

Highland County School Board

Tentative Agenda

Wednesday, October 7, 2026

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

1st Grade

D. Approval of the Agenda

4. SPECIAL RECOGNITIONS AND/OR PRESENTATIONS

A. National Honor Society Induction Recognition

Mrs. Hise

B. Accreditation Status Update

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. As a reminder, Board Members cannot respond during this time.

6. ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

A. High School Update

Mr. Miller

B. Elementary School Update

Mrs. Williams

C. Superintendent's Update

Dr. Nycum

7. CONSENT AGENDA*

A. Payment of October 7, 2026, Vendor Bills

B. Approval of August 12, 2026, and September 9, 2026, Board Meeting Minutes

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. PTO Update
- C. Pathways to Play Grant
- D. Dates of Interest

Mrs. Williams

- October 23rd – End of 1st Quarter
- October 26th – School Closed for Staff Workday
- October 30th – Report Cards Sent Home
- Next School Board Meeting – Thursday, November 12th – HHS Library at 7:00PM

9. ACTION ITEMS*

- A. Policies for Approval
 - Digital Citizenship and Internet Safety IIBEC(A)
 - Annual Parent Safe Storage Notification JFCD-A
 - Student Use of Cell Phones and Personal Devices IIBEC
 - Student Conduct JFC
 - Mental Health Awareness JHH-A
- B. Governor's School Overnight Field Trip
- C. Approval of First Amendment to Superintendent's Contract

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. CLOSED SESSION (IF NEEDED)

- A. 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.
- B. Reconvene from Closed Session

12. ADJOURNMENT

Suggestions or concerns you have regarding current issues from this meeting may be shared to hcps@highland.k12.va.us or call (540) 468-6300.

*Board Action Required

+Addendum Item

HIGHLAND COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD

SCHOOL BOARD MEETING

AUGUST 12, 2026 ~ 7:00 P.M.

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

Board Members Present: Jason Wilfong and Kenny Hodges

Administrative Staff Present: Superintendent: James "Nick" Nycum, High School Principal: Richard Miller, Elementary School Principal Designee: Alicia Williams, Technology Director: Gary Lane

AGENDA ITEM # 1 CALL TO ORDER

A. Call to Order

Mr. Wilfong called the meeting to order at 6:00pm.

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 § 2.2-3711(A)(1) of the Code of Virginia for the discussion and consideration of specific personnel matters, including and assignment of specific employees and administrators, and the compensation and contract terms of the Superintendent.

Mr. Hodges seconded the motion, and the motion passed by the following vote: YES: Wilfong, Hodges. Motion passed by a 2:0 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. Hodges made a motion to return to regular session at 7:00pm 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. Wilfong seconded the motion, and the motion passed by the following vote: YES: Wilfong, Hodges. Motion passed by a 2:0 vote.

B. Moment of Silence

C. Pledge of Allegiance

D. Approval of Agenda

Mr. Hodges made a motion to approve the August 12, 2026 agenda. Mr. Wilfong seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

AGENDA ITEM # 4 SPECIAL RECONGNITON AND/OR PRESENTATIONS

- A. Holtzman Oil Company
Mr. Donnie McCormick presented a proposal to continue providing Highland County Public Schools with fuel storage tanks for heating oil, diesel fuel, and propane.
- B. Davenport Investment Update
Mr. Bradley Watson provided an overview of the Fox Scholarship and Caldwell Fund. He noted that approximately \$635,000 has been awarded to students through scholarships to date. The fund currently has a balance of approximately \$1.2 million and continues to grow.
- C. 2025-2026 SOL Results
New principals Ali Williams and Richard Miller presented the 2025–2026 SOL results, highlighting both strengths and areas needing improvement. Highland Schools showed strong performance in several subjects, including 100% pass rates in science, geometry, reading, writing, geography, biology, economics, and world history across tested grade levels. Elementary reading scores in grades 3–5 were also strong. Middle school results were more mixed, with grade eight identified as the greatest area of concern, particularly in math, and Virginia/U.S. history. High school results were generally strong, with 100% pass rates in biology, economics, writing, and world history, while world geography showed the greatest need for improvement at 50%.
- D. 2026-2027 SOL Cut Scores
Dr. Nycum and Mr. Miller discussed Virginia’s higher SOL standards and new proficiency cut scores. They explained that HCPS will use benchmark assessments, intervention, remediation, and the CIP to identify student needs early and strengthen instruction. He also noted that the temporary “approaching” category will eventually be phased out, making continued progress toward full proficiency a priority.

AGENDA ITEM # 5 PUBLIC COMMENT

Kevin Conner addressed bullying issues and praised the 4th grade teacher. Betty Arbaugh thanked the Board for brining back the 4th grade teacher.

AGENDA ITEM # 6 ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

- A. High School Update
Mr. Miller expressed excitement for the new school year and thanked staff who worked over the summer on facilities and technology. He reported that 27 students are participating in volleyball this fall. He also introduced a new “Return Block” in the bell schedule, which will be used Monday through Thursday for intervention, enrichment, instruction, and administrative activities, and on Fridays for clubs, class meetings, and school-wide activities.
- B. Elementary School Update
Mrs. Williams welcomed several new staff members to Highland Elementary School and thanked teachers for their work preparing classrooms for the new

year. She emphasized the importance of regular attendance beginning August 18, noting that students will have 11 instructional days before the county fair and mandatory state testing will occur during the second week of school. She also invited families to Open House on August 13, with Pre-K at 5:00 p.m. and HES families at 6:00 p.m.

