



## Board-to-Board, May 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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***ACPS Administrator Appointed as Principal of the Division's First Fully Virtual School***—Reed Gillespie, who joined Albemarle County Public Schools (ACPS) as an associate principal for Monticello High School in 2015 and currently serves as the associate principal at Western Albemarle High School, has been appointed as principal of the division's first fully virtual school. The new school, which debuts on August 23, will provide synchronous learning on a full-day schedule. In addition to Gillespie, the school is hiring a faculty that will be fully devoted to online instruction.

The new principal will be joined by the division's Director of Secondary Education, Jay Thomas, in two upcoming information sessions on the virtual school on May 26 and June 1. Interested parents and students may join the virtual information sessions using the following links:

- Wednesday, May 26 | 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. | [Zoom link](#)
- Tuesday, June 1 | 6 to 7 p.m. | [Zoom link](#)

The school division also has established a [Virtual School](#) web page with information and updates on the virtual school.

The division's Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Matthew Haas, said that the new school is a one-year pilot and furthers the expansion of choice that has led to more diversity in the range of learning experiences available to students. "We want students to be excited about how and what they learn," he said. "When schools meet students at their individual interest and passion points, their academic performance becomes more purposeful and fulfilling," he said.

On June 1, all families in the school division will receive an intent form that asks them to declare whether their child will attend school in person or virtually when the new school year begins. The form also will be available on the Parent Portal for each student and should be completed by June 11.

Families that choose to enroll one or more of their children in the virtual school will receive follow-up information regarding registration for course offerings and will be asked to commit to the virtual school for at least one semester, through January of next year.

Gillespie's focus as a leader has been on designing programs and working with students on academic coaching. His previous experience includes leading a weekly Twitter program for

educators and being a frequent presenter at Edcamp, the professional development resource for Digital Promise, an education nonprofit authorized by the U.S. Congress to expand learning opportunities for students by speeding up innovation in how students learn.

This year, Gillespie led a student-teacher committee to redesign instruction around technology integration to support online and hybrid learning and expanded the school's community outreach, adding improvements to its website and the production of video tutorials. He also initiated professional development opportunities for teachers to enhance student and teacher engagement and expanded student participation in a program that prepares students for college success.

Prior to joining Albemarle County Public Schools, Gillespie taught English and history and served as the social studies department chair at Rappahannock County High School. He also taught at Fauquier High School and was an assistant principal at Kettle Run High School in Nokesville. He received his Bachelor of Arts from Wittenberg University and his Master's in Educational Administration from Shenandoah University.

***New Accessibility Option in Use At ACPS***—For the past few years, ACPS has used Google Translate's website translator widget to provide free and automatic translation of our website content. However, Google announced in 2019 that they would no longer support their website translator widget. Eventually the tool will cease to work, likely without warning.

In order to ensure that ACPS web content is accessible to users who prefer to read text in a language other than English, ACPS has partnered with a website translation service called Weglot (pronounced Wē-glōt). Beginning **Monday, May 3**, Weglot will seamlessly integrate with our website to offer translation options.

For ACPS website visitors, Weglot will behave similarly to Google Translate. A drop-down menu located in the upper-right corner of our website will allow users to select an alternate language. In response, Weglot will automatically detect and translate text content in the selected language.

As of the launch on May 3, the drop-down menu will include English, Spanish, Arabic, Korean, Nepali, Pashto, Swahili, and Chinese. Moving forward, we will continue to partner with the ESOL team to make sure the language offerings meet the needs of ACPS students, their families, and community.

On the backend, Weglot offers tools that will help us improve ACPS customer service, such as editing automatic translations, if needed, and a dashboard where we can add additional languages to our menu. The program also allows ACPS employees to view analytics to help monitor and evaluate use of the translation tool.

***Online Survey for Members of the Jack Jouett School Community Seeks Opinions on Whether the School's Name Should Change***—Members of the Jack Jouett Middle School community are being asked to share their views about the name of their school through an online survey that became active today. The survey, which will close on Thursday, May 27, asks participants if they favor the school's current name or have suggestions for a new one.

The survey can be accessed at <https://survey.k12insight.com/r/vqho07>.

