



# Cherokee County Schools

Dr. Stephen E. Lane, Superintendent  
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Cherokee County Board of Education Meeting of October 10, 2013 6:00 p.m. – Martins Creek  
Elementary Middle School

## Minutes

### Board Members Present

Mr. Erik Brinke, Board Chair  
Ms. Debbie Hogan, Vice Chair  
Dr. David Ackerman  
Ms. Wanda Arrowood  
Mr. Randy Barnett  
Mr. Paul Brown  
Mr. Winfield Clonts

### School Board Attorney Present

Mr. Dean Shatley

1. Call to Order. Mr. Erik Brinke called the Cherokee County Board of Education meeting to order and welcomed all present to Martins Creek Elementary Middle School.
2. Principals Welcome. Mr. Paul Wilson, Principal of Martins Creek Elementary Middle School, delivered his welcome.
3. Pledge of Allegiance. Mr. Paul Brown led the Pledge of Allegiance.
4. Mission Statement. Dr. David Ackerman read the mission statement.
5. Approval of Agenda. The agenda was approved.
6. Approval of the Minutes. The minutes for the Board of Education meeting of September 12, 2013 were approved.
7. Public Input. Mr. Erik Brinke called for public comment. There was none.
8. Teacher of the Year. Mr. Kenny Garland announced the Cherokee County Schools Teacher of the Year naming Mr. Ben Owens, Math/Science Teacher, of Tri-County Early College. Mr. Garland next recognized teachers nominated by their schools for Teacher of the Year. Those teachers recognized were: Lisa May-Andrews Elementary School, Joslyn Parker-Andrews Middle School, Cheryl Mason-Andrews High School, April McNabb-Hiwassee Dam Elementary School, Jenny Sickle-Hiwassee Dam High School, Melissa Godfrey-Marble Elementary School, Donna Collins-Martins Creek School, Keith Payne-Mountain Youth School, Sara Hickey-Murphy Elementary School, Stephanie Foley-Murphy Middle School, Catharine Rourk-Murphy High School, Linda Mashburn-Peachtree School, and Tonia Forrister-

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### **Board of Education**

Mr. Erik Brinke, Chair; Ms. Debbie Hogan, Vice Chair; Dr. David Ackerman, Scribe  
Ms. Wanda Arrowood; Mr. Randy Barnett; Mr. Paul Brown; Mr. Winfield Clonts

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Ranger School. As Mr. Garland called upon each teacher he spoke of their accomplishments and awarded each with a certificate. Dr. Lane presented each with a bonus check in recognition of their Teacher of the Year status.

9. Principal of the Year. Dr. Stephen Lane announced Mr. Tom Graham as the Cherokee County Schools Principal of the Year. He spoke of Mr. Graham's accomplishments as a principal as well as those of his faculty and staff. At the conclusion of his announcement, Dr. Lane presented Mr. Graham with a bonus check. In honor of National Principals' Month each principal was individually recognized and presented with a gift certificate.

10. AIG Presentation. Ms. Carmen Garland and Ms. Jane Ware delivered an informative presentation about the AIG program outlining various aspects of the program as well as forthcoming goals. It began with a short video that outlined the new direction of Cherokee County Schools' AIG program. Ms. Garland next provided a point by point snap shot of how she, Ms. Ware, and those involved in AIG were going to implement the new program.

11. Regional SAT Comparison. Mr. Kenny Garland presented regional SAT comparison data spanning 2011, 2012, and 2013. The data displayed counties of North Carolina and their average scores compared to those received by Cherokee County as well as compared to the National averages.

12. 2013/2014 District Improvement Plan. Mr. Garland next presented the District Improvement Plan for consideration. Upon conclusion of his briefing of the District Improvement Plan, Mr. Garland informed the Board that each school's School Safety Plan had been included in their closed session information for consideration and review.

