

MINUTES
WORK SESSION OF THE ALBEMARLE COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD
Thursday, October 24, 2024

Meeting Video Link

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

BOARD MEMBERS - Dr. Kate Acuff, Ms. Judy Le, Ms. Ellen Osborne, Mr. Chuck Pace, Mr. Graham Paige, Ms. Ellen Osborne, Ms. Allison Spillman, and Student Representative, Margaret Lee

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 School Board Christine Thompson.

1.0 OPENING ACTIVITIES

Agenda Item No. 1.2 Call to Order - At 6:32 p.m., Chair Le called the meeting to order.

Agenda Item No. 1.3 Roll Call

Agenda Item No. 1.4 Pledge of Allegiance

Agenda Item No. 1.5 Moment of Silence

Agenda Item No. 2.0 APPROVAL OF AGENDA - Dr. Berlin offered a **motion** to approve the agenda. Ms. Spillman **seconded** the motion. **A voice vote was called, and the motion passed by the following recorded votes:**

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: None

Motion carried by a 7:0 vote.

Agenda Item No. 3.0 APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA - Ms. Spillman offered a **motion** to approve the consent agenda. Mr. Paige **seconded** the motion. **A voice vote was called, and the motion passed by the following recorded votes:**

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: None

Motion carried by a 7:0 vote.

- 3.1 Approval of Consent Agenda
- 3.2 Personnel Action
- 3.3 Approval of the Minutes
- 3.4 2025 Legislative Agenda
- 3.5 For Action: Policy Review and Revision
- 3.6 Donations & Reimbursements to School Division FY24 4th Quarter
- 3.7 Donations & Reimbursements to School Division FY25 1st Quarter

Agenda Item No. 4.0 ITEMS PULLED FROM CONSENT AGENDA – None.

Agenda Item No. 5.0 ANNOUNCEMENTS

Agenda Item No. 5.1 2024-2025 Student Representative to the School Board
Margaret Lee, Western Albemarle High School

Agenda Item No. 5.2 School Board / Superintendent Business

Superintendent Haas shared insights from his visit to Mountain View Elementary where he was joined by Ms. Ellen Osborne. He was impressed by its welcoming atmosphere, innovative programs, and exceptional staff. He praised the school for its multilingual signage, clutter-free environment, and pioneering work in hiring international teachers to address the linguistic needs of its diverse student body. During the visit, he observed engaging classroom activities, including a fifth-grade music lesson utilizing technology for interactive learning and a second-grade literacy session with effective individualized instruction.

Dr. Haas celebrated six schools named as *Exemplar Schools* by the Virginia Department of Education, recognizing their outstanding performance in multiple accreditation areas. These schools—Broadus Wood, Community Lab, Hollymead, Ivy, Stony Point, and Virginia Murray—demonstrated excellence across diverse metrics, including equity in student achievement and, for high schools, graduation rates and attendance.

He concluded by acknowledging board members receiving VSBA Academy Awards for their commitment to governance development. Chair Judy Lee earned a bronze pin, Ellen Osborne and Dr. Kate Acuff received silver pins, and Graham Paige was awarded a gold pin for their active participation and accrued credits through VSBA initiatives.

Dr. Acuff expressed her support for the VISA program initiated by the HR department for international teachers, acknowledging the effort involved and emphasizing the importance of continuing the program. She also shared her visit to the bus tailgate meeting, where bus drivers were recognized for their contributions. She noted hearing from William Shifflett that there are currently nine drivers in training, which has helped alleviate staffing challenges.

Mr. Pace shared his visit to Agnor Elementary School, where he observed teachers diligently working on LETRS training and preparing for a great lunch. He also noted the exciting training Albemarle High School science teachers were participating in and expressed his appreciation for their efforts.

Mr. Paige shared his experience attending Mix-Up Day at Scottsville Elementary School with Dr. Daphne Keiser. Students dressed in costumes and mismatched socks, and the event brought together pre-K through 5th-grade students to have lunch in mixed-age groups. Volunteers, including Dr. Kavanaugh, facilitated conversations at tables with 5-6 students using icebreaker questions. While the pre-K students often drifted off topic, Mr. Paige found the experience enlightening and enjoyable.

Agenda Item No. 6.0 PUBLIC COMMENT

Ms. Heidi Gilman Bennett, a resident of the Samuel Miller District, addressed the Board as an informed citizen regarding high school overcrowding. She urged the Board not to approve the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) until after reviewing the Scholar Studios enrollment data later in the meeting. While she acknowledged the importance of addressing overcrowding at Western Albemarle High School, she noted there is no similar concern at Monticello High School.

Ms. Gilman Bennett highlighted that enrollment trends show students are more likely to enroll in programs located closer to their base schools. She pointed out that only a small number of Western Albemarle students have participated in programs at Center 1, and projections for Center 2 suggest it will not fully alleviate Western Albemarle's overcrowding. Even after Center 2 opens in 2027, Western Albemarle is projected to be 174 students over capacity, with Monticello High School also nearing its limits.

