



## Board-to-Board, July 2019

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

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***Cale's New Principal, Also a Former Cale Parent, Brings Strong Multicultural Credentials to One of the Division's Most Diverse, Advanced Bilingual Schools***— Cyndi Wells, the leader of the school division's ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) Program and a highly experienced coach who has worked with administrators and teachers across the division to promote their professional development, has been appointed by the School Board to be the next principal of Cale Elementary School.

Wells succeeds Lisa Jones, who earlier this month joined the division's Center for Learning and Growth as the Student Services Officer. Her appointment is effective this month.

Wells joined Albemarle County Public Schools in 2006 as the coordinator for support services and professional development provided to students and teachers in Title I schools, which included Cale. In 2009, she was appointed as a lead coach in the division, overseeing the professional development of teachers in the school division's ESOL and World Languages Programs, preschool, and fine arts.

Her appointment followed a survey of Cale's staff and parent communities that called for the next principal to have a deep understanding of bilingual education, instructional leadership, and community building skills.

Much of Wells' career in the school division has been devoted to building collaborative communities. She is a forceful advocate of multicultural education, having been one of the early administrators in Albemarle to earn her Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) certification. In her ESOL leadership role and as Title I Coordinator for the division, she worked with families from diverse life experiences to support the success of their children in school.

Wells began her career in education as an elementary school teacher in San Antonio, Texas, and was an elementary summer school principal. She also was a member of the clinical faculty at Trinity University, where she supervised student teachers. She later directed Professional Development for the Core Knowledge Foundation. She joined Albemarle County Public Schools in 2006 as a Title I Coordinator and became a lead coach in 2009.

She earned both her bachelor's and master's degrees from Trinity University in San Antonio. She holds two Master of Arts degrees, in Teaching and in Administration and Supervision.

One of Wells' first orders of business was the promotion of Benjamin Allen from assistant to associate principal of Cale. Allen joined Cale in 2016 and last year was recognized as the Culturally Responsive Educator of the Year for Albemarle County Public Schools.

Also joining Wells' leadership team is Rosaura González-Muñiz as assistant principal. González-Muñiz is a former instructional coach at Cale, and beginning in 2014, was an assistant principal at Stone-Robinson.

***Western Albemarle High School Appoints Interim Principal***—Dr. Patrick McLaughlin, the Chief of Strategic Planning for Albemarle County Public Schools, has been appointed by the School Board as Western Albemarle High School's interim principal. Dr. McLaughlin will serve in this new role for no more than one year, allowing the division to conduct a comprehensive national search for a new principal. This recruitment process will begin early in 2020 as part of the school division's normal recruitment and hiring cycle.

Dr. McLaughlin succeeds Darah Bonham, who was named principal of Albemarle High School last month.

Dr. McLaughlin, who attended schools in the county and lives with his family in the western part of the county, was the principal of Henley Middle School for seven years. Under his direction, the 800-student school received the Virginia School Board's Distinguished Achievement Award. During his tenure, Henley was the first school in the division to install solar panels to increase energy efficiency, and as part of its science curriculum, the school transformed its undersized traditional gymnasium into a multi-purpose, technology-driven modern physical education facility promoting student and community health and fitness. In the case of juniors and seniors, Dr. McLaughlin will be reuniting with students who attended Henley when he was the middle school's principal.

As part of his transition to Western Albemarle High School, Dr. McLaughlin plans to conduct listening tour conversations similar to those that Superintendent Matt Haas held last fall in order to hear input and feedback from parents, students, and teachers.

Since 2015, Dr. McLaughlin has led strategic planning for the division, most recently focusing on how the high school learning experience can be improved. Among the issues he's examined are expanding the ability of students to take courses in which they have a strong interest; equalizing educational opportunities; reexamining the division's homework policy; reducing student stress; and working closely with colleges and universities on enhancing college preparation programs.

Dr. McLaughlin will return to his role as Chief of Strategic Planning once a new principal has been appointed for Western Albemarle. One of his immediate priorities at that time will be to lead the development of an updated strategic plan for the division, succeeding the current Horizon 2020.

A graduate of the University of Pittsburgh, Dr. McLaughlin received both his master's and Doctor of Education degrees from the University of Virginia. Prior to joining Albemarle County

Public Schools in 2007, he was a high school English teacher and then an assistant principal at two high schools in the Henrico County school division.

Dr. McLaughlin is expected to complete his transition from the central office to Western Albemarle High School by mid-July.

***Premium Services Brands Non-Profit to Donate 50,000 Snacks to Benefit Albemarle County Students in 13 Schools***—Kids-Lift, a local non-profit dedicated to working with schools to eliminate achievement gaps, said today that it would donate 50,000 healthy snacks during the 2019-20 school year to students in 13 schools throughout the county.

The schools were selected for the program based on the percentages of families that participate in the federal government's free and reduced-price lunch program. Last school year, Kids-Lift provided backpacks with more than 3,000 weekend meals to some families at Stone-Robinson Elementary School and Henley Middle School recommended for special assistance by family support workers with the county's Department of Social Services. Kids-Lift said it will continue the weekend meal program next year at Stone-Robinson.