***Motion made Mr. Winfield Clonts and seconded Ms. Debbie Hogan to approve the District Improvement Plan as presented by Mr. Garland. Voting is unanimous.***

13. Mountain Youth School Local Option Plan. Mr. Bill Gaither presented Mountain Youth School's Local Option plan to the Board for consideration.

***Motion made Ms. Wanda Arrowood and seconded Mr. Winfield Clonts to approve the MYS Local Option Plan as presented by Mr. Gaither. Voting is unanimous.***

14. Facilities Sub-Committee and Child Nutrition Sub-Committee Update. Dr. David Ackerman delivered a Facilities Sub-Committee update to the Board. During his update, Dr. Ackerman spoke of the Andrews High Stadium project, Hiwassee Dam ball field project, and the phased plan to install and upgrade intercom and alarm systems.

Mr. Winfield Clonts delivered a Child Nutrition Sub-Committee update to the Board. Mr. Clonts informed the Board how child nutrition was impacted by the partial Government Shutdown stating the number of operational days remaining with funds previously obtained. Next, Mr. Clonts addressed the plan to obtain stop-gap funding needs. He provided a brief overview of the various topics discussed during the Child Nutrition Sub-Committee meeting. Dr. Lane reemphasized the effect the partial Government Shutdown is having on receiving child nutrition funds, and explained why the shutdown was impacting child nutrition.

15. Budget Request. Ms. Stephanie Anderson presented a budget amendment and request to use half cent sales tax to facilitate the costs associated with a Dalton HVAC repair and the purchase of 2 activity buses.

***Motion made Mr. Winfield Clonts and seconded Dr. David Ackerman to approve the budget amendment to use of half cent sales tax as requested by Ms. Anderson. Voting is unanimous.***

16. Policy Review. Ms. Debbie Hogan presented several policies for first and second reading. The following policies were heard for second reading and approved: 3420 Student Promotion and Accountability, 6430 State Purchasing Requirements for Equipment, Materials and Supplies, 7100 Recruitment Selection and Retention of Personnel, 7130 Licensure.

***Motion made Ms. Debbie Hogan and seconded Ms. Wanda Arrowood to approve the policies presented for second reading. Voting is unanimous.***

Ms. Hogan then presented the following policies were heard for first reading: 6140 Student Wellness, 7240 Drug-Free and Alcohol-Free Workplace, 7430 Substitute Teachers, 7520 Family and Medical Leave, 7810 Evaluation of Licensed Employees, 9200 Care and Maintenance of Facilities.

17. Superintendent's Report. Dr. Lane delivered his Superintendent's report to the Board: Dr. Lane recognized the hard work put in by Mr. Jeana Hardin and those who assisted her in preparing a grant request to the Golden Leaf organization which resulted in Cherokee County Schools being awarded \$1,000,000. Next, Dr. Lane announced on September 23, 2013 Cherokee County Schools was recognized for the third year in a row as a Top 10 school in graduation. Dr. Lane then informed the Board that Tom Graham had reported that the Stiles Painting Company, a family owned painting company in Hiwassee Dam, had volunteered to paint the Hiwassee Dam Gym for the cost of the paint only and that Murphy Middle had a slab poured in front of the band room to keep those students from walking in the mud. He next announced the NOC has been converted to 100% LED lighting making it the first in the state to be 100% LED. Dr. Lane then informed the Board that Cherokee County Schools had been recognized by the North Carolina Sustainable Energy Association and were awarded the State Community Initiative award by that organization. Next, Dr. Lane informed the board of upcoming fieldtrips. Lastly, Dr. Lane informed the Board of Federal days of recognition for the month of October. He addressed Columbus day, Child Health Day, National Fire Prevention week, and National school lunch week.

Mr. Erik Brinke expressed how exciting it was to see the teamwork displayed in this District that resulted in these Top 10 recognitions year in and year out. He went on to say that the teamwork from all corners of the county is what differentiates our county from others.

