



Board-to-Board, July 2025

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

Albemarle County Public Schools Announces New Administrators and Division Leaders for the 2025-26 School Year—Albemarle County Public Schools (ACPS) is pleased to announce several school and division leaders who will begin new positions for the 2025-26 school year. These individuals will serve in key administrative roles at the division and school levels, supporting students, staff, and families across ACPS. Their appointments reflect the division’s ongoing commitment to strong leadership, inclusive practices, and academic success for all students.

The following appointments took place on July 1:

Nancy McCullen, bringing more than 30 years of experience in Albemarle County Public Schools, has been appointed principal of **Baker-Butler Elementary**. Currently principal at Red Hill Elementary since 2018, McCullen has driven significant academic gains in reading and math, fostered an inclusive school culture, and introduced Responsive Classroom and outdoor learning initiatives. Her prior roles—as assistant principal, instructional coach, mentor, and classroom teacher—underscore her deep-rooted commitment to instructional leadership and equity across the division. McCullen said she’s “honored to be joining a school with such a strong tradition of academic excellence and family engagement” and looks forward to partnering with the Baker-Butler community.

Dr. Seth Kennard, currently serving as principal of Mountain View Elementary, has been named the inaugural principal of **Mountain View Upper Elementary School**, set to open in August 2026 serving grades 3–5. He will continue at Mountain View Elementary through the 2025–26 school year to support a smooth campus split. Kennard joined ACPS in 2019 (formerly at Baker-Butler) and has led improvements in safety protocols, academic progress, and school culture, earning honors like Alexandria City’s Principal of the Year and The Washington Post’s Distinguished Educational Leadership Award. As the new Upper Elementary principal, he aims to continue “to build on the incredible work our staff and families have done together,” ensuring every student’s journey is engaging and supported.

Dan Redding will assume the role of **Chief Human Resources Officer**, a new Cabinet-level position that reports directly to the superintendent. Redding has led ACPS’s Human Resources team since 2021, first as Director and later as Executive Director. During his tenure, he reshaped HR into a more responsive, employee-centered operation focused on recruiting, retaining, and supporting a diverse workforce. He also launched affinity groups for African-American, Latinx, and LGBTQ+ employees, modernized policies, and increased professional support for staff. Redding holds a Master’s in Elementary Education from UVA and brings nearly three decades of northern Virginia educational leadership experience — including teaching, administrative, and district-level roles.

Dr. Kecia Lipscomb will take the helm of the newly consolidated role, **Executive Director of PreK–12 Leadership and Instruction**, which merges elementary and secondary instructional oversight as part of the 2025–26 budget strategy. With over 25 years in education, including experience as principal and assistant principal, she most recently served as Director of Curriculum and Instruction for Fredericksburg City Public Schools. At Fredericksburg, she led major initiatives in curriculum alignment, literacy expansion, gifted education, and implementation of the Virginia Literacy Act. Dr. Lipscomb earned her Ed.D. in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies from Virginia Tech and holds superintendent licensure, making her well-positioned to support instructional excellence across ACPS schools.

Ashley Struzik has been named **Director of Special Education** for ACPS. A nearly 20-year veteran in special education, Struzik has served as Assistant Director of Special Education and held roles as a coordinator, lead teacher, and teacher for the deaf and hard of hearing. She holds degrees in education from Bloomsburg University and administrative credentials from George Mason University. Struzik is passionate about inclusive practices and systems that affirm and empower every learner, and she is committed to partnering with educators and families to ensure student success.

Cabell Guy will serve as **Coordinator of School Counseling**, a division-wide role reinstated to strengthen and align student counseling services. With more than 25 years of experience, Guy has been a counselor at Lakeside Middle School since 2006 and has also served as interim assistant principal and testing coordinator. His work has focused on academic advising, student wellness, and equitable access to support. Guy brings a deep understanding of student needs and a strong commitment to collaboration that will guide his leadership in this vital role.

William Schaffer has been appointed principal of **Jackson P. Burley Middle School**. With nearly two decades in education, including 10 years as an assistant principal within ACPS, Schaffer brings a wide range of experience in instructional leadership, special education, and student support. He has served at Journey, Western Albemarle, and Albemarle High Schools and previously taught social studies and special education. Schaffer is eager to honor Burley’s history while fostering a collaborative school culture where students and staff can thrive.

Paula Gately will become the new principal of **Red Hill Elementary School**. Gately has most recently served as assistant principal at Stony Point Elementary and previously taught fourth grade in Albemarle County and in Maryland. Her leadership has emphasized inclusivity, relationship-building, and student-centered instruction. With advanced degrees in leadership and human development, and credentials in culturally responsive education, Gately is dedicated to building a school community where every student feels known, supported, and inspired to succeed.

Albemarle County School Board Votes to Increase Member Compensation, Aligning with Division’s Market-Based Pay Philosophy—At its regularly scheduled meeting on Thursday, June 12, the Albemarle County School Board voted to increase board member salaries for the first time since 2022. The decision followed a public presentation and discussion, a public hearing in which two community members provided input, and a closed session deliberation.

By a majority vote, the Board approved a new salary structure as outlined in Virginia Code § 15.2-1414.2. The new annual salary of \$16,249.20, up from \$7,915, will take effect on January 1, 2026. The Board also approved an additional \$2,000 for the Chair and an additional \$1,000 for the Vice-Chair. These salaries will continue to be managed within the School Operating Fund as part of the division's standard budgeting practices.

