



Board-to-Board, March 2020

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

Schools Close in Response to Coronavirus Outbreak—On Friday, March 13, Albemarle County Public Schools (ACPS) announced that they would be closed for a *minimum* of two weeks (through at least April 10), following Governor Ralph Northam’s executive order. At this time, no decisions have been made on events that are scheduled after that date, including graduations. It remains a possibility that the school year may be extended if school divisions are required to do so by the Virginia Department of Education.

Below is information on the school division’s operations as they currently stand.

Meal distribution. ACPS is providing meals to students and siblings, 18 years of age and younger, at six school locations: Albemarle, Monticello, and Western Albemarle high schools; Sutherland and Walton middle schools; and Woodbrook Elementary School. The meals are “grab-and-go” and are being distributed in the parking lots of these schools between 11 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. each weekday.

Instructional Support. ACPS continues to support the engagement of students in learning activities. Beginning March 17, and lasting through at least through Friday, March 27, students can participate in optional, self-directed learning activities that will be provided by their school or teacher. Also, resources are available on the [At-Home Learning Resources](#) web page. These activities are not required or graded, but they will offer students opportunities to remain engaged in learning.

In the new few days, we will be communicating additional information on how teachers will be connecting with students while schools are closed. Resources and updates to our current operating status will continue to be posted on our website and shared on social media and other outlets.

Technology Resources. For students in grades 3-5 who do not have access to a computer at home, laptops were distributed on Friday, March 20 at Greer and Woodbrook Elementary Schools.

The school division’s [COVID-19 Management Plan](#) web page provides access the division’s COVID-19 plan, community messages, news releases, and more.

Update on Building Operations. In addition to our school buildings, all school division offices and departments are closed as of Wednesday, March 18. Phones in the schools and department offices are currently unmanned, though the division continues to communicate with families through email, text, voice messages, and social media and web posts. Those who need to reach the school division in an emergency can call 434-296-5820. This line is reserved for emergencies and will be answered Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Sutherland Advisory Committee Postpones March 25 Public Meeting—The first public meeting of the Sutherland Middle School Community Advisory Committee, originally scheduled to be held at the school on Wednesday, March 25, has been postponed. The advisory committee's public meeting was to have solicited input from members of the community about names for the school that were submitted in an online survey that began on March 10. Since then, more than 400 people have participated in the survey which is being extended through Friday, March 27, to enable as many community members as possible to participate.

Updates on Grading Improvements at ACPS—Grading and measuring student progress are important issues for every school in our country. From the inability of grades to communicate meaningful information to the challenges created by differences in grading practices, there is an urgent need to more accurately measure and report student achievement. Over the past several months, our teachers and administrators have been studying how to improve grading systems, including working with grading and assessment expert, Ken O'Connor.

On Tuesday, March 3, at Henley Middle School, Mr. O'Connor was a guest speaker for a community forum on grading and measuring student progress. Author of *Repair Kit for Grading*, Mr. O'Connor is a world-renowned consultant and presenter at educational conferences across the globe. He has extensive experience in assisting school divisions and teachers with improvements to their grading practices and reporting systems. Mr. O'Connor joined ACPS in July for a similar event and, due to an overwhelming response, he returned in order to give more parents the opportunity to gain from his research and insight.

Charlottesville-Albemarle Technical Education Center (CATEC) Hosts SkillsUSA Virginia District VI's Annual Skills and Leadership Competitions—On March 3, 2020, high school students from CATEC, Massanutten Technical Center, Greene County Technical Center, and Valley Career Technical Center participated in skills and leadership competitions. This year, CATEC will had 186 student participants competing in its building. Students competed in categories ranging from Culinary Arts, Cosmetology, Nurse Aide and Veterinary Science to Internetworking, Auto Technology, Collision Repair, Carpentry, Electrical, EMT and Firefighting. CATEC also hosted Leadership competitions in categories such as Job Interview, Job Demonstration, Prepared Speech and Medical Terminology.

CATEC had support from local community business partners who provided supplies, materials, and prizes for the competitions, and assisted in competition design and judging. UVA Facilities Management, Martin Horn, Wegmans, City of Charlottesville Fire Department, Safe-Way Electric, Malloy Ford, Price Hyundai, and Albemarle County Transportation are just a few of CATEC's business partners who participated in SkillsUSA District VI's skills and leadership competitions.

SkillsUSA is a national organization serving students and professionals enrolled in training programs in technical, skilled, and service occupations. SkillsUSA has more than 305,000 members annually, organized into 13,000 chapters nationally. SkillsUSA Virginia has more than 12,000 members across the Commonwealth. Each district holds its own contest to determine the students who will proceed to state and even national competitions.