C. Superintendent Update

Dr. Nycum thanked custodial staff, student workers, Dr. Jessee, and Mr. Miller for their summer work preparing and organizing school facilities. He reviewed upcoming back-to-school dates, including new staff returning August 12, all staff returning August 13, Back-to-School Night, teacher workdays, and the first student day on August 18. He also noted school closures for the Highland County Fair and Labor Day, shared plans to participate in the Horse Show dunk tank with the principals, and announced the next School Board meeting for September 10.

AGENDA ITEM # 7 CONSENT AGENDA*

A. Payment of August 12, 2026 – Vendor Bills

Mr. Hodges made a motion to approve the August 12, 2026 vendor bills. Mr. Wilfong seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

B. Approval of the July 9, 2026 School Board Meeting Minutes

Mr. Hodges made a motion to approve the July 9, 2026 School Board Meeting Minutes. Mr. Wilfong seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

C. Personnel Report

Mr. Hodges made a motion to table the entire personnel report until all three board members are present. Mr. Wilfong second the motion and it passed unanimously.

ACTION ITEMS # 8 INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

A. HCEA Update

N/A

B. PTO Update

Mr. Obaugh announced that the community survey is now posted and the end date is September 5th.

C. Employee Leave Policy GCBDA

Dr. Nycum spoke about the proposed changes to this policy. This policy will be on the website for public comment for 30 days. If there are no major changes proposed, the policies will be brought to the next School Board Meeting for approval.

D. Grading Policy

Mrs. Williams stated that the division is not changing its grading practices but is ensuring that all staff consistently follow the existing grading requirements. This policy will be on the website for public comment for 30 days. If there are no major changes proposed, the policies will be brought to the next School Board Meeting for approval.

E. Teacher Workday & Back to School Night – Thursday, August 13th

F. Staff Workdays – Friday, August 14th & Monday, August 17th

- G. First Day of School for Students - Tuesday, August 18th
- H. School Closed for Fair – September 2nd – 4th
- I. School Closed for Labor Day – Monday, September 7th
- J. Next School Board Meeting – Thursday, September 10th – HHS Library at 7:00PM

ACTION ITEMS* # 9

- A. 2026-2027 Substitute Rates
- B. 2026-2027 Stipend List - Revised
- C. 30 Days Notice
- D. Amendment to the existing Superintendent contract

Mr. Hodges made a motion to table A, B, C, and D action items until all three board members are present. Mr. Wilfong second the motion and it passed unanimously.

AGENDA ITEM # 10 BOARD COMMENT

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 shared that he is looking forward to the start of the school year and has high expectations for the division's new hires.

AGENDA ITEM # 11 CLOSED SESSION (IF NEEDED)

N/A

AGENDA ITEM # 12 ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Hodges made a motion that the meeting adjourn at 8:32pm.
Mr. Wilfong seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

X

School Board Chairman

X

School Board Clerk

HIGHLAND COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD

SCHOOL BOARD MEETING

SEPTEMBER 9, 2026 ~ 7:00 P.M.

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

Board Members Present: Sherry Sullenberger, Jason Wilfong, and Kenny Hodges

Administrative Staff Present: Superintendent: James "Nick" Nycum, High School Principal: Richard Miller, Elementary School Principal Designee: Alicia Williams, Technology Director: Gary Lane

AGENDA ITEM # 1 CALL TO ORDER

A. Call to Order

Mrs. Sullenberger called the meeting to order at 6:05pm.

B. Announcement and vote to enter closed session

Mrs. Sullenberger made a motion that the Highland County School Board go into closed session pursuant to § 2.2-3711(A)(1) of the Code of Virginia for the discussion and consideration of specific personnel matters, including the appointment and hiring of personnel, including substitute personnel; the assignment of specific employees and administrators; and the compensation and contract terms of the Superintendent.

Mr. Hodges seconded the motion, and the motion passed by the following vote:

YES: Sullenberger, Wilfong, 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

Mrs. Sullenberger made a motion to return to regular session at 7:15pm 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: Sullenberger, Wilfong, Hodges. Motion passed by a 3:0 vote.

B. Moment of Silence

C. Pledge of Allegiance

D. Approval of Agenda

Mr. Hodges made a motion to approve the September 9, 2026 agenda. Mr. Wilfong seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

AGENDA ITEM # 4 SPECIAL RECONGNITON AND/OR PRESENTATIONS

None

AGENDA ITEM # 5 PUBLIC COMMENT

Mrs. Arbaugh noted that it was a great start to the school year and both principals have been very responsive.

AGENDA ITEM # 6 ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

A. High School Update

Mr. Miller thanked students, families, and staff for a successful start to the school year, noting the transition from baseline testing to regular instruction and improvements to the afternoon dismissal process. New initiatives include the Highland County Student Activity Fund, providing PreK–12 students free admission to regular-season home activities, and attendance incentives in partnership with the Highland County Fair Association. He is also meeting individually with students to discuss schedules, classes, and overall well-being.

