

MINUTES

REGULAR MEETING OF THE ALBEMARLE COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD

Thursday, October 12, 2023

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

BOARD MEMBERS - Dr. Kate Acuff, Mr. Jonno Alcaro, Dr. Rebecca Berlin, Ms. Katrina Callsen, Ms. Judy Le, Mr. Graham Paige, and Student Representative, Ms. Opal Kendall

ABSENT - Ms. Ellen Osborne.

ALSO, IN ATTENDANCE - Superintendent Matthew Haas; School Board Attorney Ross Holden; 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 Phil Giaramita; and Clerk of the School Board Christine Thompson.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 1.0 CLOSED MEETING

At 5:28 p.m., Mr. Alcaro 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 discussion, consideration, or interviews of prospective candidates for employment and the assignment, appointment, promotion, appointees, demotion, salaries, disciplining, or resignation of specific public officers, appointees or employees of any public body. The purpose of this item is to discuss an addendum to the Superintendent's contract; and Subsection 8 for consultation with legal counsel employed or retained by the School Board 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 legal issues in connection with a resolution for public sector collective bargaining. Dr. Acuff seconded the **motion**. **Roll was called, and the motion passed by the following recorded votes:**

AYES: Mr. Paige, Dr. Acuff, Mr. Alcaro, Dr. Berlin, and Ms. Le.

NAYS: None.

ABSENT: Ms. Osborne and Ms. Callsen.

Motion carried by a 5:0:2 vote.

Ms. Callsen arrived at 5:30 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., Mr. Alcaro 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, Dr. Acuff, Mr. Alcaro, Dr. Berlin, Ms. Callsen, and Ms. Le
NAYS: None
ABSENT: Ms. Osborne

Motion carried by a 6:0:1 vote.

Ms. Callsen offered a **motion** that the Board amend the Superintendent's contract to extend it from June 30, 2025 to June 20, 2027. Dr. Acuff seconded the **motion**. **Roll was called, and the motion passed by the following recorded votes:**

AYES: Mr. Paige, Dr. Acuff, Mr. Alcaro, Dr. Berlin, Ms. Callsen, and Ms. Le
NAYS: None
ABSENT: Ms. Osborne

Motion carried by a 6:0:1 vote.

Chair Le made the following statement: *At the top of my list today and every day is the closing the achievement gap. This is not a new issue, nor is it one that we alone face. In fact, UVA just opened its Education Rights Institute to help find solutions to this problem. And we've just begun the hard work prescribed by Bellwether as well as starting the adoption process for a new and evidence-based reading curriculum. At the same time, Division Superintendencies have been turning over at historic rates in the past two years. About 50 have turned over in the 130 or so school divisions in Virginia. In fact, I reached out to the head of VASS to figure out why so many were turning over, and some people were tired, some people were exhausted from the pandemic, which I can completely understand. But also, there's increased polarization and politicization of public schools, and that's something that does feel quite familiar to me. So, I feel that now is not the time to disrupt our leadership. Continuity and stability matter and I have great confidence in Dr. Haas to work with our board and to lead the division on these very big issues.*

Mr. Alcaro addressed the petition for the board to replace Dr. Haas: *We always welcome input from the public and we carefully and thoughtfully consider the advice that comes to us. And after careful and thoughtful analysis, I respectfully disagree with the petitions conclusions and its stretch to find a problem to solve. I think there are some issues. I looked into the issues that were in there. And discussed each of them, and some of them were not in Dr. Haas's purview, some of them were in our purview. He has owned a lot of the issues that were in there. This is the time for*

us to show our confidence in your work. And that is why I'll be voting the way I am, so I'd like to invite comments from others. I have 100% faith and trust in Matt Haas and the job that he's doing and the job he will continue to do.

Mr. Paige stated: I fully support extending Dr. Haas's contract. In my opinion he has provided the leadership that we need in our division when we were going through a lot of rough times over the last few years with the COVID pandemic, implementing the anti-racism policy and the transgender policy. Along with dealing with the bus transportation shortage, which is a nationwide problem, not just one here in Albemarle County. I recognize that our division has problems; including the achievement gap, and Dr. Haas has provided plans to close this gap and he's been doing that over many years, not just within the last few weeks and which culminated in bringing in Bellwether to help give us some guidance with that process. Because of all of those things I have complete confidence in Dr. Haas to continue to lead our model county schools.

