



Board-to-Board, September, 2018

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

Anti-Racism Committee—This summer, before making any substantive decisions about the Albemarle County Public Schools dress code, the School Board asked Dr. Bernard Hairston to convene an Anti-racism Committee to develop and overarching anti-racism policy for ACPS. This group, which includes student leaders from ACPS high schools, has taken this work seriously and is examining a wide range of topics (informed by a series of expert panels). The group has begun drafting a comprehensive policy and has surveyed focus groups of students about racism as part of its work. It is meeting again this week to hear from an expert panel on issues including tracking, textbook selection, and equity to enhance their thinking in developing the policy.

Although we had hoped to have their report sooner, the Anti-racism Committee has asked to have until later this year to complete their work. In parallel, the School Board is reviewing materials and has met with legal counsel about the implications of having a content specific ban in the dress code, which is counter to 50 years of Supreme Court precedent.

Albemarle County, Charlottesville City Schools to Fight Racism Together—Albemarle County Public Schools Superintendent, Dr. Matthew Haas, announced on September 18 that both the county and city public school divisions hope to be a regional and perhaps national model for ensuring that “racism and discrimination will find no home in our school communities.” Dr. Haas told the Albemarle County School Board that he had accepted an offer from Dr. Rosa Atkins, his city counterpart, for the two school divisions and their boards to work together on developing practices that would serve as such a model. The school division is focused on closing opportunity gaps for students, and the 2017 budget included a pilot program, now in its second year, for urban ring elementary schools designed to address the social, emotional, and academic needs of students. Dr. Haas also noted that the division’s culturally responsive teaching program—the first of its kind in Virginia—is showing gains both in the professional development of teachers and in students’ academic performance. Albemarle County students are actively researching and developing proposals for an anti-racism policy for the schools.

First Lady Visits Agnor-Hurt Elementary School—First Lady Pamela Northam visited Agnor-Hurt Elementary School on September 18. In June, Governor Ralph Northam appointed the first lady as chairwoman of the Children’s Cabinet, which was founded in 2014 by Governor Terry McAuliffe with the goal of developing solutions to address challenges that exist for children across the Commonwealth. Mrs. Northam read aloud from *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do*

You See? to a group of preschoolers as a part of her statewide Back to School Tour to promote kindergarten readiness and investment in early childhood education. Two of Agnor-Hurt's preschool classrooms are supported by Albemarle's Bright Stars program, and an adjacent classroom hosts students in the Monticello Area Community Action Agency's Head Start program. Mrs. Northam also visited Greenbrier Elementary in Charlottesville.

Enrollment Updates—At the September 18 meeting, the School Board was presented with the 10-day enrollment report from September 5, the tenth day of school for the 2018-19 school year. In total, there are 13,605 students enrolled in the 25 county schools, which is 38 more than last year but 95 fewer students than projected. Most notably, Woodbrook Elementary School has 154 more students than last year, the result of its major expansion and redistricting to address overcrowding at Greer and Agnor-Hurt Elementary Schools.

Albemarle County Public Schools Hires New Full-Time Legal Counsel—Ross Holden, previously Executive Vice President & General Counsel for the New York City School Construction Authority, has joined Albemarle County Public Schools as full-time legal counsel. Formerly the Executive Vice President & General Counsel for the New York City School Construction Authority, Holden directed and managed its legal, procurement, internal audit, real estate, and labor law departments. The Authority designs, constructs and rehabilitates public schools throughout New York City. Holden is an undergraduate of the University of Virginia, where he was a member of Phi Beta Kappa. He graduated Magna Cum Laude from Georgetown University Law Center, where he was an Editor of the Law Journal. Prior to Holden's appointment, the school division's legal affairs were handled by the Albemarle County Attorney's Office. Amanda Farley, who is a senior assistant county attorney, served as legal counsel to the School Board.

Delegate Rob Bell Visits Albemarle Tech—On September 13, Delegate Rob Bell stopped by Albemarle Tech to see the facilities, meet students and faculty, and to understand more about how the center operates. Albemarle Tech Head Teacher David Glover showed Delegate Bell around and introduced him to the students, who were working on their "passion projects" on the day of the visit. Delegate Bell represents the 58th House District of Virginia, which includes parts of Albemarle County. This was his second visit to the school division since August.

2019 Albemarle County Public Schools Legislative Agenda—The School Board discussed the 2019 Legislative Agenda at its September 18 meeting. Its legislative priorities for next year's General Assembly session will include increased funding for public education, support for high school redesign, broadband infrastructure, and school safety, all of which promise to be important topics for the Virginia General Assembly in 2019. There is also an item in the agenda on school bus safety and bus cameras, which is an important effort for the schools. ACPS has had success in its limited pilot of extended stop arms on school buses. In high traffic areas, incidents of vehicles passing stopped school buses dropped between 50 and 89%. However, given the annual incidence of 6000 vehicles passing school buses that leaves between 600-3000 such incidents. Additionally, there is some evidence that vehicles become accustomed to the extended stop arms and resume passing.

Grading Practices Study—To ensure that fair and equitable grading practices are in place in Albemarle County Public Schools, division leaders undertook a study of grading practices during the 2017-18 school year. This work included a survey of all teachers in grades 4-12 on their grading practices and beliefs. Preliminary results of this survey were shared with the School Board on September 18, and this year staff will be using this data to help determine what steps need to be taken as a division to help schools achieve these key operating principles.

Allstate Selects CATEC as Recipient of Kia Sorento—On September 19, Brown Collision Center transported a 2011 Kia Sorento to the CATEC Auto Body Technology Program to be restored by students. Allstate and the Collision Repair Education Foundation selected CATEC as the recipient of the Kia in an effort to advocate the next generation of community leaders. Auto Body Technology is among the most popular programs at CATEC and offers immediate placement into a profession with starting hourly wages between \$15 and \$17 per hour. Eventually, auto body technicians can earn annual salaries exceeding \$50,000. They hope to restore the car and then sell it, investing the proceeds back into the program.

School Bus Driver Shortage—A shortage of school bus drivers has forced Albemarle County Public Schools to adjust some routes and cut back on field trips. The school division lost eight drivers to other jobs just before schools opened on August 22, leading to the consolidation of some bus routes. This means that after dropping off a busload of students, some bus drivers must return to pick up more students. Agnor-Hurt, Cale, Greer, Hollymead, and Woodbrook have all been affected by these consolidated routes. Schools have also been forced to reduce the number of field trips that take place outside of 9:15 AM and 1:45 PM, the period between morning and afternoon runs. The division is attempting to make these jobs more attractive, and it offers paid training and full-time health benefits. It is currently accepting applications for bus driver positions and begins a new training class on October 1. However, because this year is not unusual and there is a chronic school bus driver shortage due to other, higher-paying jobs in the area, a long term solution needs to be developed.

Community Public Charter School Teacher Attends Launch of NASA Satellite—A science teacher from Albemarle County's Community Public Charter School has been selected as the only teacher in the country to attend a special satellite launch with NASA at Vandenberg Air Force Base. Kate Kogge applied for the trip in May with the goal of integrating the launch into her curriculum. Kogge created a YouTube channel so that the students could participate in the press conference and be with her on the launch pad. Upon her return, she and her students will create a "Mission to Mars," and they will also be taking measurements to compare to data from the satellite, which studies climate change and the melting of glaciers. As part of this program, the students have been also invited to tour the NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center in Maryland later this year to talk with mission scientists.