

MINUTES

REGULAR MEETING OF THE ALBEMARLE COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD

Thursday, November 14, 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, Mr. Chuck Pace, Mr. Graham Paige, Ms. Allison Spillman, and Student Representative, Moosa Ahmed.

ABSENT – Ms. Ellen Osborne

ALSO, IN ATTENDANCE - Superintendent Matthew Haas; School Division Counsel Josiah Black; Assistant Superintendent Clare Keiser; 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

Agenda Item No. 1.1 Closed Meeting - At 5:45 p.m., Dr. Acuff 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 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 this item is to consult with legal counsel concerning issues of safety and security in certain school buildings. Mr. Paige seconded the **motion**. **A voice vote was called, and the motion passed by the following recorded votes:**

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

NAYS: None.

ABSENT: Dr. Berlin and Ms. Osborne

Motion carried by a 5:0:2 vote.

Dr. Berlin arrived shortly after the meeting began and joined the Board in closed session.

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., Dr. Acuff 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**. **Roll was called, and the motion passed by the following recorded votes:**

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: Ms. Osborne

Motion carried by a 6:0:1 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

Agenda Item No. 3.1 Approval of Agenda – Dr. Acuff offered a **motion** to approve the agenda. Dr. Berlin **seconded the motion. A voice vote was called, and the motion passed with the following recorded votes:**

- AYES:** Dr. Acuff, Dr. Berlin, Mr. Pace, Ms. Spillman, Mr. Paige, and Chair Le.
 - NAYS:** None
 - ABSENT:** Ms. Osborne
- Motion carried by a 6:0:1 vote.**

AGENDA ITEM NO. 4.0 APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA

- 4.1 Approval of Consent Agenda
- 4.2 Approval of the Minutes
- 4.3 Personnel Action
- 4.4 For Information: Policy Review and Revision
- 4.5 2025-2026 Middle School Program Guide and High School Program of Studies
- *4.6 Info/Action: Funding Requests for High School Center II and Southern Feeder Pattern Elementary School

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

- AYES:** Ms. Spillman, Dr. Berlin, Mr. Pace, Dr. Acuff, Mr. Paige, and Chair Le.
 - NAYS:** None
 - ABSENT:** Ms. Osborne
- Motion carried by a 6:0:1 vote.**

AGENDA ITEM NO 5.0 ITEMS PULLED FROM CONSENT AGENDA –

Dr. Berlin offered a motion to pull item 4.6 Funding Requests for High School Center II and Southern Feeder Pattern Elementary School for further information from staff. Mr. Paige **seconded the motion. A voice vote was called, and the motion passed with the following recorded votes:**

- AYES:** Mr. Paige, Mr. Pace, Dr. Berlin, Dr. Acuff, Ms. Spillman, and Chair Le.
 - NAYS:** None
 - ABSENT:** Ms. Osborne
- Motion carried by a 6:0:1 vote.**

Dr. Acuff offered a motion to approve the Funding Request for High School Center II and Southern Feeder Pattern Elementary School. Ms. Spillman **seconded the motion. A voice vote was called, and the motion passed with the following recorded votes:**

- AYES:** Mr. Paige, Mr. Pace, Dr. Berlin, Dr. Acuff, Ms. Spillman, and Chair Le.
 - NAYS:** None
 - ABSENT:** Ms. Osborne
- Motion carried by a 6:0:1 vote.**

AGENDA ITEM NO. 6.0 ANNOUNCEMENTS

Agenda Item No. 6.1 Spotlight on Education

Dr. Chandra Hayes, Assistant Superintendent of Instruction, introduced six Albemarle County schools that received recognition from the Virginia Board of Education for the highest achievement awards for the 2024-2025 academic year. These schools were honored as part of the Exemplar School Recognition Program for demonstrating success in key areas, including closing achievement gaps. To earn this recognition, the schools met strict standards, such as being fully accredited, performing at high levels in reading, mathematics, and science, maintaining a low absenteeism rate, and achieving strong graduation rates.

Dr. Hayes highlighted that Albemarle County has the highest number of recognized schools outside of Northern Virginia and Virginia Beach. The schools honored were Broadus Wood Elementary, Community Lab School, Hollymead Elementary, Ivy Elementary, Stony Point Elementary, and Virginia L. Murray Elementary. She praised these schools for their academic excellence, commitment to equity, and the support of their educators and communities.