Ms. Callsen stated: I will say that I also support the extension of Dr. Haas's contract. The public doesn't have access to the fact that you do some of the most comprehensive evaluations that I've ever seen from a leader. If they're willing to grow and learn and get feedback, that's about as good as you can ask for and you have illustrated and exemplified that. I think the longevity of the people who have been on the Cabinet is proof of the fact that you provide good leadership. There are so many public institutions, even right here in our geographic area, that are struggling with maintaining leadership, maintaining institutional knowledge, and people are fleeing. The education field, Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee (JLARC) just did their study on the exodus that is occurring. And so the fact that you have maintained high caliber people dedicated to this profession speaks to the fact that you are doing good work.

Dr. Acuff stated: I was a member of the school board that hired Matt and today I want to go on record as reaffirming my support for his leadership of ACPS. I'm aware of a petition asking the school board not to extend his contract, but the reasons cited in that petition are either erroneous in attributing the decision to Matt or show a misunderstanding of the issues. For example, a reason cited for cutting ties with Doctor Haas is the effort to review an ACPS school name. Similar work that's being done all over the country and campuses, universities, and government buildings. My view generally is that no building or structure should be named for an individual in perpetuity. But even setting that aside, it was the school board and not Dr. Haas that started the review of school names and it was the school board that had final authority for making the decision. Additionally, although I do agree that the achievement gap is something to be taken very seriously. The achievement gap is something the entire country sees in data that has been with us, unfortunately for generations. What is different is that Dr. Haas and this school board have decided and prioritize addressing the long-standing achievement gap by placing it central to our strategic plan and soliciting consultants. Bellwether for example, leaders of other school divisions to help us direct personnel and resources more effectively to address the issue. Dr. Haas has decided that shining a light on the problem is essential to solving it, and I agree. The fact that some in our community have been surprised that the achievement gap exists by this intense focus does not translate into Dr. Haas having caused it or failed to address it appropriately. One of the most important things that a school board does, and one that is articulated in the Virginia Code, is hiring a Superintendent. I take this test seriously, and I strongly support extending Dr. Haas contract so he can continue to partner with the School Board and the

work of promoting the goals of our strategic plan, thriving students, affirming and, empowering communities, and equitable, transformative resources.

Dr. Berlin stated: When the bellwether report was presented, in my national work I've worked with hundreds of leaders at the state level the federal level, the school district level, in the community level and I have seen very few who had the guts and the courage that Dr. Haas did to write the RFP, with the school board for The Bellwether Evaluation, and then to sit and listen and work with that steering committee with those consultants. And in that meeting to go through those 20 points of what we needed to do as a school division. There have been many places where that information would have been swept under, but every person in this county has access to 150 pages, plus a significant number of supporting documents that show everything that we need to do to move forward, and that takes a whole lot of courage and I respect that. I know that this school district needs this stability that Dr. Haas brings for the next number of years to continue to move us forward. I've spoken to a number of constituents, a large number of teachers, a large number of parents in the last year and everyone feels that we have the momentum moving forward and the last thing I would like to see is that stop. And the other thing I'd like to note is so many people have said no, this school board just kind of rubber stamps everything. And I think it's important for everyone to know that there are numerous issues that we bring forward in our one-on-one conversations with Dr. Haas, from concerns with communication to concerns about special education to concerns about reading, about the achievement gap, and transportation. And as my colleague said, he owns them. He may not have caused them, but he will own them and the next day there is a plan of action to move forward that he is working in collaboration with his staff so that they there will be an action plan. So that we can continue to make progress, I will be voting in favor of extending Dr. Haas's contract.

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

Agenda Item No. 3.1 Approval of Agenda – Mr. Alcaro offered a motion to approve the agenda. Mr. Paige seconded the motion. **Voice vote was called, and the motion passed with the following recorded votes:**

AYES: Mr. Paige, Dr. Acuff, Mr. Alcaro, Dr. Berlin, Ms. Callsen, and Ms. Le

NAYS: None

ABSENT: Ms. Osborne

Motion carried by a 6:0:1 vote.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 4.0 APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA

Mr. Alcaro offered a motion to approve the Consent Agenda. Dr. Berlin **seconded the motion. Voice vote was called, and the motion passed with the following recorded votes:**

AYES: Mr. Paige, Dr. Acuff, Mr. Alcaro, Dr. Berlin Ms. Callsen, and Ms. Le
NAYS: None
ABSENT: Ms. Osborne

Motion carried by a 6:0:1 vote.

