



Board-to-Board, April 2024

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

Albemarle County School Board approves resolution enabling collective bargaining—At its April 11 meeting, the Albemarle County School Board voted unanimously to approve a resolution that will allow Albemarle County Public Schools (ACPS) employees to pursue collective bargaining through a set of very specific procedures.

In 2020, the Virginia General Assembly amended [Virginia Code § 40.1-57.2](#), repealing the prohibition against collective bargaining for school board employees and granting school boards the authority to recognize any organized employee associations if they choose to do so.

In May of 2022, the Albemarle Education Association (AEA) sought certification as the collective bargaining representative of ACPS employees, but the school board at the time voted against the measure. At the time, the board felt that the state legislation did not provide enough guidance on how the process of entering a collective bargaining agreement as a school board would work.

Since February of 2023, the School Board Subcommittee on Collective Bargaining and the AEA have met 13 times to discuss the contours of a collective bargaining resolution. The [resolution](#), presented at the March 28, 2024, school board meeting, was approved on April 11, 2024, by a 7-0 vote.

The resolution creates two possible bargaining units within ACPS: one for licensed instructional staff and the other for education support professionals, or classified staff. If a sufficient number of employees in either or both of those bargaining units request representation by a union, then the school board will convene a secret ballot election, to be administered by a neutral third party known as a Labor Relations Neutral. A union elected in this manner would then have authority to negotiate contracts with the school board covering the wages, benefits, and working conditions of represented employees. This type of contract, called a “collective bargaining agreement,” typically lasts for several years and commonly contains a grievance-arbitration process.

A copy of the full resolution is available on the [School Board web page](#), here: [Albemarle County School Board Resolution Providing for Collective Bargaining](#).

Albemarle County School Board directs school division counsel to enter into class action lawsuit—Board member Rebecca Berlin shared concerns about social media platforms’

deceptive practices at the school board’s March 28 meeting. She continued by mentioning that those platforms’ practices are meant to attract and addict students and to gather personal data that is often sold to third parties and the detrimental effects to student mental health from the habitual use of these platforms.

Those issues have caused the school division to incur substantial costs—not only in dollars, but in the most important of assets: children—to assist and support our students who are suffering from social media-inflicted injuries to their mental health.

The motion presented and unanimously approved at the meeting directs School Division Counsel Josiah Black to engage outside litigation counsel and join the lawsuit on behalf of Albemarle County Public Schools (ACPS). The suit, filed in early October, alleges that social media platforms fail to adequately warn users about the mental health risks associated with their use, including addition, suicidal ideation, anxiety, depression, and eating disorders.

Entering this litigation would give ACPS the opportunity for financial recovery of funds that have been funneled into the mental health care of our students if the defending parties are found liable. It would also give ACPS the opportunity to obtain future damages to fund initiatives to help support student mental health issues caused by social media.

“We may recover some damages on behalf of ACPS, but that is not really the primary goal. The most important goals are forcing these companies to change their deceptive practices and showing our students and their families that we are concerned about their well-being and will do what is necessary to support them in any way we can,” Black said. “As a school division, we have a responsibility to stand up for our students and their families, and joining this lawsuit is one way we can do just that,” he added.

Black will oversee the involvement of ACPS in this suit and be the point person for the division’s participation in this effort.

Golden Apple award winners announced—After sifting through a total of 1,420 nominations, the Golden Apple Selection Committee has announced the winners of the 2023-24 Golden Apple Awards.

Each year, Albemarle County Public Schools (ACPS), Charlottesville City Schools (CCS), and area independent schools that are members of the Virginia Association of Independent Schools (VAIS) come together to gather nominations of teachers who best embody the characteristics of a good teacher identified by Richard Nunley at the inception of the program.

In early January, the committee began soliciting nominations of teachers who create a love of learning in students of all abilities and backgrounds; stimulate thought and provoke student dialogue; challenge students to reach high standards and expectations; understand the needs of

students individually and collectively and meet those needs with determination, enthusiasm and imagination; and involve families in the education process.

For more than two decades, the program has not only recognized the hard work of local teachers, but has provided classroom grants to the winners. Sponsored by Better Living Building Supply and Cabinetry, each winning teacher will receive a golden apple statuette and a \$500 grant that can be used in their classroom.

This year's ceremony will be held on May 8 in Lane Auditorium at the County Office Building located at 401 McIntire Road in Charlottesville. Beginning with a reception for the winners at 5 p.m., Mr. Steve Koleszar, chair of the Golden Apple Selection Committee, will lead the ceremony for the second year in a row starting at 5:30 p.m.

Koleszar is joined on the selection committee by Albemarle County Public Schools representatives Cyndi Wells, Gwedette Crummie, and Jonno Alcaro; Charlottesville City Schools representative Liza Utz; and independent schools representative Amber Wilkins.

The Albemarle County Public Schools 2023-24 Golden Apple recipients are:

- Inga Tuzun, Agnor-Hurt Elementary School
- Jennifer Morris, Albemarle High School
- Randi Welborn, Baker-Butler Elementary School
- Amy Gaertner, Broadus Wood Elementary School
- Courtney Wood, Brownsville Elementary School
- Ruby Garofalo, Burley Middle School
- David Glover, Center I
- John Baran, Community Lab School
- Gary Grassi, Crozet Elementary School
- Ciara Wolfe-Craig, Greer Elementary School
- Meagan Hoy, Henley Middle School
- Jim Loffredo, Hollymead Elementary School
- Virginia Carew, Ivy Elementary School
- Patricia Mariscal, Journey Middle School
- Matt Hepler, Lakeside Middle School
- Ellie Weikle, Monticello High School
- Arianna Barkhordari, Mountain View Elementary School
- Sean Snider, Murray Elementary School
- Lindsay Winston, Post High
- Holly Shiflett, Red Hill Elementary School
- Angela Weymouth, Scottsville Elementary School
- Jennifer Lunsford, Stone-Robinson Elementary School
- Eddie Jackson, Stony Point Elementary School
- Marissa Spurlock, Walton Middle School
- Joel Hartshorn, Western Albemarle High School
- Lexus Anderson, Woodbrook Elementary School

The Charlottesville City Public Schools 2023-24 Golden Apple recipients are:

- Alton Coleman, Buford Middle School
- Teresa Amasia, Burnley-Moran Middle School,
- Matt Richardson, CATEC
- Matthew Miller, Charlottesville High School
- Madeline Hermsmeier, Clark Elementary School
- Kathryn Rogers, Greenbrier Elementary School
- Rachel Lieb, Jackson-Via Elementary School
- Kelly Walters, Johnson Elementary School
- Megan Greenwood, Venable Elementary School
- Edward Cash, Walker Upper Elementary School

The local private school 2023-24 Golden Apple recipients are:

- Dedra Demaree, Blue Ridge School
- Vanessa Devlin, Charlottesville Catholic School
- Ellen Ewell, Miller School of Albemarle
- Sue Alston, Mountaintop Montessori School
- Becky Gall, St. Anne's-Belfield School
- Ned Fischer, Tandem Friends School
- Dan Warren, The Covenant School

Kindergarten registration opens—For those who live in Albemarle County and have a child who will turn 5 by September 30, Albemarle County Public Schools has opened registration for kindergarten from April 17 and May 31. To learn more or to start the registration process, visit us online at k12albemarle.org/kindergarten. Questions are welcome at 434-296-5820.