18. Adjourn to break and closed session: Ms. Debbie Hogan read the motion to adjourn to closed session.

***Motion made Ms. Debbie Hogan and seconded Dr. David Ackerman for the Board of Education to adjourn to break and closed session pursuant to the provisions of North Carolina General Statute 143-318.11(a)(3) and 143-318.11(c), that the Cherokee County Board of Education go into closed session for the following purposes: under subsection (a)(1) to prevent the disclosure of privileged or confidential personnel information pursuant to G.S. 115C-319-321; and under subsection (a)(3) to discuss matters protected by the attorney-client privilege. Voting is unanimous.***

19. Return to Open Session. Mr. Erik Brinke called the meeting to order and returned to open session.

20. Closed Session Decisions. After returning to open session, the Board took the following actions based on closed session discussion:

- **The Board approved the following resignations and retirements:**

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>School</i>	<i>Request</i>	<i>Effective Date</i>
Sarah Sisson	Teacher	MMS-MHS	Retirement	January 31, 2014
Elizabeth Garrett	Teacher	AES	Retirement	December 31, 2013
Jeanne Burton	EC Teacher Assistant	MMS	Resignation	December 31, 2013
Nell Britt	Child Nutrition	HD Schools	Retirement	January 31, 2014
Betty Truett	Child Nutrition	MHS	Retirement	January 31, 2014
Karen Kephart	Dir, Child Nutrition	District	Retirement	February 1, 2014

*Motion made Ms. Debbie Hogan and seconded Ms. Wanda Arrowood to approve the resignations and retirements as presented by the Superintendent. Voting is unanimous.*

- **The Board approved the following leave of absence:**

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>School</i>	<i>Leave Type</i>
Libby Thigpen	Chief, SRO	MMS	Medical
Randy Phillips	SRO	AHS/AES	Medical

*Motion made Dr. David Ackerman and seconded Ms. Debbie Hogan to approve the leave of absence as presented by the Superintendent. Voting is unanimous.*

**The Board approved the following hiring recommendations on this date for the positions, schools, type of employment, and effective dates listed below with the understanding that their hiring is based on a clear criminal records check, proper credentials, and adequate position funding:**

- **The Board approved the following hiring recommendations:**

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Effective</i>
Josh Postell	Bus Driver/District	October 11, 2013
Lori Roberts	Co-Site Director 21 <sup>st</sup> Century CLC/AES	October 14, 2013
Allison Brown	Site Director 21 <sup>st</sup> Century CLC/MCS	October 14, 2013
Chad Caldwell	Site Director 21 <sup>st</sup> Century CLC/MBL	October 14, 2013
April Harper	Tutor 21 <sup>st</sup> Century CLC/HDES	October 14, 2013
Judy Breazeale	Tutor 21 <sup>st</sup> Century CLC/District	October 14, 2013

*Motion made Dr. David Ackerman and seconded Ms. Debbie Hogan to approve the hiring recommendations as presented by the Superintendent. Voting is unanimous.*

- **Dr. Lane announced the following personnel transfers:**

<i>Name</i>	<i>From</i>	<i>To</i>	<i>Effective Date</i>
Susanne Parker	EC Teacher/Peachtree	EC Teacher/Peachtree-MMS	October 1, 2013

- **The Board approved the following Substitute Teachers:**

Josh Postell	Dawn Hurd
Natalee Palmer	Katrina Flaws
Lisa Orr	Kaley Geyer
Valerie Shaffer	Joseph Poirier
Shirley Cutshaw	Kayla McCann
Anne Silver	Heath Curtis
Vicki Ledford	Kerry Rittenhouse
Donald Gaddis	Jonathan (Josh) Griggs

- **The Board approved the following 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC Substitutes:**

Travis Garrett (MES)
Jennifer Forchetti (AES)

*Motion made Ms. Debbie Hogan and seconded Ms. Wanda Arrowood to approve the Substitute Teachers as presented by the Superintendent. Voting is unanimous.*