B. Elementary School Update

Mrs. Williams reported a strong start to the school year, with good attendance and initial state assessments underway. Required safety drills continue as scheduled. Upcoming activities include a gifted field trip to Hayfields State Park on September 30, a Junior Hunter Safety Course in late October, and the return of the “All Hands on Deck” anti-bullying program.

C. Superintendent Update

Dr. Nycum reported a successful start to the school year, noting positive student and staff engagement during the first 11 days. He also praised the Highland County Fair and the strong participation and community support. Upcoming meetings and events include the State Superintendent dinner meeting, Region V Superintendents Meeting, NHS Induction, VSBA Legislative Advocacy Conference, WVPEC Meeting, Region 8 Superintendents Conference, UVA K–12 Advisory Council Meeting, and the next School Board meeting on October 7.

AGENDA ITEM # 7 CONSENT AGENDA*

A. Payment of September 9, 2026 – Vendor Bills

Mr. Hodges made a motion to approve the September 9, 2026 vendor bills. Mr. Wilfong seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

B. Approval of the August 12, 2026 School Board Meeting Minutes

Mr. Hodges made a motion to table the August 12, 2026 School Board Meeting Minutes pending adjustments. Mr. Wilfong seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

C. Personnel Report

Mr. Hodges made a motion to approve the personnel report except for B1, B2, and B5. Mr. Wilfong second the motion and it passed unanimously.

- Resignation of Special Education Instructional Aide, Haley Terry
- Appointment of Substitute, Tracey Hodge
- Appointment of Substitute, Hilary Lockridge
- Appointment of Substitute Bus Driver, Miranda Terry
- Appointment of Volunteer Assistant Volleyball Coach, Sabrina Conner
- Appointment of Mentor Teacher, Billy Coombe
- Appointment of Mentor Teacher, Evelyn Beers
- Appointment of Mentor Teacher, Lynn Leardi
- Appointment of Mentor Teacher, Montana Hise
- Appointment of Mentor Teacher, Melody Moats
- Appointment of Annual Substitute, Yvonne “Missy” Lockridge
- Appointment of Reading Teacher, Ashleigh Hinson

ACTION ITEMS # 8 INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

A. HCEA Update

Mrs. Hupman provided the HCEA and staff update. She reported that HCEA held an election and new member interest meeting, selected representatives for the year, and gained two new members. She also shared updates from staff regarding professional development, student field trips and classroom activities, gifted education opportunities, government and mathematics coursework, new teacher orientation and student benchmark data, National Honor Society induction, band program development, and AP course offerings.

B. PTO Update

Mrs. Simmons noted that the community survey received 53 responses and included valuable feedback. She expressed appreciation for the attendance at the most recent meeting, encouraged additional families to participate in future meetings, and provided an update regarding the EIN number.

C. Proposed Policy Updates

- Student Cell Phones and Personal Devices GAB-001-IIBE-001
- Bullying GBA-F-JFHA-F
- Cyberbullying GBA-F-JFHA-F-A
- Mental Health Awareness JHH-A
- Internet Safety and Digital Citizenship VAB-001-IIBE-002

Mrs. Williams spoke about these proposed policy changes. These policies will be on the website for public comment for 30 days. If there are no major changes proposed, the policies will be brought to the next School Board Meeting for approval.

- Parent Course Registration Notifications IGBC-A

The item was not discussed and will be presented at a later date.

- Firearm Safety Notification JFCD-A
- Prescription Medication Safety Notification JHCE-A

At least one copy of the proposed agenda and all agenda packets and, unless exempt, all materials furnished to members of a public body for a meeting shall be made available for public inspection at the same time such documents are

furnished to the members of the public body. No final action may be taken on items added to the agenda after the meeting commences unless they are time-sensitive or are the subject of a closed meeting properly identified in a motion in accordance with § 2.2-3711.

Mr. Hodges that the Highland County School Board grant temporary approval to the proposed policy implementing Virginia Code § 22.1-79.3 regarding annual parental notification concerning the safe storage of prescription drugs and firearms, effective immediately, in order to meet the statutory notification deadline, with the policy to return to the Board for final adoption in accordance with Policy BFC. Mr. Wilfong second the motion and it passed unanimously.

- D. Progress Reports – Friday, September 18th
- E. Staff Workday – Friday, October 2nd
- F. Next School Board Meeting – Wednesday, October 7th – HHS Library at 7:00PM

ACTION ITEMS* # 9

- A. 2026-2027 Substitute Rates

- B. 2026-2027 Stipend List – Revised

Mr. Hodges made a motion to approve the 2026–2027 substitute rates and the revised 2026–2027 stipend list. Mr. Wilfong seconded the motion. The motion passed 2–1, with Mrs. Sullenberger abstaining.

- C. Amendment to the existing Superintendent contract

Mr. Hodges made a motion to approve the amendment to the existing Superintendent contract. Mr. Wilfong seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

- D. Employee Leave Policy GCBDA

Mr. Hodges made a motion to approve Employee Leave Policy GCBDA. Mr. Wilfong seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

- A. Grading Requirements Policy IKA

Mr. Hodges made a motion to approve Grading Requirements Policy IKA. Mr. Wilfong seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

- A. Surplus List

Mr. Hodges made a motion to approve the surplus list. Mr. Wilfong seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

- B. Fuel Vendor Selection

Mr. Hodges made a motion to select The Home Oil Company as the division's fuel and oil vendor. Mr. Wilfong seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

AGENDA ITEM # 10 BOARD COMMENT

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 commented on a great opening to the school year, and Mrs. Sullenberger discussed school safety.

