

MINUTES
ALBEMARLE COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD
Business Meeting
Thursday, March 12, 2026
[Meeting Video Link](#)

Roll Call - UPON THE ROLL BEING CALLED, THE FOLLOWING WERE PRESENT:

Board Members - Dr. Kate Acuff, Mr. Bob Beard, Dr. Rebecca Berlin, Mr. Jim Dillenbeck, Ms. Judy Le, Ms. Ellen Osborne, and Student School Board Representative Claire Curry

Absent – Ms. Allison Spillman

Staff Members - Superintendent Matthew Haas; Chief Legal Officer Josiah Black; Assistant Superintendent Daphne Keiser; Assistant Superintendent Patrick McLaughlin; Assistant Superintendent Chandra Hayes; Chief Operating Officer Rosalyn Schmitt; Assistant School Division Counsel Erin Stone, Chief Human Resources Officer Dan Redding; Chief Communications Officer Jason Grant; and Clerk of the School Board Christine Thompson

AGENDA ITEM NO. 1.0 CLOSED MEETING - At 5:30 p.m., Dr. Acuff offered a **motion** that the Albemarle County Public School Board of Albemarle County, Virginia go into a closed meeting as authorized by the Virginia Freedom of Information Act, section 2.2-3711(A) of the Code of Virginia under:

1. Subsection 1, which authorizes the discussion, consideration, or interviews of prospective candidates for employment and the assignment, appointment, promotion, performance, demotion, salaries, disciplining, or resignation of specific public officers, appointees, or employees of any public body. The purpose of this item is to review and discuss the appointment of a candidate for the position of Principal of Henley Middle School. The Chief Human Resources Officer will also brief the School Board on proposed reductions in force for the 2026-2027 school year.
2. Subsection 3 for discussion or consideration of the acquisition of real property for a public purpose or the disposition of publicly held real property, where discussion in an open meeting would adversely affect the bargaining position or negotiating strategy of the public body. The purpose of this item is to discuss a parcel of land that might be used for a fourth comprehensive high school.
3. Subsection 8 for consultation with legal counsel employed or retained by the School Board regarding specific legal matters requiring the provision of legal advice by such counsel; the purpose of this item is for the School Division's Chief Legal Officer to advise the School Board regarding changes to public comment procedures at its meetings and the process for discussing and acting on proposed amendments to School Board policy.

Ms. Le seconded the **motion**. **A voice vote was called, and the motion passed unanimously (6-0)**. [Ms. Spillman was absent]

AGENDA ITEM NO. 2.0 OPENING ACTIVITIES

Agenda Item No. 2.1 Call to Order - At 6:30 p.m., Chair Berlin called the Albemarle County School Board meeting back to order.

Agenda Item No. 2.2 Closed Meeting Certification - At 6:31 p.m., Dr. Acuff offered a **motion** that the Board certify by recorded vote that to the best of each Board member's knowledge, only public business matters lawfully exempted from the open meeting requirements of the Virginia Freedom of Information Act and identified in the motion authorizing the Closed Meeting were heard, discussed, or considered in the Closed Meeting. Ms. Le seconded the **motion**. **A voice vote was called, and the motion passed unanimously (6-0)**. [Ms. Spillman was absent]

Dr. Acuff offered a **motion** to appoint John Hobson as principal of Henley Middle School as recommended by staff. Ms. Le seconded the **motion**. **A voice vote was called, and the motion passed unanimously (6-0)**. [Ms. Spillman was absent]

Agenda Item No. 2.3 - Roll Call

Agenda Item No. 2.4 - Pledge of Allegiance

Agenda Item No. 2.5 - Moment of Silence

AGENDA ITEM NO. 3.0 APPROVAL OF AGENDA – Ms. Le offered a **motion** to approve the agenda. Ms. Osborne seconded the **motion**. **A voice vote was called, and the motion passed unanimously (6-0)**. [Ms. Spillman was absent]

AGENDA ITEM NO. 4.0 ANNOUNCEMENTS

Agenda Item No. 4.1 Spotlight on Education - None

Agenda Item No. 4.2 School Board, Superintendent, and Committee Updates

Chair Berlin appointed two community members from the White Hall district to serve on the Advisory Committee for Environmental Sustainability (ACES)

Jennifer Williams
Meghan Geraghty

AGENDA ITEM NO. 5.0 PUBLIC COMMENT

Chair Berlin explained that public comment would proceed under the School Board’s established procedures. Because more than 20 individuals had signed up to speak, speakers would be selected through a lottery, with each selected speaker limited to two minutes. The total public comment period would not exceed 40 minutes unless extended by the Board.

