



Board-to-Board, May, 2023

A monthly report from the Albemarle County School Board to the Albemarle County Board of Supervisors

School Board Appoints Four New Elementary School Principals—The Albemarle County School Board approved the appointment of four elementary school principals during their May 11 meeting. The new school leaders are C'ta DeLaurier, who will become Woodbrook's principal; Seth Kennard, who will be the principal of Mountain View; Jim Kyner, who will lead Brownsville; and Leslie Wills-Taylor, who will be Stone-Robinson's next principal. All appointments will be effective July 1.

DeLaurier's career with Albemarle County Public Schools (ACPS) spans more than 20 years, most recently as principal of Murray Elementary. Her service to public education prior to becoming a principal includes several years as a teacher, interventionist, instructional coach, and assistant principal and emphasizes the importance of close partnerships with families and staff. Among her priorities has been developing critical thinking and problem-solving skills among students.

Kennard has served as principal of Baker-Butler Elementary for the past four years, during which time students have improved their reading and math performance. He has been a significant contributor to the update and improvement of division-wide security practices through the implementation of [ALICE Training](#). Prior to joining the division, Kennard was principal of the year for Alexandria City Schools, where he received *The Washington Post's* Distinguished Educational Leadership Award. Under his leadership, Charles Barrett Elementary School became a Kennedy Center Art Integration Demonstration School, earned a Virginia Index of Performance Award from Virginia's Board of Education for the Standards of Learning (SOL) performance of its students, and was named one of the region's "top elementary schools" by *Northern Virginia Magazine*.

Kyner has served as principal of Springs Ranch Elementary School in Colorado Springs, Colorado, for the past seven years. A strong instructional leader, Kyner was responsible for the adoption of a new and effective reading program for the school. His focus on family, student and employee engagement resulted in improved services for the whole school community. Prior to his time in Colorado, Kyner was principal of Charlottesville City Schools' Greenbrier Elementary. During his time there, the school was named a National Blue Ribbon School and earned a Mid-Atlantic Family Engagement Award. He also served preschool children with high-risk factors through the Virginia Preschool Initiative. Earlier in his career, Kyner served ACPS as an assistant principal at Agnor-Hurt Elementary for three years.

Wills-Taylor joined ACPS as a teaching assistant at Greer Elementary in 2007. She subsequently served as a teacher at Woodbrook Elementary, where she was nominated by the division as its choice for Virginia Teacher of the Year. Wills-Taylor also was an assistant principal intern at Brownsville Elementary, an assistant principal at Meriwether Lewis Elementary, and most recently, an Equity Education Specialist in the central office. During her tenure with the Equity Education team, Wills-Taylor assisted with the development and implementation of the division's Culturally Responsive Teaching certification and micro-credentialing program.

DeLaurier is an undergraduate of Rutgers University, where she studied English. She received her Master of Arts from James Madison University in Administration and Supervision. DeLaurier received her certification in Culturally Responsive Teaching in 2019.

Kennard earned his Bachelor of Arts degree at the University of Mary Washington and his Master of Education in Administration and Supervision at the University of Virginia. He is currently in the process of completing his Doctor of Education from the University of Virginia.

Kyner earned his Bachelor of Arts degree in Elementary Education at Ohio Wesleyan University and his Master of Education in Administration and Supervision from the University of Virginia.

Wills-Taylor earned her Bachelor of Science in Human Development at Howard University, her Master of Education in Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Virginia, and her Educational Leadership Certificate at James Madison University. She will soon begin her work toward a doctoral degree in Curriculum and Instruction from the University of Virginia.

Changes in ACPS transportation operations for next school year—While bus driver shortages continue to disrupt arrival and departure schedules for students, the ACPS Transportation Services Department is making improvements to the operations of school buses next year to support the on-time arrival of students. These moderations will make bus routes more efficient, prioritize services to those who need it, and provide more predictability for families and staff.

Beginning with the new school year on August 23, the department will no longer utilize double-backs to complete bus routes. A double-back occurs when a bus route is open, meaning that there is not a driver permanently assigned to operate the bus. For all of this school year, open routes have required another bus driver to first complete their route and then return to the road to cover the open route. While this practice ensures that all student passengers have service, it also results in schedule delays for some students. Those sometimes reach an hour or more.

In its most current report to the Albemarle County School Board, Transportation said that 83% of all students who ride a school bus arrive at school on schedule, meaning that nearly 1,000 students experience at least minimal delays. A little more than 100 of these student passengers arrive at school more than 15 minutes after their scheduled time.

While the school division is continuing to prioritize the recruitment of drivers, vacancies are likely to continue through next year, leading the department to take several actions that are designed to reduce and eliminate bus route schedule delays in the future.

The most influential change is already in progress. The school division has sent out notices to all families with students in division schools, asking them to complete a short form to indicate whether their child will need bus transportation next year. All responses are due as soon as possible, but no later than June 30.

The significance of this information is underscored by requests from parents last year that indicated more than 9,500 students would need bus service. The actual number of student passengers this year has been 40% less than requested, or fewer than 6,000. This is consistent with the situation that has existed most years, dating back prior to the pandemic.

Bus routes are designed and buses and bus drivers are assigned based upon parental requests for service. When those numbers are inflated, it results in bus stops and routes that are not needed. When there is a driver shortage, the impact of these “phantom” stops is magnified, as has happened throughout this year.

All parents are being asked to complete the one-question form by June 30, even if their child will not need bus transportation. These responses will allow the department to design the most efficient bus routes, saving travel time. If a parent requests transportation for their child after June 30, their child will be placed on a waitlist for service. This will not affect families who register their child for school after June 30 or students who receive transportation service by law.

