

MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING OF THE ALBEMARLE COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD
Thursday, May 9, 2024
[Meeting Video Link](#)

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

BOARD MEMBERS - Dr. Kate Acuff, Dr. Rebecca Berlin, Ms. Ellen Osborne, Mr. Chuck Pace, Mr. Graham Paige, Ms. Allison Spillman, Ms. Judy Le

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; Chief Technology Officer Christine Diggs; Public Affairs and Strategic Communications Officer Helen Dunn; and Clerk of the Board Christine Thompson

AGENDA ITEM NO. 1.0 CLOSED MEETING - At 5:30 p.m., Ms. Osborne offered a **motion** that the Albemarle County Public School Board 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 (1) the selection of the next Student Representative to the School Board; and (2) a performance-management issue relating to an administrative employee. Ms. Spillman seconded the **motion**. **A voice vote was called, and the motion passed by the following recorded votes:**

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

NAYS: None.

ABSENT: None.

Motion carried by a 7:0 vote.

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. Dr. Acuff seconded the **motion**. **Roll was called, and the motion passed by 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.

Dr. Berlin offered a **motion** that the Board nominate Students A, B, C, and D to serve as Student Representatives on the School Board for the 2024-2025 School Year. Ms. Spillman seconded the **motion**. **A voice vote was called, and the motion passed by the following recorded votes:**

AYES: Ms. Spillman, Ms. Osborne, Mr. Pace, Dr. Berlin, Mr. Paige, Dr. Acuff, 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. 3.10 APPROVAL OF AGENDA - Ms. Osborne offered a **motion** to approve the agenda. Mr. Paige seconded the **motion**. **A voice vote was called, and the motion passed with the following recorded votes:**

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

NAYS: None.

ABSENT: None.

Motion carried by a 7:0 vote.

4.0 APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA - Ms. Osborne offered a motion to approve the Consent Agenda. Ms. Spillman **seconded the motion**. **A voice vote was called, and the motion passed with the following recorded votes:**

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

NAYS: None.

ABSENT: None.

Motion carried by a 7:0 vote.

4.1 Approval of Consent Agenda

4.2 Prioritized Aspiring Educator Grant

4.3 Teacher Apprenticeship Implementation Grant ARP-ESSR III

4.4 4.4 For information: A/E Term Contract RFP Selection Committee

4.5 Personnel Action

4.6 For action: Policy Review and Revisions

Mr. Paige asked about two items on the Consent Agenda – not wishing to pull the items but asking for further information.

1. Item 4.4 does ACPS have provisions for contracting with minority businesses and how these contracts are considered and measured. A formal follow-up on this will be provided to the Board.

2. Item 4.6 (Policy GCL): The progress towards awarding micro-credentials and certifications, and whether current achievements align with the established goals. Staff will present data on this matter to the Board.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 5.0 ITEMS PULLED FROM CONSENT AGENDA – None.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 6.0 ANNOUNCEMENTS

Agenda Item No. 6.1 – 6.4 School Board Superintendent Business

The School Board presented the following:

Resolution recognizing [National Teachers Appreciation Week](#)

Proclamation recognizing [Mental Health Awareness Month](#)

Proclamation recognizing [National School Nurse Day](#)

Agenda Item No. 6.5 Spotlight on Education

The School Board recognized the 2024 Employees of the Year.

2024 [Classified](#) Staff Member of the Year

2024 [Teacher](#) of the Year

2024 [Leadership](#) Staff Member of the Year

AGENDA ITEM NO. 7.0 PUBLIC COMMENT

Courtney Stanley, a 1959 graduate and former mathematics teacher at Albemarle High School, shared her personal connection to Mr. Hurt. She stated that Mr. Hurt had a positive impact and refuted claims about racist elements in the school's yearbooks. Stanley explained that controversial images, such as rebel flags and blackface, were misinterpreted as they were taken during events with different contexts, not intended to be racist. She highlighted Mr. Hurt's commitment to integrating and supporting Black students and staff and urged the board to reconsider any negative perceptions about the school's past under his leadership.

Barbara Fitzgerald has extensive teaching experience and is the spouse of another educator, expressed support for Mr. Hurt, refuting claims of racism. She emphasized that yearbooks and other student publications were managed by students, not administrators, and that organizations like the Lions Club are not inherently racist. Ms. Fitzgerald reflected on Mr. Hurt's positive impact and urged the board to consider the potential harm to his reputation if his name were removed from the school.

