



Board-to-Board, May 2024

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

New Director of Transportation— Albemarle County Public Schools (ACPS) has appointed Jamie L. Gellner as the division's new Director of Transportation. An Army veteran with a background in transportation management, Gellner's previous roles include Assistant Director of Transportation and Division Program Evaluator in Charlottesville, VA, where she introduced procedural enhancements resulting in improved customer service and operational efficiency.

Gellner's career journey within the education sector is marked by a series of notable achievements and progressive responsibilities. Most recently, serving as the Director of Special Projects, Program Evaluation, and Department Improvement at Albemarle County Public Schools, Gellner spearheaded various initiatives aimed at operational enhancement and organizational effectiveness.

During her tenure, Gellner played a pivotal role in managing the school division's strategic planning processes, translating vision into action to achieve key objectives. Her leadership extended to overseeing improvement programs across all ACPS departments, fostering collaboration among administrative and instructional staff, and providing essential support in project management skill development.

Gellner's dedication to excellence and innovation was evident in her role as Division Program Evaluator, where she led complex evaluations of educational and operational programs. Her contributions ranged from project management oversight to policy development and review, encompassing critical areas such as COVID-19 recovery, school improvement planning, and anti-racism policy implementation.

Commenting on her appointment, Gellner expressed her enthusiasm for aligning transportation goals with ACPS's commitment to equity, excellence, family and community, and wellness. "Our students deserve safe, reliable transportation services that support their education," remarked Gellner. "I am eager to collaborate with students, families, and, of course, the dedicated staff of the Department of Transportation to implement innovative solutions and ensure every student arrives at school safely, on time and ready to learn."

Gellner holds a Project Management Professional (PMP) Certification from PMI and an Ed.S. in Administration and Supervision as well as a B.A. from the University of Virginia, and a Master of Arts in Teaching from Wake Forest University. Her diverse background, coupled with her

commitment to fostering a supportive and inclusive culture, positions her as a valuable asset to the ACPS leadership team.

She began in the role on Monday, May 13, of this year.

ACPS Has Three Exemplar Schools Named—Three ACPS were recently [honored by the Virginia Board of Education](#) with a 2023-2024 Highest Achievement Award for outstanding assessment performance and practices during the previous school year. Community Lab School, Ivy Elementary School, and Virginia L. Murray Elementary School were among 64 schools recognized by the board as part of the state's [Exemplar School Recognition Program](#). This year's Exemplar Performance Awards recognized 37 Virginia schools with the Highest Achievement Award and 27 schools with the Continuous Improvement Award.

According to the Virginia Department of Education, recognition in the Exemplar Awards program is one of the highest achievements a school can receive in the Commonwealth. Schools receiving the Highest Achievement Award have demonstrated high levels of success across all school quality indicators, including success in narrowing achievement gaps.

In order to earn the Board of Education's Highest Achievement Award, a school must achieve [Performance Level One](#) for reading, mathematics and science based on the student pass rate for the "all students" group in the school, as well as for each student group. The school also is required to achieve Level One in the Chronic Absenteeism, Graduation and Completion Index, and Dropout Rate school quality indicators.

More specifically, schools that receive the Highest Achievement Award must be accredited and meet the state pass rate benchmarks in reading, math and science (75% for reading and 70% for math and science) on state assessments. All student groups within the school must meet those state benchmarks in reading and math. Additionally, for schools with two student groups, there can be no more than five percentage points between the lowest performing group and all other students in the school, and for schools with three or more student groups, there can be no more than 10 percentage points between the lowest performing group and all other students in the school. The school must also demonstrate a chronic absenteeism rate of 15% or lower.

For schools with a graduating class, such as Community Lab School, two additional criteria apply. The school must demonstrate a Graduation and Completion Index of 88 points or higher, as well as a dropout rate of 6% or lower.

For more information about Albemarle County Public Schools' performance, visit the division's [Virginia School Quality Profile](#).

2023-24 Teacher and Classified Staff of the Year Awards—ACPS is delighted to name the 2023-24 Teacher of the Year and Classified Employee of the Year.

Sarah Reyes, an English and geometry teacher and the English Learners (EL) Department Chair at Albemarle High School (AHS), has been awarded the distinction of ACPS 2023-24 Teacher of the Year.

According to AHS Assistant Principal Leilani Keys, Sarah Reyes is the true embodiment of the goals of ACPS. In fact, she attributes the school's decrease in chronic absenteeism in part to Reyes and her team's work with students.

In addition to her work directly with families and students around absenteeism, Reyes has also helped form several cultural groups within the school community, including the Latinx Club, the Latino Mentorship Program, and Latino Family Forums since she began teaching at AHS more than seven years ago.

Reyes' passion, she said, is to do what she can to lower the dropout rate of EL learners. According to the United States Department of Education, the EL dropout rate nationally is about 29%. Many factors can contribute to a student's decision to drop out, Reyes said, like financial issues, family issues, or a lack of knowledge of the education requirements in the United States.

In addition to receiving the distinction of the ACPS 2023-24 Teacher of the Year, Reyes will move forward as the ACPS nomination for the Virginia Department of Education's Teacher of the Year competition.

Carla Dodson, Fiscal Administrator I at Virginia L. Murray Elementary School (MES), has been selected as ACPS 2023-24 Classified Employee of the Year.

Dodson, who has been with ACPS since 2011, when she began her time at ACPS as a bus driver, and at Murray since 2014 as an office support staff member, goes the extra mile for her community, according to the colleagues and parents who nominated her for this distinction.

Leslie Ratan, a parent of students at MES and a member of the school's PTO, recalled meeting Dodson for the first time in 2014 when she and her son made an unscheduled stop at the school to drop off enrollment paperwork.