



Board-to-Board, August 2020

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

Most Students Will Begin the New School Year on September 8 Through a Virtual Learning Model—When Albemarle County Public Schools opens the 2020-21 school year on September 8, the instructional model for most students will be virtual; however, in-person access to school buildings will be offered to students without home internet access adequate for virtual learning as well as some students with special needs and some who are English Learners.

The School Board voted at their July 30 special meeting to endorse the recommendation of Superintendent Dr. Matthew Haas for how schools should open. They also agreed with Dr. Haas that his recommendation would apply for the first nine weeks of the school year, from September 8 to November 6. Halfway through this period, the superintendent will make a recommendation to the School Board for the second nine-week period that begins on November 9.

Students who return to school through in-person access to school buildings will be arranged in learning groups of 10 or fewer students and have a learning coach who will support them in accessing their virtual instruction assignments. This group will include students who are not able to adequately access virtual instruction from home; special education students who may not receive meaningful educational benefits online at home; and students who have not yet reached English proficiency and would most benefit from in-person instruction.

Consistent with guidance from the state departments of health and education as well as local health authorities, the School Board's decision is based upon the most current information on health conditions in the county; input from employee and parent surveys; recent town hall meetings and emails sent to the Board; as well as the capacity of schools to provide a safe learning environment that maintains social distancing requirements.

Prior to the vote, the division received more than 6,500 responses from families to an intent form, with 72 percent of all respondents expressing some level of concern over sending their children to school for in-person instruction this September. More than 1,200 employees participated in a separate survey, with two out of three (65%) also concerned about safely returning to work in September.

In their presentation to the School Board at the July 30 meeting, Deputy Superintendent Debora Collins and Chief Operating Officer Rosalyn Schmitt outlined five stages of returning for the 2020-21 school year. Those stages determine how instruction would be delivered, ranging from fully virtual instruction in Stage 1 to every student returning to in-person instruction in Stage 5. Each intervening stage gradually increases the number of students who would attend school in

person. The recommendation approved by the Board has students return to school on September 8 in Stage 2.

Collins and Schmitt said the stages represent a measured approach to transitioning to fully in-person instruction, allowing the division to be flexible and respond quickly and effectively to protect community health and promote the academic growth of students. Movement from one stage to another would occur at a nine-week interval unless it was necessary to move to a more restrictive stage, which would be immediate.

Under the Stage 2 opening approved by the Board, most teachers would deliver instruction virtually with a limited number providing in-person instruction by their choice. Support staff will need to contact their supervisor for their work schedules.

Students without home internet access or those with limited internet service that cannot be improved by other means will have the option of coming into their school to complete online assignments. These families also can choose to have assignments delivered to them at home in a paper format or a recorded video. The division also can provide hotspot devices to homes that will enable them to connect to local Wi-Fi providers. Talks are continuing with Comcast about making it possible for families that cannot afford broadband service to benefit from data plans that would provide such service where available. This service would be provided as part of Comcast's *Internet Essentials* program, with the school division underwriting the reduced costs of this service.

The joint presentation by Collins and Schmitt is available on our [Return to School](#) website. This site also includes updated information on community and employee resources around COVID-19; the division's health and safety practices, information on instructional plans and school bus transportation, and more. In the near future, the site will also include answers to frequently asked questions.

School Meal Details Released, Registration Will Be Required—Beginning **September 8, 2020**, school meals (including breakfast and lunch) will be available to all students enrolled in Albemarle County Public Schools (ACPS). Siblings of students will no longer be eligible to receive meals once our spring/summer meal service ends on August 28.

Breakfast can be purchased at full price for **\$1.55** and lunch will be **\$2.90** for elementary and **\$3.15** for middle and high. Students approved for reduced-price meals can buy breakfast for **\$0.30** and lunch for **\$0.40**. Meals will be provided free of charge to students who are approved for free meals.

For a child to receive school breakfast and/or lunch on any school day, families must register by August 21, 2020, using the [2020-21 School Meals Sign-Up Form](#).

Families may opt for their children to receive school meals whether they are beginning the school year through virtual learning or in-person access. Meals will be available on scheduled school days according to the [2020-21 School Year Calendar](#).

Families who would like to participate in the student meal program, but do not register by August 21, can register to receive meals by contacting Child Nutrition by email or by phone.

Virtual Learning Information Released—The division has outlined how the virtual learning experience from this past spring compare to virtual instruction planned for the 2020-21 school year. Where spring 2020 was focused on keeping students connected to school and on presenting only some new information in academic subjects, the new school year will provide robust, high-quality learning experiences and teaching. Teaching will cover all content areas. Tasks and assignments will be required, assessments will be made, and participation will be expected.

Additionally, there will be a blend of synchronous and asynchronous instruction and teachers will hold consistent office hours in order to help students who require extra attention. All students will engage in synchronous learning with Zoom, and recordings will be available for student viewing. Teachers have had professional development in support of this instruction plan, and they may teach from their classrooms where they will have full access to school technologies and instructional materials.

Tech support will be available directly to families/students through the Service Desk and school-based technology staff. Because not all families have access to online instruction from home, alternatives will provide a high-quality, parallel experience.

More information is available on the [Virtual Learning: Then and Now](#) website. This page features a comparison between the model used in spring 2020 and the approach that the division will take in the new school year.

Experienced High School Administrator Appointed Burley Middle School's New Principal—Kasaundra E. Blount, who brings 14 years of experience as a high school administrator and dean of students, has been appointed the new principal of Burley Middle School. She succeeds James Asher, who announced his retirement on June 17.

Blount brings an extensive background in managing educational equity programs to one of the division's most diverse schools. Of Burley's nearly 600 student population, 52 percent of students are white; 22 percent are Latino; and 17 percent are Black.

Blount, who is a member of the division's anti-racism steering committee, has served as the Equity & Diversity Administrator for the division's largest school, Albemarle, with nearly 2,000 students. She also led the school's AVID program, which begins working with students who would be the first in their family to attend college, early in their high school career to prepare them for college.

While at Albemarle, she oversaw instructional programs in English, social studies, fine arts, health, and physical education, and supported incoming freshmen with their transition to high school. She was appointed an assistant principal at the school in 2015 and previously served in similar roles as an assistant principal at Armstrong High School in Richmond.

Both Burley staff and community members were valuable participants in the search. They identified several qualities that were most important to them in a new leader, such as having a strong instructional background; skills at meeting the needs of students capable of improving their performance in school; having a collaborative management style; and an ability to involve all of the school's partners to continue to strengthen the school's culture and climate. Blount's strengths and her record of accomplishments made her an ideal fit.

Blount began her career in education as a social studies teacher in 1999 for Northeast High School in Guilford County, North Carolina, where she first began her work with the AVID program. She had a similar role in Chesterfield County while dean of students for Meadowbrook High School, where she coordinated the school's Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs.

An undergraduate of Hampton University with a Bachelor of Arts degree in political science, Blount earned a master's degree in teaching secondary education from Hampton and a certification in administration and supervision from Virginia Commonwealth University. She currently is pursuing a doctorate in educational management at Hampton.