The decision aligns with Albemarle County Public Schools' market compensation philosophy, which aims to provide salaries at the 60th percentile of the division's comparative market. A recent analysis found the average school board salary among peer divisions to be \$14,608, with the 60th percentile at \$15,600.

School Board Extends Superintendent's Contract; Approves Compensation Adjustments Aligned with Divisionwide Actions—During its annual end-of-year retreat on Friday, June 13, the Albemarle County School Board voted to extend Superintendent Dr. Matthew Haas's contract by one year, through June 30, 2028, with all members present voting in favor. (Board member Allison Spillman, At-Large Representative, was not in attendance.)

In accordance with the terms of his existing contract, the School Board meets annually with the Superintendent to review and discuss contract provisions. The last extension was approved on October 12, 2023, setting the term through June 30, 2027. The new one-year extension reflects the Board's continued confidence in Dr. Haas's leadership.

In addition to the contract extension, the Board approved a 3% salary adjustment for Dr. Haas, effective July 1, 2025, the same date that salary increases for all regular Albemarle County Public Schools employees take effect. The Board also approved a \$600 bonus for Dr. Haas, matching the amount distributed to all full-time employees in May as part of a state-funded initiative included in the General Assembly's Conference Budget.

ACPS Employee Engagement Survey Results Show Positive, Encouraging Trends—Shay Carter-Shifflett, Program Manager for Talent Retention and DEI, presented results from the 2025 Employee Engagement Survey (Gallup's Q12), conducted this spring. The survey includes 12 core statements designed to measure key areas of employee engagement—Basic Needs, Individual Contribution, Teamwork, and Growth—to help ACPS better understand how to support employees in their work.

This year's division-level results show encouraging trends: The mean engagement score rose to 3.92, up from 3.83 in 2024 and 3.73 in 2022, with the most significant year-over-year increase occurring this spring. ACPS is now in the 39th percentile, meaning our engagement score is higher than that of 39% of organizations in the K–12 education sector.

According to the engagement index, 42% of employees are engaged, up from 38% last year. Both the percentage of employees who are not engaged and those who are actively disengaged improved by 2 percentage points. The division's engagement ratio—the number of engaged employees for every actively disengaged employee—improved from 2.92 to 1 last year to 3.82 to 1 this year. Notable mean score

increases were seen in Transportation Services (+0.55), Henley Middle School (+0.36), and the International & EL Program (+0.45).

Celebrating the Service and Leadership of Our Departing Division Leaders—As we prepare for a new school year, Albemarle County Public Schools (ACPS) would like to take a moment to recognize and celebrate several division leaders who are completing their service with ACPS. Whether they are beginning exciting new chapters elsewhere or entering a well-earned retirement, each has made meaningful contributions to our schools, students, and community.

Katy Compel, Director of Special Education, will become the Executive Director of the Piedmont Regional Education Program (PREP). Over her years with ACPS, she has been a driving force behind inclusive practices and equity-focused leadership, previously serving as Assistant Director, Coordinator, and assistant principal at Baker-Butler. Her tenure has been marked by expanded parent engagement, professional development, and a steadfast commitment to students with disabilities.

Dr. Eric Irizarry, Director of Equity, Family, School, and Community Relations, has been appointed Superintendent of Staunton City Public Schools. Since 2022, he has led key initiatives like the Student Senate, Stay Day, and School Champions network, elevating student voice and equity. Previously principal of Charlottesville High School, he's known for improving graduation outcomes and closing achievement gaps.

Dr. Jesse Turner, Director of Student and Family Support, will serve as the next principal of Fort Hill Community School in Lynchburg. A longtime ACPS leader, he's known for his student-first mindset and equity-driven leadership, including transformative work at Monticello and Albemarle high schools and his stewardship of the division's Anti-Racism Policy and school climate improvements.

Dr. Kasaundra Blount, Principal of Burley Middle School, is departing for a principal role in the Richmond area. A culturally responsive educator, she has championed instructional equity and community engagement at Burley and previously at Albemarle High School, where she led the AVID program and coordinated academic departments.

Brad Handrich, Principal of Baker-Butler Elementary, will become principal of the future Sunrise Elementary School in Charlottesville. A former assistant principal at Mountain View and Greer, he is known for fostering inclusive, student-centered environments and has helped lead schoolwide improvement and professional development efforts.

Doug Granger, Assistant Principal at Western Albemarle High School, will become a principal in Rockingham County. A veteran ACPS educator, Granger has held multiple leadership roles, from elementary to middle school, and is recognized for his work in arts integration, literacy, and project-based learning.

Jason Lee, Assistant Principal at Albemarle High School, has been named principal of the Prince Edward County Career and Technical Education Center. A former principal at Western Albemarle and district

administrator in Charlottesville, Lee is known for his equity-focused leadership and commitment to high school program innovation and student engagement.

Dr. Clare Keiser, Assistant Superintendent for Organizational Development & Human Resource Leadership, is retiring after more than two decades with ACPS. A former principal, assistant principal, and Director of Educator Quality, her tenure has significantly enhanced employee support, professional learning, and equity-centered leadership development.

Michele Castner, Executive Director of Elementary Education, is retiring after 29 years with ACPS. A former principal at Crozet and Agnor-Hurt elementary schools, she has led major instructional initiatives and curriculum adoption, earning state and national recognition for her leadership in student achievement and inclusive learning environments.

Rosaura González-Muñiz, Federal & State Educational Programs Support Specialist, is retiring after more than 20 years of service to ACPS. A dedicated advocate for English Learners and equity, she has held numerous roles including assistant principal, instructional coach, and mentor, making lasting contributions to culturally responsive instruction and family engagement.