



## Board-to-Board, April 2021

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

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***Superintendent Haas Says Division Is Planning for Five Days per Week of In-Person Instruction for All Students Next School Year; Will Also Offer Virtual Instruction for Elementary, Middle & High School***—Moving up the May 6 date for his recommendation to the school board, Albemarle County Public Schools Superintendent, Dr. Matthew Haas, recently said the school division has begun its planning to offer five days per week of in-person instruction at all school sites for students in all grades next year. The 2021-22 school year will begin on Monday, August 23.

Haas also said the division will offer an all-virtual school for elementary, middle and high school students. The all-virtual school will have its own principal and teaching staff and provide synchronous instruction to students.

A recently concluded online survey of families generated over 6,500 responses, with more than 90% of the replies supporting in-person instruction for their child next year. When asked a follow-up question about their views if there were no physical distancing in schools, 89.6% of those respondents still supported in-person instruction, although there are no current plans to eliminate physical distancing.

Approximately 8% of responses favored an all-virtual option for students next year. At the present time, 42% of students are in virtual instruction.

Haas said recent developments related to COVID-19 have been favorable to offering full in-person instruction to all students in August, including:

- The continued success of the division's mitigation strategies and practices;
- Updated guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) that schools can consider a reduction in physical distancing guidelines from six feet to three feet, provided face masks continue to be required of all students and staff;
- The success of the Blue Ridge Health District's program to fully vaccinate ACPS staff who desire vaccination, and that soon may include offering vaccines to students as young as 12 years old; and
- The recent legislation signed by Governor Northam that takes effect on July 1 and requires all school divisions in Virginia to offer students in all grades five days of in-person instruction each week. The legislation also permits school divisions to provide virtual instruction.

Despite these developments, the division is not planning to expand in-person instruction for students during the remainder of the current school year. All pre-K through grade 3 students now attend school four days per week, and students in grades 4-12 attend school in person two days per week. There are more than 5,500 students — larger than the size of many neighboring school divisions — now primarily learning from home. In order to bring more students into schools at this late point in the school year, the division would have to redeploy resources away from students in virtual instruction, yet again changing their schedules and those of staff. Adding to these disruptions is the certainty that many students would need to change teachers.

Throughout the pandemic, the superintendent said, many students have likely suffered learning losses and have missed their interactions with teachers and their classmates as the result of not being in school full-time.

To address this, the school division has planned a robust summer program starting in July of 2021. There will be two sessions each day: a morning session devoted to academic enrichment and an afternoon session that, in collaboration with community partners, will feature programs specifically designed to promote student social and emotional health and physical fitness. These programs are in addition to the annual summer programs that offer high school students the opportunity to earn credits needed for graduation.

***Local Public Preschool Programs Currently Registering Students for Next School Year--*** The Charlottesville-Albemarle area early intervention and public preschool programs are currently accepting applications for the 2021-22 school year. A joint application for Bright Stars, Charlottesville City Preschool, and MACAA Head Start can be found at [Go2Grow.com](https://www.Go2Grow.com), a website dedicated to helping local families find public and private preschool options in our area.

Enrollment space in each of these public preschool programs is limited; early application is recommended. These programs offer a comprehensive experience for children and their families by providing a high-quality preschool experience and family support.

Families who live in **Albemarle County** and have a child who will be four years old by September 30 may be eligible to enroll in Bright Stars and/or MACAA Head Start. MACAA Head Start also accepts children who will be three years old by September 30.

The Albemarle County Bright Stars Program serves 191 four-year-old children at Agnor-Hurt Elementary, Mountain View Elementary, Greer Elementary, Red Hill Elementary, Scottsville Elementary, Stone-Robinson Elementary and Woodbrook Elementary. Families living within the Stony Point Elementary school district may participate at Stone-Robinson Elementary.

Those who live within the **Charlottesville City** limits and have a child who will be three or four years old by September 30 may be eligible to enroll in the Charlottesville City Preschool Program and/or MACAA Head Start.

***Dr. Jesse Turner, Who Led Two High Schools in the County, Returning to Albemarle as Division's Director of Student Services***—Dr. Jesse Turner, who has served as the principal of

two of the division's high schools, is returning to Albemarle County Public Schools as its division-wide Director of Student Services, effective July 1.

