

MINUTES
WORK SESSION OF THE ALBEMARLE COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD
Thursday, September 26, 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, Ms. Isabelle Wang.

ABSENT – Dr. Rebecca Berlin.

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.

Agenda Item No. 1.0 CLOSED MEETING - At 5:45 p.m., Ms. Osborne offered a **motion** the 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 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 this item is to discuss collective bargaining and the resolution of a pending lawsuit against the school board. Dr. Acuff seconded the **motion**. **A voice vote was called, and the motion passed by the following recorded votes:**

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: Dr. Berlin

Motion carried by a 6:0:1 vote.

2.0 OPENING ACTIVITIES

Agenda Item NO. 2.1 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. Ms. Spillman seconded the **motion**. **Roll was called and the motion passed by the following recorded votes:**

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: Dr. Berlin

Motion carried by a 6:01 vote.

Agenda Item No. 2.2 Call to Order - At 6:32 p.m., Chair Le called the meeting back to order

Chair Le recognized Curriculum Coordinator Ms. Dama Schneider, who introduced the students who played music for the audience while the board members returned from the closed session. The performers included Sean Fr, Adrian Park, and Erick Chen from Albemarle High School, as well as Zander Change from Monticello High School.

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 - Dr. Acuff offered a **motion** to approve the agenda. Mr. Paige **seconded** the motion. **A voice vote was called, and the motion passed by the following recorded votes:**

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: Dr. Berlin

Motion carried by a 6:01 vote.

Agenda Item No. 4.0 APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA - Ms. Spillman offered a **motion** to approve the consent agenda. Dr. Acuff **seconded** the motion. **A voice vote was called, and the motion passed by the following recorded votes:**

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: Dr. Berlin

Motion carried by a 6:01 vote.

4.1 Approval of Consent Agenda

4.2 For Information: Policy Review and Revision

4.3 For Action: Policy Review and Revision

4.4 Personnel Action

Agenda Item No. 5.0 ITEMS PULLED FROM CONSENT AGENDA – None.

Agenda Item No. 6.0 ANNOUNCEMENTS

Agenda Item No. 6.1 2024-2025 Student Representative to the School Board

Isabelle Wang, Albemarle High School

Agenda Item No. 6.2 School Board / Superintendent Business

Superintendent Haas congratulated Monticello High School for achieving 100% staff attendance, highlighting the collective efforts of the school community. He shared his recent visit to the Blue Ridge Detention Home School, which serves 37 students from various regions, including Albemarle. The school atmosphere was calm and productive, reflecting the staff's dedication. Haas mentioned a communication program called SIT Debt that fosters student engagement and builds relationships with staff, particularly through reading initiatives. He observed various classes, including physical education led by former NFL player Ahmad Hawkins, where students demonstrated significant fitness improvements. The English class used a graphic novel adaptation of *The Odyssey*, while the science class engaged in traditional experiments like baking soda volcanoes. Dr. Haas emphasized the commitment of Albemarle County teachers to support incarcerated students, often reaching out to check on their well-being. He also recognized the essential role of the security team in maintaining a safe environment at Blue Ridge.

Chair Le attended the building services pre-service this week and expressed appreciation for the hard work of everyone involved. She mentioned that the event was pleasant and highlighted the dedication of the team, noting the importance of the presentations and efforts put forth.

Agenda Item No. 7.0 PUBLIC COMMENT – There were no public speakers.

Agenda Item No. 8.0 SCHOOL DIVISION WORK SESSION

Agenda Item No. 8.1 Assessment and Accreditation Update - The mission of Learning for All, the strategic plan for Albemarle County Public Schools, states, “Working together as a team, we will end the predictive value of race, class, gender, and special capacities for our children’s success through high-quality teaching and learning for all. We seek to build relationships with families and communities to ensure that every student succeeds. We will know every student.” School and division assessment and accreditation results are key indicators of our progress in achieving this mission. This item contains our division accreditation detail report which shows growth-adjusted results for each school in the division, a spreadsheet of our unadjusted division assessment data from the past three years, and a spreadsheet of growth-adjusted data for our achievement gap groups.

- **2024-2025 Accreditation Detail Report**
- **Assessment Data**
- **Growth Data**
- **Virginia’s Visualization and Analytics Solution (VVAAS)**

Dr. Acuff inquired about the need for intensive support and whether the state plans to provide additional resources for this area within the new system. Dr. Patrick McLaughlin, Assistant Superintendent for Strategic Planning, responded that there haven’t been significant details discussed on this topic. He mentioned seeing information earlier in the week regarding a specific funding amount allocated to those schools but noted that they are currently unaware of the specifics.

Mr. Pace asked about the state's current support process for schools. Dr. McLaughlin explained that schools with a Level 3 indicator enter state monitoring. This involves a liaison from the Office of School Quality, who guides the school through a needs assessment and the development of both a performance and school improvement plan. At the end of the year, schools present artifacts and progress to the state. The process, which used to be uncomfortable, has evolved into a supportive experience, with the Office of School Quality genuinely wanting to assist schools. Additionally, the strategic planning process for schools has been modified to align with expectations from the state, allowing schools to engage in productive work that doesn’t need to be repeated in the following year.

