – 8th Grade Exploring College Field Trip
- Tuesday, November 25th – Parent Teacher Partnership Meeting at 7pm, HES Library
- Wednesday, November 26th – Early Release at 1:00pm
- November 27th & 28th – Thanksgiving Break, School Closed
- Tuesday, December 2nd – Varsity Girls Basketball vs. WV School for Deaf, 5:30pm
- Friday, December 5th – Varsity Girls Basketball vs. Meadow Bridge, 6:30pm
- Tuesday, December 9th – Middle School Basketball vs. Parry McCluer, 5:30pm
- Thursday, December 11th – School Board Meeting, HHS Library at 7pm
- Friday, December 12th – Holiday Concert, HHS Gym at 6pm
- Thursday, January 8th – School Board Meeting, HHS Library at 7pm

9. ACTION ITEMS*

A. Appointment of Deputy Clerk of the School Board

B. Graduation Date Change – June 13th moved to June 6th *Mr. Good*

C. Governor's School Overnight Field Trips

10. BOARD COMMENTS

An opportunity for members of the board to make individual comments, share updates, or express viewpoints related to board matters. Comments are limited to board members only.

11. ADJOURNMENT

*Board Action Required

+Addendum Item

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HIGHLAND COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

SCHOOL BOARD MEETING

OCTOBER 9, 2025 ~ 7:00 P.M.

HHS LIBRARY - 244 MYERS MOON ROAD, MONTEREY, VA 24465

Board Members Present: Jason Wilfong, Sherry Sullenberger and Kenny Hodges
Administrative Staff Present: Superintendent: James "Nick" Nycum, High School Principal: Tim Good, Technology Director: Gary Lane, School Board Clerk: Tabitha Ulmer

AGENDA ITEM #1 CALL TO ORDER

A. Call to Order
   Mr. Wilfong called the meeting to order.
B. Announcement and vote to enter closed session
   Mr. Wilfong made a motion that the Highland County School Board go into closed session pursuant to VA Code § 2.2-3711 A.1 Discussion of personnel matters – discussion or evaluation of a specific employee or candidate for employment, teacher licensure update, A.2 student matters, and A.7 legal updates.
   Mr. Hodges seconded the motion, and the motion passed by the following vote: YES: Wilfong, Sullenberger, Hodges. Motion passed by a 3:0 vote.

AGENDA ITEM #2 CLOSED SESSION

Under the Code of Virginia § 2.2-3711, public bodies may hold closed sessions to discuss, consider, or interview of prospective candidates for employment; to discuss or consider admission or disciplinary matters; discuss or consider the acquisition or disposition of publicly held real property; protect the privacy of individuals in personal matters; or consultation with legal counsel.

AGENDA ITEM #3 OPENING

A. Reconvene from Closed Session
   Mr. Wilfong made a motion to return to regular session at 7:07pm and certify by recorded vote, that to the best of each member's knowledge only public business matters lawfully exempted from open meeting requirements were discussed by the Highland County School Board and such public business matters as were identified in the motion by which the closed meeting was convened.
   Mr. Hodges seconded the motion, and the motion passed by the following vote: YES: Wilfong, Sullenberger, Hodges. Motion passed by a 3:0 vote.
B. Moment of Silence
C. Pledge of Allegiance
   5th graders Brady Mullins and Liam Obaugh led the Pledge of Allegiance.
D. Approval of Agenda
   Mr. Wilfong made a motion to approve the October 9, 2025, amended agenda.
   Mr. Hodges seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