- 4.1 - Approval of Consent Agenda
- 4.2 - For Information - Annual Class Size Report
- 4.3 - For Approval - Release of Compulsory Attendance
- 4.4 - School Naming Review Update
- 4.5 - Religious Exemption
- 4.6 - Religious Exemption
- 4.7 - Religious Exemption
- 4.8 - Religious Exemption
- 4.9 - Religious Exemption

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 Opal Kendall.

The first goal of *Learning for All*, our school division's strategic plan is *Thriving Students*. Among its commitments is that our division will facilitate learning experiences grounded in networks of care. This connects with well-established research that tells us that for students to achieve at their highest personal and academic levels, they must feel and be safe in school. Over two decades ago, schools in our division began focusing on a formalized approach to removing one of the most serious barriers to feeling safe in school—bullying. More broadly, in 2010, October became National Bullying Prevention Month, bringing together educators, parents, students, caregivers and the broader community, in a shared national call to action. The damages from bullying are well-known. And well documented: eroded self-esteem, increased personal anxieties and depression, restricted academic development, and an accelerated pathway to other unsafe habits.

Here, in our school division, the most effective and prominent resource for eliminating bullying and its harmful impacts has proven to be our annual Peer Nomination Survey. Students are asked anonymously to identify students who have bullied others or have been bullied themselves. The survey itself and its results have been an invaluable resource in promoting awareness and leading to restorative practices.

Here with us this evening are three counselors from Lakeside Middle School who have seen the impact this survey has had on their school climate, Cabell (CAB-ELL) Guy, Heather Lindsay, and Anna Hill. They are going to share with us how the Peer Nomination Survey is used as well as some of the other proactive strategies at Lakeside that are proving to be successful. They will tell you that although their survey is voluntary, 99.9 percent of students participate. And

although you will hear more about our *Anonymous Alerts* app later this evening, they will offer some thoughts on how its information is leading to positive results.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 7.0 PUBLIC COMMENT – No public speakers.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 8.0 SCHOOL BOARD / SUPERINTENDENT BUSINESS

Dr. Haas made the following statement:

I want to thank each School Board member, the School Board as a whole and all my colleagues in the division for their support of our values and our mission as a school division. It is an honor to join you in support of our children, their families, and our community in the important work of making lives better.

Long ago, I decided to be a teacher and to work in a public school. Even before I left middle school, I had so much regard for my teachers and the staff, I knew I wanted to be like them. As a high school student, this desire only was reinforced by the powerful role models I was fortunate to have in several of my teachers and athletic coaches. I am a first-generation college student, and I am where I am today only because my public school educators saw something in me and wouldn't give up on me, even when I wanted to. I think this same commitment to today's students is just as valuable and is required of each one of us.

I never planned on being in the role I am in today, and I know the responsibilities of this position could not be higher. This morning, I drove a bus full of middle schoolers and am pleased to say that I got all of their names right when I greeted each one at their bus stop. I met with two new principals, each to talk with me about their goals and dreams and strategies for improving student learning in their schools. And I visited an elementary school, where I got to see your plans - your vision - as a School Board and my vision as your superintendent come to life in classrooms with great teachers and teaching assistants and beautiful and capable learners. I had time to talk with office associates, parent volunteers, and our building services professionals. I am so impressed with our school community members.

Even more necessary, it is interactions such as these that remind us that our purpose is about nothing more important than the lives we greet each day in our schools. My job is a humbling job; I am not perfect and that's why I make it a point to learn something new every day. It's also why I am so focused on ensuring that our leaders and staff have the resources and support they need to fulfill our mission. And if you have never knelt down to grasp the small hand of a kindergartner that you never met before and encourage that child with a smile and a kind word and have him smile in return, it is difficult to appreciate what a privilege it is to do my job.

I am humbled and grateful for your support. You have my promise that I will do my best to earn your confidence every day and that the health, safety, and success of those we proudly serve will always be my highest priority. Thank you.