To help the school division improve bus service next year for families with no other transportation option, families who can transport their children to and from school are encouraged to do so.

The department also is consolidating the number of bus stops on private roads beginning in August, as using more centralized locations will save approximately 200 miles and about 11 hours of daily drive time. In a presentation to the school board on May 11, the department outlined several other measures that will be in effect this August to improve on-time service, including:

- An expansion of current walk zones to one mile for elementary school students and 1.5 miles for middle and high school students. (Some exceptions will be made in areas where walking to school within these distances would present a safety concern.)
- Schedule adjustments that would result in some students arriving at school 15 minutes earlier than usual, allowing drivers to then pick up additional passengers and deliver them to school on time.
- The elimination of service on routes that do not have an assigned driver. Families who would be affected by this change will be notified by July 31. As drivers are assigned to these open routes, bus transportation will become available.

Students who by law are required to receive bus service, such as special education and homeless students, are not affected by any of these changes.

The [May 11 presentation](#) to the school board contains more information on the school bus changes that will take effect for the 2023-24 school year, including a list of specific schools affected by each of the changes.

Winners of the 2022-23 Golden Apple Awards—The Golden Apple Selection Committee recently chose the Golden Apple Award recipients for the 2022-23 school year. Each year, ACPS, Charlottesville City Schools, and local independent schools come together to recognize outstanding teachers for their dedication to teaching and leading area pupils.

Sponsored by Better Living Building Supply and Cabinetry for more than 20 years, the Golden Apple has celebrated outstanding teachers by shining a spotlight on their hard work and dedication. As part of the celebration, the company provides each recipient with a \$500 grant for use in their classroom. The 2022-23 Golden Apple recipients were honored at a ceremony on Wednesday, May 3, which was led by Golden Apple Selection Committee Chair, Steve Koleszar, who served for more than 20 years on the Albemarle County School Board representing the Scottsville Magisterial District.

In addition to Koleszar, guest speakers at this year's ceremony included Charlottesville City Schools Superintendent, Dr. Royal Gurley; University of Virginia School of Education and Human Development Dean, Dr. Stephanie Rowley; ACPS Assistant Superintendent of Organizational Development, Dr. Clare Keiser; Charlottesville City Schools Chief Academic Officer, Dr. Katina Otey; Charlottesville Catholic School Principal, Vada Fallica; and ACPS Superintendent, Dr. Matthew Haas.

ACPS teachers who earned Golden Apples include:

- Sara Hahn, Agnor-Hurt Elementary
- Mary Montalbine, Albemarle High
- Kimberly Geer, Baker-Butler Elementary
- Brittany Ham, Broadus Wood Elementary
- Jacqueline Simounet, Brownsville Elementary
- Christina Pearman, Burley Middle
- Heather Schmidt, Center I
- Rebecca Hostetter, Community Lab School
- Barbara Huneycutt, Crozet Elementary
- Lori Alridge, Greer Elementary
- Lydia Beeler, Henley Middle
- Anna Shaner, Hollymead Elementary
- Carrie Carter, Journey Middle
- Tabatha Myers, Lakeside Middle
- Nancy Ealy, Meriwether Lewis Elementary
- Robert Ayres, Monticello High
- Steve Ivory, Mountain View Elementary
- Jeffrey Vorberger, Murray Elementary
- Sarah Rodgers, Red Hill Elementary

- Timothy Decker, Scottsville Elementary
- Jordan Black, Stone-Robinson Elementary
- Elizabeth Seawell, Stony Point Elementary
- Danielle Kauffman, Walton Middle
- Zoe Padron, Western Albemarle High
- Diane Gibbs, Woodbrook Elementary

Progress in Center II planning—ACPS is moving forward with their center model for schools, currently focusing on the development of Center II. ACPS centers maintain the objective of helping students pursue their interests and future careers, and Center II will focus on STEAM-based work, along with other programming.

During a community event on May 9, local leaders and officials discussed the potential benefits that Center II will provide for both students and businesses. The event, hosted by ACPS, featured a presentation of what Center II, still in the very early phases of development, will look like.

Currently, Center I has a capacity of 200 students, and the proposed planning for Center II creates a capacity of 400 students a day. Students in 10th, 11th or 12th grades who elect to attend Center II will alternate between their "base" school and the center, as Center I currently does, amounting to an ability to accommodate up to 800 students per week.

The new center will launch career learning opportunities starting this fall, and ACPS has a goal of getting Center II open and ready for students by the 2026-27 school year.

Resolution honors ACPS Child Nutrition Program—Delegate Sally Hudson visited Greer Elementary School on May 11 to recognize ACPS nutrition team with a General Assembly resolution. The resolution honored the team's work both during the pandemic and now.

Christina Pitsenberger, the Child Nutrition Director for ACPS, was recognized. She leads a team of 100 workers who serve almost 9,000 meals a day. When schools closed during the pandemic, the team served 100,000 healthy meals to children and their siblings.

School Board seeking advisory group applicants—The Albemarle County School Board is seeking applications from community members who are interested in serving on its Long-Range Planning Advisory Committee. Currently, there are vacancies on the committee for volunteers to represent the Rio and Rivanna magisterial districts and for an at-large representative. Applicants must live in the magisterial district for which they apply, or, in the case of the at-large seat, applicants must be county residents.

The division also is seeking community members who are interested in serving on the School Health Advisory Board. The School Health Advisory Board (SHAB) makes recommendations to the school division and to the school board on policies and programs that promote student health, offering guidance on health issues and suggesting improvements to school environments and existing health services. The board currently is seeking new members who live in the Samuel Miller and Scottsville magisterial districts.