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AGENDA ITEM #4 SPECIAL RECONGNITON AND/OR PRESENTATIONS

A. National Honor Society Induction Recognition
Mr. Good read "The National Honor Society is about recognizing students who go above and beyond, not just in their academics, but in how they lead, serve, and show good character every day. Our members set a positive example for others, whether they're volunteering in the community (as a few did earlier this evening at the public library) helping at school events, or supporting their classmates. Being part of NHS gives them the chance to grow as leaders and to see the difference they can make in the world around them. This year, we have four new members joining six returning ones, making a strong and dedicated group often. We recently held our induction ceremony, welcoming parents, friends, and family of the new inductees for a meaningful celebration followed by light refreshments. Throughout the year, students will take part in activities that help them grow in different ways. Some of the projects we plan to continue from last year include helping with local library events, collaborating with DSS on food drives and other activities, fundraising within the school, sponsoring Angel Tree recipients, hosting fun Christmas activities for students, and helping clean up after the Maple Festival to keep our community beautiful. They'll also create something special for Teacher Appreciation Week and complete their own individual service hours. In addition, we are also sponsoring the first Attendance Raffle that we can hopefully continue in years to come. I'm incredibly proud of our NHS members and all they do to make a difference here at school and throughout our community. I am excited to see where they all are in a few years." Dr. Nycum and Chairman Wilfong then presented certificates of honor to Luke Baxter, Jack Herold, Peyton Neil, and Emma Brower.

AGENDA ITEM # 5 PUBLIC COMMENT

DaCane Sampson addressed the Board, stating that he has served as a coach for ten years and was recently terminated without explanation. He asked the Board to clarify the process used for selecting coaches, expressing concerns that the process appeared biased and was not properly advertised. Mr. Sampson questioned the qualifications required for coaching positions and noted that he had heard conflicting information. He shared that when players and parents ask why he is no longer coaching, he feels obligated to seek answers. Mr. Sampson emphasized that over the past two years, his position has been the only one affected, and he is seeking an explanation. He stated that the matter has been handled privately, but he is requesting a response for himself, the parents, and the players. Mr. Sampson also submitted a letter to the Board, requesting a response within ten days.

Lauren Sampson addressed the Board with concerns regarding the current attendance policy, questioning why it does not align with the guidelines outlined in the student handbook. She expressed concern about what qualifies as an excused absence when a child is ill, noting that it is not always necessary to take a child to the doctor. Mrs. Sampson stated that if the current policy remains in place, there may be fewer student-

athletes participating by spring. She described the policy as unreasonable, emphasizing that most parents do not take their child to the doctor on the first day of a fever, and she hopes to see changes made to the policy.

Jessy Wilfong addressed the Board, stating that she initially attempted to resolve her concerns at a lower level by speaking directly with her child's teacher. She clarified that her comments were solely her own and not representative of her husband's views due to his role on the Board. Mrs. Wilfong expressed concerns regarding her child's classroom, specifically noting that students were receiving zeros on in-class assignments. She stated that she was unaware of these grades until accessing PowerSchool and had not received graded work at home. Mrs. Wilfong said she was informed that her child was distracted and off task but that the teacher refused to respond to her inquiries. She emphasized that it is the teacher's responsibility to ensure that classwork is completed during instructional time. Additionally, she cited vague and inconsistent communication from the teacher, stating that messages were sometimes ignored or selectively answered. Mrs. Wilfong suggested that perhaps a classroom camera might help improve accountability. She also shared that when her child was sent to the office, Mr. Johnson addressed all of her questions professionally. However, she expressed concern that the teacher used her position and connections to intimidate others by referencing her mentor. Mrs. Wilfong concluded by stating that teachers should be held to high professional standards, accountability must be enforced, and that action needs to be taken.

Malory Brower addressed the Board and read from the Code of Conduct, noting that parents are to be notified if a teacher who is not fully qualified is instructing their child.

