

**MINUTES**  
**REGULAR MEETING OF THE ALBEMARLE COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD**  
**Thursday, April 11, 2024**  
[Meeting Video Link](#)

**ROLL CALL** - UPON THE ROLL BEING CALLED, THE FOLLOWING WERE PRESENT:

**BOARD MEMBERS** - Dr. Kate Acuff, Dr. Rebecca Berlin, Ms. Judy Le, Ms. Ellen Osborne, Mr. Chuck Pace, Mr. Graham Paige, Ms. Allison Spillman, and Student Representative Ms. Fernanda Cisneros.

**ABSENT** – None

**ALSO, IN ATTENDANCE** - Superintendent Matthew Haas; School Division Counsel Josiah Black; Assistant Superintendent Clare Keiser; Assistant Superintendent Patrick McLaughlin; Assistant Superintendent Daphne Keiser; Assistant Superintendent Chandra Hayes; Chief Operating Officer Rosalyn Schmitt; Public Affairs and Strategic Communications Officer Helen Dunn; Clerk of the School Board Christine Thompson

**AGENDA ITEM NO. 1.1 CLOSED MEETING** - At 5:30 p.m., Ms. Osborne offered a **motion** that the School Board of Albemarle County, Virginia go into a closed meeting as authorized by the Virginia Freedom of Information Act, section 2.2-3711(A) of the Code of Virginia under Subsection 1 for the discussion, consideration, or interviews of prospective candidates for employment and the assignment, appointment, promotion, performance, demotion, salaries, disciplining, or resignation of specific public officers, appointees, or employees of any public body; the purpose of this item is to discuss the potential resignation of a teacher; and Subsection 8 for consultation with legal counsel employed or retained by a public body regarding specific legal matters requiring the provision of legal advice by such counsel; the purpose of the item in the closed meeting is to discuss proposed amendments to the School Board Policy BDDH, which concerns Public Participation at School Board Meetings. Dr. Acuff seconded the **motion**. **A voice vote was called, and the motion passed by the following recorded votes:**

**AYES:** Mr. Pace, Mr. Paige, Ms. Osborne, Ms. Spillman, Dr. Acuff, and Chair Le.

**NAYS:** None.

**ABSENT:** Dr. Berlin.

**Motion carried by a 6:0:1 vote.**

Dr. Berlin arrived at 6:35 p.m.

**AGENDA ITEM NO. 2.0 OPENING ACTIVITIES**

**Agenda Item No. 2.1 Call to Order** - At 6:30 p.m., Chair Le called the Albemarle County School Board meeting back to order.

**Agenda Item No. 2.2 Closed Meeting Certification** - At 6:31 p.m., Ms. Osborne offered a **motion** that the Board certify by recorded vote that to the best of each Board member's knowledge, only public business matters lawfully exempted from the open meeting requirements of the Virginia Freedom of Information Act and identified in the motion authorizing the Closed Meeting were heard, discussed, or considered in the Closed Meeting. Mr. Paige seconded the **motion**. **A roll call vote was called, and the motion passed by the following recorded votes:**

**AYES:** Mr. Pace, Dr. Acuff, Ms. Osborne, Mr. Paige, Dr. Berlin, Ms. Spillman, and Chair Le.

**NAYS:** None.

**ABSENT:** None.

**Motion carried by a 7:0 vote.**

Dr. Acuff offered a **motion** to direct staff to amend Policy BDDH – Public Participation in School Board Meetings as follows:

1. Continue allowing sign-ups for public comment both online and in person but limit the total number of speakers to 20 per meeting.
2. Set a time limit of 40 minutes for public comment, with the option for the Board to extend this time due to special circumstances.
3. If more than 20 individuals or groups sign up to speak, assign numbers to each and draw to determine which speakers will have the opportunity to speak. Unselected speakers can sign up for future meetings or submit written comments.