Agenda Item No. 6.2 School Board/Superintendent Business

Mr. Pace offered a motion to approve a half day on November 27 for 12-month employees. Ms. Spillman **seconded the motion. A voice vote was called, and the motion passed with the following recorded votes:**

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: Ms. Osborne

Motion carried by a 6:0:1 vote.

Superintendent Dr. Haas shared several highlights with the board. He praised the excitement and teamwork at schools, noting the success of Mountain View's "after-school buyback club," where students can make up missed time by participating in clubs tied to Virginia Standards of Learning. He highlighted the importance of school psychologists, especially during National School Psychologist Week, for their role in supporting students' emotional well-being, mental health, and academic success.

Dr. Haas also celebrated Scottsville and Broadus Wood Elementary Schools for achieving 100% staff attendance, acknowledging the dedication of staff members who still take time off when needed. He shared his positive visit to Agnor Elementary, where he spent time with first-grade teachers and saw students actively engaged in math. Additionally, he reminded the board that next week is American Education Week, with special days recognizing education support professionals and substitute educators, both of whom have proven essential in recent years.

Dr. Clare Keiser, Assistant Superintendent, provided an update on the Making Connections conference held on November 4th. This event, by and for Albemarle County Public Schools (ACPS) employees, featured two main areas: one for instructional staff and another for support staff. At Monticello High School, instructional staff, including teachers, counselors, and teaching assistants, participated in a variety of sessions on topics like the science of reading, increasing rigor, differentiation, and professional networking. Vendors also supported the implementation of new programs.

For support staff, sessions included topics like custodial safety, special education support for nurses, leadership, customer service, and mental health, alongside a wellness fair. The Department of Professional Learning, along with Human Resources, played a key role in organizing the event, ensuring its success. Dr. Keiser acknowledged the hard work and participation of employees, especially those who presented, and noted the positive turnout, with many employees choosing to attend rather than take the day off.

Dr. Keiser emphasized the value of professional learning, highlighting the large turnout at Monticello High, where many employees volunteered to enhance their skills for the benefit of students. The event was well-received and will continue in future years.

Superintendent Haas shared that in his 21 years of working in the county, he had never seen so many cars parked at Monticello High School, noting that employees could have taken the day off if they wanted to avoid professional learning but instead chose to attend and enhance their work for students. He described this as a testament to their dedication. He also thanked Kagan Squires for his excellent session on project management at Albemarle High, from which he personally learned valuable insights.

Dr. Daphne Kaiser, Assistant Superintendent, discussed the observance of Veterans Day, which was originally called Armistice Day to mark the end of World War I in 1918 and renamed in 1954 to honor all military veterans. The day is nationally recognized with ceremonies, wreath laying, and moments of silence, celebrating qualities such as sacrifice, loyalty, and commitment. On November 11th, schools and departments across the district paused to honor military service members. For example, Ivy Elementary, led by Principal Underwood, honored over 120 veterans from their community. Dr. Kaiser emphasized the importance of instilling pride and patriotism in students, ensuring they carry these values into the future. She requested that the Albemarle County School Board issue a [proclamation](#) in recognition of Veterans Day.

Dr. Berlin offered a motion for the Board to issue the [Proclamation recognizing Veterans Day](#). Dr. Acuff **seconded the motion. A voice vote was called, and the motion passed with the following recorded votes:**

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: Ms. Osborne

Motion carried by a 6:0:1 vote.

At-Large Board Member Allison Spillman shared the following message on behalf of the Board:

“In the wake of the recent election, we want to reaffirm our commitment to each of you—our students, families, and staff members—who make up the heart of our school community. Regardless of the outcome, we remain dedicated to ensuring that every student feels safe, supported, and valued in our schools.

Our schools are places of growth and learning, where each individual is encouraged to reach their full potential. We recognize that elections can bring a range of emotions, and it’s natural to feel a variety of ways. We are here to support you as we navigate these times together, fostering an environment of understanding, respect, and empathy.