Turner will be leading the planning, design and implementation of programs that support student learning, the social and emotional wellness of students, and school security and emergency preparedness. His portfolio encompasses oversight of the division's new student safety coach program; implementation of the division's anti-racism policy as it impacts students, which includes greater awareness and use of an anonymous online reporting system; expansion of a highly successful program alternative to out-of-school suspensions; school security reviews; crisis planning; and community outreach.

In his funding request message to the School Board earlier this year, Superintendent Dr. Matthew Haas said the new student safety coach program will be focused on identifying and using best practices for student, employee, and school visitor safety. Among its benefits, he said, will be improvements in school climate, student attendance, and relationships with students.

Turner began his administrative career in the division as an assistant principal at Sutherland Middle School in 2003 and moved to its largest high school, Albemarle, as an assistant principal in 2005. He became the principal of Monticello High School in 2012. During his leadership, Monticello earned the National School Boards Association's prestigious Magna Award for academic innovation and excellence. Among the school's other signature achievements while Turner was principal was a 100% on-time graduation rate for Black students. In 2017, Turner was appointed principal of Albemarle High School, the division's largest school. He relocated in 2019 to the Charlottesville City school division as principal of Buford Middle School.

***School Board Approves Recommendations of Community Advisory Committees & Superintendent on Names of Charter, Murray Elementary Schools; Jouett Next School to Have Name Reviewed***—At their April 1 meeting, the Albemarle County School Board approved two school naming recommendations from community advisory committees and from Superintendent Dr. Matthew Haas. In unanimous votes, the Board retained the name of Virginia L. Murray Elementary School and decided to name the division's charter school Community Lab School, effective July 1, 2021.

The Superintendent told the Board that just as previous name reviews have demonstrated, one of the most valuable benefits from the naming reviews was the engagement of students, who learned about the history of their schools and came together to reflect on their school's mission and values. "It's rare for students to have the opportunity to be part of a process that names their own school," he said.

Haas said the next school to conduct a naming review will be Jack Jouett Middle School. The school, named for a Revolutionary War soldier, opened in 1966 as a junior high school and became a middle school in 1977. The school's enrollment last year was 681 students.

Hannah Peters, who has taught special education at Jouett for eight years, has been named the chair of the community advisory committee that will review the school's name and make a

recommendation to Haas on whether the name should be retained or the school should have a new name.

The advisory committee will include Ashby Johnson, the school's principal; at least three teachers and/or staff; at least three parents of Jouett students; and two residents of the school community who do not presently have children enrolled in the school. Also on the committee will be at least one parent of a student from each elementary school who will attend Jouett, encompassing Agnor-Hurt, Broadus Wood, Greer, and Woodbrook. Johnson also is planning to involve students in the review process.

Those interested in becoming members of the advisory committee are asked to email why they would like to serve, their affiliation with the school, and their contact information to [SchoolNamingReview@k12albemarle.org](mailto:SchoolNamingReview@k12albemarle.org) no later than 5 p.m. on Wednesday, April 21. Committee members will be announced on April 23 and the committee is expected to hold their organizational meeting the following week.

As required by School Board policy, the Jouett advisory committee will conduct up to two online surveys to gather suggestions for the school's name, including keeping the current name. Those surveys will be the subject of as many as two public forums, in which community members can discuss survey results. Following these public engagement sessions, the committee will make a recommendation to Haas.

Jouett will be the fifth school in the division to have its name reviewed. In all, there were 13 schools in the division named for individuals when the naming review policy went into effect in October of 2018. Information on the naming review policy, process, and all of the current and completed reviews can be found on the division's [School Naming Review](#) website.

***School Division to Enhance Its Human Resources Support & Services for Employees***—The school division and Albemarle County local government are engaging professional consultants to review their human resources structure for serving employees. The ultimate outcome will be separate human resources departments for each organization—departments that will be more closely aligned with each organization's specific strategic and operational needs. These improvements are expected to take place by July 2022.

Among the areas that the school division's consultant will examine is a review of existing policies, practices, and staffing structures to evaluate their effectiveness and relevance to the division's mission, values, and competitive strength. This research will include an assessment of best practices of high-performing human resource departments in other school divisions. Recommendations will include optimum staffing structures, ratios, and technology resources that will best serve the school division's strategic and operational responsibilities to families and students, staff, and community partners. Among those responsibilities are the recruitment, hiring, development and retention of outstanding employees; competitive compensation and benefits; employee wellness, recognition and engagement programs; and assisting with implementation of the division's anti-racism policy.