***ACPS Holds Professional Development to Rethink Grading Practices***—In order to meet its goal of closing the achievement gap, the school division is considering changing its grading practices so as to increase consistency from teacher to teacher and school to school. On July 17, ACPS, along with Charlottesville City Schools, brought in Ken O'Connor, an educational consultant who has developed a series of grading guidelines, to lead two days of professional development focused on the issue and why changes are necessary. Charlottesville teachers also attended the workshop. The Public Education Foundation of Charlottesville-Albemarle paid for the professional development session, and close to 800 teachers participated.

O'Connor also led a community forum on July 16 evening at Jack Jouett Middle School. Dozens of members of the community attended the forum.

A survey of teachers in spring of 2018 found inconsistency across the division in late work policies and other grading practices. Superintendent Matt Haas has made changing the grading system a priority because assessment is at the center of what schools do. O'Connor advocates for schools to grade using levels of achievement, not points and percentages. The division does not plan to eliminate letter grades. Rather, it is considering looking at shifting the model to one based on how well students learn state standards and that provides additional information to increase the meaningfulness of the grades. O'Connor suggests, for example, that teachers not penalize students for late work or give zeroes, which can make it harder for a student's grade to recover.

***Albemarle County Public Schools Joins Montpelier, Charlottesville Area Community Foundation on \$299,500 Program to Elevate Teaching and Learning of Nation's Untold History***—A new partnership between the Charlottesville Area Community Foundation, James Madison's Montpelier, and Albemarle County Public Schools will elevate the teaching and learning of historical events and issues that have shaped the development of the nation and the Commonwealth over the past 400 years.

In a statement last week, the Community Foundation said it has awarded a three-year grant of \$299,500 to the Montpelier Foundation. The grant will support the school division's teachers in collaborating with Montpelier to create a social studies curriculum that will improve the teaching and learning of untold history.

John Hobson, the division's social studies lead coach, said the new program has three components:

- Professional development workshops for social studies teachers at Montpelier that will leverage Montpelier's cutting-edge work in public history;
- Curriculum development sessions in which teachers will design strategies for integrating workshop content into student classroom studies; and
- Student field trips to Montpelier to complement classroom learning with on-site experiential learning experiences.

In 2017, high school students visited Montpelier and met with historians and researchers to discuss the students' *Let 'Em Shine* project, funded by the National Writing Center. In examining the role of community monuments, students researched and made recommendations for the recognition of little-known community heroes.

***Shannon Foundation for Excellence in Public Education Funds 10 Classroom Projects in Five Elementary Schools***—Bringing learning to life through technology, environmental sciences, and the arts characterizes the 10 classroom projects funded for the 2019-20 school year by the Edgar and Eleanor Shannon Foundation for Excellence in Public Education. Teachers from five elementary schools will receive funding for the coming school year, with Baker-Butler teachers earning approval for four projects. Other schools that will benefit from Shannon Grants include Cale, Crozet, Red Hill, and Woodbrook.

Two of the most interesting ideas came from Woodbrook Elementary School educators. Third graders, under the guidance of Marian McCullough and Annie Joyce, will create and operate their own civilizations over the course of the school year. In a second project, "Windows, Mirrors and the Sliding Glass Doors," Christopher Howell will use his grant to diversify the school library. He noted the importance of children having access to books that reflect a broad variety of life experiences and culture. "Diverse books break down barriers and promote empathy for others and unity within a classroom and school," he wrote.

The Shannon Foundation was established in 1990 to provide funds to public school teachers in Charlottesville City and Albemarle County for innovative programming. This year, the Foundation awarded 15 grants totaling \$20,246 to city and county teachers. On Friday, August 16, the Foundation will hold a ceremony to recognize this year's recipients.

***Third Meeting of Cale Renaming Advisory Committee Held***—The third meeting of the Cale Renaming Advisory Committee was held on Tuesday, July 30. In accordance with the finalized agenda for the meeting, the advisory committee heard from members of the Cale family and specific community members who are former Albemarle County Public Schools students. The

committee has scheduled a fourth meeting for August 15, at which time it will make a decision regarding the recommendation it will make to Superintendent Dr. Matthew Haas.

***Superintendent Matt Haas Reflects on his First Year***—*The Daily Progress* and NBC29 recently ran stories focused on Dr. Matt Haas' first year as ACPS Superintendent. Haas took the reigns of ACPS in July of 2018 and since has successfully worked on such high-profile issues as the dress code, an anti-racism policy, an online threat, and more. He has worked hard to gather input from students, parents, teachers and community members too in order to help all ACPS students achieve success.

Haas just began the second year of his four-year contract. He is focused on creating greater alignment between the classroom curriculum and the state standards of learning, as those are how ACPS success is measured. He also hopes to improve the division's performance on Virginia standards of learning exams while placing more emphasis on learning and not grade-point-averages. He is also working toward selecting a location for a second centralized high school center and on drafting a new strategic plan for the school division.

