



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 Randi Howard

Tuesday, November 4, 2025

12:30 PM

Union Grove Middle School
334 S. Old Grey Ridge Rd., Friendsville 37737

ROLL CALL

BE IT REMEMBERED, that the Blount County Education Committee met at Union Grove Middle School in Friendsville, Tennessee, on Tuesday, November 4, 2025, at 12:30 p.m. Blount County Education Committee Chair Dawn Reagan called the meeting to order. There were 6 members present and 5 absent. The Chair declared that a quorum did exist. In addition to the Education Committee members, others present were: Blount County Clerk Chief of Staff Brad Bryant; Director of Schools Justin Ridge; Union Grove Middle School Assistant Principal Dr. Randy Echols; BCS Chief Finance Officer Brittany Spence; BCS Maintenance and Facilities Supervisor Clay Davis; and BC School Board members: Fred Goins and Chris Pass. The following proceedings were held, to wit:

- Present** 6 - Commissioner Robbie Bennett, Commissioner Misty Davis, Commissioner John Giles, Commissioner Earl McMahan, Commissioner Dawn Reagan, and School Representative John Lowe
- Absent** 5 - Commissioner Mike Akard, Commissioner Brad Bowers, Commissioner Jessica Hannah, Commissioner Steve Mikels, and School Representative Randi Howard

A. SETTING OF AGENDA.

A motion was made by Commissioner Davis, seconded by Commissioner Bennett, 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 September 30, 2025.](#)

Attachments: [2101_M_Education_Committee_25-09-30_Meeting_Minutes](#)

A motion was made by Commissioner McMahan, seconded by Commissioner Bennett, 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 Dr. Randy Echols, Assistant Principal of UGMS, who welcomed everyone and thanked them for attending. Principal Strayn was unable to attend due to illness, so Echols was present on his behalf. His presentation included: modernizing procedures and technology; updating handbooks and building leadership teams; building community and parent engagement; focus on academics and student achievement; Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and team collaboration; Instructional Practice Guides (IPGs) and data-driven improvement; equity and support for special education students; positive school culture and student feedback; reflection on progress and leadership philosophy; commitment to excellence and positive school culture; emphasis on mental health and student support; appreciation for teamwork and coaching support; school spirit and daily positivity; communication and community involvement; a culture shift and administrative renewal; leadership background and commitment; school scale and leadership demands; collaboration with the district and IPG tools; recognizing school success and district variations; leadership philosophy and staff buy-in; leadership and community as the cornerstones of success; teacher leadership and accountability; culture of high expectations and collective growth; the role of leadership teams and sustained effort; the importance of stability and veteran teachers; benefits of the IPG walks and teacher collaboration; accountability and consistency through IPG implementation; and proven success of the IPG and districtwide adoption.

There was no action taken.

2. School District Reports.

The Chair recognized Director of Schools, Mr. Justin Ridge. His report included ongoing capital projects; an energy savings program for HVACs, LED lights and mechanical; and a new Walland Elementary School building.

Chief Financial Officer Brittany Spence provided an overview of anticipated budget increase requests related to Special Education services, including occupational therapy, physical therapy, and educational support. She also discussed a forthcoming request to fund a feasibility study and site analysis for Walland Elementary School.

There was no action taken.

3. Blount County School Board.

The Chair recognized School Board Member John Lowe, who invited the attendees to attend their Board of Education meeting on Thursday, November 6, 2025, at 5:30 p.m.

The Chair recognized Commissioner Giles, who recommended that the principal of the next host school attend upcoming committee meetings; that the district's commissioners be invited to participate; that school teachers be invited to address the committee; and that the committee reconvene following the walkabout for a recap.

Mr. Ridge introduced Clay Davis as BCS Maintenance and Facilities Supervisor.

There was no action taken.

4. Next Meeting on Tuesday, December 2, 2025 - Location to be Announced.

It was decided that the Education Committee would meet at Rockford Elementary on December 2, 2025; William Blount CTE in February 2026; and Friendsville Elementary in March 2026. Mr. Ridge will coordinate with those schools and principals to host the upcoming Education Committee meetings.

F. PUBLIC INPUT ON ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA.

There was none.

G. ADJOURNMENT.

The Chair declared the meeting to be adjourned. The Education Committee adjourned on Tuesday, November 4, 2025, at 1:33 p.m. for committee members to participate in a tour (walkabout) of the school.

WALKABOUT