



## Board-to-Board, July, 2018

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

*Board of Supervisors*

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**Boys & Girls Club**—At our July 12 meeting, rather than vote on a single proposal from one organization offering an after-school program for students, the School Board voted instead to open up opportunities for any qualified organization to partner with the division in providing these services. Staff was directed to design and issue an RFP that will seek proposals from organizations to provide affordable, quality after-school programming to students throughout our county. There is a consensus on the School Board that the division's Extended Day Enrichment Program is not meeting the needs of all families, given its high cost. The RFP for additional after school programming will be issued in the near future with a January selection or selections of providers. The Boys & Girls Club will likely resubmit their plan for a program center at Albemarle High School in response to the RFP.

**Student Conduct, Dress Code**—For many years, the School Division has produced a hard copy calendar that includes more than 200 holidays, observances and event listings and which that also showcases student art. Following community input in January of this year, Lee-Jackson Day was removed from our calendar as a recognized state holiday. Staff subsequently convened a discussion group that included members of the community. The group's purpose was to examine whether School Division policies should be revised to explicitly ban clothing worn by students that could be racially offensive to other students. In the past, students have worn clothing to school with Confederate and other controversial insignia or lettering. At several recent meetings, public comment speakers have urged the School Board to ban the wearing of such clothing. However, banning content specific messages is fraught with legal challenges. A 1969 U.S. Supreme Court ruling, *Tinker vs. the Des Moines School District*, held that students have free speech rights that cannot be abridged inside a school unless the exercise of those rights is disruptive to the learning environment, obscene or promotes illegal activities.

At our July 12 meeting, Dr. Bernard Hairston, who led the discussion group, did not recommend that our policy further limit clothing worn by students in school. Instead, he proposed that students wearing clothing with objectionable messaging no longer be subject to discipline but instead be counseled to help them better understand why the clothing is offensive to others. This language change will be voted on next month by the School Board. It is notable that following the events of last August and considerable discussion around those events, teachers reported a decline in the number of occasions when students wore clothing to school that contained Confederate insignia. Given that the issues are broader than student dress, the School Board also directed staff to draft an anti-racism policy for our consideration.

**Superintendent's Listening Tour**—Our new Superintendent, Dr. Matt Haas, has scheduled 13 listening tour sessions this summer with students, teachers, staff and members of the community. These are open-ended conversations around the school division's strengths, needs and future opportunities. Dr. Haas will be using the conversations to inform his strategic and operational plans. As of the end of July, he will have completed eight of these sessions, including two with community members, on July 25 and 31. The final community meeting is at 6 p.m. on Wednesday, August 8 at Monticello High School. Most of the input to date has focused on expanding student choice, improving equity in our learning

environments, increasing real-world learning opportunities, promoting more collaboration among teachers and offering teachers more flexibility to be innovative in their classroom practices.

***New Hollymead Principal and Several Other Administrative Appointments***—At a special meeting on July 19, we approved the appointment of Craig Dommer as Hollymead Elementary School's new principal. Mr. Dommer succeeds Kimberly Candler, who withdraw her appointment due to family and personal considerations. Mr. Dommer has extensive administrative experience, supporting principals and teachers across the division on best instructional practices as a lead coach; serving as Yancey's principal and most recently, serving as an assistant principal for our largest middle school, Henley. Henley has over 800 students compared to Hollymead's 470.

Earlier last month, we announced the appointment of 14 education leaders as assistant principals at nine of our schools, including Albemarle, Western Albemarle and Monticello High Schools, Jouett Middle School and Baker-Butler, Brownsville, Greer, Meriwether Lewis and Woodbrook Elementary Schools.

Also, on August 7 and 8 at Jouett Middle School, the division will host its annual New Teacher Academy. This year, we are estimating that we will hire approximately 150 new teachers.

***State History Teacher of the Year***—The State Department of Education announced this month that Dr. Russell (Rusty) Carlock from Albemarle High School, has been selected as Virginia's History Teacher of the Year. There are several thousand teachers of history in the Commonwealth's secondary schools. Dr. Carlock will represent the state in the selection process for the nation's history teacher of the year. Dr. Carlock has extensive experience in supporting ESOL students, SOL test reform, interdisciplinary team teaching and was one of the leaders in the School Division's recent *Let 'Em Shine* project for high school students. Students in the year-long project met with historians and archivists, discussing how communities have recognized local heroes, community values and legacies. As a capstone to this and other research, students offered specific proposals on appropriate historical recognitions.

***Shannon Grants***—Four schools received a total of eight grants from the Shannon Foundation for innovative classroom projects. Among them is Scottsville's *Our Global Hearth: Exploring Cultures Through Traditional Foodways*. This program will look at the role baking bread has had in the development of civilizations. The program since has been featured by the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards and led to a connection with a Transatlantic Outreach Program to set up a partnership with a German school for a collaborative inquiry on the topic.

***School Bus Safety***—Our transportation department initiated a pilot program utilizing extended stop arms on school buses to physically deter vehicles from passing stopped school buses. We estimate that drivers illegally pass stopped school buses **6000 times** per school year.

Last fall, the pilot program, launched on routes along Earlysville Road and parts of Route 29, showed a 55 percent reduction in the number of times a motorist illegally passed a stopped school bus. Phase two of this pilot, launched this past spring, brought changes to speed up the deployment of the arm that displays the stop sign and it resulted in an 89 percent reduction in the number of violations by motorists.

Albemarle is one of two school divisions in the state that have piloted the use of the extended stop arms and in the 2018-19 school year, we will become the only school division in the state to test yet another

safety improvement—the installation of warning lights and signage on the back of the bus above the bumper. It is our hope that a multi-tiered approach to school bus safety, that eventually would include stop arm cameras, will permanently reduce the high numbers of violations. This program currently is stalled in the General Assembly where a revision of the current law would permit the state department of transportation to share car ownership information with the camera operator, similar to the current red light program.

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