



Board-to-Board, October 2020

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

State SOL Testing Options Presented—Students enrolled in semester-long courses that have an associated SOL test have been presented with options related to standardized testing required by the state. The state does not allow SOL tests to be taken virtually. The SOL Writing test also has an option for a student to postpone taking the test until the spring. A refusal to take the test will not be recorded or entered as a zero this year. However, students enrolled in high school courses must earn verified credits to meet graduation standards. (A verified credit is earned by passing both the course and the SOL test for that course.)

In order to offer added support to families as they make decisions around SOLs, schools will provide specifics regarding which test(s) each student needs to take and relevant testing dates. Transportation for testing will be provided upon request, and students will return home at the end of the school day unless they have arranged private transportation home. Lunch will be provided and students should bring their charged computer with them to school.

During in-person testing, ACPS will continue to strictly follow the requirements of its health plan, which includes the disinfection of surfaces and the enforcement of hand hygiene, the wearing of face coverings, and maintaining physical distancing between students and staff.

ACPS Launches COVID-19 Hotline—Albemarle County Public Schools (ACPS), in an effort to increase its ability to help community members, ACPS has launched a [COVID-19 Hotline](#). The hotline is accessible by phone or email:

- Phone: 434-972-1618
- Email: SupportForFamilies@k12albemarle.org

The division encourages ACPS students, employees and families to use the hotline to request help finding resources for things like mental health support, food, and other small material requests. ACPS aims to do provide as many resources as possible to those who contact the hotline.

School division staff will respond to hotline messages within 24 business hours. The hotline is not intended for emergencies or highly time-sensitive requests.

***Expanding Student Mental Health Services and Support:
Division Will Provide Professional Development on Student Mental Health Aid to All***

Employees Who Work Directly With Students—Bolstered by an anonymous donation of \$500,000, the school division is significantly expanding student mental health programs and services over the next two years. The School Board recently approved the use of the grant to fund a division-wide program to broaden support for students in crisis. Included is Mental Health First Aid training for employees who work directly with students.

The grant also will enable the division to hire an experienced mental health professional who will coordinate the work of school counselors, school psychologists, and community partners in how best to address the mental health needs of students in all grade levels. The division also will contract with an outside mental health agency to deliver direct mental health services to students and their families within schools.

Two recent events have added to the urgency of deepening support for student mental health: changes at the state level that have reduced therapeutic day treatment services for hundreds of students in the division, and the pandemic, which can raise student anxiety levels by limiting the personal interaction between teachers and students and among students.

The grant builds upon recent student mental health investments by the school division, which began two years ago with the addition of more full-time school counselors in the division's 25 schools.

Last year, the state of Virginia announced changes to its Therapeutic Day Treatment Program, which resulted in substantially fewer students qualifying for services. The program funds such interventions as individualized therapy for any child who is experiencing a mental health trauma in school.

Major components of the program, such as the hiring of the Coordinator of Mental Health Services and the engagement of an outside mental health agency to provide direct services, should be completed by the spring, with the employee training program underway by the summer and in full implementation by the next school year.