

MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING OF THE ALBEMARLE COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD
Thursday, July 9, 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 Ms. Allison Spillman

Absent – None.

Staff Members – Acting Superintendent Chandra Hayes; Chief Legal Officer Josiah Black; Assistant Superintendent Daphne Keiser; Chief Operating Officer Rosalyn Schmitt; Public Affairs and Strategic Communications Officer Jason Grant; Assistant Superintendent Patrick McLaughlin; Chief Human Resources Officer Dan Redding; and Clerk of the Board Christine Thompson

AGENDA ITEM NO. 1.0 CLOSED MEETING - At 6:00 p.m., Ms. Spillman 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 personnel changes at Hollymead Elementary School and the appointment of an interim Principal.
2. Subsection 8, for consultation with legal counsel employed or retained by the Albemarle County School Board regarding specific legal matters requiring the provision of legal advice by such counsel; the purpose of this item is for the Division's Chief Legal Officer to advise the School Board regarding legal aspects of the construction of the ACE Academy at Lambs Lane facility. Ms. Le seconded the **motion**. **A voice vote was called, and the motion passed unanimously.**

AGENDA ITEM NO. 2.0 OPENING ACTIVITIES

Agenda Item No. 2.1 Call to Order - At 6:31 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., Ms. Spillman 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.**

Ms. Spillman offered a **motion** that the Board accept the resignation of Dr. Matthew S. Haas as Superintendent of Albemarle County Public Schools. Ms. Le seconded the **motion**. **A voice vote was called, and the motion passed unanimously.**

Ms. Spillman offered a **motion** that the Board appoint Dr. Chandra R. Hayes as Acting Superintendent of Albemarle County Public Schools, effective immediately, to serve through June 30, 2027. Ms. Le seconded the **motion**. **A voice vote was called, and the motion passed unanimously.**

Albemarle County Circuit Court Clerk Jon Zug administered the oath of office to Dr. Chandra R. Hayes, swearing her in as Acting Superintendent of Albemarle County Public Schools.

Dr. Chandra R. Hayes, Acting Superintendent [Statement](#)

Agenda Item No. 2.3 - Roll Call

Agenda Item No. 2.4 - Pledge of Allegiance

Agenda Item No. 2.5 - Moment of Silence – Chair Berlin asked everyone to pause as we honored the memory of Brendan Rose, a rising senior at Monticello High School, who passed away on Wednesday, July 1.

“Brendan was a student, teammate, friend, and deeply loved member of the Monticello High School community. His loss is felt by his family, his classmates, his teammates, his teachers, and many others across our school division.

We also extend our care and support to Brendan’s mother, Stephanie Rose, who is a member of our ACPS staff in Building Services. This is a heartbreaking loss for both a school community and a staff family.

In moments like this, we are reminded that behind every student, every jersey, every classroom seat, and every school community is a person whose life matters. We encourage our students and staff to care for one another, check on one another, and ask for help when it is needed. No one should feel that they are alone.”

Chair Rebecca Berlin [Statement](#)

AGENDA ITEM NO. 3.0 APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Agenda Item No. 3.1 Approval of Agenda - Ms. Le offered a **motion** to approve the agenda. Ms. Spillman seconded the **motion**. **The motion passed unanimously.**

AGENDA ITEM NO. 4.0 ANNOUNCEMENTS

Agenda Item No. 4.1 Spotlight on Education - Dr. Lucy Montalvo, Director of Starr Hill Pathways at the University of Virginia’s Center for Community Partnerships, provided an update on the program’s summer activities. Starr Hill Pathways serves nearly 300 students in grades 7 through 12, including approximately 200 Albemarle County Public Schools students, through long-term college and career readiness support.

During the summer, seventh- and eighth-grade students participated in a two-week career exploration program covering fields such as culinary arts, veterinary science, business and finance, STEM, neuroscience, multimedia, and the performing and creative arts. Ninth-grade students participated in a counselor-in-training program at the Brooks Family YMCA, while tenth-grade students completed workforce training and paid five-week job placements through the YMCA of Charlottesville. Eleventh- and twelfth-grade students participated in employment, college visits, and individualized college and career advising. Students also took part in community-based opportunities with local organizations and businesses.

Dr. Montalvo stated that the program will continue in the fall with school-based success coaching, college visits, and additional programming. Board members thanked Starr Hill Pathways for providing students with meaningful, long-term career and college experiences and encouraged local businesses and nonprofit organizations to consider partnering with the program.