Dr. Berlin seconded the **motion. A roll call vote was called, and the motion passed with the following recorded votes:**

**AYES:** Dr. Acuff, Mr. Pace, Ms. Spillman, Mr. Paige, Ms. Osborne, Dr. Berlin, and Chair Le

**NAYS:** None

**ABSENT:** None

**Motion carried by a 7:0 vote.**

**Agenda Item No. 2.3 - Roll Call**

**Agenda Item No. 2.4 - Pledge of Allegiance**

**Agenda Item No. 2.5 - Moment of Silence**

**AGENDA ITEM NO. 3.0 APPROVAL OF AGENDA** - Mr. Paige offered a **motion** to approve the agenda. Dr. Acuff seconded the **motion. A voice vote was called, and the motion passed with the following recorded votes:**

**AYES:** Ms. Osborne, Dr. Acuff, Dr. Berlin, Mr. Pace, Ms. Spillman, Mr. Paige, and Chair Le

**NAYS:** None

**ABSENT:** None

**Motion carried by a 7:0 vote.**

**AGENDA ITEM NO. 4.0 APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA** - Dr. Berlin offered a **motion** to approve the Consent Agenda. Mr. Pace **seconded the motion. A voice vote was called, and the motion passed with the following recorded votes:**

**AYES:** Mr. Paige, Ms. Osborne, Dr. Berlin, Dr. Acuff, Ms. Spillman, Mr. Pace, and Chair Le

**NAYS:** None

**ABSENT:** None

**Motion carried by a 7:0 vote.**

4.1 - Approval of Consent Agenda

4.2 – Personnel Action

4.3 – For Information: 2024 VSBA Excellence in Workforce Readiness Award

**AGENDA ITEM NO. 5.0 ITEMS PULLED FROM CONSENT AGENDA - None**

**AGENDA ITEM NO. 6.0 ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**Agenda Item No. 6.1 Spotlight on Education** - Presented by Student Representative Fernanda Cisneros.

Albemarle County Public School [Spelling Bee Winners](#) - 2024

**Agenda Item No. 6.2 School Board / Superintendent Business**

April – Month of the Military Child. [Resolution](#)

Dr. Acuff a motion that the School Board adopt the Month of the Military Child resolution. Ms. Spillman **seconded the motion. A voice vote was called, and the motion passed with the following recorded votes:**

**AYES:** Mr. Paige, Ms. Osborne, Dr. Berlin, Dr. Acuff, Ms. Spillman, Mr. Pace, and Chair Le

**NAYS:** None

**ABSENT:** None

**Motion carried by a 7:0 vote.**

**AGENDA ITEM NO. 7.0 PUBLIC COMMENT**

Matthew Hepler, a resident of the Samuel Miller district, ACPS teacher, and parent of an ACPS student, spoke urging the board to adopt the collective bargaining resolution for ACPS employees. He highlighted recent academic studies showing that collective bargaining benefits student learning, staff retention, and morale. He noted the current climate of disrespect towards educators and emphasized that adopting collective bargaining would affirm the respect and trust educators deserve. He also pointed out that such a move would set a positive example for students about having a voice in negotiations.

Patricia Napoleon, a lifelong resident of Charlottesville and a retired Albemarle County teacher, spoke in support of Mr. Ben Hurt. She praised Mr. Hurt's leadership at Albemarle High School, recalling it as a safe and successful environment under his guidance. She shared a personal story about a former student, Walter White, who thrived under Mr. Hurt's mentorship. Napoleon criticized the board for what she views as unfair judgment of Mr. Hurt and a lack of compassion. She urged the board to show more open-mindedness and forgiveness, arguing that their actions promote division and set a poor example for the community and students.

David Rhodes, a member of the Albemarle High School Class of 1975 and a Rivanna district resident, shared his reflections on the changes he has witnessed over his 66 years. He recounted his experience starting first grade in 1963 during school integration and how he learned a great deal from his Black friends. Rhodes highlighted a sign outside his elementary school honoring the first African American students, some of whom remain his friends. He praised Mr. Hurt for his efforts to address challenges during a difficult period in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Rhodes recalled Mr. Hurt's initiative in starting the first Black History Month program and his approach to expanding the cheerleading squad by involving students in the decision. Rhodes emphasized that Mr. Hurt's actions demonstrated respect for student input and a commitment to inclusivity during a time of adversity.