AGENDA ITEM # 11 CLOSED SESSION (IF NEEDED)

N/A

AGENDA ITEM # 12 ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Hodges made a motion that the meeting adjourn at 8:50pm.

Mr. Wilfong seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

X

School Board Chairman

X

School Board Clerk

DRAFT

Policies For Approval

The Highland County Public Schools recognizes that student access to the internet is required at time for enhanced learning and research. It is imperative, however, that students, families, and staff understand there are appropriate and inappropriate use of the internet. Schools must provide a learning environment free from unnecessary distraction and disruption. In accordance with HB 957 (2026), Chapter 246, Acts of Assembly (988 resources) Code of Virginia, this Digital Citizenship and Internet Safety Policy is provided.

Purpose

The School Board recognizes that technology is an essential tool for teaching, learning, communication, creativity, collaboration, and innovation. The School Board is committed to preparing students to become responsible digital citizens who use technology safely, ethically, respectfully, and effectively.

The School Division shall provide age-appropriate instruction and support to ensure that students develop the knowledge and skills necessary to safely navigate digital environments while protecting their personal well-being, privacy, and security.

Digital Citizenship

Digital citizenship is the responsible, ethical, safe, and informed use of technology and digital resources. Students are expected to demonstrate good character and responsible decision-making when participating in online activities and communicating through digital platforms.

Students shall:

- Use technology in a respectful and responsible manner.
- Communicate appropriately with peers, staff, and others.
- Protect personal information and respect the privacy of others.
- Follow applicable laws, School Board policies, and acceptable use requirements.
- Demonstrate honesty, integrity, and accountability in digital environments.
- Respect intellectual property rights and properly cite sources.
- Report concerns regarding online safety, cyberbullying, threats, harassment, or suspicious online activity.

Internet Safety Education

The School Division shall provide instruction designed to educate students on safe and responsible online behavior.

Instruction may include:

- Safe internet navigation and online decision-making;
- Protecting personal information and digital identities;
- Recognizing online predators, scams, fraud, and deceptive practices;

- Password protection and cybersecurity awareness;
- Responsible use of social media;
- Prevention and reporting of cyberbullying;
- Digital footprints and long-term consequences of online activity;
- Evaluating online information for accuracy and reliability;
- Media literacy and responsible content sharing;
- Online ethics and appropriate digital communication.

Artificial Intelligence and Emerging Technologies

Students shall receive guidance regarding the appropriate use of artificial intelligence (AI) tools and emerging technologies.

Students shall:

- Use AI tools only as authorized by staff and Division procedures;
- Verify the accuracy and reliability of AI-generated information;
- Acknowledge and disclose AI-assisted work when required;
- Avoid using AI tools for cheating, plagiarism, harassment, or other prohibited activities;
- Understand the ethical implications of AI and emerging technologies. [[resources....alsite.net](#)],

Cyberbullying Prevention

Cyberbullying, harassment, intimidation, threats, and harmful online conduct are prohibited.

Students shall not use technology to:

- Harass, intimidate, threaten, or humiliate another individual;
- Create or share harmful, embarrassing, or inappropriate content;
- Impersonate another person online;
- Engage in repeated conduct that disrupts the educational environment;
- Encourage self-harm, violence, or illegal activities.

Students, parents, and staff are encouraged to report incidents of cyberbullying or online misconduct. The School Division shall investigate complaints consistent with School Board policy and applicable law.

Online Safety Resources

The School Division shall make students and families aware of available support resources related to online safety, cyberbullying prevention, mental health support, and crisis intervention.

Appropriate information regarding the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline may be included in student support resources, bullying prevention efforts, and family communications consistent with Virginia law.

Technology Protection Measures

The School Division shall maintain technology protection measures designed to:

- Filter or block access to content that is harmful to minors;
- Prevent unauthorized access to computer systems and networks;
- Protect student information and privacy;
- Promote secure and responsible use of Division technology resources.

The Division reserves the right to monitor, review, and manage use of Division-owned devices, networks, systems, applications, and electronic communications in accordance with applicable law and School Board policy.

Parent and Family Engagement: The School Division recognizes that parents and guardians play a critical role in helping students develop safe and responsible technology habits.

The Division shall encourage families to:

- Discuss online safety with their children;
- Monitor internet and social media use;
- Promote healthy technology habits;
- Reinforce expectations for respectful online conduct;
- Review available resources related to digital citizenship and internet safety.

Compliance

All users of School Division technology resources shall comply with the Division's Acceptable Use Policy, Student Conduct Policies, and all applicable laws and regulations.

Violations of this policy may result in disciplinary action, loss of technology privileges, or other consequences consistent with School Board policy and applicable law.