Drawing from her experience as a parent of a student in the Environmental Studies Academy, she emphasized the value of academy and studio models but argued that relying on off-campus programs will not adequately address high school overcrowding. She called on the Board to advocate for an ambitious and strategic capital plan with the Board of Supervisors to meet the growing county's needs. Ms. Gilman Bennett stressed the urgency of providing sufficient high-quality learning spaces, urging decisive action to support the future of Albemarle County students.

Agenda Item No. 7.0 SCHOOL DIVISION WORK SESSION

Agenda Item No. 7.1 Long Range Planning – 2024 Recommendation – On October 10, 2024, Staff provided updates and recommendations for the FY 26-30 **Capital Improvement Program (CIP)**. Following up on the recommendation and discussion, staff requests the Board approve the FY 26-30 Capital Improvement Program Request.

Ms. Spillman asked for clarification on the recommendation, specifically if approving it means agreeing to revisit the request sooner but still approving the total funding amount requested. Ms. Kumazawa clarified that the action requested is for the Board to approve the FY 26-30 CIP Request to present to the Board of Supervisors. This approval represents the Board's agreement on identified needs. Decisions on actual funding and implementation will occur in separate discussions.

Dr. Acuff raised concerns about the historical underfunding of capital projects since the Great Recession, emphasizing the need for a needs-based budget. She highlighted the delayed timelines for high school expansions, current reliance on trailers, and the inadequacy of these facilities for students. She questioned how many trailers the division should continue to support and the timeline for addressing capacity issues, particularly in the western and northern feeder patterns. Dr. Acuff also stressed the importance of a more aggressive strategic capital plan to catch up on unmet needs and urged for broader financial commitment from both the Board of Supervisors and the state. Ms. Kumazawa acknowledged the issues raised and highlighted the need for collaboration with the Board of Supervisors to develop a more robust capital plan. She noted the high costs of projects such as new schools and expansions and emphasized that previous plans aimed to balance cost savings with addressing capacity needs.

Ms. Spillman expressed her agreement with Dr. Acuff's remarks, emphasizing the importance of presenting a needs-based budget that reflects the division's actual requirements. She highlighted concerns about future capacity challenges, particularly in the western feeder pattern, and suggested that the division should adopt a more ambitious approach in its requests. She stressed that it is the division's responsibility to ensure students and teachers have the necessary resources for learning and advocated for pushing back more strongly on funding limitations. Ms. Spillman also acknowledged the challenges faced by students commuting from further areas and reiterated the need for a more aggressive stance in capital planning.

Chair Le agreed on the importance of submitting a needs-based budget while emphasizing the need for thoughtful and deliberate planning. She reflected on past experiences, such as discussions on bus funding, where impromptu decisions highlighted the importance of comprehensive preparation. Regarding high school capacity planning, she acknowledged the necessity of including placeholder projects in the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) to signal long-term needs to the public, even if details are not fully developed. Chair Le sought clarification on the biannual CIP process and the timeline for updates, noting that comprehensive recommendations and updates to costs are part of the planning cycle. Ms. Kumazawa

highlighted that high school capacity planning is already included as a placeholder in the five-year request to ensure awareness and proactive planning.

Mr. Paige asked for clarification on the high school capacity project, specifically how many additional classrooms at Western and Monticello are planned and whether the Long-Range Planning Advisory Committee has finalized those details. He also inquired if the estimated \$110 million placeholder would adequately address anticipated overcrowding at both schools. Ms. Kumazawa explained that the scope of the project has not been fully defined, and staff recommend directing the Long-Range Planning Advisory Committee to develop a detailed recommendation. The \$110 million placeholder is an estimate based on the cost of building additions at Monticello and Western, but more time and analysis are needed to provide a fully informed and specific plan.

Dr. Acuff offered a **motion** to approve the FY 26 to FY 30 five-year Capital Improvement Plan Request accompanied by a letter to the Board of Supervisors urging more ambitious strategic planning for capital for the schools. Dr. Berlin **seconded** the motion. **A voice vote was called, and the motion passed by the following recorded votes:**

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: None

Motion carried by a 7:0 vote.

Agenda Item No. 7.2 Proposed 2025-2026 School Calendar - Albemarle County Public Schools (ACPS) started its annual calendar development process early this school year. Throughout the development process, the Calendar Committee, which is composed of teachers, support staff, parents/guardians, and school and central office administrators, considered feedback from students, employees, families, and community members. The work prioritized the following goals:

- Create a calendar that meets state requirements for instructional hours and supports the division's efforts to engage students and improve opportunities and achievement.
- Enable time for division-level and school-based professional learning and collaboration for staff to deepen their understanding of instructional practices that support student learning.
- Embed time for teachers to work individually on such tasks as updating lesson plans, developing assessments, grading assignments, preparing materials, etc.

The committee recommended two calendar options for the 2025-2026 school year and requested feedback from the School Board. The Board will act on this matter at the November 14th meeting.