Lucy Adams, parent of a fourth-grade student and a substitute teacher for the division, addressed the Board regarding concerns with her child's classroom. She stated that her child had been told he would be permitted to retake a test but had not yet been given the opportunity to do so. Mrs. Adams noted that, despite notifying the teacher in advance of her child's absence and requesting work, no assignments were sent home. She described the teacher's responses as rude and brief, adding that the teacher told her to contact the principal or superintendent and that she would no longer communicate with her directly. Mrs. Adams shared that Mr. Johnson had reviewed the email exchanges and agreed the teacher's tone was unprofessional, assuring her the matter would be addressed upon his return from bereavement leave. She stated that the division's commitment to maintaining quality relationships among students, staff, and families, as outlined by HCPS, had been violated. Mrs. Adams offered to provide the Board with copies of the emails if requested. She further expressed concern that an unlicensed teacher was serving in this instructional role and was being mentored by a retired teacher whose license had expired. Mrs. Adams also reported that a volunteer had administered state testing to her child, questioning whether volunteers receive proper training for such responsibilities. She emphasized that she had not given permission for her child to work one-on-one with a volunteer. Mrs. Adams concluded by reading the unlicensed teacher's SOL pass rates from the previous year.

Betty Arbaugh addressed the Board to respond to Lucy Adams' concerns. She clarified that she was the volunteer mentioned and that the teacher conducted the testing. Mrs. Arbaugh stated that her role during the testing session was to remain in the classroom to ensure that students stayed on task and completed their assessments appropriately.

AGENDA ITEM #6 ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

A. Elementary School Update
B. High School Update

Mr. Good provided the Elementary update on behalf of Mr. Johnson, noting that benchmark testing will be completed by Friday and that VALLSS testing is underway and progressing well. He shared that the school year has started off strong and the staff looks forward to maintaining this positive momentum throughout the year. Looking ahead, the Book Fair is scheduled for the week of October 20, and Mrs. Sweeney is doing an excellent job preparing for the event. Additionally, planning is well underway for the Veterans Day program, which is shaping up to be a phenomenal event honoring our veterans.

The school year is off to a great start, with progress reports sent home last week and the after-school remediation program now underway to support students who need extra help or a quiet place to complete assignments. Middle and high school teachers are available Monday through Thursday until 4:30 p.m.

Mr. Good shared updates on Agriculture Education and FFA activities. The Junior Forestry and Hippology Teams recently competed at the State Fair, with the Hippology Team placing 6th out of 47 teams and Skylar placing 7th overall. The FFA Fruit and Bacon Sale is in progress, and eight students will attend the National FFA Convention in Indianapolis later this month. Greenhouse renovations are nearly complete, providing valuable learning spaces, and plans are underway for Agriculture Day in April and the Spring Plant Sale.

Dr. Nycum provided an attendance update, noting improved awareness and communication among families. He clarified that the attendance incentive program targets chronic absenteeism—defined as missing 18 or more days—while allowing flexibility for excused or pre-approved absences. Mr. Hodges added "This is a national problem. Not just our problem."

Fall sports are in full swing, with JV and Varsity volleyball teams competing against Parry McClure tonight for Senior Night. The final regular season home games will be held October 13, with the Pioneer District Tournament beginning the week of October 27.

C. Superintendent Update

Dr. Nycum shared upcoming dates and events, beginning with the October 13 Teacher Workday, during which staff will participate in division-wide professional development on identifying signs of human trafficking and reviewing school threat indicators and security protocols, with information provided by the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services. He extended appreciation to Sheriff Kelly and his staff for their continued support in maintaining school safety. On October 15, Dr. Nycum and Mrs. Obaugh will

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accompany several high school students to the Dream to Teach Conference at Bridgewater College. Dr. Nycum will also attend FAPT and CPMT meetings on October 20 at the public library and the Region V Superintendent's Meeting in Lovingston on October 21. From October 26–28, he will participate in the VASS Fall Conference in Richmond for statewide collaboration and professional learning. Looking ahead, November is designated as *Take Your Legislator to School Month*, and plans are underway to invite Delegate Chris Runion and Senator Mark Obenshain to visit Highland County schools. Additionally, November 4 will be a Teacher Workday for professional development and planning, with no school for students.