Tim Klobuchar, an English teacher at Monticello High School and a member of the Albemarle Education Association (AEA) team, spoke in favor of the collective bargaining resolution set for a vote. He expressed excitement and optimism about entering a new era at ACPS with the passage of the resolution. Klobuchar emphasized that collective bargaining would give employees across various roles a significant voice in their pay, benefits, and working conditions. Drawing from his experience in a collective bargaining state, he highlighted the benefits of multi-year contracts and negotiated guarantees, which improve both tangible benefits and morale. He noted that strong collective bargaining practices correlate with high-performing education systems and believed that the partnership between AEA and ACPS will enhance conditions for everyone involved. Klobuchar acknowledged that while the path to collective bargaining has been challenging, the collaborative relationship established with ACPS is promising. He recognized that further steps, such as an authorization card campaign and election, are necessary before formal negotiations can begin, but he is hopeful about the positive impact on the schools.

Andrew Shelton, a resident of the Samuel Miller District, spoke in support of the collective bargaining agreement. He mentioned that he has no direct affiliation with the county schools or children in the system but expressed appreciation for the contributions of Albemarle County Schools graduates he works with. Shelton argued that supporting teachers through collective bargaining would greatly benefit the education system and urged the board to adopt the resolution.

Sarah Harris, representing the local public education advocacy organization Forward Albemarle, spoke in favor of the collective bargaining resolution. She expressed strong support for teachers and gratitude to the AEA and board members for their efforts in advancing collective bargaining. Harris thanked the board in advance for approving the resolution and emphasized the importance of continuing to support and empower educators. She also acknowledged the dedication of ACPS employees who contribute in various roles across the school system, highlighting their vital role in the success of public schools.

John Glass, a Spanish teacher at Albemarle High School, from the Rio district and echoed support for the AEA and collective bargaining. He specifically addressed the issue of cell phone use in schools, advocating for a county-wide "phone away for the day" policy. Glass urged the board to review successful implementations of such policies in other school systems and highlighted the negative impact of cell phones on classroom environments. He expressed frustration at the lack of understanding about the issue's gravity and criticized the inconsistency between educational training and the absence of supportive policies and tools. Glass referenced Ms. Hammond's work on culturally responsive teaching and argued that while schools restrict vending machines for health reasons, they allow businesses to exploit students' attention through cell phone use. He called for a consistent policy to mitigate these issues and protect students from intrusive advertising and data collection.

Chris Winter, a resident of the Rio district, expressed his dissatisfaction with the recent changes to school names. He felt that renaming schools shows disrespect to the community and criticized the board for potentially revising historical names based on imperfect pasts. Winter argued that such actions undermine the community's values and leaders. Winter shared his experience as a former bus driver who was fired after raising concerns about students violating the school's dress code. He expressed his frustration over the dismissal and requested reinstatement, emphasizing his dedication to his job and his unwillingness to tolerate violations of the dress code.

Barbara Westbrook from the Whitehall District spoke in support of Mr. Hurt, sharing personal experiences with him. She recounted graduating from Albemarle High in 1965, where Mr. Hurt was a significant influence, encouraging her to pursue higher education. Westbrook described Mr. Hurt as kind, religious, and free of prejudice. She urged the board not to remove his name from Agnor Hurt Elementary School, arguing that such an action would be disrespectful to a man she views as having been a positive and influential figure in her life and career.

Betty Suetz, a resident of Keswick and a retired teacher who worked in Albemarle County for 43 years, spoke about Mr. Hurt, who was her principal. Suetz expressed deep disappointment and sadness over the decision to remove Mr. Hurt's name from a school. She highlighted his role in establishing strong relationships with students, teachers, and the community, emphasizing his significant impact during his tenure from 1954 to 1984. Suetz urged the board to reconsider their decision, arguing that removing his name would disrespect his legacy and commitment to the county.

## **AGENDA ITEM NO. 8.0 SCHOOL DIVISION BUSINESS**

**Agenda Item No. 8.1 - [Resolution Providing for Collective Bargaining](#)** – § 40.1-57.2 permits local governing bodies to recognize and bargain with a labor union or other employee association as the exclusive bargaining agent of their employees, and to collectively bargain and enter a collective bargaining agreement "with respect to any matter relating to them or their employment or service," by resolution or ordinance. Following the School Board's decision to authorize collective bargaining last year, a committee met numerous times over the course of more than ten months to draft a proposed Resolution, which, if adopted, will establish the terms and conditions under which an Employee Organization may seek to be certified as the exclusive bargaining representative of ACPS employees. [Presentation](#)

Ms. Spillman expressed gratitude to Dr. Berlin and Ms. Osborne for their efforts and acknowledged the emotional impact of the teachers' passionate public comments. She shared that, as a parent of five children in the schools, she deeply appreciates the work of the educators. Spillman, who was a strong advocate for collective bargaining before joining the board, conveyed her excitement and honor at being able to vote on the resolution. She praised the collaboration between the board and the AEA and thanked everyone for their support and involvement in reaching this milestone.

