



Board-to-Board, October 2021

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

Albemarle County's class of 2021 far exceeds state and national graduation rates and SAT's college readiness scores—The school division's Class of 2021 significantly outperformed their peers across Virginia and the nation this year, both in on-time graduation rates and scores on the College Board's SAT tests.

Albemarle County Public Schools seniors raised their on-time graduation rate by 5%, surpassing state averages overall and besting each of five student demographic groups. Separately, those who took the College Board's SAT tests scored 110 points higher than their counterparts in the state and nearly 200 points better than their peers across the nation.

The division's graduates were well ahead of the state average for earning Virginia's highest academic achievement, with 64.3% receiving an Advanced Studies Diploma. Statewide, 52.8% of all Virginia graduates received an Advanced Studies Diploma.

The on-time graduation rate, which indicates that a student earned their diploma four years after entering ninth grade, was 96.5% in the county, compared to 91.8% a year ago. Graduation rates for Black students, Hispanic students, special education students, students from economically disadvantaged households, and English Learners were all higher in the county than they were statewide.

The county's drop-out rate of 3% compared favorably to the state rate of 4.3%. It also improved from last year's 4.6%.

Graduates from each of the county's three comprehensive high schools surpassed the statewide on-time graduation rate of 93%. Western Albemarle High School's on-time rate was 99%, and it included a 100% rate for Hispanic and special education students. The school's drop-out rate was less than 1%, and 73% of Western Albemarle graduates earned an Advanced Studies Diploma.

Albemarle High School's on-time graduation rate was 96.1%, including a 96.8% rate for Black students and a 90% rate for special education students. The percentage of graduates awarded an Advanced Studies Diploma was 65, and the school's drop-out rate was 3.5%.

Monticello High School graduates achieved an on-time graduation rate of 95.1%, with 56% achieving an Advanced Studies Diploma. The school had the highest rate for graduating special

education students on time at 98.1%, and for Black students, 97.8%. The school's drop-out rate was 4.2%.

School division seniors earned SAT scores of 636 on the verbal test and 626 in math for a combined score of 1261. This compared to combined tests scores across Virginia of 1151 (584 on the verbal test and 567 in math) and nationally of 1061 (533 on the verbal test and 528 in math). The combined score of 1261 was 70 points higher than the 2020 SAT results for Albemarle County seniors.

The tests also yield a college readiness benchmark. Research has shown that students who meet or exceed the College Board benchmark have a high likelihood for success in credit-bearing college work.

This year, nearly nine out of 10 Albemarle County students (89%) who took the SAT met the benchmark—20% higher than a year ago. This also was 26 percentage points above the state average and almost double the national average of 45%.

Nationally, across Virginia, and in Albemarle County, the percentage of students taking the SAT was substantially below 2020 levels. The College Board cited several factors related to the pandemic for the decline, pointing out that there was a pause in testing and that many test sites were either closed or had their capacity reduced by public health orders.

To help expand participation this school year, the division will offer SAT tests in the spring during the normal school day instead of on a weekend as has previously been the case. The division will pay test fees and provide free transportation to its three comprehensive high schools where the tests will be administered.

Survey opens for Broadus Wood Elementary School naming review; committee seeks participation from public—Members of the Broadus Wood Elementary School community were recently asked to share their views about the name of their school through an online survey that closed on Friday, October 22 and asked participants which naming categories should have priority.

The survey is part of a school naming review being conducted by a 14-member community advisory committee in accordance with a division-wide policy. The policy requires a community review of all schools in the division that are named for an individual to ensure those school names reflect the division's four values of equity, excellence, family and community, and wellness.

The advisory committee shared the survey results prior to a public meeting on Tuesday, October 26, at 6:30 p.m. At that meeting, which was conducted virtually over the Zoom video conferencing platform, community members offered comments and shared their thoughts about the history of the school and the survey results.

The committee includes the school's principal, Amy Morris, as well as two members of the Broadus Wood faculty who are also alumnae, five parents of students, and three residents of the

school community who do not have students attending the school. Among the latter is a veteran and a faith leader in the community.