The Chair reminded speakers to state their name and address or magisterial district for the record, address comments to the School Board as a body, and limit remarks to matters within the Board’s work or school division operations. The Chair also emphasized that public comment is not a debate, a forum for personal attacks, or a place to direct remarks at individual Board members, division leaders, or staff.

The Chair asked all speakers and attendees to remain respectful, noting that adults in the room are examples for students. The Chair stated that if a speaker engaged in personal attacks, they would be asked to stop and reframe their remarks. If the speaker continued, the microphone could be turned off.

The Chair directed the audience not to clap, shout, interrupt, or otherwise audibly express support or opposition during public comment. Attendees who wished to show support were asked to do so silently, such as by raising a hand or standing. Signs were permitted, provided they did not block anyone’s view.

The Chair also reviewed the disruptive meeting procedures, including warnings, possible recess, removal from the meeting, and continuation of the meeting once order is restored, citing School Board policy and applicable Virginia Code provisions.

Noah Coffman, Samuel Miller District, TPUSA student club member stated that he was speaking as a student involved with the Turning Point USA chapter in Albemarle County. He began by expressing respect for the School Board and acknowledged that serving on the Board is difficult. He said Board members have a unique opportunity to create positive change for students, but he did not believe the proposed policy change would accomplish that. He raised concerns that the policy would negatively affect student speech, dialogue, and participation in student groups. He described his experience with the TPUSA club as a place where students from different backgrounds, races, religions, and viewpoints came together to ask questions, listen, and participate in civil discussion. He said he had seen students more engaged in that setting than he often sees in class. Coffman encouraged the Board to support environments where students can gather, ask questions, and have civil discussions, rather than creating what he viewed as a culture of silence. He expressed concern that the policy could limit opportunities for student engagement and could affect student organizations that rely on donations, outside support, or student-led participation. Mr. Coffman also referenced student opposition to the proposed policy, stating that students had signed or responded to a survey opposing it. He urged the Board not to move forward with the policy as proposed.

Jennifer Ludovici, parent, Samuel Miller District. Ms. Ludovici stated that she supports the immediate adoption of the proposed changes to the student activities policy. She acknowledged that others may view the policy differently but offered her perspective that recent concerns involving outside organizations have highlighted the need for clearer rules. She said the issue is not simply the conduct of one organization, but the lack of policy clarity for administrators, parents, students, and educators regarding what outside groups may do during school time and in public school spaces. She emphasized that policies should provide clear direction and should not rely on interpretation after problems arise. She said the proposed changes would help clarify expectations and are needed because current practice has revealed gaps in the existing policy. Ms. Ludovici encouraged the Board to move forward with the proposed policy changes.

Amanda Moxham, Rio district. Ms. Moxham stated that schools should be places where every student feels safe, respected, and able to focus on learning. She argued that Turning Point USA, referred to as Club America, should not be treated as an ordinary student club because, in the speaker's view, it is connected to a national political organization with a history of racist, homophobic, misogynistic, and confrontational behavior. Ms. Moxham referenced incidents at other schools and colleges, including allegations involving racist and homophobic language and student walkouts related to LGBTQ issues, as examples of why the organization raises concern. She also connected the issue to Charlottesville's history with white supremacist organizing and said that history should inform decisions about what is allowed in public schools. She concluded that the School Board has a responsibility under federal civil rights law to protect students from hostile environments and urged Albemarle County to prioritize student safety and protection.

Frankie Arens, a graduate of Albemarle County Public Schools and a current public educator in the division, spoke regarding planned reductions in force. Ms. Arens stated that the staffing cuts tied to the opening of ACE Academy had undermined trust, disrupted schools, and negatively affected high-quality educators. She urged division leadership to better support teachers and staff.

Phillip Hamilton, of the Jack Jouett District, spoke in opposition to the proposed policy revisions. Mr. Hamilton expressed support for Turning Point USA, urged the Board to retain the current policy, referenced concerns raised by the Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression, and stated that adoption of the proposed revisions could result in legal challenges.

Carmen Chandross yielded speaking time to Jimmy Hawk.

Jimmy Hawk of Crozet spoke regarding concerns raised by students at Western Albemarle High School about bullying, intimidation, bias, and disrespect in the learning environment. Mr. Hawk supported requiring outside speakers to appear after school to avoid disruption during the instructional day and urged the Board to address hostile speech and student safety more directly.

