



Board-to-Board, March 2019

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

Henley Middle School Student Wins Daily Progress Regional Spelling Bee—Layla Bouer, a Henley Middle School seventh grader, won the 2019 *Daily Progress* Regional Spelling Bee finals on March 9. Bouer’s victory came after hours of battle against 26 elementary- and middle-school students from public and private schools from all over the central Virginia region. The winning word was “ammonia.” This was the first time in many years that an Albemarle County Public Schools (ACPS) student has won this competition.

As the winner, Bouer will receive an all-expenses-paid trip to the national bee, the Samuel Lewis Sugarman Award (a \$100 savings bond), a copy of Webster’s Third New International Dictionary and a one-year subscription to Encyclopedia Britannica Online.

Teacher and Administrator Hiring Plan—At the March 14 Albemarle County School Board meeting, Assistant Superintendent Clare Keiser presented her plan for the hiring process of the 2019-20 school year. Information was shared regarding the processes and strategies being used for recruitment and hiring of teachers and administrators. She explained the hiring timeline that ACPS is using and also underscored the emphasis that the division is putting on hiring diverse teachers and administrators in order to best meet students’ needs. So far this year there has been an increase in both applications and teacher vacancy announcements in ACPS.

Check & Connect—The Check & Connect program, a Department of Education What Works Clearinghouse awardee, has been added to the services provided to fifth-grade students in all 15 ACPS elementary schools. Check & Connect provides an academic coach for selected fifth-grade students in order to foster the development of the life skills needed to solve problems and to improve academic performance. The program was founded at the University of Minnesota and introduced to schools in 1990 in a response to a need to increase student engagement. This program has a proven record of success and is grounded in research on student engagement, the importance of one-on-one relationships to bring about change, and the significance of relevant and timely feedback. Some of the core principles of the program are the need to be present and punctual at school as well as to understand how school affects future success. Check & Connect encourages students to believe, “I can succeed!”

Charter School—Principal Chad Ratliff, in accordance with Albemarle County School Board Policy LC, provided an annual report of the school division’s two charter schools, Murray High School and Community Public Charter Middle School, at the March 14 Albemarle County School Board meeting. The schools are co-located and aim to foster creativity and intellectual

curiosity through art and design, experiential learning, mastery and student agency. They also serve a secondary function as “lab schools” to design and pilot non-traditional approaches to learning that align to the ACPS mission. Enrollment trends show a consistent increase since 2016, and both schools have focused goals for the future. Murray intends to deepen its commitment to a strong liberal arts curriculum with an emphasis on creative arts, media, and design while Community Public Charter School intends to partner with UVA Curry School of Education for evaluation, to promote a positive school culture and to utilize interdisciplinary approaches to develop students’ meaning-making and system-thinking capacities.

Governor Signs Bill Allowing Use of School Bus Stop-Arm Cameras—On March 19, Governor Ralph Northam signed HB 2344, a bill that changes Virginia state code so as to give all school divisions the opportunity to use school bus stop-arm cameras. Stop-arm cameras are a safety enhancement on school buses that have been shown to prevent drivers from passing stopped school buses with only a 1 percent recidivism rate. ACPS have been trying to implement a stop-arm camera program in their Transportation Department for over five years, but Virginia code was written in a way that prohibited the school division from moving forward. The bill was introduced by Delegate Rob Bell on behalf of ACPS.

Kindergarten Registration Underway—On March 20, Albemarle County elementary schools hosted Kindergarten Registration. Kindergarten Registration is an opportunity for parents to receive assistance with the enrollment process, present required documentation, and learn more about the ACPS kindergarten program.