Randy Fitzgerald, a 1959 graduate of Albemarle High School, shared personal experiences with Mr. Hurt, who was a principal during Fitzgerald's time. Fitzgerald described Mr. Hurt as welcoming and supportive, particularly during the school's integration period. He emphasized Mr. Hurt's efforts to make all students feel included and respected, including organizing meetings and activities to foster understanding between students from different backgrounds. Fitzgerald refuted claims of racism against Mr. Hurt, highlighting his ongoing support and positive impact on students over the decades.

Patricia Napoleon, a long-time educator spoke in defense of Mr. Hurt. She spoke about a resolution from the Board of Supervisors, which honored Mr. Hurt with recognition presented by a former school board chairwoman. Napoleon criticized the board for disregarding this past recognition and for making a decision she views as unjust. She mentioned a letter from Ms. Barnett, a former colleague of Mr. Hurt, who admired him greatly. She accused the board of performing an "insulting hatchet job" on Mr. Hurt and urged them to reflect on their actions, suggesting they have overlooked his many positive contributions.

Samantha Shifflett, a senior at Monticello High School, spoke about the need to reintroduce Student Resource Officers (SROs) in schools. She highlighted that despite having SROs at other schools, Monticello has not seen any, impacting student safety. She recounted her experiences of safety concerns, such as fights and drug use, that might have been mitigated by an SRO's presence. Samantha emphasized that SROs not only provide security but also serve as mentors and positive influences. She urged the board to bring SROs back to all high schools, and potentially to middle and elementary schools as well, to enhance student safety and support.

Vincent McKinney, a 1964 graduate and the first Black student at Albemarle High School, shared his experiences with Mr. Hurt. He recounted two meetings with Mr. Hurt: one in the summer of 1963 and another during the school year, where Mr. Hurt treated him and his parents with respect. McKinney expressed surprise and emotional distress upon learning about discussions to remove Mr. Hurt's name from a school. He criticized Mr. Hurt for not actively challenging the status quo and for permitting disrespectful symbols, such as Confederate flags, during a time of significant change. McKinney's comments reflect his disappointment in Mr. Hurt's lack of action and leadership in addressing these issues.

Sally James from the Whitehall District expressed concerns about the decision to remove Mr. Hurt's name from Agnor Hurt School. She questioned what it would take for the school board to reconsider their decision, given the evidence of Mr. Hurt's character presented by various speakers. James asked if public comments could influence the board's decisions and criticized the board for potentially acting in an autocratic manner rather than being responsive to community feedback. She voiced frustration about the perceived lack of accountability and responsiveness from local government.

Mr. JH Jones, a resident of Whitehall, spoke passionately in defense of Mr. Hurt, asserting that he did nothing wrong and played a positive role during integration. Jones emphasized his own deep connection to local history and criticized the current board members and Superintendent for their approach to renaming schools. He accused them of imposing their ideology and expressed strong frustration and anger at what he sees as attacks on respected community figures and their historical contributions.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 8.0 – SCHOOL DIVISION BUSINESS

Agenda Item No. 8.1 [Senior Stay Day](#)

Ms. Spillman inquired about the possibility of including resume writing in next year's event, emphasizing the importance of aligning these sessions with career opportunities. She stressed the necessity for participants to be prepared with a plan and knowledge about the event's attendees, enabling them to conduct research beforehand. Additionally, Ms. Spillman highlighted the value of family involvement in such events, drawing a parallel with college tours for seniors, suggesting that parents would appreciate being part of their children's decision-making processes at such important events.

Dr. Acuff raised concerns about the timing of launching career pathways, questioning the effectiveness of introducing these initiatives in May of students' senior year as opposed to earlier stages like freshman year or even 8th grade. Staff acknowledged that while the ideas were formulated at the end of January, there has been consideration to move these events to March, before spring break, to better align with employer hiring schedules which typically begin in March or April. There are plans to collaborate with Piedmont Virginia Community College, which is opening a new building. The new facility at PVCC might serve as the venue for next year's event, potentially scheduled during their spring break to facilitate access.

Dr. Acuff inquired about whether there was a mechanism in place to measure how many students successfully connected with employers during the event. A follow-up survey was integrated into the event registration process through a QR code. This survey will provide data on the students' engagement with employers, allowing the organizers to assess the effectiveness of the event in facilitating these connections.

Chair Le commented that she was impressed with the event. She personally engaged with 90% of the employers present, inquiring about their strategies for handling potential hires who lack the necessary skills for their respective fields. The employers unanimously indicated that they offer on-the-job training to equip new employees with the required skills, highlighting a proactive approach to workforce development.