Adopted: August 2026

Updated: October 2026

Legal Refs:

- Virginia Code §22.1-70.2
- Virginia Board of Education Model Policy on Internet Safety
- Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA)
- HB 957 (2026), Chapter 246, Acts of Assembly (988 resources) Code of Virginia, 1950, as amended, 22.1-70.2 and 22.1-78.

- Executive Order 33 by Governor Glenn Youngkin on July 9, 2023
(<https://www.governor.virginia.gov/media/governorviriniagov/governor-of-virginia/pdf/eo/EO-33---Cell-Phones-7.9.24.pdf>)

Cross refs.: GAC Staff Cell Phone Usage
 IBEA-001 Acceptable Use Policy for Electronic Information, Service, and Networks

Purpose

The School Board recognizes that preventing unauthorized access to prescription medications and firearms is critical to protecting the health, safety, and well-being of children and adolescents. The School Division will provide annual information to parents and guardians regarding the safe storage of prescription medications and firearms in the home. This policy is intended to support accident prevention, injury reduction, suicide prevention, and overall student safety.

Annual Parent Notification

The School Division shall provide an annual notification to the parent or guardian of each enrolled student regarding:

1. The importance of securely storing prescription medications present in the household;
2. The importance of properly disposing of unused or expired medications;
3. The legal responsibility of firearm owners to safely store firearms and prevent unauthorized access by minors;
4. Safe firearm storage practices designed to reduce accidental injury, death, theft, misuse, and unauthorized access by children;
5. Available local, state, and national resources relating to prescription medication safety, substance misuse prevention, firearm safety, injury prevention, mental health awareness, and suicide prevention.

Content of Notification-The annual notification may include, but is not limited to:

Medication Safety

- Information encouraging parents and guardians to store prescription medications in a secure location inaccessible to children and unauthorized individuals;
- Guidance regarding monitoring access to prescription medications;
- Information regarding the safe disposal of unused or expired medications;
- Resources related to prevention of prescription medication misuse and accidental poisoning.

Firearm Safety

- Information regarding Virginia laws and regulations related to firearm safety and child access to firearms;
- Safe firearm storage practices, including the use of locked containers, safes, trigger locks, and separate storage of ammunition;
- Information concerning firearm-related accidents, injuries, and deaths among youth;
- Information regarding the role of firearms in youth suicide and available mental health resources;

- Resources available to families seeking assistance for a child who may be at risk of self-harm or harm to others.
- The importance of securely storing prescription medications in the household;
- The parent's legal responsibility to safely store firearms in the household;
- Information regarding firearm safety laws, child access prevention, firearm-related injuries and fatalities, and related safety resources.

Distribution: The annual notification shall:

- Be distributed electronically to parents and guardians by email and, when available, text message;
- Be posted on the School Division website;
- Be made available in multiple languages whenever practicable;
- Be distributed annually within the first thirty (30) days of each school year or at another time designated by the Superintendent.

Administrative Procedures

The Superintendent or designee shall develop administrative procedures to implement this policy and identify appropriate educational materials and resources from governmental agencies, public health organizations, law enforcement agencies, and other qualified organizations.

The School Division may cooperate with community partners to increase awareness of medication safety, firearm safety, injury prevention, and youth mental health resources.

Adopted: October 2026

Updated:

Legal Refs.: Virginia Code § 22.1-79.3, as amended by Chapter 89 of the 2026 Acts of Assembly (SB 109) 18 U.S.C. § 930.
20 U.S.C. § 1415.
Code of Virginia, §§ 15.2-915.4, 18.2-308, 18.2-308.1, 18.2-308.7, 22.1-277.07, 277.07:1, 22.1-280.2:4.
8 VAC 20-81-10.

Cross Refs.:	GBEB	Staff Weapons in School
	JGD/JGE	Student Suspension/Expulsion
	JFC	Student Conduct
	JGDA	Disciplining Students with Disabilities
	JGDB	Discipline of Students with Disabilities for Infliction of Serious Bodily Injury

The Highland County Public Schools recognizes that student access to cell phones and other personal electronic devices is common in current society. It is imperative, however, that students, families, and staff understand there are appropriate and inappropriate times for the use of such devices. Schools must provide a learning environment free from unnecessary distraction and disruption. To minimize distractions in the learning environment, the School Board supports a cell phone-free education, meaning an age-appropriate restriction on the use of cell phones and other personal electronic devices (including personal earphones and wearable devices) during the instructional day.

RATIONALE

This policy was developed to align with Executive Order 33 which was issued by Virginia Governor Glenn Youngkin on July 9, 2024. The initiative was subsequently codified by the General Assembly through Virginia Code § 22.1-79.3:1, effective July 1, 2026, requiring all public-school divisions to implement age-appropriate bell-to-bell student cell phone and smart device policies.

The executive order promotes the health and safety of Virginia's preK-12 students. In addition, the order recognizes that a focused educational environment with minimal distractions is most conducive to learning. Parents, public health professionals, educators, and other community groups have expressed concern over depression and anxiety that can partially be attributed to high social media usage and consistent access to cell phones.

This order includes but is not limited to: Smartphones, smart watches, tablets, wireless or wired earbuds, earphones, wireless eyewear and other personal electronic devices that connect to the internet and transmit data wirelessly.