In keeping with our values, we also want to remind our community that federal laws protect students' rights, regardless of their immigration status. Under the law, all children are entitled to a public education, and no student should feel unsafe or excluded based on immigration concerns. We are committed to upholding these protections, ensuring that all students can enroll and participate in school without fear.

Furthermore, we reaffirm our commitment to supporting LGBTQIA+ youth. Federal protection exists to prevent discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, and we are here to ensure that every student, including those in the LGBTQIA+ community, is treated with respect and dignity. Our schools are inclusive spaces where all students can feel accepted and valued for who they are.

To our students: You are the future, and your education and well-being are our top priorities. We will continue to provide you with the tools and guidance needed to succeed, both academically and personally. We encourage you to engage in open dialogue, explore new ideas, and be respectful of the diverse perspectives within our community.

To our families: We are deeply grateful for your ongoing partnership. Together, we will continue to ensure that every child has access to the resources and opportunities they need to thrive. Your support and involvement are essential in creating an environment where our students can learn, grow, and succeed.

To our staff: Thank you for your dedication and hard work in supporting our students and families. Your commitment and resilience are what make our schools truly exceptional. As we move forward, we will continue to support you in your efforts to create a positive and inclusive learning environment for all.

As a school board, we are steadfast in upholding our values of equity, inclusion, and respect. We are committed to ensuring that all members of our community feel heard, valued, and supported. Together, we will continue to foster a climate of collaboration, empathy, and respect, no matter the circumstances.

Thank you for your trust and support. We look forward to working with all of you in the coming months to continue building a strong and unified school community.

School Board Student Representative Moosa Ahmed, shared the following statement on behalf of the 2024-2025 student representatives:

“On behalf of the student representatives, I want to share some of the pressing issues and concerns we are hearing from our peers across Albemarle County Public Schools. We appreciate your attention to these matters, as they have a significant impact on our student body.

As many of you know, there has been a noticeable atmosphere of unease in our schools following recent events, including the recent election. Students are expressing heightened fears and anxieties about the political climate and its potential effects on their lives and school communities. For many, there is a fear of the unknown and a worry that tensions might lead to incidents of hate or discrimination. We respectfully ask for the Board's continued commitment to creating a safe and inclusive environment, reaffirming our schools' stance against racism, bias, and intolerance.

To support students during this time, we have some suggestions for consideration:

1. **A Reporting System** – Establish a safe and anonymous system for students to report incidents of hate or discrimination, enabling timely intervention while protecting student privacy.

2. **Support Groups and Safe Spaces** – Create designated spaces where students can openly discuss their experiences and concerns with trusted, neutral counselors or in facilitated support groups, offering emotional relief and a sense of belonging.
3. **Mental Health Resources** – Provide additional mental health support, especially for students who feel isolated due to their political beliefs, family situations, or other personal circumstances.

In addition to these broader concerns, I'd like to highlight a specific issue facing Monticello High School: **Monticello High School:** A recent incident related to drug use on our campus has underscored the urgent need for increased education and support around substance abuse. The following initiatives to strengthen drug awareness and prevention efforts:

- **Educational Workshops** – Host workshops or assemblies that address the dangers of drug use, with real-life stories from individuals affected by substance abuse to make the message more relatable and impactful.
- **Peer-Led Support Programs** – Establish peer support groups where students can talk openly about the pressures they face and provide support to one another. Research shows that students are more receptive to advice and guidance from their peers, especially when discussing sensitive topics.
- **Collaboration with Local Health Organizations** – Partner with local health organizations to provide resources and expertise, such as guest speakers or informational materials, that can educate both students and parents about the signs of substance abuse and where to seek help.

These requests reflect our shared desire to foster a school environment where every student feels valued, safe, and supported. By addressing these concerns and reinforcing our commitment to inclusivity and well-being, we believe we can build a strong and resilient community for all students. Thank you for listening to our voices and for considering these actions to support our student body.”