Nancy Koenig of Scottsville, a retired county teacher and parent of a Monticello High School graduate, spoke in opposition to the proposed changes. Ms. Koenig stated that the current procedure supports a broad and balanced range of student activities and viewpoints, questioned the timing of the revisions in light of an invited Turning Point USA speaker, and expressed concern that funds raised by clubs could be retained by schools if a club were dissolved.

James Powers, a parent in the Rio District, spoke in support of the proposed revisions. Mr. Powers asked the Board to clarify how disruption would be measured, stated that the impact on targeted students should be central in determining whether conduct is harmful, and urged the division to provide clear guidance on terms such as violence, harassment, and hatred, including how outside affiliated organizations would be monitored. Will Woodrow yielded speaking time to Ollie Woodrow.

Ollie Woodrow, vice president and co-founder of the Turning Point USA chapter at Western Albemarle High School, spoke in opposition to the proposed revisions. Mr. Woodrow stated that the club had encouraged civil political discourse among students and argued that limiting outside speakers to after-school hours would significantly reduce participation and harm student dialogue.

Adrian Eichner, a graduate of Albemarle High School, spoke in opposition to the proposed policy changes. Ms. Eichner stated that student clubs provide valuable opportunities for students to learn from one another and questioned why the Board was considering additional restrictions on clubs she described as respectful and peaceful. Her comments were interrupted after she began directing remarks toward a Board member.

Libby Hewitt of the Samuel Miller district spoke in opposition to the proposed policy changes. She referenced the Equal Access Act and stated that students should have equal access and equal treatment when participating in student clubs. She raised concerns that the proposed policy could create unequal access for students who do not have transportation or who cannot stay after school. In her view, limiting certain club activities or meetings to times outside the school day may disadvantage students who rely on buses or otherwise cannot return to school later. Ms. Hewitt said that student clubs should be encouraged, not restricted, and that students should be allowed to choose their speakers, manage their budgets, and conduct their own meetings. She described those responsibilities as part of how students learn leadership. She also said students are looking for honest, in-person dialogue and opportunities to search for truth. She suggested that the growth of the club reflects students' desire for that kind of engagement.

Barbara Ruddy, Samuel Miller district stated that, based on her experience as a long-time resident, former legislator, and former Albemarle County Public Schools central office administrator, she believes she is qualified to comment on policies affecting student health, well-being, and safety. Ms. Ruddy supported the proposed policy changes regarding outside speakers for non-curricular student clubs and activities during the school day. She emphasized that the proposed changes would not eliminate existing curricular or non-curricular student clubs and would continue to comply with the federal Equal Access Act. She said the proposed revisions do not discriminate against or prohibit outside speakers from being invited to non-curricular student clubs. Rather, the policy appropriately distinguishes between outside speakers for curricular activities and outside speakers for non-curricular clubs during the school day. Ms. Ruddy concluded that the proposed changes do not restrict student free speech or the exchange of ideas, both of which they described as important to students' intellectual development and civic growth.

Kim Albero, White Hall district resident, mother of four, parent, and Army veteran. Dr. Albero spoke in support of student safety concerns related to school-day events involving high-profile visitors who may require elevated security. She stated that ACPS already has safety protocols coordinated among school administration and law enforcement, including procedures related to potential threats. She said that, given her military background and understanding of operational risk management, she became concerned about whether there was a clear risk management plan for events involving high-profile visitors at a local high school. Dr. Albero found that some safety planning information exists, but that it appears to involve confidential coordination between law enforcement and school administration. While she found the existence of a plan reassuring, she emphasized that parents also need reassurance that appropriate protocols are being followed to keep students safe.

She argued that when an organization invites a speaker who requires significant security into a public school during school hours, the safety implications should be considered carefully. She said parents deserve to understand how student safety will be protected, especially when students are required to be at school even if the event itself is connected to a voluntary club. Dr. Alberio urged the Board to consider whether such events increase risk for students and to ensure that safety planning and parent communication are handled appropriately.

Josh Hetzler, counsel for Founding Freedoms Law Center and legal counsel for Club America stated that he was speaking on behalf of an organization that protects constitutional rights and civil liberties. He expressed opposition to the proposed policy changes and raised concerns that the policy could infringe on students' constitutional rights. He acknowledged that the School Board has authority to set reasonable parameters for student clubs but said that authority is not unlimited. He argued that the proposed policy appears to have been developed in response to a specific student club and its invited speaker, which he viewed as problematic. Mr. Hetzler suggested that the timing of the policy change raises concerns about whether the policy is being applied in a content-based or viewpoint-based manner. He expressed concern that the policy could give too much discretion to one person to dissolve or limit a club based on subjective judgments about speech, organizations, or viewpoints. He urged the Board to reject the proposed policy and to protect the constitutional rights of all students.