Update - Theory of Change - Jamie Gellner, Director Special Projects

- Two Community Sessions - collecting input for our Draft Theory of Change - Bellwether.
 - 120 registered – 40 attended and participated.
- Was not a step that Bellwether suggested, however, our strategic plan is reflective of all stakeholders, and we want to start off on the right foot by getting input from everybody.
 - There will be sessions at Making Connections for support staff, teachers, and other staff to come, and the Board will have an opportunity to provide input on October 26 at the work session.
- Some of the themes that we're hearing are very similar to what we heard from Bellwether.
 - We've heard about communication. How we communicate and make it effective. We need to monitor and evaluate that work.
 - When we create this document, we really need to hold it up and evaluate it and have a rubric that goes against this sort of philosophical theory.

Dr. Berlin thanked Ms. Gellner for organizing these community sessions. She stated that Bellwether did tell us that we need to do more family and community engagement and she thinks this is an example of one of those types of things that we need to do. She was in the family group and tried to only wear her family hat and not her school board member hat and the openness that parents were speaking of and things that were working and many things that we're working as well as the constructive criticism is important and things that we can do better. She noticed parents were speaking both for themselves and their kids, and also speaking for families who might not have a voice and thinking about things like translation and communication services.

Mr. Alcaro commented that he got six full weeks of experience with this and learning about the division. He was with one person who is a TA in special needs with positive comments and and worthwhile to listen to. He thanked the staff for doing these exercises. He further stated that the Theory of Change can be a little esoteric, and it was a good exercise.

Community Based Learning Coordinator, Amber Roberts gave a presentation on the Career Pathways Day that was held on October 10. More than 1,000 ACPS 9th graders traveled to

our businesses, local government, and CPS employer partners all around the county to gain hands on experience in a career pathway.

This was something that ACPS has been thinking about for quite some time, and we had a lot of help from our community partners. It's because of the community partners that we were able to bring this together. Not one person contacted said no. Thirty buses went in 30 different directions. They got to go see careers in our community and from the 26 different locations that they went to, they did get an opportunity to see a representation from every single career cluster. Our career partners were able to answer questions about what employment looks like, what education they would have taken, and what classes they would have taken seriously. We got a lot of great feedback from our community partners and they're excited to do it again next year. ACPS is very grateful for our community, particularly Virginia Career Works helped get it together, as well as our local visitors Bureau.

Chief Operating Officer, Ms. Rosalyn Schmitt, gave an update on the Transportation Department.

	Early August	Week of 8/28	Week of 9/5	Week of 9/11	Week of 9/25	As of 10/11
Students who did not have a route in the AM and PM	994 (12 routes)	456 (8 routes)	391 (5 routes)	275 (3 routes)	189 (2 routes)	19 (0.5 routes)
Students who only had an AM route	-	193 (2.5 routes)	213 (2.5 routes)	214 (2.5 routes)	217 (2.5 routes)	211 (2.5 routes)

❖ Drivers in Training: 7

❖ Immediate next steps: actively recruiting drivers and modifying routes to cover long term absences, pending retirements, and stacked routes.

**A route is a driver assignment. Some open routes include an elementary and a secondary run, others are longer secondary runs only.*

Note: AM only figures have been corrected since last Board update.

Agenda Item No. 9.1 – Long Range Planning-2023 Recommendation - Maya Kumazawa

Per policy, the Long-Range Planning Advisory Committee (LRPAC) is formed to "inform and advise the Superintendent and School Board in the development of comprehensive, long-term plans for facilities needs in the most effective and efficient way and in support of the School Division's Strategic Plan."

The committee has met monthly over the two years to analyze and discuss the capital needs of ACPS. The recommendation serves as the first stage in developing the Division's FY 25 - 29 Capital Improvement Program (CIP).

In addition to the LRPAC report, staff will make a recommendation for CIP Maintenance - Replacement programs for the FY 25-29 Capital Improvement Program.

- [LRPAC Report](#)
- [LRPAC Presentation](#)

Mr. Alcaro stated that the board has been a longtime fan of the Long Range Planning Advisory Committee, and they do consistently good work. He likes the renovations, and it looks like it's about 96 million without the middle school numbers and including middle school numbers, last year it was about 106 million. He urged the committee and the Board to try to impress on the Board of Supervisors the importance of getting this done earlier, sooner rather than later.

