



**Board-to-Board, June 2020**

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

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***Sutherland Community Advisory Committee Votes to Change School's Name***—The Sutherland Community Advisory Committee decided to recommend to the Superintendent, Dr. Matthew Haas, that the name of their school be changed.

The committee's action follows an opinion survey that asked members of the school's community for their top three preferences among a list of 10 suggested names. Throughout the process, nearly 1,900 names were suggested for the school. Three of those, Lakeside, Rivanna, and Willow Creek, were selected last week by the committee as finalists. A new survey asking for opinions on the three finalist names can be accessed at <https://survey.k12insight.com/r/HfWWNH>.

Not among the names on the finalist list is the name that generated the most support in previous surveys, the school's current name of Mortimer Y. Sutherland. Sutherland was a teacher and later a principal in the school division, retiring in 1946. Between 1954 and 1962, he served on the Albemarle County School Board and then the Board of Supervisors.

In recent deliberations, Sutherland advisory committee members referenced research documents on Sutherland's votes and actions while a member of the Board of Supervisors. They consulted documents originally produced as part of the work by the Cale Advisory Committee last year. These documents confirmed that in 1963, Sutherland was the lone vote on the Board of Supervisors to uphold a ban on all school athletic and social activities if they resulted in joint participation by white and black students.

As both a member of the School Board and the Board of Supervisors between 1954 and 1963, Sutherland faithfully supported resistance to the decision by the U.S. Supreme Court to end school segregation. The county's public schools were not fully integrated until 15 years after the court established school desegregation as the law of the land.

Sutherland also sought to re-appoint a member of the School Board (in those days, School Board members were appointed by the Board of Supervisors) who supported the segregation of white and black children for athletic and social activities. He did not receive a second on his motion, and the attempt to re-appoint the School Board member did not succeed.

The school division has created a School Naming Review website to enable members of the public to track the progress of all school naming reviews. The site provides information on relevant School Board policy and the school naming review process. The page that contains all

the information compiled to date on the Sutherland naming review, including survey results, can be accessed at <https://www.k12albemarle.org/acps/division/school-naming-review/Pages/Sutherland-Middle-School.aspx>.

***Principal Jim Asher Announces Retirement***—James “Jim” Asher, among the longest serving principals of Burley Middle School, has announced that he will retire this year. Asher was appointed as interim principal of the nearly 600-student school on July 1, 2012, and then appointed six months later as principal. Asher said his decision to retire followed a great deal of thought and discussion with his wife about their personal priorities at this time in their lives.

Prior to his current position, Asher served three secondary schools in the division as an assistant principal, including CATEC, Monticello High School, and Walton Middle School.

In order to assist with the recruitment of a new principal, Asher has agreed to stay on beyond the traditional July 1 retirement date. The selection process for a new principal will include staff and community feedback through an online survey of qualities valued in a new leader. It also will include representatives from staff, students and parents to serve on a school-based interview panel to provide feedback to the Superintendent regarding the candidates interviewed. The goal is to have a successor in place by the time schools reopen.

***Charter School Community Advisory Committee Narrows List of School Names Under Consideration to Ten***—The school division’s Charter School Community Advisory Committee has narrowed the list of names for its new school to 10, following a community meeting last week. More than 100 names were suggested by the public in an online survey in late May.

The new school was established in February when the School Board approved the merger of the division’s charter middle school, the Community Public Charter School, and its charter high school, Murray.

Community members now have the opportunity to comment on the list of 10 names beginning tomorrow when an online survey becomes operational. The survey, which can be accessed at <https://survey.k12insight.com/r/6rIjGY>, will remain open until 5 p.m. on Friday, June 19.

The results of the survey will be shared with the community prior to a second community meeting to comment on those results. This will be a virtual meeting on Monday, June 22, at 6:30 p.m. The meeting will be live-streamed and those wishing to comment can do so by emailing the advisory committee at [SchoolNamingReview@k12albemarle.org](mailto:SchoolNamingReview@k12albemarle.org) prior to the meeting. They will be provided with a link that will allow them to address committee members and the meeting audience.

The same link can be used to contact the advisory committee with any questions about the naming process itself.

Following the June 22 meeting, the advisory committee will select three names as finalists, recommending one of those names to Dr. Matthew Haas, the school division superintendent.

Information about the School Board's policy on the naming or renaming of schools and of the status of all reviews can be accessed at <https://www.k12albemarle.org/acps/division/school-naming-review/Pages/default.aspx>.

***Updates on Response to Student Stress Dilemma***—Over the past several years, Albemarle County Public Schools (ACPS) have been researching and planning how the student high school experience can be improved. This process has been a conversation with students, teachers, and families about the schools' current model and how well it prepares students for future success. At the state level, recent changes to earning a high school diploma include increasing the emphasis on acquiring lifetime skills, problem-solving, the value of internships, and community service, for example.

ACPS began making improvements even before these state requirements were enacted and, a few years ago, received permission from the state Board of Education to proceed with one very positive change: eliminating weighted grades.

Beginning with freshmen entering high school in the 2022-23 school year, the division will no longer use weighted grades. Currently, students who take some advanced classes can earn more than four points on the traditional grading scale of four points for an A, three points for a B, and so on. Giving classes added weight in calculating a grade point average (GPA) pressures students to take these classes even if the class itself does not fit their interests.

This is but one of several improvements to the high school learning experience in ACPS and continued efforts to modernize how we prepare students for lifetime success.