Zach Paulet of the White Hall district stated that he has served in uniform for 23 years, first in the Army and now in the Virginia National Guard. He said that service has reinforced for him the importance of protecting rights, civility, freedom, and respectful disagreement. Mr. Paulet said schools should be places of learning, inclusion, mutual understanding, and support. He expressed concern about what he described as a disturbing trend at Western Albemarle High School, where his two sons have reported that certain club activities and outside materials have increased division among students. He said his children have come home feeling unsafe and that, when guest speakers create security concerns at school, his family has considered keeping them home. He stated that the disruptions associated with TPUSA have negatively affected the learning environment at Western. Mr. Paulet also said school administrators need clearer policy guidance to do their jobs effectively. He emphasized that, in his view, the issue is not political and is not limited to TPUSA. Rather, he said it applies to any organization or speaker whose actions create risk, interfere with students' rights, or disrupt the school environment. He concluded that the proposed policy would help administrators maintain an academic-first and inclusive learning environment.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 6.0 APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA – Dr. Acuff offered a motion to approve the Consent Agenda. Ms. Le **seconded the motion. A voice vote was called, and the motion passed unanimously (6-0).** [Ms. Spillman was absent]

- 6.1 Approval of Consent Agenda
- 6.2 Personnel Action
- 6.3 Approval of the Minutes
- 6.4 FY26 2nd Quarter Financial Report
- 6.5 Personnel Action – Athletics Coaches
- 6.6 For Information: Communications Committee Charter
- 6.7 Proposed Adjustments to the 2026-2027 School Year Calendar
- 6.8 For Action: Architectural/Engineering Selection Committee for the Northern Feeder Pattern Elementary School

AGENDA ITEM NO. 7.0 ITEMS PULLED FROM CONSENT AGENDA – None

AGENDA ITEM NO. 8.0 SCHOOL DIVISION BUSINESS

Agenda Item No. 8.1 Policy IGDA on Student Clubs - Dr. Russell Carlock, Educational Equity Data Specialist, presented information regarding the review and proposed revisions to Policy IGDA, Student Activities. Dr. Carlock reported that the review was undertaken at the School Board's request and included a comparison of ACPS policy with policies from peer Virginia school divisions, as well as input gathered from students, staff, and caregivers to ensure community input informed the recommendations.

Dr. Carlock stated that the review identified areas where additional clarity and stronger language would support more consistent implementation. These areas included the chartering of student organizations, financial oversight, fundraising procedures, safety provisions, and expectations related to outside involvement. He further reported that the proposed revisions would clarify definitions, establish an application process for student organizations, strengthen language related to safety and viewpoint neutrality, and provide additional guidance regarding guest speakers, fundraising, and facility use.

Dr. Carlock explained that the proposed language regarding fundraising was intended to align student organization fundraising with existing ACPS financial practices and policies. He stated that the proposed language requires all fundraising by student organizations, whether inside or outside of school, to receive prior approval from the principal or designee. He also explained that money raised or collected by student organizations and clubs must be deposited promptly into the school's student activity fund.

Dr. Carlock noted that the fundraising language was added based on guidance from finance staff to clarify how student activity funds are already handled. He explained that if funds cannot be used for the specific purpose originally identified in a fundraising proposal, the funds may be used for a purpose as close as possible to the original intent. As an example, he referenced fundraising related to student music competitions and explained that, when circumstances change, administrators may need to determine how to apply those funds appropriately and in accordance with existing policy.

Dr. Carlock also connected the proposed language to existing ACPS policies governing fundraising, crowdfunding, and school-based funds. He stated that those policies already require appropriate approval, direct that funds raised through crowdfunding or similar efforts be sent to the school or ACPS Finance, and provide that donated or purchased items become ACPS property when acquired for school programs.

Dr. Carlock stated that the proposed policy language does not create an entirely new fundraising process. Rather, it clarifies and connects student club fundraising to existing school division financial policies and student activity fund procedures.

Chair Berlin shared that discussion of both the full policy and the proposed changes would be appropriate, as each provides important context. She thanked Dr. Carlock and his team for their work over the past several months.

Dr. Acuff commented that, in November, the Board had requested a review of policies in Virginia and elsewhere to help clarify the Board's thinking regarding student clubs. She stated that many questions had been answered that the review was thorough, and that they supported adoption of the policy as written. She also thanked those involved in the review process, as well as the individuals who addressed the Board during public comment.