AGENDA ITEM # 7 CONSENT AGENDA*

A. Payment of October 9, 2025 – Vendor Bills
Mr. Hodges made a motion to approve the October 9, 2025 vendor bills. Mrs. Sullenberger seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

B. Approval of Meeting Minutes September 11, 2025
Mr. Hodges made a motion to approve the September 11, 2025 meeting minutes. Mrs. Sullenberger seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

C. Personnel Report+
The Board discussed the wording of the Hard Trades position.
Mr. Hodges made a motion to hold off on advertising that way until we have time to discuss it further. Mrs. Sullenberger second the motion and it passed unanimously.
Mrs. Sullenberger made a motion to approve the balance of the personnel report. Mr. Hodges seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

- Resignation of Special Ed. Instructional Aide – Mark Jaccard, 12/19/25
- Appointment of Substitute – Jolene Moyers, 10/10/25
- Appointment of Mentor Teacher & Sub – Jennifer Gardner, 10/1/25
- Appointment of Mentor Teacher – Jennifer Neil, 10/1/25
- Appointment of Mentor Teacher – Melody Moats, 10/1/25
- Appointment of Mentor Teacher – Lynn Leardi, 10/1/25
- Appointment of Mentor Teacher – Montana Hise, 10/1/25
- Appointment of Mentor Teacher – Brooke Springer, 10/1/25
- Appointment of Mentor Teacher – Megan Obuagh, 10/1/25
- Appointment of Mentor Teacher – Deborah Hodges, 10/1/25
- Appointment of Mentor Teacher – Mariam Lightner, 10/1/25
- Appointment of Boys Varsity Basketball Coach – Cole Armstrong
- Appointment of Boys Assistant Varsity Basketball Coach – Danny Hull
- Appointment of Boys Middle School Basketball Coach – Thomas Moore
- Appointment of Boys Volunteer Assistant Middle School Basketball Coach – DaCane Sampson
- Appointment of Girls Varsity Basketball Coach – Capitola Jackson
- Appointment of Girls Assistant Varsity Basketball Coach – Megan Botkin
- Appointment of Girls Middle School Basketball Coach – Beth McGuire

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- Appointment of Girls Volunteer Assistant Middle School Basketball Coach – Haley Terry
- Appointment of Dance/Cheer Coach – Ann Foster
- Appointment of Assistant Dance/Cheer Coach – Ashley Hutchinson
- Appointment of Winter Assistant Athletic Director – Bridget Nelson

D. Policies for Approval
- DJF - Purchasing Procedures
- JFC - Student Conduct
- KBA - Request for Public Records

Mr. Hodges made a motion to approve the policies as presented.
Mrs. Sullenberger seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

ACTION ITEMS #8 INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

A. HCEA Update

Mrs. Jones shared an update from the Highland County Education Association highlighting several recent classroom and school activities. The National Honor Society inducted four new members, some of whom assisted with setting up the Tiny Art Show at the public library earlier in the evening. Mrs. Jolley is planning enrichment field trips for students in the Gifted and Talented program, while Algebra II students learned the Quadratic Formula song to help reinforce their understanding of equations. Third graders have been enjoying music with Mr. Johnston, especially their performance of *America* for Dr. Nycum, and have shown great progress in keyboarding classes with Mrs. Springer. In Spanish class, students explored traditional clothing worn by indigenous groups and created their own MOLA-inspired paper designs. “No Tech Tuesdays” are off to a great start, with students embracing hands-on learning without the use of computers. The attendance initiative has also shown positive results, with fewer students leaving early and more absences being supported by doctor’s notes. Mrs. Jones concluded by expressing appreciation to Tabitha for sharing school activities on social media, helping the community stay connected with student achievements and events.

B. Mentorship Program

Dr. Nycum provided an overview of the mentorship program implemented at HCPS last week. He explained that several teachers are currently working toward licensure or teaching outside of their endorsement areas. All first- and second-year teachers at HCPS are included in this mentorship program, which was developed by Mrs. Springer. Dr. Nycum noted that mentor positions were first filled internally; however, due to the number of mentees, three former HCPS educators were invited to assist as mentors. He outlined the structure of the program, which includes weekly meetings and monthly classroom observations. Dr. Nycum commended Mrs. Ulmer for her efforts in keeping unlicensed teachers on track and added that mentors have also been asked to assist in monitoring these licensure requirements.