Dr. Acuff asked how effective we are at preparing students for the future, specifically asking how alumni perceive their school preparation five years post-graduation. Staff are collecting baseline data on alumni to assess the impact of career learning pathways on their progress in further education and careers.

Agenda Item No. 8.2 – The School Board took a break from 8:22 p.m. to 8:32 p.m.

Agenda Item No. 8.3 [High School Center II](#) – Design Development Phase

Dr. Berlin asked if there would be a renaming of Center I. There will be a rebranding of the entire Center Model.

Ms. Spillman shared that the Student Senate were able to see the plans for the Center and see the furniture that will be used, they were engaged and excited. They were particularly excited about trying out the new furniture.

Dr. Acuff shared that the Georgetown Green neighborhood had complaints regarding the existing retaining pond. Staff noted that the issue stemmed from water runoff accumulating in people's backyards, particularly from a hilltop building services facility. The introduction of a new roadway at the bottom of the hill will include curbing and gutter systems along with storm drain inlets. This setup is expected to effectively manage and redirect water runoff, preventing it from accumulating in residential areas.

Dr. Acuff inquired about geothermal wells. Staff discussed implementing geothermal wells to power central facilities, potentially extending to other schools. They shared that there are 90 wells, each 450 feet deep, already planned or in place. There's a strong interest in expanding geothermal technology to more schools, following its successful implementation at AHS.

Mr. Pace praised the parking plans.

Mr. Paige inquired about the architectural design of a space, specifically asking about the concept of having an open area extending from the floor to the top of the second floor, essentially a double-height or two-story high space. Staff confirmed the design, explaining that the space in question has a double-height ceiling. They described a scenario where one can stand at the entrance and see up to the second floor in the distance, enhancing the openness and visibility of the area.

Agenda Item No. 8.4 [Southern Feeder Pattern Elementary School](#) – Design Development Phase

Dr. Acuff inquired about the plans for integrating solar panels into new facilities, questioning whether funding for solar panels will be sought in parallel to the construction so the buildings can start with solar capabilities. She emphasized the potential for making a strong environmental statement to the community by combining solar panels with geothermal energy. Staff outlined plans to bid for a solar array as an additive option through a delegated design process for both facilities. If initial funding attempts prove unfavorable, they will pursue a Power Purchase Agreement (PPA), with opportunities arising in the coming months. This strategy aims not only to implement solar technology but also to realize operational savings.

Dr. Berlin asked about the logistical issues of connecting two parcels of land totaling about 16 acres, noting the difficulty in creating a direct path between them without circumventing the property externally. Staff acknowledged the desirability of a connecting path, which the principal also supports. However, it outlines significant legal challenges, such as the absence of clear property ownership and the existence of potentially 30 different claimants to the route. While the staff expresses a commitment to continue pursuing this project, they caution that resolving these issues will not be straightforward and the path may not be feasible in the immediate future.

Ms. Osborne raised a safety concern regarding the open-style interior stairs, questioning their suitability for children. Staff highlighted safety measures in place to address these concerns. They noted that the upper floor features floor-to-ceiling glass barriers and that guardrails, which are code-required to be 42 inches high, will be extended to 4 feet to enhance safety further. These measures are intended to mitigate any risks associated with the open stair design.

Mr. Pace inquired about the presence and design of bathrooms in the alternative classroom configuration, particularly if they remain individual bathrooms within each classroom as previously considered. Staff clarified that the classroom designs have been modified to support the educational needs of 3rd, 4th, and 5th graders. Instead of individual bathrooms in each classroom, there are bathroom suites located at central points ("the knuckle") in each learning community. These suites feature a communal sink area open to the corridor and individual toilet spaces that offer privacy. This design choice was made to retain flexibility for future modifications while adapting to current educational configurations.

Agenda Item No. 8.5 ACPS [PreK-12 Division Literacy Plan](#)

Ms. Spillman expressed appreciation for the document's quality and breadth but questions its intended audience, given its complexity and potential difficulty for general comprehension. Staff clarified that the primary audience for the document is the families of students, aiming to help them understand current literacy practices. However, recognizing the document's complexity, staff shared concerns about its accessibility for families. To address this, there is ongoing discussions with the communications department about producing a simplified version in pamphlet form. This shorter version would highlight key points and provide guidance on what families can do if they have questions, making the information more digestible and actionable for non-specialist audiences.

Dr. Berlin shared that this would be a great opportunity to use video and audio as a supplement.

