



Board-to-Board, October, 2018

A monthly report from the Albemarle County School

Board to the Albemarle County Board of Supervisors

Albemarle County Public Schools' On-Time Graduation Rate Tops Statewide Rate for 11th Consecutive Year—The on-time graduation rate for Albemarle County Public Schools once again exceeded the statewide rate in Virginia, according to a report issued by the Virginia Department of Education. An on-time graduation means that a student completed his or her high school studies within a four-year period. The measure was first established in 2006, and Albemarle County students have outperformed their peers across the Commonwealth every year since then.

For 2018, the school division's rate was 92.7 percent, marking the ninth year it has exceeded the 90th percentile. The on-time graduation rate for the state's 131 school divisions averaged 91.6 percent, and it is 84 percent for the U.S. according to the most recent report. The drop-out rate across the state was 5.5 percent; nationally, it is 6.1 percent. The rate in Albemarle County was five percent. More than 63 percent of local graduates met the most rigorous academic standards for graduation, earning Advanced Studies diplomas. Statewide, the rate was 52 percent.

School division graduates matched or exceeded the graduation rates of their state peers in three demographic groups. The percentage of African-American students who graduated within four years was nearly 90 percent, both locally and for public school seniors across the state. Graduation rates were higher for local students for whom English is a second language (79 vs. 73) and for students with disabilities (90 vs. 88). They were lower for Hispanic students (76 vs. 81) and for students from economically disadvantaged homes (84 vs. 88).

Albemarle County Public Schools Selects Experienced Teacher, National Tech Leader, as Its Chief Technology Officer—Dr. Christine Diggs has been appointed as the new Albemarle County Public Schools Chief Technology Officer. Dr. Diggs is currently the Director of Technology Services for Columbia (Missouri) Public Schools, which serves 18,500 students across 31 schools and a career center. The National School Boards Association (NSBA) ranks Columbia Public Schools in the top 10 percent of all school divisions across the country for its "exemplary and innovative uses of technology."

ACPS Superintendent Dr. Matthew Haas announced that Dr. Diggs will be assuming responsibility for Learning Engineering, Access and Design (LEAD), a department that has earned national recognition in its own right for the breadth of its support and services and for its next generation use of technology in the classroom. The department supports over 27,000 technology devices in 32 schools and site locations. Over 100,000 emails are sent throughout the

division each day, and there are over 12 million internet-related activities every day across the division. Albemarle County Public Schools is one of 102 member school divisions across the country in the League of Innovative Schools, authorized by the U.S. Congress to accelerate innovation in education.

Dr. Diggs graduated from the University of Florida with a B.A. in Elementary Education and earned her master's degree in Information Science and Learning Technologies at the University of Missouri and her Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) in Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis from the same institution. She began her career in education as a teacher, serving as a media specialist and an instructional technology coach for 12 years with Columbia Public Schools before being appointed as the manager of data services and a senior project leader in 2006. She became the director of technology services in 2012. Dr. Diggs' first day in her new role will be Monday, November 12.

Albemarle County Public Schools Holds Annual Legislative Meeting—On October 5, the Albemarle County School Board held its annual legislative meeting at Albemarle Tech to discuss its legislative agenda for 2019 General Assembly. Legislators were vocal in their support of an ACPS priority increasing the number of mental health counselors in public schools in order to optimize school safety. There was also a consensus to prioritize efforts to improve school bus safety in the school division, and agreement that broadband access for all students must be a high priority in Virginia. Members of the School Board, including Chair Kate Acuff, Vice-Chair Jonno Alcaro, Stephen Koleszar, and Graham Paige, met with Delegate David Toscano, Delegate Steve Landes, Senator Creigh Deeds, Jordan Dix Hargrave on behalf of Delegate Rob Bell, and Mark Sneseavage on behalf of Senator Bryce Reeves. ACPS will send its Legislative & Public Affairs Officer, Helen Dunn, to General Assembly session in 2019 to represent the school division.

School safety has become a significant priority for the Virginia House of Delegates since Speaker Kirk Cox appointed a Select Committee on School Safety in March of 2018 in a response to recent violent tragedies in the nation's public schools. This committee is working to review comprehensively state and local policies relating to school security and protection. Delegates Steve Landes, Rob Bell and David Toscano are among the 22 members of the committee, which will intend to meet again on November 14th to produce final legislative and budgetary recommendations for the 2019 General Assembly session.