Dr. Acuff stated that she and Mr. Alcaro have been keen on capital projects for the past several years, and she really does appreciate their work. She loves how Lambs Lane campus which is in her district has been a big project ambition of hers. She noticed in the modernization of elementary schools, they are removing trailers, but without changing capacity. Dr. Acuff asked about the five elementary school trailers that would be removed and have either been expanded or have they experienced reduced enrollment.

Dr. Berlin commented that one of the things she is always asked about is overcrowding in schools and renovation, and the last new school was built over 20 years ago. She believes this is a huge advocacy need for our community, and if we want to give our kids a world class education, we need to give them world class facilities. She also commented that she believes we are failing our kids in a number of ways, and this is something they need; buildings that really show how much we care about them, and new coats of paint can only do so much.

Agenda Item No. 9.2 – Break – The Board took a break from 8:29 p.m. to 8:42 p.m.

Agenda Item No. 9.3 – Annual Student Discipline Review - Kevin Kirst & Miles Nelson

The review of annual school discipline data included an overview of the 22-23 school year to 21-22 year by administrative referral type. Additionally, current trends were highlighted when compared to last year. A Mental Health and Wellness review was also included as we believe discipline, mental health and community partnerships are best addressed as intertwined vs. separate entities.

- [Discipline Report to the School Board](#)
- [Violations - Responses at a Glance](#)
- [ACPS Discipline Levels](#)
- [Anonymous Alerts Update 2023](#)

Dr. Acuff asked about healthcare financial services for students and if we found that this was a barrier for the community that we serve. – ACPS has a grant that we are able to draw from to help cover these services for students.

Dr. Berlin asked about the LGBTQ community students, and if we provide for kids who might be in one of those categories and might be having some problems. – Staff will get back to the board on the numbers we have for the LGBTQ students who have sought out our services.

Mr. Paige asked about resource availability for students during the summer. It can be a difficult time with the lack of structure. – Staff will do some research and get back to the board.

Agenda Item No. 9.4 – School Health Advisory Board and Nursing Update - Eileen Gomez

- [SHAB Annual Report](#)
- [Clinic Visit Summary 2022-2023](#)
- [ACPS Chronic Conditions 2008-2023](#)

Dr. Acuff asked if our schools had naloxone kits, and how big our nursing staff was at this time? – We do have kits in all of our schools and were going to offer training at Making Connections on a voluntary basis for teachers. We have 27 nurses plus the coordinator – one nurse at each school: two at Albemarle High School.

Ms. Le asked how many nurses should we have with the size of our division? -- With the chronic conditions we have, if we could rotate, if we could do some more rearranging of the staffing. We would like to have a nurse in every building and then extras that would be doubled in the larger schools.

AGENDA ITEM No. 10.0 OTHER BUSINESS

AGENDA ITEM NO. 10.1 Other Business by Board Members and/or Superintendent

Dr. Acuff offered a motion to divert \$6,000 from the school board fund to match the BAMMA Grant Award (BAMMA Works Foundation), as well as fund up to ten (10) student interns. Mr. Alcaro **seconded the motion. Voice vote was called, and the motion passed with the following recorded votes:**

- AYES:** Mr. Paige, Dr. Acuff, Mr. Alcaro, Dr. Berlin Ms. Callsen, and Ms. Le
- NAYS:** None
- ABSENT:** Ms. Osborne

Motion carried by a 6:0:1 vote.

Ms. Le shared she attended the Newcomer Learning Community located at the Boys and Girls Club. There are fifty (50) students, and they have room for seventy (70). They go across the age spectrum, it's a very interesting program that we all supported this year. She highly recommends everyone visit. They had a morning activity which was very inspiring. She also recommended everyone check out the Boys and Girls Club. She got a nice tour, and it was quite impressive.

Agenda Item No. 10.1 Closed Meeting – None.

Agenda Item No. 10.2 Closed Meeting Certification – None.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 11.0 ADJOURNMENT - At 9:41 p.m., hearing no objections, Chair Le adjourned the meeting of the Albemarle County School Board.

Chair

Clerk