EXPECTATIONS

Student access to cell phones and other wireless or wired personal devices is restricted from bell-to-bell. Bell-to-bell means from when the first bell rings to begin the instructional day until when the dismissal bell rings to end the instructional day. The bell-to-bell includes recess, second chance breakfast, lunch, time between classes, and all school activities held during the instructional day. If cell phones or personal electronic devices are brought to school, they must be turned off and stored during the bell-to-bell instructional day.

Students needing to communicate non-emergency needs with parents/guardians may use the phone in the school office with permission of their supervising staff personnel and the office staff. Parents should call the school office to communicate emergencies and non-emergencies. In the case of a family emergency, a school official will be available to support the student.

Highland County Public Schools will supply any necessary electronic devices required for educational purposes.

A. Elementary School

Elementary School students shall not bring cellular or personal electronic devices to school. Elementary School students may not use cellular phones or personal electronic devices before or after the instructional day on school property or on a school bus. Exceptions for field trips will be communicated with families as necessary.

B. High School

High school students may use cell phones, earphones, and personal electronic devices (including wearable devices) before the first bell rings to start the instructional day and after the dismissal bell at the end of the instructional day.

Cell phones and any personal electronic device must be turned off and stored during the bell-to-bell instructional day. They may not be used, turned on, visible, or in a student's possession during the bell-to-bell instructional day. Devices should not be taken into a classroom or the cafeteria during the bell-to-bell instructional day.

Student choices for their cell phones and personal electronic devices during the bell-to-bell instructional day:

- Leave them at home.
- Turn them off and store them in a locker or a vehicle.

CONSEQUENCES FOR VIOLATIONS

There are consequences for having a cell phone, earphones, or personal electronic devices on or not stored or during the bell-to-bell instructional day (for any reason).

A. First Offense (BSO13):

- The school personnel observing the device may take possession of the device(s) by approaching the student and asking for the device from the student.
- The school personnel will secure the device. At the end of class or the first convenient time, the school personnel may return the device.
- The student's parent or guardian will be notified.
- At the end of the instructional day, after 3:15 pm, the students may come to the office to retrieve their phone.

B. Second Offense (BSO13):

- A second violation of this policy may require a parent/guardian to retrieve the device(s) in the school office after school between 3:15 – 4:00 pm or during the following day. A conference between the parent/guardian and the school principal may occur before the device is released.
- The device(s) may not be returned to the parent/guardian during school hours on the same day of the offense.

C. Additional Offenses (BSO11 and BSO13):

- The third and subsequent offenses could warrant a Level 3 response by the administrator. The device may be confiscated for an extended period or banned from possession at school and/or on the school bus.
- Aggravating circumstances and repeated behaviors could result in a higher level of response as defined in the Student Code of Conduct.

D. Failure to turn over a Cell Phone, Earphones, or a Personal Electronic Device

- Failure to handover a device upon request could constitute a referral to the school principal for failure to respond to a request by staff (RB10).
- Other consequences listed above will still apply.

EXPECTATIONS FOR SCHOOL PERSONNEL

School personnel are expected to strictly enforce this policy so that students experience consistent expectations and consequences in all school settings. School personnel who take possession of devices may store the device(s) in a safe location until the first available opportunity to deliver it to the school office. Confiscated devices may be retrieved as outlined above.

Employees are expected to model student cell phone and personal electronic device use expectations. As such, employees are prohibited from using cell phones and other personal electronic devices during scheduled class time or when employees are responsible for the instruction and/or direct supervision of students except in the event of an emergency. Employees may use cell phones when on break, during meals, during planning time, and to communicate with fellow staff members or administrators on school related issues.

Division employees, including co-curricular/extra-curricular sponsors/coaches, should use non-social media-based apps to communicate activity and athletic information with students during school hours. All school communication with a student shall include another adult; a division employee or the student's parent/guardian is preferred.

EXCEPTIONS TO THIS POLICY

Exceptions to this cell phone-free education policy may be made to support the health and wellness of a student. Allowable exemptions must be written into an Individualized Education Plan (IEP), a 504 plan, a Limited English Proficiency Plan, and/or an individualized health care plan. All individualized health care plans that include cell phone or personal electronic device usage must be approved by a licensed medical practitioner, the school principal, and the superintendent.

Adopted: November 2024

Updated: October 2026

Legal Refs: Code of Virginia, 1950, as amended, 22.1-70.2 and 22.1-78.
Executive Order 33 by Governor Glenn Youngkin on July 9, 2023
(<https://www.governor.virginia.gov/media/governorvirginiagov/governor-of-virginia/pdf/eo/EO-33---Cell-Phones-7.9.24.pdf>)

Cross refs.: GAC Staff Cell Phone Usage
IBEA-001 Acceptable Use Policy for Electronic Information, Service, and Networks

GENERALLY

The Highland County School Board establishes expectations for student conduct so that public education is conducted in an atmosphere free of disruption and threat to persons or property and supportive of individual rights.

In addition to the types of conduct prohibited below, the superintendent issues Standards of Student Conduct and a list of possible actions for violations of those Standards.

This Policy and the Standards of Student Conduct apply to all HIGHLAND COUNTY school students. They are enforced when the student's conduct occurs when the student is

- On school property.
- Traveling to school or from school.
- Traveling to, at, and from bus stops.
- In School Board vehicles.
- In attendance at any school-sponsored activity.
- Off school property if the conduct disrupts the learning environment.