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

Vice Chair Allison Spillman presented a [statement](#) regarding the superintendent search process.

Dr. Acuff, representing the Albemarle Foundation for Education, shared information about the second annual Back-to-School Backpack Bash, scheduled for Sunday, August 9, at Fashion Square Mall in the former JCPenney location. Students and families will be able to receive backpacks and school supplies, athletic physicals, vaccinations, haircuts, and other back-to-school services. Dr. Acuff encouraged community members to volunteer with backpack packing, event setup, activities during the event, and cleanup.

Ms. Osborne reported on her visit to Mountain View Upper Elementary School. She noted that it is the first new school opened by the division in 25 years and described the building as beautiful and ready to welcome students. She also shared that the ribbon-cutting ceremony was scheduled for July 24.

Dr. Hayes appointed Emily Potter, an Albemarle County resident, to serve on the Advisory Committee for Environmental Sustainability.

Dr. Hayes introduced a new superintendent's monthly update intended to provide the Board and community with regular information about division accomplishments, parent feedback, ongoing initiatives, challenges, and areas for improvement.

Dr. Hayes reported that more than 1,000 ACPS students graduated during the previous school year. Of those graduates, 56% planned to attend a four-year college, 19% planned to attend a two-year college, 5% planned to enlist in the military, and 12% planned to enter the workforce full-time. ACPS graduates also received more than \$5 million in scholarships. She highlighted the work of several operational departments. The Child Nutrition Department served more than 450,000 breakfasts and more than one million lunches during the school year. The Transportation Department traveled approximately 3.3 million miles, including daily student transportation and field trips.

Dr. Hayes also recognized employees working behind the scenes during the summer. Custodial staff deep-cleaned division facilities, refinished floors, cleaned carpets, applied floor finish, and prepared thousands of desks and tables for the new school year. The Technology Department refurbished approximately 14,000 student laptops, supported summer coding programs, and maintained the division's fiber-optic network. The Human Resources Department processed more than 170 licensed employees and 65 classified employees.

Summer programming included the National Society of Black Engineers program, coding camp, and summer jazz camp. Looking ahead, Dr. Hayes noted preparations for the August 9 Back-to-School Bash, continued work to close academic achievement gaps, an upcoming assessment update from Dr. Ross, the July 16 presentation of findings from the special education review, a review of technology use for students in kindergarten through third grade, implementation of gradebook data systems, and increased communication about student and staff accomplishments throughout the division.

Chair Berlin provided a [statement](#) prior to public comment.

“As a School Board, we identified a number of areas where greater attention needs to be given to the policies that govern our school division. As you can see, tonight we are reading several key policies for significant revision, as we will again next week, and considering new policies to strengthen the learning environment in our schools.

Our aim is to increase student safety, standardize instructional practices, and meet the needs of each and every student so that they receive a quality education that prepares them for their future.

In addition to the policies governing the actions of students, staff, and community partners engaged with ACPS, we also need to strengthen our own policies governing School Board activities. To that end, next week I plan to bring forward rules and procedures to clarify how School Board meetings are managed.

We need to establish rules for public comment that maintain decorum and limit personal attacks, while still providing the opportunity for the public to raise concerns in a respectful manner, even if that means respectfully calling out specific Board members or staff by name.

We need to clarify how policy decisions are brought forward to the School Board and how public business is conducted so that the public can better engage in the process. The policies as written are not always clear, and I appreciate those who have reached out to me directly to share their concerns.

My interpretation and application of the policy regarding public comment, in my role as Chair last week, made it difficult for some individuals to express themselves fully in their comments to the Board. For that, I am personally sorry, and I take full responsibility.

I believe the Board needs to rectify that ambiguity. Next week, we will consider additional amendments to our rules and policies guiding the management of Board meetings, with the purpose of increasing public participation and providing clear direction for each of us as a School Board. We will also ensure that what is stated before public comment matches what is posted on our website.

Due to the number of items we needed to complete before tonight’s meeting, we were not able to complete those rule updates. Tonight, we will use the current rules as they stand, but next week, in a public meeting, we will update those rules with the full Board.”

AGENDA ITEM NO. 5.0 PUBLIC COMMENT

Jimmy Belew, A Scottsville district resident expressed concern about failures within the division’s special education system and commented on the proposed Professional Boundaries and Prevention of Misconduct and Abuse policy. The speaker stated that the policy does not go far enough because it relies primarily on the school division to investigate itself. The speaker recommended requiring independent investigations when allegations involve employee misconduct, immediate notification of parents when their child may be involved, and removal of employees from student contact while serious allegations are investigated.

