

MINUTES
ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING OF THE ALBEMARLE COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD
Thursday, January 8, 2026

[Meeting Video Link](#)

ROLL CALL - UPON THE ROLL BEING CALLED, THE FOLLOWING WERE PRESENT:

BOARD MEMBERS - Dr. Kate Acuff, Dr. Rebecca Berlin, Mr. Bob Beard, Mr. Jim Dillenbeck, Ms. Judy Le, Ms. Ellen Osborne, Ms. Allison Spillman, and Student Representative Leyton Cox

ABSENT – None

ALSO, IN ATTENDANCE - Superintendent Matthew Haas; Chief Legal Officer Josiah Black; Assistant School Division Counsel Erin Stone; Assistant Superintendent Daphne Keiser; Assistant Superintendent Chandra Hayes; Assistant Superintendent Patrick McLaughlin; Chief Communications Officer Jason Grant; and Administrative Support Specialist Lauren Crawford

Prior to the start of the 2026 Operational meeting, the following Board members were sworn into office for the term January 1, 2026 through December 31, 2029: Dr. Kate Acuff (Jack Jouett District), Mr. Bob Beard (Samuel Miller District), and Mr. Jim Dillenbeck (Rio District).

AGENDA ITEM NO. 2.0 CLOSED MEETING

Agenda Item No. 2.1 Closed Meeting – At 6:00 p.m., Dr. Haas offered a **motion** that the 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 3 for discussion 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 parcels of land that might be used for a fourth comprehensive high school; and
2. Subsection 15 for discussion of the award of a public contract involving the expenditure of public funds, including interviews of bidders or offerors, and discussion of the terms or scope of such contract, where discussion in an open session would adversely affect the bargaining position or negotiating strategy of the School Board. The purpose of this item is to discuss potential contract with a vendor to provide planning and facilitation services to the School Board. Ms. Le seconded the **motion**. **A voice vote was taken, and the motion passed unanimously (7-0)**

AGENDA ITEM NO. 3.0 OPENING ACTIVITIES

Agenda Item No. 3.1 Call to Order - At 6:30 p.m., Dr. Haas called the Albemarle County School Board meeting back to order.

Agenda Item No. 3.2 Closed Meeting Certification – Ms. Le 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. Dr. Acuff seconded the **motion**. **A voice vote was taken, and the motion passed unanimously (7-0)**

Agenda Item No. 3.3 Roll Call

Agenda Item No. 3.4 Pledge of Allegiance

Agenda Item No. 3.5 Moment of Silence

Agenda Item No. 3.6 Election of Officers for the 2026 Calendar Year (Chair): Chair: Ms. Spillman nominated Dr. Berlin for Chair for the 2026 calendar year. There were no other nominations. A roll call vote was taken, and the nomination passed unanimously.

Agenda Item No. 3.6, Election of Officers for the 2026 Calendar Year (Vice Chair): Ms. Le nominated Ms. Osborne, and Mr. Beard nominated Ms. Spillman. A roll call vote was taken, with each member stating their choice for Vice Chair: Dr. Acuff, Ms. Osborne; Mr. Dillenbeck, Ms. Spillman; Ms. Le, Ms. Osborne; Ms. Osborne, Ms. Osborne; Ms. Spillman, Ms. Spillman; Mr. Beard, Ms. Spillman; and Chair Berlin, Ms. Spillman. By a vote of 4-3, Ms. Spillman was elected Vice Chair for the 2026 calendar year.

Agenda Item No. 3.7, Appointment of School Board Clerk for the 2026 Calendar Year: Dr. Acuff nominated Christine Thompson, seconded by Ms. Spillman. **A roll call vote was taken, and the motion passed unanimously (7-0)**

Agenda Item No. 3.8, 2026 Appointments to Other Boards and Committees

Ms. Le offered a **motion** to approve the Board and Committee Assignments as follows:

Advisory Committee for Environmental Sustainability (ACES)	Judy Le and Bob Beard
Albemarle Foundation for Education (AFE)	Kate Acuff and Bob Beard
Audit Committee	Ellen Osborne
CIP Advisory Committee	Kate Acuff and Allison Spillman
Communications Committee	Allison Spillman and Rebecca Berlin
Discipline Committee	Allison Spillman, Jim Dillenbeck, and Judy Le Alternates: Rebecca Berlin and Ellen Osborne
Diversity & Equity Advisory Committee	Allison Spillman
Legislative Committee	Kate Acuff and Rebecca Berlin
New School Board Member Orientation	Josiah Black
Piedmont Regional Education Program	Rebecca Berlin
Thomas Jefferson Adult & Career Regional Board	Ellen Osborne
Work Session Committee	Kate Acuff