The School Board and superintendent biennially review the model student conduct code developed by the Virginia Board of Education to incorporate into policy and the Standards of Student Conduct a range of discipline options and alternatives to preserve a safe and non-disruptive environment for effective learning and teaching.

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT AND RESPONSIBILITY

Each parent of a student enrolled in Highland County Public Schools has a duty to assist in enforcing this policy, the Standards of Student Conduct and compulsory school attendance in order that education may be conducted in an atmosphere free of disruption and threat to persons or property and supportive of individual rights. This policy, the Standards of Student Conduct, a notice of the requirements of Va. Code § 22.1-279.3, and a copy of the compulsory school attendance law is sent to all parents within one calendar month of the opening of schools simultaneously with any other materials customarily distributed at that time. A statement for the parent's signature acknowledging the receipt of this policy, the Standards of Student Conduct, the requirements of Va. Code § 22.1-279.3 and the compulsory school attendance law is also sent. Parents are notified that by signing the statement of receipt, they are not deemed to waive, but expressly reserve, their rights protected by the constitution or laws of the United States or Virginia. Each school maintains records of the signed statements.

The school principal may request the student's parent or parents, if both have legal and physical custody, to meet with the principal or principal's designee to review this policy, the Standards of Student Conduct and the parent's or parents' responsibility to participate with the school in disciplining the student and maintaining order, to ensure the student's compliance with compulsory school attendance law and to discuss improvement of the child's behavior, school attendance and educational progress.

The school principal notifies the parents of any student who violates a School Board policy, the Standards of Student Conduct, or the compulsory school attendance requirements when such violation is likely to result in the student's suspension or the filing of a court petition, whether or not the school administration has imposed such disciplinary action or filed such a petition. The notice states (1) the date and particulars of the violation; (2) the obligation of the parent to take actions to assist the school in improving the student's behavior and ensuring compliance with compulsory school attendance; (3) that, if the student is suspended, the parent may be required to accompany the student to meet with school officials; and (4) that a petition with the juvenile and domestic relations district court may be filed under certain circumstances to declare the student a child in need of supervision.

The principal notifies the parent of any student involved in an incident required to be reported to the superintendent and Virginia Board of Education as described in Policy CLA Reporting Acts of Violence and Substance Abuse.

If a parent fails to comply with the requirements of this Policy, the School Board may ask the Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court to proceed against the parent in accordance with the requirements of the Code of Virginia.

A parent, guardian or other person having control or charge of a student is notified in writing of any disciplinary action taken with regard to any incident upon which an adjudication of delinquency or conviction for an offense listed in Va. Code § 16.1-260.G was based and the reasons therefor. The parent or guardian is also notified of the parent or guardian's right to review, and to request an amendment of, the student's scholastic record, in accordance with regulations of the Board of Education governing the management of scholastic records.

PREVENTION, INTERVENTION, AND TREATMENT ACTIVITIES AND PROGRAMS

Any student involved in a reportable drug or violent incident, as described in Policy CLA Reporting Acts of Violence and Substance Abuse, participates in prevention and intervention activities deemed appropriate by the superintendent or superintendent's designee. Further, any student who has been found to be in possession of or under the influence of drugs or alcohol on school property or at a school sponsored activity may be required to (1) undergo evaluation for drug or alcohol abuse and (2) participate in a drug and/or alcohol treatment program if recommended by the evaluator and if the parent consents.

PROHIBITED CONDUCT

The following conduct is prohibited. Students engaging in such conduct are subject to disciplinary action.

1. **Bullying and Use of Electronic Means for Bullying**

Bullying is prohibited. "Bullying" means any aggressive and unwanted behavior that is intended to harm, intimidate, or humiliate the victim; involves a real or perceived power imbalance between the aggressor or aggressors and victim; and is repeated over time or

causes severe emotional trauma. "Bullying" includes cyber bullying. "Bullying" does not include ordinary teasing, horseplay, argument or peer conflict.

The principal notifies the parent of any student involved in an alleged incident of bullying within 24 hours of learning of the allegation of bullying.

In accordance with Chapter 246 of the 2026 Acts of Assembly (HB 957), the School Division shall encourage the promotion and utilization of the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline as a resource for addressing student bullying and cyberbullying.

Information regarding the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline may be incorporated into bullying prevention programs, student support services, parent communications, counseling resources, and related educational materials.

2. Gang Activity

Gang activity, as defined in Policy JFCE Gang Activity or Association, is prohibited.

3. Harassment

As provided in Policy JFHA/GBA Prohibition Against Harassment and Retaliation, students are prohibited from harassing other students, school staff, volunteers, student teachers or any other person present in school facilities or at school functions.

4. Hazing

Hazing is prohibited.

Hazing means to recklessly or intentionally endanger the health or safety of a student or students or to inflict bodily harm on a student or students in connection with or for the purpose of initiation, admission into or affiliation with or as a condition for continued membership in a club, organization, association, fraternity, sorority, or student body regardless of whether the student or students so endangered or injured participated voluntarily in the relevant activity.

5. Intentional Injury of Others

Students are prohibited from intentionally injuring others.