The Board discussed how to define the portion of the school day during which certain student club-related activities would apply. A concern was raised that the period immediately before and after the school day can be difficult to define because the time between the final bell and when students leave campus is often chaotic.

Ms. Le asked whether the Board wanted to establish a specific time frame, such as 15 or 20 minutes before the first bell and 15 or 20 minutes after the final bell. She also noted that the division uses the term “teacher contract day,” but that the specific time frame was not available during the discussion.

Dan Redding, Chief Human Resources Officer, clarified that teacher contract time can be adjusted based on the needs of the position.

Board members continued discussing whether the policy language should include a specific time frame or broader language based on the needs of the school or activity. A Board member noted that if the policy is going to define the time period, the language should be useful and clear. It was also noted that meetings held immediately after school may be easier to manage than meetings held later, depending on the activity and school operations.

Board members continued discussing how to define the school day for purposes of the policy. A recommendation was made to use a specific time period after dismissal rather than tying the language to when buses leave or when all students have cleared campus. It was noted that students who are interested in attending an after-school club or presentation often either remain at school or leave and return.

Dr. Haas recommended specifying a defined time period and noted that adjustments could be made later if the time frame proved impractical. Board members discussed how this would apply across school levels, including the different dismissal times for middle and high schools. It was noted that all high schools have a common bell schedule, and all middle schools have a common bell schedule with the exception of Henley Middle School.

Board members discussed several options, including using a set time of day or defining the school day as a certain number of minutes before the first bell and after the final bell. It was clarified that the policy applies to secondary schools, so only middle schools and high schools were included in the discussion.

Ms. Le offered a **motion** to define the school day as *45 minutes before the first bell and 45 minutes after the final bell of the day for all high schools, and 30 minutes before the first bell and 30 minutes after the final bell of the day for all middle schools*. Mr. Dillenbeck seconded the **motion**. A voice vote was called, and the **motion passed unanimously 6-0**. [Ms. Spillman was absent]

Mr. Dillenbeck encouraged those present to consider the perspectives of others and to engage in honest and respectful conversations with individuals who may hold opposing views. He stated that the Board is responsible for setting policy to govern the schools and must consider whether a policy will enhance or inhibit student learning.

Mr. Dillenbeck stated that while he agreed with many provisions of the proposed policy change, he had significant concerns regarding several issues. He noted the Board’s responsibility to adopt a balanced policy that protects students’ rights to a safe and effective learning environment while also protecting students’ rights of free expression. He also referenced concerns about harassment on both sides of the issue and stated that such conduct needs to stop.

Mr. Dillenbeck stated that the Board had received substantial input on the policy and welcomed productive feedback. He indicated that he had several specific friendly amendments to offer. Before doing so, *he proposed that the Board remove, for purposes of the current discussion, the policy language related to financial donations and the distribution and management of fundraising*. He stated that he believed the Board could agree on much of the remainder of the policy, but that the fundraising language left unanswered questions and raised concerns regarding money coming into student organizations from outside sources.

Mr. Dillenbeck clarified that his concern also included the supervision of fundraising activities. A point of order was raised that Mr. Dillenbeck had made a motion and that, if seconded, the motion could be discussed.

Mr. Dillenbeck's proposal was clarified as a **motion** to *delete Section 3, Fundraising by Student Organization, from the proposed policy and allow that section to be pulled out for additional work.*

A second to the **motion** was requested. Hearing no second, the **motion died for lack of a second.**

Mr. Dillenbeck offered a **motion** to *amend the policy language on line 63 to add "political beliefs" to the list of protected categories in the sentence addressing student organizations that promote or endorse violence, harassment, or hatred toward an identifiable person or group.* The proposed language was discussed, including whether the phrase should be "political beliefs" or "political affiliation" and where it should be inserted in the sentence. Mr. Dillenbeck moved to insert "political beliefs" after "disability" in the applicable sentence. Mr. Beard seconded the **motion**. Board members discussed the proposed amendment. Ms. Le raised a concern about adding a mutable characteristic to a list of immutable characteristics and whether the existing list aligned with categories commonly recognized under the Virginia Human Rights Act.

Chair Berlin requested a roll call vote.