CATEC, PVCC Planning to Unify Area's Apprenticeship Programs—The Charlottesville Albemarle Technical Education Center is considering partnering with Piedmont Virginia Community College to run its apprenticeship programs with the goal of matching career and technical education with higher education in order to elevate the trades. There will be a focus on partnering with businesses to create a consistent pool of students who can go into apprenticeship programs that meet their needs. The CATEC board has asked director Daphne Keiser to draft a memorandum of understanding with legal counsel that would outline the roles of Albemarle County Public Schools, Charlottesville City Schools and PVCC in administering a combined apprenticeship program.

Albemarle School Board chair calls for review of building names—Albemarle County Public Schools will review the names of its school buildings and change those that are “inconsistent with the [school division’s] values.” School Board Chair Kate Acuff proposed a review of school naming policies and building names after racist comments by the late Paul H. Cale—Albemarle’s longest-serving superintendent and the namesake of Cale Elementary School—resurfaced in a historical lecture at the October 18 School Board meeting.

Lorenzo Dickerson, a web and social media specialist for the school division, spoke about the educational experience of African-Americans in Albemarle County from emancipation to desegregation. Dickerson’s presentation referenced a 1956 story in *Commentary* magazine about Virginia’s resistance to integration following the Supreme Court’s school desegregation decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*. In the story, Cale was quoted as saying that Albemarle’s white parents “would not permit their children to receive instruction from inferior Negro teachers—and they were inferior.” Cale added that if integration were to be enforced, parents would withdraw their children and cease paying school taxes.

Superintendent Matt Haas will review the division’s current policy on the naming of school buildings and facilities “for the purpose of adding school values to the criteria,” and report back to the School Board within six months with any recommendations for changing the names of schools.

Student Group Drafts Anti-Racism Policy—The Albemarle County Public Schools Office of Community Engagement has designated a group of eight students to help draft an anti-racism policy to present to the Albemarle County School Board in December. The group is led by Kimalee Dickerson, a doctoral student at the University of Virginia’s Curry School of Education who holds a law degree from the University of North Carolina. These students attended the division’s 2018 summer leadership academy, where they were trained in cultural competency and recognized the significant role that racism was playing in their daily lives at school. The group has come together for a series of half-day workshops since it first met in August to define problems, discuss and analyze research, and consult with division leaders, parent council, policy experts, peer groups and other ACPS staff. In addition to the important part that this group is playing in division policy, it is also engaging in the kind of project-based experience that constitutes lifelong-learner competences, like data analysis, problem-solving, and participation in civic life.

The School Board has embraced the idea of involving students in the creation of the anti-racism policy, and the students will present an update on the policy at the November 8 School Board meeting. Their final report and recommendations are on the agenda for the special School Board meeting scheduled for December 6, and the December 13 School Board will include a work session about the proposed policy recommendations.

Revision Proposed to Community Involvement in Community Relations Policy Based on Equity Policy Review Checklist—In spring of 2018, a new equity policy review checklist was presented to the Albemarle County School Board. This tool examines whether policies will have a positive impact on equity and inclusion in the school division and whether there is potential for

adverse impact. The checklist also analyzes whether certain groups could be negatively affected and whether an equity lens is incorporated within the policy. The desired results are to end the predictive value of race, class, gender, and special capacities on student success by working together with families and communities to ensure each student's success. The checklist was developed by the Public Schools Diversity and Equity Advisory Committee (DEAC) and vetted by a review process of Policy KC, Community Involvement in Community Relations.

Former County Schools Tech Chief Sues School Board, Superintendent—A former Albemarle County Public Schools administrator has filed a federal lawsuit against the county School Board and Superintendent Matt Haas. Ira Socol, the division's former Chief Technology and Innovation Officer, argues in the suit that Haas terminated his employment without a hearing, thus violating his civil right to due process under the 14th Amendment. Socol also is suing for breach of contract and defamation.

Work Session Held on State of the Division —The October 25 School Board meeting included a work session focused on the annual state of the school division report. The report is a school division quality profile that comprises such information as accredited schools, on-time graduation rate, enrollment by ethnicity, expenditures for instruction, absenteeism, and student achievement from the 2017-2018 school year. The report will be used as a springboard for developing budget priorities for the 2019-2020 school year and is tied to the division's three strategic priorities, which include high achievement for all, closing the achievement gap, and developing personal interests. This year, the division plans to send the report out to division stakeholders to increase community awareness and engagement with schools.