



Board-to-Board, January 2019

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

To Support Student Participation, Albemarle County School Board Moves up Public Comment Period—Starting with its first meeting of 2019, the Albemarle County School Board moved up the public comment period on its agenda at its business meetings, which are held on the second Thursday of each month. In order to support students who hope to attend the meetings to address members of the Board, public comment is scheduled to take place prior to the business portion of the meeting. Students will be given priority during the 30 minutes that are allotted to hear from as many as 10-12 speakers. If more than 10 speakers sign up to speak to the Board on at these meetings, a second public comment period will be conducted after the business portion of the agenda. Recent public comment periods have followed the completion of the Board's business agenda, often occurring as late as 9 p.m. Setting aside an earlier time for students to address the Board is intended to make it easier for them to participate, especially given that Friday is a school day.

There will be no change to the public comment procedures for the School Board's work sessions, which generally occur on the fourth Thursdays of each month. Public comment will continue to be offered at the conclusion of the work session. There also will be no change to the Board's policy regarding special meetings, which do not include public comment.

Alcaro, Paige Elected to Board Leadership Roles—At its annual organizational meeting on January 10, the Albemarle County School Board selected Jonno Alcaro, its At-Large member, as its 2019 Board Chair. Graham Paige, who represents the Samuel Miller District on the Board, was selected as the new Vice Chair. Alcaro succeeds Dr. Kate Acuff, who served three years as the Board Chair and will continue to serve on the Board as its Jack Jouett District representative. The Board also decided upon committee assignments for 2019 and confirmed meeting dates and times for the new year.

Henley Students Get "Step Up!" Bystander Intervention Training—The Gordie Center at the University of Virginia took its Step Up! program to Henley Middle School on Friday, January 11 to teach the importance of bystander intervention and what to do if students see something that they believe is wrong. Henley had the honor of being the first middle school in the country to receive this training, as the Gordie Center typically visits high schools and colleges. Susie Bruce, director of the Gordie Center at UVA, says that teaching kids at a younger age is just as important, which is what led the Gordie Center to begin this training to younger students.

This training is part of an ongoing effort to stop bullying, and aims to give kids the tools and strategies to feel empowered to step in and help when they see something that's wrong or that they're uncomfortable with. Among its many lessons, the program teaches students not to be afraid to reach out to victims even if the situation has passed. This helps students not feel alone and to feel supported by their peers.

The Gordie Center hopes to continue to teach younger students how to be helpful bystanders and to help others in general.

Student Career Survey—During the January 10 Albemarle County School Board business meeting, board members reviewed the results of the first-ever ACPS career cluster survey of middle school students. More than 2,600 out of 3,000 students participated, indicating their early career interests. Top-rated professional was the Arts, Audio/Visual Technology and Communications, followed by Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics and then Law, Public Safety, Corrections and Security. Complete survey results will be used to help determine future high school elective course offerings and our student center curricula.

Bond Referendum Project Status—An update on the 2016 school bond referendum projects was presented to the Albemarle County School Board on January 10. All four project areas, the Woodbrook addition, modernization and renovation, Western's science lab addition and renovation, and the learning space modernization at all 25 schools as well as school security improvements, will be completed on time this year and \$1.2 million under current budget.

Superintendent Haas' 2019-20 Funding Request "Builds on a Strong Foundation," Seeks to Raise Value of Connections Between Schools, Businesses and Albemarle County Residents—Citing the interconnections between schools, business and service organizations, and community residents, Albemarle County Public Schools Superintendent, Dr. Matthew Haas, presented his 2019-20 funding request to the School Board on January 17. The Superintendent's request would increase school division expenditures by four percent, or two percent above inflation, beginning next July 1. The proposed investment of \$194.3 million would increase funding to broaden student learning opportunities, close the achievement gap, add counselors and a security coordinator, and more efficiently use school resources.