The vote was as follows:

Mr. Beard: Yes

Mr. Dillenbeck: Yes

Ms. Le: No

Ms. Osborne: Yes

Ms. Spillman: Absent

Dr. Acuff: No

Chair Berlin: No

With a vote of 3-3 the **motion failed to carry.**

Mr. Dillenbeck offered a **motion** to amend Section 3, beginning with line 194, Section B, Fundraising, to add language stating that *"any club receiving outside funds must demonstrate competent adult guardianship of the funds and disclose fundraising activity to school administration on an annual basis."* The proposed amendment also stated that *"clubs requiring additional security and supervision would be required to pay for those services."*

Mr. Dillenbeck further proposed amending the final sentence of the section to state that, *"if a student organization is dissolved, student activity funds collected inside the school would continue to belong to the school, and any funds collected from outside sources would be returned to the outside organization."*

Chair Berlin acknowledged that a **motion** was on the floor and recognized Mr. Jackson Zimmerman, School Finance Officer, to provide clarification regarding school accounting procedures.

Mr. Zimmerman explained that, once funds are under the school division's control, they are School Board funds and may only be disbursed under School Board policies and procedures. Funds received by the school division generally belong to the School Board and are used for School Board activities. The division generally does not return those funds after they have been received for a stated purpose. He further clarified the distinction between smaller donations handled at the school level and larger or formal donations requiring School Board recognition. If an individual gives a smaller donation, such as \$100, to a student organization and does not require tax documentation, the donation may typically be handled at the school level and deposited into the applicable school activity account. If a donor wants the donation formally recognized for tax purposes, the donation must be received by the School Board and appropriate documentation must be provided.

A large donation, such as a hypothetical \$100,000 donation for a mountain biking event, should be made directly through the School Board and brought before the Board, with administration involved. Smaller general-purpose donations to a club may typically be handled at the school level unless IRS documentation is requested.

Chair Berlin noted that the **motion** remained on the floor and asked whether Board members wanted Mr. Dillenbeck to restate the motion before deciding whether to second it. Hearing no request and no second, the **motion died for lack of a second**.

Board and staff discussed how funds raised by student organizations are currently handled and why clearer policy language is needed. It was noted that, in prior situations, students who organized fundraisers were required to follow established procedures for facility use, collection of funds, and prompt deposit of money with the school bookkeeper.

The discussion included an example of a student-organized fundraiser held at a high school, where students planned a soccer tournament to raise money for a charitable organization. Because the event occurred at the school and involved the collection of money, the students were required to follow the school's process for renting the facility, collecting funds, tracking receipts, and ensuring the money was turned over to the school bookkeeper as soon as possible.

Staff explained that this process reflects how student activity funds are already intended to operate. Money collected through student fundraising is deposited into the school's student activity fund and accounted for through the school's financial procedures. The purpose of the proposed policy language is to make that process clearer and more consistent across schools.

It was also noted that schools may have handled some situations differently in the past, which is why having clear policy language is important. The goal is to ensure that fundraising and student activity funds are managed properly, consistently, and in alignment with existing finance policies and school-based accounting procedures.

It was noted that **line 65** already included language stating that failure to comply with the provisions could be grounds for disciplinary action or revocation of the right to conduct meetings under the policy. Mr. Dillenbeck clarified that his concern was not only the grounds for revocation, but also the need to include an appeal process.

Board members discussed placement of the proposed language. Mr. Dillenbeck agreed that the language could be inserted in Section 3A, around line 67, and that it would replace the existing "failure to comply" language on line 65.

Mr. Dillenbeck **moved** to replace the existing language on line 65 with language stating that *failure to comply with these provisions shall be grounds for disciplinary action or revocation of recognition, and that non-curricular-related clubs and organizations denied permission to use school facilities by a principal may appeal the principal's decision to the superintendent or designee*. Ms. Le seconded the **motion**. A voice vote was called, and the **motion passed unanimously 6-0**. [Ms. Spillman was absent]

Mr. Beard thanked the individuals who spoke during public comment and expressed appreciation to ACPS staff, specifically Dr. Carlock, for their work in proposing revisions to the rules governing student organizations.

Mr. Beard stated that he was speaking as a taxpayer who cares deeply about Albemarle County Public Schools and as the parent of two sons who graduated from Western Albemarle High School in 2018. He stated that his sons received an excellent education and have gone on to successful careers and happy lives.

Mr. Beard expressed concern that the school community he and other families know, and value has experienced division and controversy related to outside speakers during lunch sponsored by non-curricular student organizations. He stated that the division needs to remain focused on student academic achievement and return its attention to educating and supporting students.

Mr. Beard spoke about the importance of caring for students, providing rigorous academics, and preparing them to become the adults and leaders of the future. He also emphasized the importance of preserving the positive qualities of the high school experience, including students' knowledge, creativity, passion, athleticism, and humor. Mr. Beard stated that the distraction should end and that he supports the proposed policy.