Ms. Osborne commended the HR department for their patience and responsiveness to numerous inquiries from the committee, particularly towards the end of their discussions. She highlighted the critical role of having an in-house HR department, expressing gratitude towards the person who initiated this structural change, and credited it with making a significant positive impact on their operations.

Dr. Berlin expressed her honor and appreciation for being part of the collective bargaining process. She acknowledged the efforts from both sides of the negotiation table in reaching an agreement that benefits teachers and students. Berlin recognized the challenges and uncertainties faced during the process but appreciated everyone's commitment to working together for the sake of the community and its children. She extended her thanks to all involved for their dedication and collaboration.

Ms. Osborne offered a **motion** to adopt the Resolution for Collective Bargaining as presented. Dr. Berlin **seconded the motion. A roll call vote was called, and the motion passed with the following recorded votes:**

**AYES:** Dr. Berlin, Mr. Pace, Ms. Osborne, Ms. Spillman, Mr. Paige, Dr. Acuff, and Chair Le

**NAYS:** None

**ABSENT:** None

**Motion carried by a 7:0 vote.**

**Agenda Item No. 8.2 – [FY 25 Budget Updates](#)** - Staff provided FY 25 budget updates and information, to solicit feedback to prepare for budget adoption on April 25, 2024.

Dr. Acuff inquired about a reduction in social-emotional coaches by one full-time equivalent (FTE). Staff confirmed that while one FTE was reduced, the total FTE allocated for social-emotional services remains at 30. Originally, the plan involved using three existing FTEs to offset costs, but with four available, another FTE was repurposed to maintain the proposed services. The services will be allocated as originally presented.

Ms. Spillman asked for details on the increase in class sizes, specifically regarding the impact of FTEs. She recalled that cuts were to be equally distributed between central office and schools, and requested more specifics on the cuts from the central office and whether they align with the original plan. Staff indicated that central office cuts are proportionally higher compared to school-based staff cuts relative to their respective budgets. Ms. Spillman requested further details on these cuts.

**Agenda Item No. 8.3 – [Special Education Annual Plan for School Year 24-25](#)** - Under the provisions of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA), the IDEA Federal Regulations, and the Regulations Governing Special Education Programs for Children with Disabilities in Virginia, local educational agencies are required to submit an annual plan and application for providing special education and related services to children with disabilities in order to secure Federal funds. ACPS ensures the community and Federal and State Departments of Education that its policies and procedures are consistent with the Regulations Governing Special Education Programs in Virginia, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act and corresponding Federal Regulations. The Annual Plan consist of the following components:

1. The Annual Plan document, that includes the applications for Section 611 Flow-Through Grant (K-12) and the Section 619 Early Childhood Special Education (PK) Grant.
2. Part B Set Aside Calculation and Plan is included. It outlines how a portion of the Federal funding was calculated, developed with consultation from private schools and parents and the resulting implementation plan. These funds are used to support children eligible for special education services that are unilaterally placed by their parents in home or private school programs located in Albemarle County.
3. The Revised Regional Jail Agreement is included. This agreement ensures that special services are provided for eligible inmates at the Charlottesville Albemarle Regional Jail per federal and state regulations.

The approved version of the Annual Plan is expected to be submitted to VDOE on or before May 10, 2024. This plan was reviewed, as required by Virginia Regulations, by the Special Education Advisory Committee on March 12, 2024.

Ms. Spillman emphasized the need for schools to be more proactive in advocating for and addressing student needs. She highlighted that while involved parents are aware of their rights and options, many others may not be as informed. She expressed interest in how the division can better reach out to parents and ensure that student needs are met proactively.