He also called for greater accountability when administrators fail to recognize or act on warning signs, as well as increased transparency throughout the process. The Board was encouraged to treat the proposed policy as a working document and seek community input before finalizing it. Mr. Belew concluded by urging the Board to speak up for individuals who may be unable to advocate for themselves.

Superintendent William T. Coles, president of the African American Parent Alliance, spoke about the persistent achievement gap affecting African American students and other students of color in Albemarle County Public Schools. Mr. Coles stated that, although some progress was made in the 1990s, more recent data show that disparities have continued or worsened.

Citing findings from a 2023 consultant report, the speaker expressed concern that the performance of ACPS students of color in elementary reading and mathematics and high school algebra was below the statewide average for students of color. He shared that more recent data showed limited progress in addressing the report's findings.

Mr. Coles asked the Board to assess the division's progress in implementing the report's recommendations and to develop a measurable action plan focused on student outcomes, teacher recruitment and retention, staff training, school investment, student safety, and educational quality. He also encouraged the division to recruit and retain highly qualified teachers and administrators who reflect the diversity of the student body, establish clear accountability measures for employees, create a shared culture of excellence, and make algebra a priority in school improvement planning.

Nancy Koenig of the Scottsville district and a former ACPS elementary school teacher thanked the Board for its work and raised concerns about declining academic performance and the role of social-emotional coaches.

Ms. Koenig encouraged the division to refocus its priorities on classroom instruction, academic achievement, rigor, and proficiency in reading, writing, speaking, and mathematics. She expressed concern that the current language arts mission places too much emphasis on broader concepts and not enough on core literacy skills. She also cited concerns about Virginia's reading standards and mathematics performance.

Ms. Koenig recommended eliminating the social-emotional coach position, stating that school counselors and existing student support teams are sufficient and appropriately involve parents. She concluded by urging the division to develop a clear plan centered on academic excellence so that ACPS schools are once again recognized for providing a high-quality education.

Phil Riese of the Rivanna district and a parent of three Hollymead Elementary School students expressed concern about the alleged sexual abuse involving a former employee and the division's response. He stated that parents have been forced to determine whether their children had one-on-one contact with the employee and questioned whether division leaders acted appropriately after learning of the criminal investigation and earlier concerns raised by parents.

Mr. Riese questioned the circumstances surrounding the former superintendent's resignation and severance payment, as well as the resignation of the Hollymead principal. He asked whether either individual should have been terminated for cause if they failed to disclose information, respond to warnings, or fulfill their responsibilities.

He called for a full independent investigation by a law firm with no ties to Albemarle County. The requested investigation would examine how the alleged misconduct was allowed to continue, why the employee was transferred between schools, how earlier parent concerns were handled, and whether mandatory reporting requirements were followed. Mr. Riese stated an intention to submit a Freedom of Information Act request and urged the Board to provide accountability, transparency, and stronger protections for students.

Chris Dilbeck, from the White Hall district followed up on earlier comments regarding the division's grading policy. Mr. Dilbeck supported several proposed revisions, including limiting students to one retake, requiring students to complete additional work or meet with the teacher before a retake, and establishing consistent expectations for late assignments across schools and classrooms.

He remained concerned about the minimum grade provision. Lowering the grade floor from 50 to 40, in his view, would still award credit when no work has been completed. He argued that students should be held accountable for completing assignments and prepared for expectations they will encounter in college and the workplace.

Mr. Dilbeck recommended returning to a traditional 0-to-100 grading scale, allowing zeros for work that is not submitted, while still providing reasonable grace and support to students who are developing organization, responsibility, and other academic habits.

Joellen Pisarczyk, a White Hall resident and longtime educator, spoke about school culture and access to sexually explicit materials in school libraries. She stated that books containing graphic sexual content, violence, drugs, abuse, and other mature themes should not be available to students through school libraries or electronic library systems.

Ms. Pisarczyk argued that exposing children to sexually explicit material may confuse healthy boundaries and increase their vulnerability to abuse. She expressed concern that materials available through school libraries may conflict with the messages taught through family life education regarding abstinence, sexual violence, inappropriate touching, abuse, harassment, and human trafficking.