Ms. Wang asked about the criteria defining the state's expectations, specifically if they were solely based on SOL scores. Dr. McLaughlin clarified that while SOL scores will be a primary factor in the new system, other elements like chronic absenteeism and the growth of English language learners in acquiring English skills will also be considered. He explained that the definition of growth has changed significantly from the current accreditation system. Previously, growth was measured using vertical scale scores on SOL assessments, where moving between score bands indicated progress. The new VVAAS system sets different targets for students based on their historical SOL performance, aiming for specific scores to demonstrate expected growth. Importantly, in the new system, growth is a critical factor for every student, not just for accreditation purposes. This means that growth can negatively affect a school's categorization in the new prediction model, depending on whether students meet their expected growth rates.

Mr. Paige asked how the adjusted pass rate is determined. Dr. McLaughlin explained that the accreditation report, specifically for Agnor Elementary School, outlines the process. On the first page, which includes the school's English data, it shows that 115 students in grades 4 and 5 passed their reading SOL tests with scores of 400 or above. The report includes several categories that contribute to the adjusted pass rate:

- 1. Recovery:** Seven students who failed the previous year passed this year after receiving remediation. These students count twice in the accreditation model.

2. Growth: Thirty students did not pass the SOL tests but showed improvement based on their previous year's scores. Their growth counts equally to those who passed.

3. EL Progress: Nine English language learners who did not pass the SOL tests also showed growth on their WIDA tests, qualifying them for growth credit in reading.

By adding these figures together (115 passers, 7 recovery, 30 growth, and 9 EL progress), and dividing by the total number of tests administered (184), the adjusted pass rate is calculated as 87.5%. The staff noted that rates above 75 are classified as Level 1, 65 to 75 as Level 2, and below 65 as Level 3, with additional factors that can influence these classifications.

Ms. Spillman inquired whether the state had responded to the various emails sent by VAAS and multiple school boards, including theirs, which contained criticism and requests for more transparency. Dr. McLaughlin indicated that he was not aware of any response from the state regarding these communications.

Chair Le noted that when examining Level 1 academic achievement, science often stood out and questioned how the school district compared to the rest of the state. Dr. McLaughlin indicated that the district's performance in science was slightly above the state average. Virginia School Quality Profiles can be accessed to view detailed performance data by division or school. Chair Le was correct that five elementary schools had a Level 3 indicator in science; however, many of these schools were making improvements in the subject but had not improved enough to move out of Level 3, often due to narrow margins. For example, one school was just one test score away from achieving Level 2, with two students scoring 399, which is only one question short of passing. The explanation emphasized that the accreditation details might not fully capture the progress made, and there are efforts to provide more granular data through reporting tools like Power BI, which break down performance by grade level. While science remains a focus, many schools showed improvement compared to two years ago, especially considering that last year marked the introduction of more rigorous fifth-grade assessments.

Chair Le asked whether the improved literacy and math curriculum is benefiting the science courses. Dr. Chandra Hayes, Assistant Superintendent for Instruction highlighted that the team aims to create alignment between content areas, specifically integrating science with literacy and social studies. This approach allows for the introduction and reinforcement of concepts across different subjects. Dr. Hayes also expressed optimism about the potential for growth as they acclimate to the new curriculum. They are preparing to conduct initial assessments and noted that there is alignment in the pacing guides across various content areas. However, they currently lack clarity on what curriculum options the state will provide for math, which may affect their ability to further integrate the subjects.

Dr. Acuff inquired about the current state of the science curriculum in elementary and middle schools and when it was last reviewed. Dr. Hayes shared that her goal for the year is to enhance hands-on learning experiences for all students. She mentioned that the team is working diligently to ensure schools have the necessary materials so that students can practice with the technology and items they will encounter on assessments. Adjustments and changes are being made to support teachers in the classroom, aiming to help students connect the new materials and curriculum with what they will experience during the tests in the spring.

Mr. Paige inquired whether ACPS would be adopting a new science curriculum or science textbooks for the upcoming year. Dr. Hayes indicated that while we plan to adopt additional science textbooks, these will primarily be for upper-level classes, such as AP courses. For elementary education, there will be upgrades made to the existing materials.

Mr. Pace asked whether the newly purchased science and social studies textbooks are content with trade books that students can read during literacy to support their science instruction. Dr. Hayes confirmed that the team collaborates effectively with the elementary curriculum coordinators for ELA, science, and math meeting weekly to ensure consistency across all subject areas. They focus on providing support to teachers

and ensuring alignment, allowing students to encounter similar themes across different content areas. This approach helps reinforce learning and integration of concepts throughout the curriculum.