Dr. Acuff expressed admiration for the project, particularly noting the impactful conceptual framing of the issue as a human right. She acknowledges the passion shown by the team for the project and the momentum it creates.

Ms. Le thought the staff's presentation was impressive. She inquired about the broader strategic aspects of the literacy plan. She is interested in understanding the state of literacy initiatives, including the specific goals, metrics, and timelines planned for implementation, recognizing that these details extend beyond the current discussion document. Staff will provide more detailed information about the literacy plan's objectives, performance indicators, and expected progress timelines in future communications, separating these strategic details from the current document's scope.

No. 9.0 OTHER BUSINESS

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

Ms. Spillman praised the Cell Phone Enforcement Policy Committee but expressed concerns and suggestions regarding its timeline and scope. She emphasized the importance of having a clear and enforced cell phone policy across middle and high schools before the new school year begins. Ms. Spillman noted that constituents frequently raise this issue, indicating a widespread need for clarity and accessibility of the policy. She requested the committee start its work earlier than August to allow changes to be made before the school year begins. Additionally, Ms. Spillman suggested expanding the committee's focus to include all forms of technology, not just cell phones. She highlighted issues with students circumventing network restrictions on school laptops for non-educational activities, such as shopping and gaming. This broader approach could help address the increasing savvy of students in bypassing technological safeguards, reinforcing the district's commitment to integrating effective technology use and mental health resources into the educational environment.

Dr. Haas acknowledged the concerns raised by Ms. Spillman regarding the cell phone policy, emphasizing the complexity of creating effective policies and the necessity for ongoing governance. He pointed out that existing policies and protocols are outlined and accessible through the announcement link he provided but admitted that the enforcement and regular review of these policies had been lacking.

To address these issues more effectively, Dr. Haas proposed a significant initial action:

Cell Phone-Free Week: Implementing a strict no-cell-phone policy for the first week of school to set a precedent and engage the community in a broader discussion about technology use in schools.

Dr. Haas also suggested regular updates and presentations from Dr. Diggs on technology management within the school system, recognizing the need for more restrictive and controlled technology use. He admitted the initial open policy on student devices led to unintended consequences, and now the administration is working to restrict access to multiple search engines and non-essential applications. Acknowledging the ongoing challenge of staying ahead of tech-savvy students, Dr. Haas stressed the importance of not being overwhelmed by these challenges but rather proactively addressing them through structured policy and community engagement. He proposed a more engaged and informed approach, with potential discussions on scaling back from a week-long to perhaps a day-long cell phone ban as a trial.

Dr. Haas concluded by emphasizing the dual importance of addressing technology use both for student well-being and as an instructional strategy, committing to better governance and continuous review of the policies in place.

Dr. Acuff and Ms. Le attended the Golden Apple awards ceremony on May 8. Dr. Acuff highlighted the inclusivity of the event, noting that it celebrated teachers from each school, including Albemarle County, Charlottesville City and private schools in the community. Dr. Acuff emphasized that the ceremony was a significant part of ongoing teacher appreciation efforts.

Mr. Paige discussed the scholarships awarded on May 4th by the 100 Black Men of Central Virginia. He reported that a record-breaking 48 scholarships were distributed to students from Charlottesville and surrounding counties, benefiting around 20 students from Albemarle County schools alone. Each scholarship was valued at \$1,000, totaling \$48,000 distributed. Mr. Paige expressed enthusiasm about the impact and success of the event.

Ms. Le discussed the recent decision to rename Agnor Hurt Elementary School to Agnor Elementary, addressing the mixed feedback received from the community. She clarified that the decision was made two months prior and is final. While acknowledging that some community members have expressed gratitude for the change, others have requested reconsideration.

She emphasized that the renaming does not negate the positive impact Mr. Hurt had on his former students, as acknowledged memories and contributions will continue to be honored within the school itself, consistent with the district's naming policy.


Ms. Le reflected on the broader context of the many individuals within the school district—teachers, nurses, bus drivers, and other staff—who contribute significantly to the community without having their names displayed on a building. She highlighted the inherent nature of change in societal values, stating that the board's role is to reflect current values and advance the district accordingly, especially during National Teacher Appreciation Week and National School Nurse Day. This was a reaffirmation of the board's commitment to evolving and acknowledging the contributions of all staff, irrespective of the recognition they receive.

Agenda Item No. 9.2 Closed Meeting – None.

Agenda Item No. 9.3 Closed Meeting Certification – None.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 10.0 ADJOURNMENT - At 10:00 p.m., hearing no objections, Chair Le adjourned the meeting of the Albemarle County School Board.


Clerk


Chair