She urged the Board to review the division's curriculum and library collections and to make these concerns a priority during the search for a new superintendent.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 6.0 APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA - Ms. Le offered a motion to approve the Consent Agenda. Mr. Dillenbeck **seconded the motion. A voice vote was taken, and the motion passed unanimously.**

- 6.1 Approval of Consent Agenda
- 6.2 Personnel Action
- 6.3 Approval of the Minutes
- 6.4 For Information: Albemarle Foundation for Education (AFE) Memorandum of Understanding
- 6.5 For Information: Policy Review and Revision
- 6.6 For Action: Policy Review and Revision
- 6.7 For Action: ACE Academy @ Lambs Lane Easements

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 Discussion: Professional Boundaries and Prevention of Sexual Misconduct and Abuse
Albemarle County Public Schools is dedicated to ensuring every student has a safe and supportive environment to learn and grow. To protect our students from misconduct and abuse, the proposed policy is grounded in peer-reviewed research and built using the latest nationwide studies on student safety and abuse prevention. It is also proven in practice, modeled after the most comprehensive safety policies from school districts throughout Virginia and across the United States.

[Presentation](#): Professional Boundaries and Prevention of Sexual Misconduct and Abuse
[DRAFT Policy](#) Professional Boundaries and Prevention of Sexual Misconduct and Abuse

Board members thanked Dr. Carlock and staff for developing the proposed Professional Boundaries and Prevention of Sexual Misconduct and Abuse policy on a short timeline and expressed broad support for the draft.

Discussion focused on several areas needing further clarification or revision:

- The counseling provisions, including how parents are notified of the school counseling program and their right to opt students out of social or personal counseling. Members also requested clearer language addressing student privacy, crisis intervention, and situations in which counseling may be required.
- Reporting and oversight procedures, particularly safeguards that would prevent responsibility from resting solely with a building principal.
- Parent notification when an employee is suspended or reassigned because of allegations of sexual misconduct, including who should be notified, the timing of notification, and how to protect due process and confidentiality.
- The need to provide notices in languages families can understand and in accessible written or oral formats.
- Clear integration of applicable legal requirements, including emergency extensions and other required procedures.
- Stronger documentation and oversight systems, including electronic records, logs, and documentation of meetings or sessions.
- Application of the policy to vendors, contractors, internships, job-shadowing placements, work-based learning programs, and other situations in which students interact with adults outside the school building.

Staff explained that counselors are already required under Virginia law and division policy to inform parents at the beginning of the school year about the counseling program, including social and personal counseling services, and that parents may opt their children out of those services.

The Chair clarified that the policy remained a draft and would not be voted on at this meeting. Board and public comments would be provided to staff for review, an updated draft would be posted, and a public hearing would be held at the next meeting. Board members were encouraged to submit specific proposed language promptly so staff could incorporate possible revisions before the Board considered adoption. The goal was to approve a policy in time for staff training and implementation before the start of the school year.

Agenda Item No. 8.2 [FY 27 Budget Update](#): State Budget & Salary Increase - The state recently adopted the budget for the 2026-2028 biennium. While the detailed calculations and spreadsheets have not been released, we estimate that ACPS will receive an additional \$2.0M in FY 27. Part of the increase in funding is a 4% salary increase for instructional and support employees.

It is staff's recommendation to provide salary increases (+0.25% from the adopted budget) as follows:

- 4.0% for licensed staff (and non-unit staff PG 20 and above)
- 4.5% for ESP (and non-unit staff PG 19 and below).

The cost of the change is estimated to be \$511,000, which would be funded by new state revenues.

Agenda Item No. 8.3 The Board took a break from 8:15 p.m. to 8:25 p.m.

Agenda Item No. 8.4 Community Lab School Highlights – Principal Chad Ratliff presented the Board with the annual report of the Community Lab School.

Community Lab School Annual Highlights [Report](#)

Board members discussed enrollment demand, facility capacity, academic performance, and how lessons from Community Lab School could be shared across the division.

Ms. Le noted that the school continues to receive more applications than it can accommodate and asked whether previously proposed facility plans could have increased enrollment to approximately 300 or 400 students. Although expansion is not currently among the division's highest capital priorities, members suggested that additional capacity could help address both demand for the program and overcrowding at other secondary schools. They also asked whether enrollment decisions should consider capacity pressures at students' assigned schools.