Revenues are currently projected at \$193.7 million and are subject to change as preliminary estimates are finalized. Local revenue from Albemarle County would increase by 3.9 percent; state revenues will jump by five percent; and revenues from the federal government are expected to be flat. The increase in state revenue will fund 26 percent of next year's \$14,104 estimated per pupil cost in Albemarle County. Prior to the recession, the state regularly funded 30+ percent of these costs. The difference between expenditures and revenues of \$642,975 is one of the most modest funding gaps in several years, comprising less than one percent of the funding request.

Dr. Haas noted the strong academic performance of students and teachers as reflected in on-time graduation rates, SAT scores, and college readiness assessments that are among the best in Virginia and the nation. In addressing the achievement gap, the Superintendent told the School Board, "We can and will do better, one student at a time. We can be the exception to the rule of discrimination that hamstrings the greatness of our work."

Among the new proposals in the funding request:

- An expansion of Center One at Seminole Place from 24 students to 60;
- The re-establishment of a Junior ROTC Program at Monticello High School;
- The addition of world language programs at Crozet and Murray elementary schools
- Expansion of the division's Culturally Responsive Teaching program.
- The replacement of the division's current Gifted Education Program, which serves under 10 percent of students with a new talent development program that will benefit every student;
- The phasing in of increased student counseling services in elementary schools;
- An additional full-time mental health counselor at the middle school level;
- The addition of a School Security Coordinator; and
- A pilot program to promote a more stable learning environment for children by allowing kindergarten students to remain in their original school even if their family relocates to an attendance zone of a different school.
- An increase in bus driver compensation to eliminate current driver shortages that have resulted in the cancellation of field trips and after-school tutoring programs and added as much as 30 minutes to travel time for students;
- The employment of retired teachers to reduce the current shortage of qualified substitute teachers and to create a permanent corps of highly experienced educators to maintain student learning at a high level; and
- A reduction in tuition paid by teachers who live outside the county and who desire to have their children attend county schools. This will strengthen the division's teacher retention practices, Haas said.

Noting that education is a "people enterprise," Haas reported that the bulk of his funding request, 85 percent, is needed to support employee compensation and benefits. That includes \$2 million to fund a 2.3 percent raise for teachers and \$1.1 million for a 2.3 percent raise plus merit for classified staff. When taking into account all mandated spending and operational requirements, less than two percent of the funding request is devoted to new proposals.

The School Board held two work sessions on the funding request, on Tuesday, January 22, and Thursday, January 24. The Board held a public hearing on the budget on Tuesday, January 29, and will approve a budget in early February, sending it on to the Board of Supervisors. The final budget for the 2019-20 school year should be adopted later in the spring. Dr. Haas and County Executive Jeff Richardson will give a joint presentation to brief community leaders on local government and school division budgets on March 1 of this year.

School Renaming Policy Approved—At its work session on Thursday, January 24, the Albemarle County School Board approved revisions to the division's policy on the naming and renaming of schools. The next step in this process is the appointment of a committee by Superintendent Matt Haas. This committee will include stakeholders both from the community and from the school and school division. Additionally, a historian or archivist will be hired to assist the division in the consideration of school names. The RFQ deadline for that role was January 24, so a selection will be made soon. Cale Elementary School will be the first school name examined.

Research by AHS Student Aims to Reduce Side Effects of Chemotherapy— Mriganka Mandal, an Albemarle High School senior, was named one of 300 Scholars by the Society for Science & the Public and Regeneron. Students are selected based upon their scientific research and also on their overall potential as future leaders of the scientific community. This honor for her egg-specific target immunotherapy project comes with a \$2,000 scholarship, and an additional \$2,000 for AHS. Mandal's project is focused on reducing the side effects of chemotherapy on lung cancer patients. She's been working on this project for the last four years with the help of researchers at the University of Virginia. She was inspired to do this work while watching her grandfather battle cancer, and she hopes that her success will encourage other young girls to pursue careers in STEM. Mandal plans to continue working on this project in college. The next step is taking her study to be tested using actual tissue samples of tumors in a lab.