Chair Berlin shared that Ms. Spillman was unable to attend the meeting due to a prior work commitment and read a [statement from Ms. Spillman](#) into the record.

Chair Berlin thanked those who participated in public comment, as well as those who contacted the School Board by email regarding the proposed policy changes. She thanked Dr. Grant for providing data regarding emails received by the full Board. And noted that the Board received 44 emails regarding the proposed policy changes through the full School Board email account and that she responded to those emails. She also acknowledged that individual Board members may have received additional emails separately. Of the 44 emails received by the full Board, approximately 35, or about 80 percent, supported the proposed changes; 3, or about 7 percent, opposed the changes; 4, or about 9 percent, were neutral; and 2, or about 5 percent, supported the policy with changes.

Chair Berlin stated that she supports the proposed policy. Speaking from her experience as a former teacher and administrator, that the school day should be focused on instruction and curriculum, and that public safety and school safety must remain primary concerns. And, for those reasons, she believes the proposed changes are needed. While policies should be written to stand the test of time, they do not always do so. Chair Berlin noted that, as a Board member, she believes in reviewing policies to ensure they remain current and responsive to present circumstances.

Ms. Le **moved** to approve Policy IGDA as amended. Dr. Acuff seconded the **motion**.

A roll call vote was called:

Dr. Acuff: Yes

Mr. Beard: Yes

Mr. Dillenbeck: No

Ms. Le: Yes

Ms. Osborne: Yes

Chair Berlin: Yes

Ms. Spillman was absent

The motion passed 5-1, and Policy IGDA, as amended, was adopted and became effective immediately.

Agenda Item No. 8.2 - The School Board took a break from 8:45 p.m. to 8:55 p.m.

Agenda Item No. 8.3 School Board Approval of the FY 27 Funding Request – Ms. Le offered a motion to approve the Funding Request of \$311,317,157 in Operating Funds and \$32,280,602 in Special Revenue Funds for Fiscal Year 2027. Consent Agenda. Dr. Acuff **seconded the motion. A voice vote was called, and the motion passed unanimously (6-0)**. Ms. Spillman was absent.

Agenda Item 8.4 Policy Review IKBA Grading Policy - Policy IKBA was adopted by the School Board in September 2020. It was presented for a five-year review first-read with no suggested changes. Staff shared the policy and the implementation guidelines with the Board and plans for a standing committee on grading. The policy will return at the March 26 meeting for adoption on the consent agenda.

- [Grading Policy](#)
- [Grading Policy White Paper](#)
- [Grading Policy Handbook for Teachers](#)

Ms. Le asked how student work habits are addressed under the proposed grading policy, noting that she understood and supported the separation of academic grades from work habits but had heard feedback from parents about whether work habits are addressed elsewhere.

Staff responded that, except for language stating that grading and work habits should be separated, work habits are not specifically addressed in the policy. Staff explained that one of the original purposes of the grading work was to consider movement toward standards-based grading, which would allow grades to be separated by individual standards while also providing separate categories for areas such as work habits and timeliness.

Staff also noted that, during the grading champions process, feedback was received regarding the original guideline that practice should not count toward a grade. In response, the guideline was revised to allow homework and practice to count for up to 10 percent of a student's grade. Staff explained that the grading champions process provided both professional learning and feedback that informed implementation.

Dr. Haas stated that the division has not abandoned the conversation about moving toward a competency-based grading system. He explained that the scholar pathways work is being used as one route for professional development, particularly for secondary educators, because career and technical education courses often evaluate students based on demonstrated skills and levels of proficiency rather than traditional percentage averages.

Dr. Haas described competency-based grading as one of the most complex changes in K-12 public education but said the division intends to continue moving in that direction. He noted that students are becoming more accustomed to being evaluated on what they know and are able to do, rather than solely on assignment completion or percentages. He also stated that the division is considering ways to broaden the conversation among teachers already using competency-based grading and build on that work as a source of momentum.

Dr. Haas added that PowerSchool has already been configured in ways that support competency-based grading, including work done in connection with the Lab School, where students are graded using that approach. He said competency-based grading provides clearer feedback for students and better supports student learning and progress, and the division will continue working with educators as that change develops.

Mr. Dillenbeck stated that, while the issue may not have been part of the policy five years ago, he has heard significant concerns from veteran teachers about unintended consequences related to the retake policy. He said teachers have expressed that the current practice creates additional work and does not necessarily address the underlying issues. He noted that the Board may need an opportunity at another time to discuss the feedback being received from teachers and parents regarding specific aspects of the policy and its implementation.