Dr. Acuff asked about the practical value of the new evaluation system, aside from the different names given to categories like "off track" and "needs support." Dr. McLaughlin highlighted that each year, meetings are held with every school to review accreditation detail reports and ensure alignment in planning. The advice given to schools is to continue their current efforts, focusing on improving literacy, math, and science skills, as well as addressing chronic absenteeism. The emphasis was placed on not getting distracted by labels. He noted that up to 60% of schools in Virginia might fall into the "off track" and "needs intensive support" categories, which raised skepticism about the accuracy of that assessment. He encourages principals to maintain focus on the goal of increasing student achievement, reinforcing that if this is achieved, schools are fulfilling their purpose effectively.

Agenda Item No. 8.2 – The Board took a break from 7:06 p.m. to 7:16 p.m.

Agenda Item No. 8.3 Student Pathway Exploration – Part I. This was the first 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.

Dr. Acuff asked about the data indicating that over half of the students do not pursue or complete secondary education, inquiring if this data had been stratified by demographic factors. Dr. Rusty Carlock, the Educational Equity Data Scientist, responded that for more recent cohorts, they have indeed been able to stratify the data and match it with older cohorts. However, they lack the capability to match it with national datasets. Dr. Carlock noted that their findings align with national trends: the students most likely to enroll in higher education are often the same students who are marginalized within the community. This suggests that the challenges faced by these students are consistent with broader national patterns.

Ms. Spillman inquired about the types of jobs that students in special education, particularly those in the CBASE and post-high school programs, obtain after leaving ACPS. She emphasized the need for support for these students. Ms. Emily Skelton, Coordinator of Special Education, explained that job placements vary depending on the individual student. A significant aspect of the DARS process for CBASE and post-high students involves comprehensive job assessments. Partnerships with workplace coaches and vendors help students find employment. The importance of matching students with employers who are flexible and willing to provide accommodation was highlighted, as this increases the likelihood of sustained employment.

Ms. Spillman further commented on the need for more funding in special education and CTE programs. She noted that many students require additional support to succeed in these programs, and without it, the district risks failing to meet their needs. She stressed the importance of considering these factors when planning the budget for the upcoming year.

Ms. Wang highlighted the strong support for special education students compared to the support for English Learner (EL) students. As a peer tutor at her school, she has observed the needs of EL students, particularly those at the Newcomer Center who have limited or interrupted formal education. She inquired about the expansion of policies and CTE (Career and Technical Education) programs to better serve these students. In response, Ms. Lauren MacLean, Assistant Director of EL, World Languages & Homeschool, acknowledged the valuable role of peer tutors, noting that they supported around 6,000 sessions last year and worked with approximately 68 different languages. This collaboration is essential for fostering a learning community. Ms. MacLean pointed out that some CTE credentials may not be accessible to certain students due to their immigration status, which is a sensitive issue they must navigate. She emphasized the importance of English language acquisition for post-secondary readiness, stating that the focus is on encouraging students to improve their English skills through CTE programs. The goal is to help them develop the language proficiency needed to pursue their desired jobs and eventually exit EL status. She acknowledged the various factors at play in addressing these challenges.

Mr. Pace asked for more information on the Project Life curriculum and its implementation. It was noted that a group of CTE teachers and special education staff visited Butler Tech to observe a site replication of the program. This experience included comprehensive training designed to equip teachers and staff with the skills necessary to implement the curriculum effectively. Additionally, there is a partner program called Project Search, which focuses on creating worksite opportunities in collaboration with community partners. This program aims to pair students who have completed the Project Life curriculum with trained employers, helping them develop further skills in real-world settings. The course is intended to be implemented throughout an entire school year, emphasizing the commitment to providing robust support and skill development for students.

Chair Le asked whether CTE courses are funded differently from other types of courses. Funding prioritizes core content classes, which receive the majority of resources. While Albemarle is able to hire some teaching assistants (TAs) to provide support, these individuals are not certified teachers and are currently allocated primarily to core content classes. As a result, there is a shortage of personnel available to support CTE courses and other programs.

Mr. Paige inquired about the declining interest in high school, specifically referencing data that identified worksheets, free time, and irrelevance as key factors. He asked whether these trends are also observed in Albemarle County and if there is national data supporting this. National data shows students tend to value school less as they progress through their education. The three themes mentioned were identified by student researchers in Albemarle County through discussions with peers. However, there is no pre-COVID comparison data available since the Panorama data collection began around the time of the pandemic.

At the October 24 Work Session, the Board will engage in Part II of the Student Pathway Exploration, which will provide an overview of the High School Redesign. The session will cover the following topics:

- Studio Programming
- Industry Credentialing
- Work-Based Learning

9.0 OTHER BUSINESS

Agenda Item No. 9.1 Other Business

Agenda Item No. 9.2 Closed Meeting - if needed

Agenda Item No. 9.3 Certify Closed Meeting – if needed

Agenda Item No. 10.0 ADJOURNMENT - At 9:20 p.m., hearing no objections, Chair Le adjourned the meeting of the Albemarle County School Board.


Clerk


Chair