AGENDA ITEM NO. 7.0 PUBLIC COMMENT

Jim Dillenbeck from the Rio District, addressed the School Board, sharing concerns he has gathered from community members, teachers, and families over the past year. He highlighted the following issues:

1. **Transportation Challenges:** Families in his district have faced unreliable bus services, leading parents to drive their children to school.
2. **Teacher and Staff Retention:** Some teachers and support staff have left Albemarle County Public Schools (ACPS) for less stressful and better-paying jobs in Charlottesville City Schools.
3. **Families Leaving ACPS:** Several families have transferred their children to city schools or private schools, citing concerns about the learning environment and unmet needs, particularly for students with dyslexia or those requiring structured classroom settings.
4. **Academic Performance Concerns:** He emphasized troubling data from Woodbrook Elementary School, where:
 - 54% of students failed reading SOLs.
 - 59% failed math SOLs.
 - 64% failed science SOLs.
 - 75% of students of color failed reading and math SOLs, and 84% failed science SOLs.
5. **Overcrowded Classrooms:** He cited elementary schools where first and second-grade teachers have over 20 students, many of whom are English Language Learners (ELL) or economically disadvantaged.
6. **Math Achievement Gaps:** A high school math teacher expressed concerns about students graduating without mastering basic math concepts due to systemic issues in the grading and support systems.

Mr. Dillenbeck concluded by urging the Board to address these critical issues and provide the necessary support for students and teachers.

Andrew Maslaney, an eighth-grade student at Henley Middle School in the White Hall District, addressed the School Board to advocate for changes to the current policy regarding middle school students participating in high school junior varsity (JV) sports. Andrew expressed his love for both academics and athletics, emphasizing how being an athlete enhances his performance as a student and vice versa. He shared his passion for basketball, which he has played since he was six years old and highlighted his recent participation in the Albemarle County middle school basketball program. He noted that his skills and abilities have been acknowledged by the high school coaching staff, who believe he could play on the JV team. However, Andrew explained that the current School Board policy prohibits eighth graders from playing on JV teams if cuts need to be made. He questioned the logic of allowing ninth graders to play on varsity teams but not permitting eighth graders to play on JV teams, citing inconsistencies in the policy compared to other school districts. He also pointed out the lack of alternative local basketball opportunities for middle school students during the fall and winter seasons. Andrew respectfully requested that the Board review and reconsider the policy to allow eighth graders to try out for and play on JV teams, emphasizing the positive impact of basketball on his focus, discipline, and overall well-being. He concluded by thanking the Board for their time and consideration.

Jessica Taylor, a resident of the White Hall district and mother of Andrew Maslaney, addressed the School Board to advocate for revisiting the current policy that restricts eighth graders from playing on junior varsity (JV) sports teams. She expressed pride in her son Andrew for speaking up on an issue that matters deeply to him and emphasized his passion and dedication to basketball. Ms. Taylor shared how devastated Andrew was after being told by his coaches that, despite having the skills to play JV or even varsity, he was ineligible due to the School Board's policy. She described Andrew's work ethic and passion for basketball, highlighting his early morning practices, determination during COVID, and commitment to traveling for competitive opportunities when local options were unavailable. She underscored that Andrew is not alone in his circumstances, as many motivated student-athletes across various sports could benefit from a policy change. She advocated not only for Andrew but for all Albemarle County Public Schools students who demonstrate the drive and ability to compete at higher levels. She argued that expanding opportunities for eighth graders to participate in high school sports would not lead to an influx of younger athletes but would positively impact those who work hard and excel. Drawing from her experience as Executive Director of the YMCA and pointed to the lack of middle school sports programs in the area and the inequity created by the reliance on costly club teams. She highlighted research showing the academic and personal benefits of sports participation, including better concentration, improved classroom behavior, reduced stress, and increased likelihood of attending college. Ms. Taylor concluded by urging the Board to consider a solution that provides more opportunities for student-athletes, fostering equity and supporting the development of well-rounded individuals.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 8.0 – SCHOOL DIVISION BUSINESS

Agenda Item No. 8.1 ACPS State of the Division Report - The [2024 State of the Division](#) report looks back on the 2023-2024 school year to celebrate our accomplishments and identify areas for continued focus as we work to meet the goals outlined in our strategic plan, "Learning for All."

Dr. Berlin inquired about the four schools accredited with conditions. Dr. McLaughlin identified them as Woodbrook, Mountain View, Scottsville, and Agnor-Hurt Elementary Schools.