Dr. Berlin expressed support for moving forward with the plan, acknowledging that while it aligns with other districts, it will create challenges for families, particularly during the first summer of implementation. She highlighted potential difficulties in adjusting childcare, summer programs, and summer school logistics, including shorter timelines for services and facility preparation. Despite these concerns, Dr. Berlin emphasized the necessity of moving forward, noting that delays are no longer feasible. She also expressed appreciation for the inclusion of students in the planning process and emphasized the importance of incorporating input from community members, families, teachers, and students.

Chair Le thanked Dr. Irizarry and Dr. Keiser for their efforts in advancing the planning process by several months since the last vote approximately eight months ago. She commended their thoughtful and diligent work, acknowledging the significant progress made in response to previous feedback about insufficient notice for changes.

Agenda Item No. 7.3 - The Board took a break from 7:22 p.m. to 7:35 p.m.

Agenda Item No. 7.4 Student Pathway Exploration – Part II. This was the second part of a two-meeting work session exploring programs and pathways available to our students, particularly regarding High School Redesign. The evening focused on pathway exploration, K-12 Arts, and College and Career Readiness Data.

Ms. Spillman asked how many students continue into studio programs after taking the gateway course. Staff indicated that the majority of students continue, with only 2–3 students annually opting out after the first year. They offered to provide detailed data on continuation rates.

Ms. Spillman inquired about efforts to inform and engage middle school counselors about the program, noting counselor feedback about insufficient information. Staff highlighted monthly meetings with counselors, feedback sessions, and the inclusion of middle school counselors on the program's steering team. Plans include a professional development day on November 4th featuring teachers and students from each studio to foster understanding and build trust. Resources for counselors, including turnkey materials, are also being developed.

Ms. Spillman asked about transportation schedules, specifically when students return to schools like Western after attending studios. Staff explained that some students return to their base schools around 5:00 PM due to stops at other schools en route. They are exploring schedule adjustments to improve efficiency, similar to those used at the Community Lab School and Center 1.

Dr. Berlin asked whether teacher leadership roles in academies' typical 10-month positions are, given their extensive responsibilities, and if they receive stipends. Staff confirmed that these are 10-month positions with full teaching loads and additional leadership responsibilities. Teachers in these roles receive stipends but still dedicate significant time beyond their regular hours. Staff noted they are exploring models to provide more time for planning and leadership in the future.

Chair Le noted that during her experience as a parent of a 9th grader, these programs and pathways were not communicated during her child's 8th-grade transition. She inquired whether families and students are now better informed about these opportunities. Staff explained that this is the first year the programs are open to 9th graders, which may explain the lack of prior communication. Efforts are now underway to ensure middle school counselors and families have resources, with information being shared at middle school transition events, high school curriculum showcases, and in-class sessions with students.

Ms. Osborne asked if there is a graphic or resource showing where specific studios will be located or if that is still being finalized. Staff stated that the planning for studio locations is ongoing and emphasized the importance of communicating this information clearly to families as it is finalized.

Mr. Pace asked if leaders had been identified for each studio. Staff confirmed that leaders have been identified for 8 out of the 11 studios. They noted that enrollment is stronger in studios with identified leaders, highlighting the positive impact of having leadership in place. Studios without leaders currently have lower enrollment, underscoring the importance of filling those positions. Staff will share the list with the Board.

Mr. Paige asked for clarification about the student ambassadors representing each studio and whether any have been selected yet. Staff confirmed that teacher leaders share the opportunity with their students, and typically three to five ambassadors are chosen for each studio. Some studios, like the whole studio, have shown significant interest, potentially resulting in more ambassadors.

Ms. Spillman asked if there is a CTE Advisory Board, whether it reports to the School Board, and if a School Board representative serves on it. Staff confirmed the existence of a CTE Advisory Board, with the first meeting rescheduled for November 12th. Traditionally, there has not been a School Board representative, but new guidelines are being developed. Staff will work with relevant stakeholders to ensure alignment and consider including a School Board representative on the committee.

Ms. Osborne asked if the Studios are accessible to English language learners and whether language barriers might affect their success. Staff assured that there are no barriers to enrollment, and students needing language support can access it while in the studios. They are working with specialists to ensure inclusivity, including collaboration with programs for students with disabilities, emphasizing that all students are welcome and supported in the studios.

Chair Le expressed her admiration for the staff, teachers, students, and the work-based learning coordinator, highlighting their impressive efforts and dedication.

Superintendent Haas echoed Chair Le’s sentiments, emphasizing the excitement of seeing decades of conversations about evolving education come to fruition. He acknowledged the commitment and energy shown by everyone involved in transforming learning experiences for students. He noted the shift from traditional subject-focused education to a more dynamic and skill-based approach, such as through English Studios, which aligns with students’ aspirations of discovering who they want to be and envisioning their future lives. Haas described the work as life-changing and trajectory-shaping for students, reinforcing the importance of continuing these transformative efforts.

8.0 OTHER BUSINESS

Agenda Item No. 8.1 Other Business - None

Agenda Item No. 8.2 Closed Meeting - if needed - None

Agenda Item No. 8.3 Certify Closed Meeting – if needed - None

Agenda Item No. 9.0 ADJOURNMENT - At 9:39 p.m., hearing no objections, Chair Le adjourned the meeting of the Albemarle County School Board.


Chair


Clerk