



Board-to-Board, October 2020

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

School Board Approves Expanding Parental Choice for In-Person Instruction for up to 5,000 Students—Albemarle County Public Schools (ACPS) Superintendent, Dr. Matthew Haas, recommended to the School Board at their October 8 meeting that in-person instruction for students be expanded beginning on Monday, November 9. The board voted in favor of Haas's recommendation 4-3.

This progression to [Stage 3](#) of the ACPS Return to School plan could increase the number of students in schools from a few hundred presently to as many as 2,500 students on two separate days, or 5,000 students in total. In-person class sizes would be 12 students or less. All pre-K students and students in grades K-3 would attend school in person on either Monday and Wednesday or Tuesday and Thursday of each week. This plan will also constitute an increase in the number of special education students who are in A-base and C-base programs and English Learners. Students without adequate internet connectivity will continue to be included as well as students who are not receiving any meaningful educational benefits from online instruction.

Parents would still have the option of choosing the all-virtual instructional model for their children.

The Superintendent said in-person instruction should be a priority for our youngest learners, pointing to guidance from the division's School Health Advisory Board, which said it supports efforts to safely increase the number of students returning for in-person instruction, and recommends focusing on younger students, along with smaller class or pod sizes with students adequately spaced.

The director of the Thomas Jefferson Health District, Dr. Denise Bonds, has said that the value of in-person education for pre-K students and students in grades K-3 is critical to this age group's overall development and growth. According to Bonds, the public health considerations that are being met and support this decision, including the implementation of masking and distancing policies, widespread access to testing, quick turnaround for results, and as of right now, lower community transmission among Albemarle County residents than in July.

This input, as well as the views of nearly 10,000 parents, employees and students from online surveys, were influential in shaping this recommendation. Another crucial consideration was the concern that the current instructional environment in the division's schools and in schools across our nation is driving an increase in the equity gap.

An online survey of teachers recently revealed that nearly 70 percent agree that health and safety protocols in their workplace have kept them safe, more than 10 times the percentage of teachers who disagreed.

Since schools closed in March, the division has invested more than \$1.5 million to keep employees and students and their families safe, investments that have reconfigured learning spaces to ensure adequate social distancing, improved air circulation, and provided equipment and supplies for regular cleaning and disinfecting of surfaces throughout school buildings.

More than 90 Percent of Seniors Graduated on Time in 2020, With Most Earning the State's Most Rigorous Diploma—Nearly 92 percent of all ACPS seniors graduated on time this year with almost two out of three graduates earning the state's highest diploma for academic excellence.

According to the state Department of Education, the school division had 1,076 graduates, with 672 receiving an Advanced Studies Diploma. These diplomas require 26 course credits with nine verified credits (earned by passing an end-of-course Standards of Learning test), while a standard diploma requires 22 credits and six verified credits. Nearly 63 percent of our graduating seniors received an Advanced Studies Diploma, compared to almost 52 percent of graduating seniors in Virginia.

The highest on-time graduation percentage was at Western Albemarle High School, at 99 percent. The percentage for the division's charter school graduates was 95. At Monticello High School, 89.3 percent of all seniors graduated within four years of entering high school, and Albemarle High School's on-time graduation percentage was 88.9.

Statewide, the on-time graduation rate of 92.3 was slightly ahead of the county's 91.8 percent. Nationally, the high school graduation rate was 85 percent, the highest it has been since the rate first was measured in 2011. The state has tracked and published on-time high school graduation rates since 2008, and the rate for ACPS graduates has been 90 percent or higher ever since.

Of the students who entered high school in the ninth grade in the county, 4.6 dropped out of school, which was lower than the statewide average of 5.1 percent.

Among individual student groups, Black students in the county graduated at an on-time rate of 93.5 percent, outperforming the statewide average for all students. The dropout rate for Black students in the county was less than one percent, compared to five percent across the state.

In the county's four high schools, the on-time graduation rate was 91.8 percent for students of multiple races; 89.6 percent for special education students; 86.5 percent for students from economically disadvantaged homes; 76 percent for Hispanic students; and for English Learners, the on-time graduation rate was 62.7 percent.

Creation of an ACPS COVID-19 Dashboard—ACPS recently launched the [ACPS COVID-19 Dashboard](#) to provide students, parents, employees, and community members with an accurate and current account of the impact of COVID-19 across our school division.

This dashboard will report the number of confirmed cases experienced by students and staff who are learning or working in person, as well as contractors who work in our buildings. It will reflect reports of outbreaks whenever two or more cases of COVID-19 are linked to exposure at any ACPS schools or office locations.

Data reported in the dashboard includes cases and outbreaks since the first day of school on September 8, 2020. It is the division's intention to update the dashboard every Monday and also as new cases are verified in our schools and department offices.

As the school year progresses, the data presented on the dashboard will serve as one factor we consider when determining the school division's stage of operation. For a complete list of considerations that inform our stage of operation, please visit our [Stages of Returning](#) web page.

Virginia Lee Murray Elementary Is the Next School to Have Its Name Reviewed by a Local Community Advisory Committee—During the October 8 board meeting, Dr. Matthew Haas said that Virginia Lee Murray Elementary School in Ivy will be the next school in the division to undergo a community-based naming review.

The Superintendent's decision follows direction from the School Board in October 2018 that all schools in the division named for individuals should be subject to a community naming review. The review is to ensure that the career of a school's namesake exemplifies the division's four values of excellence, young people, community, and respect.

The first two naming reviews focused on schools in the division's southern and northern feeder patterns, while Virginia Lee Murray is in the division's western feeder pattern.

Ms. Murray was born in 1897, attended elementary school in Albemarle County, and later was a 1927 graduate of Howard University. She also earned a master's degree from New York University. She began her teaching career in a one-room school and three years later was appointed Supervisor of Elementary Education, the first Black supervisor to be appointed in the county.

When it was built in 1960, Murray Elementary School served only Black students from first through seventh grades. The school was desegregated five years later. When the school division opened a charter high school in 1988, it was housed in Murray Elementary School. When students relocated to the charter school's present location on Rose Hill Drive in 1990, it retained Murray as its name.

Teller Stalfort, who has a child at Murray Elementary and at Henley, the middle school in Murray's feeder pattern, will chair the community advisory committee for the elementary school's naming review.

Stalfort will lead a volunteer committee that will include the school's principal, Alison Dwier-Selden; three Murray teachers or staff members; at least three parents who have children enrolled in the school and two local community members who do not have children enrolled in the

school. Those interested in serving on the committee are asked to email their name, affiliation with the school, and why they want to serve to SchoolNamingReview@k12albemarle.org.

Among the committee's responsibilities will be to design and publish an online survey to gather input on the school's current name and any suggestions of alternatives. These responses will be the subject of a subsequent public meeting. The committee will eventually narrow the list of prospective names to no more than 10, which will be the subject of a second public meeting.

Committee members will decide on whether the school's name should remain the same or be changed. They can select up to three names as finalists and will vote on the name they will send to the Superintendent for his consideration. Haas will make his recommendation to the School Board, which will make the decision on the school's name.

The school division provides information on its school name reviews and progress updates on its [School Naming Review](http://SchoolNamingReview.k12albemarle.org) website.

Members of the community with questions or suggestions throughout the Murray and charter school reviews can contact the advisory committees by email at SchoolNamingReview@k12albemarle.org.