**Agenda Item No. 8.4 Break** – The School Board took a break from 8:16 P.M. to 8:26 P.M.

**Agenda Item No. 8.5 – [Bellwether Updates](#)**

Dr. Berlin inquired about the teacher-to-coach ratio and the parameters used for caseload decisions. Staff indicated that research generally supports a ratio of about 40 teachers per coach, which would require 35 coaches. Currently, there are 25 coaches, leading to a ratio of 50 teachers per coach. Staff acknowledged this higher ratio might be challenging and emphasized that initial discussions will focus on aligning coaches' roles with each school's strategic instructional priorities for the coming year.

Dr. Acuff confirmed that the budget includes about 25-26 coaches. She asked if coaches also work with Learning Technology Integrators (LTIs) and how they fit into the system. Three coaches are focused on novice teachers to streamline support and better assist veteran teachers, addressing recommendations from the Bellwether report. Staff also noted that a new initiative this year, the "connected team meeting," has received positive feedback. This meeting structure includes two components: learning together, where roles overlap and coaching practices are discussed, and collaborative support, where coaches, LTIs, and equity specialists coordinate their support for assigned schools and collaborate on strategies.

Ms. Spillman inquired about how coaches interact with interventionists and reading specialists, given the recent shift at Albemarle High School towards a coaching model for reading intervention. Currently, most reading specialists in elementary and middle schools focus primarily on direct student interaction. The new high school reading specialist role and the Virginia Literacy Act, which emphasizes coaching within classrooms, provide opportunities for increased collaboration. At the elementary level, instructional leadership teams are expected to include both coaches and reading specialists. The goal is to strategically align roles and support to meet the needs of teachers and students, particularly with the upcoming implementation of HMH and its associated challenges.

Mr. Paige asked if teachers working with coaches have the opportunity to observe a model lesson taught by another teacher or the coach themselves. Staff confirmed that this does occur, but its frequency often depends on the teacher's request. The focus for next year, as highlighted by the Bellwether report, will be on making such modeling a standard practice in coaching.

Mr. Pace asked if teachers would receive training in their role within the coaching model. The rollout of the model at the beginning of the next school year will address this. The training for teachers will be developed in collaboration with both the principal and coach product groups.

Ms. Le inquired why the coaching model remains non-evaluative. Research indicates that making coaching evaluative can introduce judgment and undermine the coaching relationship. Maintaining a non-evaluative approach fosters a safe, supportive environment where teachers can openly discuss their challenges and learn from mistakes without fear of repercussions.

Dr. Berlin expressed admiration for the thorough planning and professional development associated with the new implementation process. She commended the commitment of both the team and the school district to ensuring the initiative's success, acknowledging the importance of the effort. Dr. Berlin extended a big thank you to everyone involved for their dedication and hard work.

## **No. 9.0 OTHER BUSINESS**

### **Agenda Item No. 9.1 Other Business by Board Members and/or Superintendent**

Ms. Osborne opened a discussion about cell phone use in schools, noting that despite having an existing policy, implementation varies significantly. The board discussed issues with enforcement, support for teachers, and the need for a more consistent approach. Several board members suggested revisiting and possibly revising the policy, emphasizing the importance of clear communication and support for teachers.

#### **Key Points:**

**Policy Review:** The current cell phone policy requires students to put phones away, but implementation varies. There is a need to review and potentially revise the policy for better enforcement.

**Support and Consistency:** Teachers have reported inconsistent support and enforcement from administration. There's a call for stronger backing and clearer expectations from school leaders.

**Training and Communication:** There's a need for a comprehensive training plan for teachers and administrators to ensure consistent policy implementation.

**Parent Involvement:** The board highlighted the importance of engaging parents, given that most parents prefer their children not to have phones during school hours.


Next Steps: The board agreed to review the current policy, consider any necessary revisions, and explore successful models from other schools or divisions. A copy of the existing policy will be distributed for review.

**Agenda Item No. 9.2 Closed Meeting – None.**

**Agenda Item No. 9.3 Closed Meeting Certification – None.**

**AGENDA ITEM NO. 10.0 ADJOURNMENT** - At 9:19 p.m., hearing no objections, Chair Le adjourned the meeting of the Albemarle County School Board.

  
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Chair

  
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Clerk