



Board-to-Board

April, 2018

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

Budget Update—At our April 26th meeting, the School Board approved an operating budget for fiscal year 2018-19. The significantly positive claims experience we continue to see in our health insurance program allowed us to reduce projected expenditures by \$2 million, which more than offset the loss of the state's one-time funding to partially cover the monies we will lose from the composite index change. Our budget of \$186.8 million is a 3.4 increase over the current year, but 1.4 percent beyond the inflation rate.

Student Pilot Center—We also approved a seven-year lease for 42,200 square feet of space in the former Comdial building. As noted in news reports, in addition to the pilot student center, which will accommodate 15-25 students in August, we also will co-locate our Learning, Engineering, Access and Design (LEAD) and Child Nutrition offices in the building and utilize portions of the space for our professional development programming. Our experiences with the pilot will inform our planning and operational decisions for the 600-student high school center now in the capital budget for a 2021 opening. The pilot will focus on project-based learning opportunities for students, including expanded internship opportunities with local businesses and our LEAD professionals.

State Select Committee on School Safety—Delegate David Toscano and School Board Chair Kate Acuff visited Albemarle High School and Baker-Butler Middle School to talk with school principals, central office staff and the Albemarle County Police Department on school safety programs and practices we have in place and the partnership between school and police. Toscano is a member of the Speaker of the House's newly-established Select Committee on School Safety, which began meeting this week. Next week, Delegates Landes and Bell together with Albemarle County Sheriff Chip Harding will visit Albemarle and Jack Jouett for the same purpose. Our major talking points are the initiatives that have been made possible due to state funding and the need to increase that support in future years. Another emphasis has been providing students with enhanced opportunities for mental health services and support. Our 2018-19 school budget includes funding for two additional mental health counselors from Region 10 at the high school and middle school levels and better support for prevention efforts.

Student Role in State Legislation—On the subject of student mental health, the *Washington Post* recently wrote about how three of our high school students worked with Sen. Creigh Deeds and the General Assembly in Richmond. The result was the enactment of [new legislation](#) to improve student mental health awareness through changes to the state's approved student health curriculum. Gov. Northam signed the bill earlier this month. NBC affiliates locally and in Washington, D.C. also are planning stories on the students' successful campaign.

Cabinet Appointments—Ira Socol, who had been serving as the interim Executive Director for Technologies and Innovation, has been appointed as the Chief Division and Technology Officer. Socol was named by the Center for Digital Education as one of its 30 national “technologists, transformers and trailblazers” in 2017. Dr. Patrick McLaughlin, formerly Strategic Planning Officer, is now the Chief of Strategic Planning for the division and Dr. Bernard Hairston, Executive Director of Community Engagement, will be Chief of Community Engagement. The latter appointments highlight an increased focus by the division on expanding contemporary education and community partnership initiatives.

Principals on the Move—Four elementary school principals have announced their retirements at the conclusion of the school year— Sharon Amato-Wilcox at Scottsville; Robyn Bolling at Greer; Andy Johnson at Stony Point and Hollymead’s Nancy Teel. Art Stow, who has served as Red Hill’s principal since 2005, will be moving to Sutherland Middle School on July 1 as that school’s associate principal. Searches are now underway with successors at each school on track to be named by July 1.

Pam Moran—Pam is one of the three newest inductees into the Albemarle High School Alumni Association’s Hall of Fame. The annual celebration by the association will be on Friday, May 4. There are more than 4,000 members of the association. Also to be inducted is former NFL star Nick Novak and Leroy Smith, who is being posthumously honored. Smith taught vocational education for more than 30 years and was the school’s first soccer coach and an active member of the community rescue squad. Dr. Moran also will be the keynote speaker at the League of Women Voters’ annual meeting on May 10.

SARA—Following the showing of two explicit videos on April 12 as part of its annual Family Life presentation to ninth grade girls at Western Albemarle High School, the school division announced that it would no longer permit SARA to be part of the curriculum. The videos, which was erroneously approved but not reviewed by staff at Western, were significant departures from any previous materials used by SARA in its presentations in our schools. They conflicted with the School Board’s stated operating principle for Family Life education which says, “*The Albemarle County School Board wishes to state to its students, parents, faculty and administration that abstinence is the best choice with regard to alcohol, drugs or premarital sex. No other choice provides better protection to the social, moral, psychological and biological development of our children.*” Not only did the videos promote sexual activity among teenagers, it included a commercial pitch for a private mail order company that sells sex toys. The teacher responsible for approving the SARA presentation is on administrative leave while the division completes an investigation of all the facts involved in this incident.

Golden Apple Awards—The annual Golden Apple Awards, honoring teachers in all of our schools and all city and private schools in Albemarle and Charlottesville, will be held on Wednesday, May 16 in Lane Auditorium, beginning at 5:00 in the afternoon. Teachers are nominated by parents, students and colleagues for their innovative programming and engagement with families in a child’s education. The awards have been sponsored for their 18 years in existence by the Nunley family.

Bond Referendum Update—At our April 12th meeting, our building services department updated the Board on the status of every one of the projects included in the 2016 school bond referendum. All projects are on scheduled to be completed on time. Bids for the various projects came in \$2.7 million above budget, primarily due to the stronger local economy, reflected in increased commercial and residential construction.