Board members praised the school's academic performance, instructional model, and learning environment. Mr. Dillenbeck described a recent visit as an exceptional experience and said the program would have benefited some of his own children. Mr. Beard asked staff to identify ways the Board could better support the school and its work.

A substantial portion of the discussion focused on how successful practices at Community Lab School could be shared with other schools. Mr. Ratliff explained that some practices are closely tied to the school's schedule, structure, size, and flexibility and therefore may not transfer directly to a traditional secondary school. However, members emphasized that effective instructional strategies, student-support practices, team structures, and scheduling approaches should be identified and shared more formally across the division rather than through informal conversations alone.

Ms. Spillman connected this discussion to the division's broader work to improve student achievement. She noted that effective practices are sometimes developed within individual schools or teams but are not consistently communicated to similar schools and departments. Ms. Spillman encouraged staff to develop stronger systems for sharing proven strategies, so schools are not repeatedly recreating work that has already been successful elsewhere.

Dr. Acuff asked about the demographics of applicants and enrolled students, including students with individualized education programs and Section 504 plans. Members observed that the school's model may be particularly effective for students who do not thrive in traditional learning environments and encouraged staff to examine which elements could improve services for students with disabilities and other learning needs throughout the division.

Chair Berlin touched on the school's research partnerships and its role as a laboratory for studying instructional practices. She highlighted the value of research-practice partnerships in which researchers and educators jointly identify questions that are useful to schools. Chair Berlin encouraged the division to work with research partners to better determine which features contribute most to the school's success, such as class size, scheduling, relationships, instructional practices, or student supports, and then identify which of those approaches could be adapted for use in larger schools.

Agenda Item No. 8.5 Policy IKBA: Grading Policy Part I - In 2020, the School Board passed its first comprehensive grading policy that attempted to institute principles of standards-based grading (SBG). This policy came under review in 2026, and the School Board called for a comprehensive study to review the policy and its associated guidelines. This report includes results and recommendations from a comparative policy analysis, quantitative analysis of grades' relationship to standardized assessment scores, a survey to all ACPS teachers, and six focus groups with students and parents.

Staff presented proposed revisions to the grading policy and related administrative procedures. The recommendations would require schools to explain grading practices to students and families at the beginning of each year and provide regular information about student progress. The administrative procedures would address limits on reassessments, minimum grades for attempted and unattempted work, acceptance of late assignments, communication with families when students are performing poorly, the minimum number of assignments during a marking period, and deadlines for posting grades.

Staff explained that the proposed language was based partly on policies used by comparable school divisions. The Department of Instruction would review those models, adapt them to Albemarle County's existing systems, and bring specific administrative procedures back to the Board for review.

Board members thanked staff for gathering feedback from students, parents, and teachers. Staff said a division-wide teacher survey was used so every teacher would have an opportunity to participate. Board members requested that additional feedback from current and retired teachers be shared as it is received before the next discussion.

Much of the discussion focused on reassessments and minimum grades. Members expressed concern that unlimited retakes and awarding substantial credit for work that was never submitted can increase teacher workload, contribute to grade inflation, and leave students unprepared for college or employment. However, members acknowledged that more work is needed to determine an appropriate minimum grade, whether unsubmitted work should receive a zero or another score, which students should be eligible for reassessment, and whether reassessment grades should be capped, averaged, or replace the original grade.

Staff reported that the limited number of teachers consulted since publication of the revised policy generally viewed the proposed changes as reasonable and helpful, although they would not resolve every concern about grading. Board members encouraged teachers to continue providing feedback about what is workable and whether any important issues had been overlooked.

The Board also discussed the need for clearer elementary grading expectations. Staff explained that division-wide elementary implementation guidance could not be developed in time for the upcoming school year and may require longer-term work, potentially for the 2027–2028 school year.

Technical and implementation concerns were also raised. Staff said PowerSchool must continue to operate on a 100-point scale, although a minimum grade could be entered once the division determines what that floor should be. Members cautioned against making too many changes immediately before the August 12 start of school and asked staff to separate changes that could reasonably be implemented now from issues requiring additional study.

Staff discussed the possibility of working with principals to pilot certain grading practices in selected schools or departments. Results from those pilots could then be reviewed by the grading committee before broader implementation. The discussion reflected general support for moving forward with clearer expectations while allowing additional time to study the more complicated questions and make adjustments based on teacher experience and student outcomes.

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 9:34 p.m., hearing no objections, Chair Berlin adjourned the meeting of the Albemarle County School Board.

Chair

Clerk