Five naming reviews have been completed by volunteer community advisory committees thus far, with the school board voting to change the name of four schools and to retain the name of another. Summaries of all completed reviews and those in progress are accessible from the school division's [School Names Under Review](#) web page.

Broadus Ira Wood, a local farmer and landowner in Earlysville, sold and donated land to build a school in the Earlysville area and was a member of the Albemarle County School Board for 36 years. The school board's naming review policy requires the advisory committee to seek to notify any family members of a school's namesake as part of its process. Katie Breaud and Ray Chrobak, the committee's co-chairs, said the committee welcomes any information from the public regarding the Wood family history or its descendants.

In addition to the upcoming public meetings, Breaud and Chrobak said the committee welcomes suggestions or questions about the review process at any time. All committee members can be emailed at SchoolNamingReview@k12albemarle.org.

ACPS changes payroll policy in coordination with county—Starting in January 2022, ACPS will pay all employees on a biweekly basis, every other Friday. The first biweekly paycheck will be distributed on January 21, 2022.

This shift will not impact how much employees are paid, only when and how often, with hopes that the new pay schedule improves convenience. One example of that will be realized in the amount of time it takes to process overtime pay. Instead of waiting nearly six weeks to see overtime wages reflected in their paycheck, employees should receive those funds sooner with a biweekly pay schedule.

Over the coming months, ACPS will provide more information and helpful resources, such as information sessions, training, and recorded webinars, to assist employees with this transition. For more information about this change, people should visit the [Payroll Clarity Project](#) web page and direct any questions to PayrollClarityQuestions@albemarle.org.

Building services, transportation leaders announce they will be leaving school division at end of calendar year—Joseph Letteri, who is completing his 15th year as the school division's Director of Building Services, recently announced that he will be retiring on January 1. Separately, the division's Director of Transportation, James Foley, said he will be leaving at the end of the year to relocate to Williamsburg. Foley has served for just over 11 years in his current role, including one year as the department's interim director.

Letteri manages the implementation of the division's capital improvement projects, including the current 28,000-square foot addition to Crozet Elementary School that will add up to 20 classrooms and 340 students. Recent years have seen expansions and the modernization of Agnor-Hurt, Greer, Red Hill, Scottsville, and Woodbrook elementary schools and Henley Middle School's fitness facility, and the construction of an Environmental Sciences building at

Western Albemarle High School. In addition to overseeing these projects, Letteri supervises a staff of nearly 200 professionals who maintain and improve each year more than 2.3 million square feet of facilities and 631 acres. This past year, his staff was instrumental in upgrading the heating and air conditioning and air filtration systems in more than 900 classrooms to provide additional layers of protection against transmission of the COVID-19 virus.

Foley leads a team of more than 220 bus and van drivers, assistants, technicians, and office staff, regularly transporting more than 8,000 students to and from school each year. His drivers cover more than 12,000 miles over more than 500 bus routes each day. Since Foley became the department's director, the transportation team has accumulated over 13 million safe driving miles.

Under his direction, the division instituted several student safety measures, including the use of extended stop arms to reduce incidents of motorists passing a stopped school bus; approval to install exterior safety cameras on buses to further discourage motorists from endangering students boarding or leaving a bus; and the authority to conduct its own safety testing and certification of new drivers. Recently, the division was selected by the state to participate in a pilot program to operate electric school buses.

Rosalyn Schmitt, the division's Chief Operating Officer, said the division will move quickly with its search for successors to both department leaders. The search process will include reaching out to employees in both Building Services and Transportation for their input, Schmitt said, with the ultimate goal of having new directors named before the end of the year to ensure a seamless transition.

Prior to joining Albemarle County Public Schools, Letteri served the Town of Harwich in Massachusetts as its director of highway and maintenance; the city of Richmond as the operations director for its division of facilities management; and Albemarle County as Chief of Public Works. Foley's previous experience includes serving as a plant manager for Cargill; as vice president of operations for Gimbal's Fine Candies; and as the acting chief operating officer for an investment firm.