The survey is part of a school naming review being conducted by a 16-member community advisory committee in accordance with a division-wide policy. The policy requires a community review of all schools in the division that are named for an individual to ensure those school names reflect the division's four values of excellence, young people, community, and respect.

The Jouett advisory committee will be sharing the results of the survey prior to a public meeting on Wednesday, June 2, at 6:30 p.m. At that meeting, which will be conducted virtually over the Zoom video conferencing platform, community members will be able to offer comments on the names that were proposed through the survey.

The Jouett advisory committee is led by Hannah Peters, a Jouett teacher who chairs the advisory committee. The committee includes parents from Jouett and from the four elementary schools that send students to Jouett; Jouett's principal; faculty and staff; a student alumna; and members of the community who do not presently have children attending the school.

Four naming reviews have been completed by volunteer community advisory committees thus far, with the school board voting to change the name of three schools and to retain the name of another. Summaries of all completed reviews and those in progress are accessible from the school division's [School Names Under Review](#) web page.

Following the public meeting on June 2, the committee will narrow the list of suggested names to five semi-finalists, which again will be subject to community input. If the Jack Jouett name is among the semi-finalists, the committee will conduct research on Jouett, who was a captain in the Revolutionary War, credited with warning of a British plot to kidnap Thomas Jefferson. The school board's naming review policy requires the advisory committee to seek to notify any family members of a school's namesake as part of its process. Peters said the committee welcomes any information from the public regarding the Jouett family history or descendants.

In addition to the upcoming public meetings, Peters said the committee welcomes suggestions or questions about the review process at any time. All committee members can be emailed at [SchoolNamingReview@k12albemarle.org](mailto:SchoolNamingReview@k12albemarle.org). The same address can be used to register to speak at the public meeting on June 2.

***School Board Adopts More Robust Budget for the New School Year***—At its May 13 meeting, the Albemarle County School Board adopted an operating budget for the 2021-22 school year of \$211.2 million, an increase of 9% over the current year. The new fiscal year begins on July 1. The adopted budget represents an increase from the School Board’s Funding Request of \$209.9 million presented in March. The changes are summarized in two presentations: [Budget Updates](#) (April 22, 2021) and [Budget Adoption](#) (May 13, 2021).

The division’s higher revenue results from recovering economies at the state and county levels. These increases have made possible an emphasis next year on improving employee compensation. The school board’s approval of raises next year will make stronger the division’s ability to recruit, develop and retain a competitive work force.

The scale and step increase for teachers will total 5.2% for eligible faculty, and eligible classified staff will see their salaries rise by 4%. All Virginia Retirement System (VRS) eligible employees will earn at least \$15 per hour, and some part-time employees will see enhanced health insurance benefits.

Next year’s budget will restore 9.5 positions that were frozen in the current year. Also restored were two programs postponed from a year ago: an expansion of the division’s equity staff and the adoption by all schools of the division’s Short-Term Educational Program (STEP).

One new program is included in the 2021-22 budget: student safety coaches. Focused on best practices for student, employee, and school visitor safety, this team will be housed across secondary schools and serve as a resource for the elementary schools that feed into them. This program is designed to improve school climates, student attendance, and relationships with students.

To learn more about the budget development process and to access budget materials, including the budget book, slide presentations, live stream recordings, and more, please visit the [2021-22 Budget Development](#) web page.

***ACPS Holds Strategic Planning Focus Group Sessions for Staff, Students, Families and Community Members***—On Tuesday, May 18 and Thursday, May 20, ACPS hosted Strategic Planning Focus Group sessions for staff and students this afternoon at 4:30 and this Thursday, May 20, at 6 p.m. These sessions offered the opportunity for staff and students to view a draft of the division’s new strategic plan, including the ACPS mission, goals and objectives, and offer feedback.

The ACPS strategic planning process is being led by Patrick McLaughlin, ACPS Chief of Strategic Planning, along with a steering committee made up of Helen Dunn, Jasmine Fernández and Jamie Gellner. A draft of the plan will go before the school board in June in hopes that it will be finalized soon thereafter and implemented in time for the new academic year this fall.