- **The Board approved the following volunteer:**

<i>Name</i>	<i>School</i>	<i>Volunteer Activity</i>
Leon Green	Basketball	HDHS

***Motion made Dr. David Ackerman and seconded Ms. Debbie Hogan to approve the volunteer as presented by the Superintendent. Voting is unanimous.***

Mr. Brinke recognized Dr. David Ackerman who began discussion about the Superintendent's Performance Evaluation. Dr. Ackerman informed the Board that the Board of Education Sub-Committee had met and of the result of that meeting. He then stated that the performance evaluation had been given to the Superintendent and recommended the Board agree to the terms that Dr. Lane would return the review to the full Board of Education not later than the November 14, 2013 Board of Education meeting. A consensus was reached for the establishment of this deadline. Dr. Ackerman concluded his briefing by making a motion to extend the Superintendent's contract by one year.

**Upon hearing the Motion, Mr. Brinke asked if there was any discussion.**

*Ms. Wanda Arrowood offered the following statement in response to the motion: I am not in favor of extending the superintendent's contract by one year for several reasons. Presently, Dr. Lane has a three year contract. Extending the superintendent's contract does not benefit CCS. A contract binds the school board but not the superintendent. With a contract, the superintendent can still give notice and leave. If the superintendent became complacent or even performed his duties in a manner that warranted dismissal, the burden of proof and evidence would fall on the board. The board would be bound to gather documentation which could be time consuming and expensive. If dismissal needed to be expedited, the board might even find itself buying out the superintendent's contract. I do not want to tell the citizens of Cherokee County that I am using their money in this manner. Presently, the superintendent's salary package is about \$187,000. His supplement and benefits package come directly from local funds or Cherokee County taxpayers. The legislature has just dealt a blow to our teachers by taking away their tenure, giving them no raise, and deciding not to pay for master's degrees. A beginning teacher's salary is \$30,000--\$50,000 if you include benefits. Our Superintendent makes about 4 times that amount. How demoralizing is it to our faculty and staff to see such disproportionate salaries when they work so hard and do so much for our students? No one except the superintendent would benefit from adding an additional year to the contract at this time.*

**After those comments offered by Ms. Arrowood, Mr. Brinke again asked for additional comments.**

*Mr. Winfield Clonts offered the following statement in response to the motion: I would just like to say that I am in favor of the extension and my comment is not based on a "what if" scenario because I'm looking at Dr. Lane's track record. Just today he mentioned that we were in the Top 10 graduation rate in the State of North Carolina and we want to continue on with our aggressive school system and what we are doing. I think he's the person to do it and I feel like he can take us to there and I think this is the way to do it.*

**After those comments offered by Mr. Clonts, Mr. Brinke again asked for additional comments.**

*Dr. David Ackerman offered the following statement in response to the motion: I would just like to make one comment. Again just to reiterate I felt like this motion was necessary because I do think we have an exceptional superintendent. I do think the track record has been stellar. I do realize and have the understanding that it is not done solely by him alone we have a tremendous faculty and staff that do warrant merit increases in their pay and increases in security of their job, etc., and we have been through a tumultuous time with that at the State level. We do not have control over those items we have only control over the leadership of our school district and I think by incentivizing him with one additional year on his contract to hopefully stabilize it for one additional year, we will be able*

*to maintain and continue to progress at the high standard that we have. This motion will not, assuming there are no “what if’s” or “negative problems”, will not cost the tax payers—in my mind—any additional money. There are no additional bonuses that have been added to his contract. There is no additional pay raise that has been added to his contract. This is simply an addition of one year to the existing contract so in my mind we can give him some form of “at-a-boy” and ensure he continually stabilizes our school district because I only see these tumultuous times on what is made at the State level becoming more of a problem. And I think we need to try to do the best that we can do to ensure that we have the best leadership possible. And if we are a Top 5 or Top 10 performing school district and we’ve been able to do that under our current leadership, I think it’s only appropriate that that be recognized and that be recognized publicly.*

After those comments offered by Dr. Ackerman, Mr. Brinke again asked for additional comments. Hearing none, Mr. Brinke asked for a vote to the previously made motion.