Dr. Acuff expressed appreciation for the restructuring of the State of the Division Report, emphasizing its alignment with the Strategic Plan, the budget process, and the bellwether report. She asked how the report might impact upcoming budget decisions. Dr. McLaughlin suggested using the report to identify areas of success that should continue to receive funding or areas of concern that might require additional support through the budget process. Dr. McLaughlin also confirmed an improvement in the Panorama survey results, reflecting more positive family perceptions of school climate and fit.

Ms. Spillman highlighted two key equity concerns: the disproportionate discipline rates for students with disabilities and students of color, and the concentration of early reading challenges in higher-poverty schools. She requested additional information on strategies to address these issues and emphasized the importance of considering these factors in budget planning. She also noted declining middle school math and reading scores, particularly at Henley Middle School, and sought insights into the reasons for these trends post-pandemic.

Dr. Berlin asked whether the schools with accreditation conditions were part of the Transformation School program. Dr. McLaughlin clarified that while some of these schools are included, the program currently involves Woodbrook, Agnor-Hurt, Red Hill, Greer, and Journey Elementary Schools. This selection was based on federal support designations, and adjustments are being made to include additional schools like Mountain View and Scottsville.

Ms. Spillman suggested evaluating lessons learned from schools like Greer and Red Hill that have shown progress, ensuring that successful strategies are both culturally and community relevant. She also raised the possibility of the School Board allocating additional funds if needed to expand and enhance the Transformation School program.

Ms. Spillman expressed concern that the State of the Division presentation received less time than the work session on studios, emphasizing that this topic, as a core aspect of their work, deserved more focus in future meetings.

Dr. Acuff highlighted the growing need for mental health support and the value of SEL coaches across the division. She requested data on the utilization of these supports, particularly in schools with greater challenges, while acknowledging the widespread need for mental health resources.

Mr. Paige asked for clarification on the acronym "DESSA." Dr. McLaughlin explained that it stands for the Devereux Student Supports Assessment, a tool used to evaluate students' socio-emotional strengths and areas of need. He noted that while the division met its targets this year, the national trend shows a significant rise in socio-emotional needs among high school students, with 45% requiring support at that level.

Dr. Berlin commented on the potential underreporting in such assessments and noted the increasing burden on schools to address issues beyond traditional academics. She stressed the importance of leveraging community partnerships to address students' socio-emotional needs, as schools cannot meet these demands alone. She urged for continued collaboration to help students thrive.

Mr. Pace emphasized the importance of integrating community resources into schools, describing a "triangle" of governance, pedagogy, and community. He noted that programs already working within schools, such as the Boys and Girls Club, could serve as models for deeper collaboration and shared responsibility for students' well-being.

Chair Le appreciated the transparency in highlighting both successes and areas for improvement. She noted the importance of this openness in showing the community that the board is actively addressing these issues and expressed her intent to delve deeper into the report and raise additional questions in the future. The conversation underscored a collective commitment to addressing the socio-emotional and mental health needs of students, while balancing these efforts with budgetary considerations and community partnerships.

Agenda Item No. 8.2 [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.

Mr. Pace asked if the 2025-2026 pay periods would remain at 20, with benefits deducted from those pay periods. Dr. Irizarry confirmed this was correct.

Ms. Spillman inquired about an apparent error on the calendar, noting that Monday and Tuesday surrounding Election Day were marked differently than in previous years. Dr. Irizarry clarified that Monday would still be a "Making Connections" professional learning day, while Tuesday, Election Day, would remain a non-workday.

Chair Le mentioned receiving limited community feedback but noted positive responses to the revised calendar addressing issues with consecutive four-day weeks.

Ms. Spillman raised concerns about ensuring that ten-month employees understand the implications of changes to the pay period structure. She emphasized the importance of proactive communication to avoid surprises and support their financial planning. Dr. Clare Keiser, Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources, acknowledged this concern and assured the board that HR is focused on clear communication and exploring options to minimize impact. She stated that HR is committed to a strong communications campaign to assist employees in adapting to these changes.

Dr. Berlin offered a motion to approve the proposed calendar with an early start and early end date. Mr. Pace **seconded the motion**. The motion was amended by Dr. Berlin and seconded by Mr. Pace to read: "approve the propose the 2026 and 2027 School Year Calendar with an early start and early end date"

A roll call vote was called, and the motion passed with the following recorded votes:

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: Ms. Osborne

Motion carried by a 6:0:1 vote.