C. Attendance Update

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Dr. Nycum emphasized that he has been advised to involve the Office on Youth once a student reaches five absences through the Check and Connect program, which is designed to address chronic absenteeism. He explained that when a student reaches ten unexcused absences, a CHINS (Child in Need of Services) petition will be filed with the court to intervene.

D. State SOL Cut Scores
Dr. Nycum informed the Board that the Virginia Department of Education has approved new SOL cut scores beginning this year, a topic that has been widely discussed among superintendents over the past month. He explained that the new scores will take effect in the spring of 2026 and will not apply to current seniors. Dr. Nycum stated that there is still uncertainty regarding the implementation timeline but wanted the public to be aware of the upcoming change. He noted that a statewide decline in SOL scores is expected when the new standards take effect and emphasized the need for significant professional development to prepare staff. He reiterated that these changes will impact all school divisions across the Commonwealth.

E. Calendar Items
- Monday, October 13th – Teacher Workday & Volleyball Game vs. Pendleton 4:30pm
- Wednesday, October 15th – Ag Ed Middle School Leadership Conference, Bridgewater College Field Trip, JMU Admissions Rep on site
- Thursday, October 16th – Picture Day for Seniors/Makeup
- Friday, October 17th – FFA Federation Forestry Contest
- Saturday, October 18th – WRE Drive Thru Turkey Dinner at 4:30pm & Fall Fantasy Dance at 7pm
- Sunday, October 19th – Volleyball Field Trip
- October 20th – 24th – VA College Application Week
- Wednesday, October 22nd – FFA Area Forestry Contest & High School English Field Trip
- Thursday, October 23rd – Flu Shots
- Friday, October 24th – 2nd Grade Field Trip
- October 27th – November 1st – FFA National Convention
- Monday, November 3rd – End of First Quarter
- Tuesday, November 4th – Teacher Workday
- Thursday, November 6th – Advocacy Workshop for FFA Day Field Trip
- Friday, November 7th – Volleyball Pink Night, HHS Gym at 6pm
- Thursday, November 13th – School Board Meeting, HHS Library at 7pm
- Thursday, December 11th – School Board Meeting, HHS Library at 7pm

ACTION ITEMS* #9

A. VDOE Title I, Part C, Education of Migratory Children 2025-2026 Certification
Mr. Hodges made a motion to approve the Migratory Children Certification. Mrs. Sullenberger seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

B. Governor's School Overnight Field Trips
Mrs. Sullenberger made a motion to approve the field trips. Mr. Hodges seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

AGENDA ITEM #10 BOARD COMMENT

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An opportunity for members of the board to make individual comments, share updates, or express viewpoints related to board matters. Comments are limited to board members only.

Mr. Hodges took this opportunity to extend condolences to Mr. Johnson on the loss of his mother, stating that he and his family are in everyone's thoughts and prayers. He shared that he had the opportunity to visit the elementary classrooms earlier in the day and was very impressed by the level of engagement and the positive learning environment. Mrs. Sullenberger also visited several classrooms earlier in the week and commended staff for the excellent instruction and active student participation she observed.
Mr. Wilfong reported that he attended a recent PTO meeting and was pleased to see strong parent involvement and their efforts to show appreciation for teachers. He expressed hope that participation in the PTO will continue to grow. Mr. Wilfong also noted ongoing discussions with Sheriff Kelly regarding the School Resource Officer position, which is currently vacant, and said that creative solutions are being explored to restore the position within the school system.

AGENDA ITEM #11 ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Hodges made a motion that the meeting adjourn.
Mrs. Sullenberger seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously at 8:16pm.

X	X
School Board Chairman	School Board Clerk

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