*Motion made Dr. David Ackerman and seconded Ms. Debbie Hogan for the Board to extend Dr. Stephen E. Lane’s contract by one year. The Motion Carries.*

*Voting in favor of extending the Superintendent’s contract for one year:  
Mr. Erik Brinke; Dr. David Ackerman; Mr. Winfield Clonts; and Ms. Debbie Hogan.*

*Voting opposed to extending the Superintendent’s contract for one year:  
Ms. Wanda Arrowood; Mr. Paul Brown; and Mr. Randy Barnett.*

After the voting, Mr. Brinke recognized Dr. Lane.

*Dr. Lane offered the following comment: I appreciate the support provided to me this evening for the extension of my contract. This extension will now allow me to meet the minimum eligibility requirements to retire in 2017 with all my state benefits intact. I understand the concerns that were iterated by the minority of the board. I can tell you that I’ve never half-stepped on anything in my life, and I’ve never felt guilty about receiving a pay check. I’ve worked as hard as I possibly can work and as smart as I can work in accomplishing goals. I have always endeavored to build the best team around me that I can because no one does this alone. We do it as a team. WRAL in Raleigh recently completed a study of all the superintendents in the state and published on their website the salary and benefits of every school superintendent. My salary was ranked “average” as a superintendent. You will find that every superintendent has a disproportionate salary to teachers, especially beginning teachers, and so is the responsibility of superintendents to teachers. The superintendent in Clay County last year received \$185,000 in salary and over \$231,764 counting benefits. Clay County is one third the size of our system and is our neighbor. In addition, the Cherokee County local funds that are awarded to me for achieving my performance goals I donate all of the net proceeds back to Cherokee County Schools for use toward staff incentives, and will continue to do so until staff members receive a pay increase or merit pay. In terms of achievement, we did achieve Top 10 in graduation as Mr. Clonts noted, and we have done it for three years in a row, but beyond that we have had six total Top 10 categories in the state this past year, and that is not only a first for Cherokee County, but is more Top 10’s than any other district in the state. And we’ve done it “together” every step of the way and we are going to do our best to continue in that effort. If I ever feel like my performance is not what it needs to be going forward then I will remove myself from the equation because within me is the desire to be the best. I work as hard as I possibly can toward that goal and I will continue to do the best that I can for Cherokee County Schools. I appreciate all the support from the Board and just looking at my summative evaluation that I received tonight, I see it’s a very strong evaluation and I thank you all for your evaluation marks and the associated comments. I believe in the continuous improvement model and therefore, always want to continuously improve. I pledge that to you. Again, thank you for the opportunity to continue to serve as your superintendent.*

Note for the record: Dr. Lane’s salary is \$147,096 of which \$116,916 is paid by the State, and \$30,180 is paid by Cherokee County. Dr. Lane receives \$36,226 in benefits (\$9,182 FICA match, \$21,608

*Retirement match, and \$5,435 Health Insurance), of which \$28,831 is paid by the State, and \$7,394 is paid by Cherokee County. Accordingly, Dr. Lane's total salary and benefits is \$183,322 of which 80% is funded by the State and 20% is funded by Cherokee County.*

21. Adjournment. The next regular meeting of the Cherokee County Board of Education will be held at Murphy Elementary School on Thursday, November 14, 2013 at 6:00 p.m. There being no further business to discuss the meeting adjourned at 10:38 pm.

*Motion made Ms. Debbie Hogan and seconded Dr. David Ackerman to adjourn the meeting. Voting is unanimous.*

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Stephen E. Lane, Ed.D. Secretary

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Erik Brinke, Board Chair