Agenda Item No. 8.3 [Cell Phone-Free Learning Policy and Responsible Use Policy](#)

This is the first read of the cell phone policy. This policy will come back at the December 12 meeting for action.

Ms. Spillman asked about ensuring that adaptive learning technology and translation services for students with medical needs or limited English proficiency are included in exceptions or designations like 504 plans or English learning plans.

Dr. Berlin supported this by emphasizing the importance of allowing students to assist one another through informal or formal translation methods. Staff confirmed that adaptive and translation technology considerations would be included, with input from teachers to tailor support for individual student needs.

Dr. Acuff inquired about the extent to which the digital citizenship curriculum educates students on the adverse effects of excessive cell phone use. Staff responded that the curriculum is being revised to address this policy and encourages metacognitive reflection on technology use. The curriculum includes lessons on balanced media usage and responsible use policies, particularly before devices are sent home.

Dr. Acuff asked Mr. Josh Walton, principal of Walton Middle School, about the effectiveness of the "Away for the Day" cell phone policy. Mr. Walton explained that compliance has been strong across grades, with 6th graders reporting fewer temptations to use their phones compared to 7th and 8th graders. He detailed the enforcement process, which includes collecting phones for non-compliance and storing them in a lockbox with increasing consequences for repeat offenses. Initial parent concerns about safety were addressed by emphasizing that schools would communicate emergencies, allowing first responders to manage critical situations.

Dr. Haas thanked Mr. Walton and his team for their proactive approach to implementing and refining cell phone policies. He acknowledged the complexity of the issue and emphasized the importance of involving students in understanding the mental health and learning impacts of cell phone use, encouraging them to make informed decisions to limit usage.

Dr. Haas asked Deputy Chief Technology Officer Jamie Foreman and Assistant Director for Technology Integration Kley Todd to explain the transition from the "Anonymous Alerts" app to the "HELPme" app, highlighting how it differs and how students can access it. Staff outlined the app's functionality, emphasizing its role in improving reporting and support mechanisms for students.

Mr. Foreman shared the benefits of the HELPme app, emphasizing its role in providing targeted support to students. Through integration with ClassLink, the app ensures accessibility and equity by consolidating all essential resources and support tools in one place. Students can anonymously report issues or request help directly through ClassLink, navigating to a page that allows them to specify their location and concern. This streamlined process enhances responsiveness and enables staff to gather actionable data, ask targeted questions, and deliver tailored support to schools. The integration of HELPme into ClassLink also simplifies access for both students and staff, ensuring a seamless user experience.

Mr. Bonham explained that the HELPme app is monitored 24/7 to ensure timely responses to student needs. Reports submitted through the app go directly to school administrators and are also overseen by safety and security staff. The app provides immediate access to resources tailored to specific schools, allowing students to receive support outside school hours. A third-party monitors reports after hours, escalating critical cases to appropriate personnel. This system ensures that urgent issues are addressed promptly and that students have access to necessary resources and support at all times. Mr. Bonham also emphasized the importance of promoting the app to maximize its reach and effectiveness.

Mr. Pace inquired about a hypothetical – suppose a teacher wants to do a cahoot that they're going to do on their school-based device and that phones can be out of that equation from now? Staff replied that anything that students would need to access is approved by the county

Mr. Pace inquired about managing situations where a student with a glucose monitoring system requires access to their phone to read their medical readings while their phone is secured in a pouch. Staff responded that in most cases, alternative devices can be issued, such as a small iPad that the school nurse can use to monitor readings. If providing a device is not feasible, accommodation can be made to ensure the student has access to their phone as needed for medical purposes.

No. 9.0 OTHER BUSINESS

Agenda Item No. 9.0 Other Business by the Board Members and Superintendent - None

Agenda Item No. 9.1 Closed Meeting – None.

Agenda Item No. 9.2 Closed Meeting Certification – None.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 10.0 ADJOURNMENT - At 8:22 p.m., hearing no objections, Chair Le adjourned the meeting of the Albemarle County School Board.

Clerk

Chair