Staff responded that one reason continued conversation is needed is because there are different interpretations of the grading guidelines. Staff noted that the guidelines do not specifically use the term "retake," but instead refer to second chances and revision opportunities for students. Staff explained that these inconsistencies in interpretation should be addressed so that classroom teachers have clearer guidance on what the guidelines mean and how they should be implemented.

Mr. Dillenbeck stated that the discussion raised the broader issue of policy versus practice. He said it appeared the division may need either clearer policy language or stronger implementation guidance to address what teachers are experiencing.

Chair Berlin asked whether the proposed focus group would be part of implementation after the Board's action on the policy, or whether it would occur before the Board voted.

Staff responded that the focus group would be formed regardless of any changes to the policy. Staff explained that the division previously had a group of grading champions who served as representatives to bring information back to schools and support alignment and consistency. Staff noted that, based on feedback from principals, that work was considered operationalized last year and the group was disbanded.

Staff stated that, given the feedback now being received, it would likely be helpful to reconvene a group to continue discussing issues that arise in the practice of grading so they can be addressed.

Chair Berlin stated that consistency is one of the issues reflected in the feedback. She said the Board's concern is not only whether the policy is understood, but whether it is being implemented consistently across schools.

She further asked whether language could be added to ensure the focus group or committee is used effectively, and whether information from that group could later inform revisions to the policy. And questioned whether the Board should vote on the policy immediately or wait until additional feedback from the focus group had been received.

Dr. Haas stated that there are two ways to consider the issue. He said the policy itself is difficult to argue against because it is grounded in Virginia Code, best practice, and what is best for students. He emphasized that students are the ultimate recipients of grading practices, and the Board's focus should remain on what is best for students.

Dr. Haas distinguished between the policy and the grading guidelines. He said the challenge with guidelines, and with other areas requiring consistency, is that teachers, principals, staff, and the Board have many responsibilities to manage. He acknowledged that grading is a significant issue and described it as a "big rock," referencing the Stephen Covey analogy about prioritizing major responsibilities before smaller ones.

Dr. Haas stated that he viewed the lack of continued attention to grading consistency as his responsibility. He said the work began during the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school years, when the division was also managing other significant issues, but he said grading should have remained a major focus because of its importance.

Dr. Haas explained that when the division wants consistency in a major area, staff need to govern the work on an ongoing basis. He clarified that by "govern," he meant staff-level oversight, not School Board governance. He said this would include a standing group with teacher representation from every school to continually review grading practices, guidelines, and implementation.

Dr. Haas stated that the division will maintain a grading committee on an ongoing basis. The committee will continue meeting to discuss grading practices, review future iterations of grading guidelines, and monitor implementation across schools. He said he believes the policy itself is strong and should stand, but staff will report back to the Board regarding any changes to the guidelines, so Board members are not surprised by concerns or questions from the community.

Dr. Haas also noted that other topics, such as the earlier discussion regarding student clubs, may similarly require ongoing staff-level oversight when they become significant implementation issues. He said standing review groups can help the division address consistency before concerns become episodic or reach a crisis point.

Dr. Haas concluded that ongoing staff governance, through a standing committee or similar structure, is an appropriate way to address consistency in grading and other major implementation areas.

Mr. Beard stated that he would like to hear from teachers about the policy changes that are coming down the road.

Chair Berlin asked whether the Board could amend the policy before acting, either by requesting staff to prepare amendment language immediately or by making an amendment the following week.

Staff responded that either option was available. Staff explained that, with Board consensus, an amendment could be added before the policy returned for action. Staff also noted that when the policy came back on the consent agenda, the Board could pull it from consent, consider it under items pulled from the consent agenda, amend it at that time, and then adopt it. Staff could prepare redline language and bring the amended policy back to the Board.

Chair Berlin said she heard Board members express interest in ensuring teacher input, along with student voice, as part of the continuing work. Staff noted that student input was already contemplated in the next steps and that language could be drafted to parallel that intent.

Staff summarized the apparent consensus of the Board as direction to bring back an amended policy that includes a governance committee, or similar standing structure, for consideration on the consent agenda at the March 26 meeting. Board members indicated agreement.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 9.0 OTHER BUSINESS

Agenda Item No. 9.1 Other Business by Board Members and/or the Superintendent – None.

Agenda Item No. 9.2 Closed Meeting – None.

Agenda Item No. 9.3 Closed Meeting Certification – None.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 10.0 ADJOURNMENT - At 9:27 p.m., hearing no objections, Chair Berlin adjourned the meeting of the Albemarle County School Board.

Chair

Clerk