



Blount County Government

359 Court Street
Maryville, TN 37804-5906

Meeting Minutes - Draft

Education Committee

Commissioner Mike Akard
Commissioner Robbie Bennett
Commissioner Brad Bowers
Commissioner Misty Davis
Commissioner John Giles
Commissioner Jessica Hannah
Commissioner Earl McMahan
Commissioner Steve Mikels
Commissioner Dawn Reagan

Ex Officio School Members: John Lowe and Erica Moore

Tuesday, September 2, 2025

12:30 PM

Heritage High School
3741 E. Lamar Alexander Pkwy., Maryville 37804

ROLL CALL

BE IT REMEMBERED, that the Blount County Education Committee met at Heritage High School in Maryville, Tennessee, on Tuesday, September 2, 2025, at 12:30 p.m. Blount County Education Committee Chair Dawn Reagan called the meeting to order. There were 8 members present and 3 were absent. The Chair declared that a quorum did exist. In addition to the Education Committee members, others present were: Blount County Commission Chair Jared Anderson; Heritage High School Principal Jed West; BCS Chief Finance Officer Brittany Spence; BCS Chief of Staff & Operations Courtney Whitehead; BCS Chief of Elementary Instruction April Heron; BCS Chief of Secondary Instruction Jon Young; and BCS Chief of Curriculum & Professional Development Dr. Heather Byrd; and BC School Board member Chris Pass. The following proceedings were held, to wit:

- Present** 8 - Commissioner Robbie Bennett, Commissioner Brad Bowers, Commissioner Misty Davis, Commissioner John Giles, Commissioner Earl McMahan, Commissioner Steve Mikels, Commissioner Dawn Reagan, and School Representative John Lowe
- Absent** 3 - Commissioner Mike Akard, Commissioner Jessica Hannah, and School Representative Erica Moore

A. SETTING OF AGENDA.

A motion was made by Commissioner McMahan, seconded by Commissioner Davis, that the agenda be set. A voice vote was taken with all voting aye, and none were opposed. The Chair declared the motion to have passed.

B. APPROVAL OF MINUTES.

1. [Education Committee Meeting Minutes for April 29, 2025.](#)

Attachments: [Education](#)

A motion was made by Commissioner McMahan, seconded by Commissioner Bowers, that the minutes be approved. A voice vote was taken with all voting aye, and none were opposed. The Chair declared the motion to have passed.

C. PUBLIC INPUT ON AGENDA ITEMS.

There was none.

D. UNFINISHED BUSINESS.

There was none.

E. NEW BUSINESS.

1. Report from Principal.

The Chair recognized Mr. Jed West, Principal of Heritage High School, who addressed the attendees regarding recent accomplishments at the school. He shared that the school operates under the guiding motto, "Preparing students to CLIMB to success," with CLIMB standing for: Care about others, Learn with passion, Invest in excellence, Model integrity, and Build community.

Principal West highlighted the school's significant academic progress over the past five to seven years, including four consecutive years of Level 5 academic growth and two consecutive years of being designated an Award School. He mentioned the federal and state accountability measures used to evaluate school performance, noting that Heritage High School is currently performing at a level that meets or exceeds expectations for students, staff, and the broader community.

In closing, Mr. West discussed recent and upcoming facility improvements and invited meeting participants to take part in a walkthrough of the school.

There was no action taken.

2. School District Reports.

The Chair recognized Director of Schools, Mr. Justin Ridge, who provided an update on a major organizational restructure within the Central Office. As part of this restructure, the Assistant Director position has been eliminated and replaced with five newly established Chief roles: Ms. Brittany Spence – Chief Finance Officer; Dr. Courtney Whitehead – Chief of Staff & Operations; Dr. April Heron – Chief of Elementary Instruction; Mr. Jon Young – Chief of Secondary Instruction; and Dr. Heather Byrd – Chief of Curriculum & Professional Development.

Mr. Ridge then introduced Chief Finance Officer Ms. Brittany Spence, who briefed the committee on two upcoming budget items to be presented to the County Commission. The first involves the replacement of 65 HVAC units at Eagleton, many of which date back to 1989. The second item pertains to contingency funding for ongoing construction projects, including the Career and Technical Education (CTE) renovation at William Blount High School. Ms. Spence also provided an overview of the approval process for contingency expenditures.

There was no action taken.

3. Blount County School Board.

The Chair recognized Board Members Mr. John Lowe and Mr. Richard Pass.

Mr. Lowe commended Director of Schools Mr. Justin Ridge for his recent personnel decisions, stating that the hires reflect a strong focus on meeting the district's needs. He also praised Chief Finance Officer Ms. Brittany Spence for her presentation before the County Commission, noting her professionalism and effectiveness.

Mr. Lowe emphasized the importance of surrounding the district with quality individuals, expressing optimism about the district's readiness to address the CMS audit recommendations. He stated that the Board is positioned to make necessary policy changes to align operations and support continued student growth.

He also underscored the importance of being responsive to the needs of teachers and ensuring they have the resources necessary to succeed. Mr. Lowe closed his remarks by expressing pride in the leadership, staff, and Central Office personnel who are working diligently to move the district forward.

There was no action taken.

4. Other.

Commissioner Misty Davis expressed appreciation for the increased transparency and the use of visual tools in presentations. She noted that these efforts help keep the Commission better informed about current developments, upcoming initiatives, and the district's goals and vision. Commissioner Davis added that this level of clarity is especially helpful when responding to questions from members of the community.

Commissioner Giles emphasized the importance of having a clear mission statement, defined goals, and measurable outcomes for groups such as this. He noted that such structure allows for accountability and the ability to assess progress effectively. While he appreciated the productive discussion during the meeting, Commissioner Giles expressed that he personally remained unclear on how he could best contribute to the work of the committee.

The Chair encouraged committee members to participate in school tours (also referred to as "walkabouts") following Education Committee meetings, as an opportunity to engage more directly with school facilities and operations.

5. Next Meeting on Tuesday, September 30, 2025 - Location to be Announced.

The Chair recognized Mr. Ridge who recommended Walland Elementary School for the next Education Committee meeting location. Mr. Ridge will confirm with the school and follow up with the Chair.

F. PUBLIC INPUT ON ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA.

There was none.

G. ADJOURNMENT.

There being no further business, the Chair adjourned the Education Committee meeting on Tuesday, September 2, 2025, at 1:48 p.m. Following adjournment, committee members toured the facility.