6. Self-defense

Whether a student acted in self-defense is considered when the student's conduct is evaluated for disciplinary action.

7. Threats: Intimidation

Students are prohibited from making any verbal, written or physical threat of bodily injury to another person.

8. Trespassing

Students, including students who have been suspended or expelled, are subject to disciplinary action for trespassing on school property.

9. Use and/or Possession of Alcohol, Tobacco Products, Nicotine Vapor Products, Anabolic Steroids, and Other Drugs

Students are prohibited from possessing, using, or distributing any of the restricted substances listed below on school property, on school buses or during school activities, on or off school property.

Students are prohibited from attempting to possess, use, consume, procure and/or purchase, any of the restricted substances listed below or what is represented by or to the student to be any of the restricted substances listed below or what the student believes is any of the restricted substances listed below.

Students are prohibited from being under the influence of any of the restricted substances listed below, regardless of whether the student's condition amounts to legal intoxication.

Restricted substances include but are not limited to alcohol, tobacco products as defined in Policy JFCH Tobacco Products and Nicotine Vapor Products, nicotine vapor products as defined in Policy JFCH Tobacco Products and Nicotine Vapor Products, inhalant products, and other controlled substances defined in the Drug Control Act, Chapter 15.1 of Title 54 of the Code of Virginia, such as anabolic steroids, stimulants, depressants, hallucinogens, marijuana, imitation and look-alike drugs, drug paraphernalia and any prescription or non-prescription drug possessed in violation of School Board policy.

In addition to any other consequences which may result, a student who is a member of a school athletic team will be ineligible for two school years to compete in interscholastic athletic competition if the school principal and the superintendent determine that the student used anabolic steroids during the training period immediately preceding or during the sport season of the athletic team, unless such steroid was prescribed by a licensed physician for a medical condition.

10. Use of Profane or Obscene Language and Conduct

Students are prohibited from using profane or obscene language or engaging in profane or obscene conduct.

11. Vandalism

Students are prohibited from vandalizing school property and the property of any School Board staff member or any other person.

The School Board may recover damages sustained because of the willful or malicious destruction or, or damage to, public property pursuant to Policy ECAB Vandalism.

Adopted: September 2021

Updated: October 2026

STUDENT CONDUCT**Policy JFC**

Legal Refs.: Code of Virginia, 1950, as amended, §§16.1-260, 18.2-56, 18.2-308.1, 18.2-308.7, 22.1-23.3, 22.1-78, 22.1-200.1, 22.1-253.13.7; 22.1-254, 22.1-276.3, 22.1-277, 22.1-277.08, 22.1-277.2, 22.1-279.1, 22.1-279.3, 22.1-279.3:1, 22.1-279.6, 22.1-288.2.
Model Guidance for Positive and Preventive Code of Student Conduct Policy and Alternatives to Suspension, Virginia Board of Education June 2021.

Authority: HB 957 (2026), Chapter 246, Acts of Assembly, effective July 1, 2026.

Cross Refs.:	CLA	Reporting Acts of Violence and Substance Abuse
	EBB	Threat Assessment Teams
	ECAB	Vandalism
	IIBEA/GAB	Acceptable Computer System Use
	JFCE	Gang Activity or Association
	JFCF	Drugs in School
	JFG	Search and Seizure
	JFHA/GBA	Prohibition Against Harassment and Retaliation
	JGA	Corporal Punishment
	JGD/JGE	Student Suspension/Expulsion
	JGDA	Disciplining Students with Disabilities
	JGDB	Discipline of Students with Disabilities for Infliction of Serious Bodily Injury
	JN	Student Fees, Fines and Charges

DUTIES OF TEACHERS AND ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF

The School Board recognizes that mental health is essential to student learning, personal development, school safety, and overall well-being. The School Division shall promote awareness of mental health resources and encourage early identification and intervention when concerns arise. Additionally, HB 38 (2026), effective July 1, 2026, does not require a parent notification policy. Instead, it amends Virginia Code § 22.1-298.6 and requires school boards to adopt policies ensuring that teachers and other designated full-time personnel complete mental health awareness training.

The superintendent is responsible for developing procedures for such contact that are in accordance with the guidelines developed by the Board of Education in cooperation with the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services and the Department of Health as required by Va. Code § 22.1-272.1.

Annually, the School Division shall provide parents and guardians with information regarding:

- Common signs and symptoms of mental health concerns among children and adolescents;
- Available school-based mental health supports;
- Community mental health resources;
- Suicide prevention awareness and crisis intervention resources;
- Substance misuse prevention resources;
- Procedures for obtaining assistance when a student may be experiencing emotional distress or a mental health crisis.

The School Division shall work to reduce the stigma associated with seeking mental health assistance and encourage students and families to access appropriate support services.

Mental health information and crisis resources, including information regarding the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, shall be made available through Division communication channels and the Division website.

The Superintendent shall develop procedures to support implementation of this policy.

Adopted: October 2026

Updated:

Legal Refs: Code of Virginia, 1950, as amended, §§ 22.1-207.1:1, 22.1-272.1 and 63.2-1509.

Cross Refs: GAE Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting
EB School Crisis, Emergency Management and Medical Emergency Response
Plan
EBB Threat Assessment Teams
JHH Suicide Prevention