Dr. Acuff seconded the **motion**. **A voice vote was taken, and the motion passed unanimously (7-0)**

During discussion, Mr. Dillenbeck raised the possibility of creating additional Board committees, including one focused on achievement gap groups, one centered on public-private partnerships, and one to provide teacher advisory input to the Board. In response, Board members reflected on the importance of clearly defining the purpose of committees and ensuring they complement the work of the division while elevating voices not regularly

heard. The Board expressed interest in continued discussion of these ideas at a future meeting.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 4.0 APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Agenda Item No. 4.1 Approval of Agenda – Ms. Osborne offered a **motion** to approve the agenda. Ms. Le seconded the **motion**. **A voice vote was called, and the motion passed unanimously (7-0)**

AGENDA ITEM NO. 5.0 ANNOUNCEMENTS

Agenda Item No. 5.1 Spotlight on Education - Principals of ACPS schools received a Distinguished rating in the most recent VDOE School Performance and Support Framework report were recognized by the Superintendent and School Board.

Jim Kyner – Brownsville Elementary
Joe McCauley – Hollymead Elementary
Jennifer Underwood – Ivy Elementary
Maureen Jensen – Stony Point Elementary
Wendy Eckerle – Virginia L. Murray Elementary
Rick Vrhovac – Josephy T. Henley Middle
Jennifer Sublette – Western Albemarle High School
Chad Ratliff – Community Lab School

Agenda Item No. 5.2 School Board/Superintendent Business

Student Representative Leyton Cox read a [statement](#)

Dr. Chandra Hayes, Assistant Superintendent for Instruction, shared that Albemarle County Public Schools had recently been awarded more than \$2.5 million in grant funding to expand career-connected learning and academic acceleration opportunities for students. She reported that ACPS received \$685,000 as part of a \$1.7 million regional GO TEC grant, in partnership with Charlottesville City Schools and Greene County Public Schools, to support career connection labs in middle schools and advance the division’s Scholars Studio Vision and Exploration Academies. Dr. Hayes also reported that ACPS received \$1.5 million through the Targeted Extended, Enriched School Year and Year-Round School Grant program. Of that amount, \$600,000 will support Future Graduate Camp at Albemarle High School and Monticello High School, a summer bridge program for rising ninth-grade students designed to improve readiness, connection, and long-term graduation outcomes. She noted that ACPS hopes to assess future expansion of the program to Western Albemarle High School.

Dr. Ben Allen of the Starr Hill Pathways Initiative then provided remarks regarding the second grant award, which totaled \$900,000 and was co-authored with Megan Maynard. Dr. Allen explained that the funding will expand college and career readiness programming, workplace learning, and postsecondary pathways for students. He shared that the initiative began four years ago as a pilot at Burley Middle School and has since grown to serve approximately 300 students across Albemarle County and Charlottesville City Schools, including 200 students in ACPS across grades 6 through 12. He stated that the program provides students with early college and career exploration, industry engagement, and paid internships, with a focus on supporting first-generation students and students from low-wealth communities. He added that the grant will allow the program to expand student participation, strengthen social-emotional supports, and continue research on student outcomes and barrier removal.

The Board reviewed the proposed legislative priorities for transmittal to its legislators. During discussion, Chair Berlin emphasized the importance of all priorities presented, while specifically highlighting the need for greater state investment in school facilities. Ms. Le offered a **motion** to approve the legislative priorities as presented. Ms. Spillman seconded the motion. **A voice vote was called, and the motion passed unanimously (7-0).**

Dr. Haas expressed his support for reviving the legislative committee and strengthening ongoing communication with legislators. He noted that legislators have indicated interest in building closer relationships with school divisions through invitations to visit schools and attend events such as graduations and performances. Dr. Haas stated that he would work with staff to identify opportunities for such engagement throughout the year.

Dr. Haas also informed the Board that, following the December 3, 2025 meeting with the Board of Supervisors, staff had compiled [responses](#) to questions raised during that discussion. He explained that the document was included on the consent agenda for the Board’s information only and would be transmitted to the County Executive for sharing with the Board of Supervisors after Board members had an opportunity to review it.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 6.0 PUBLIC COMMENT

Chris Dilbeck from the Rivanna district addressed concerns regarding traditional grading practices and their long-term impact on students. He stated that grades can oversimplify student performance, fail to reflect growth over time, and create unnecessary pressure that may influence instructional standards. Mr. Dilbeck encouraged the Board to consider approaches that would allow student achievement to be demonstrated more accurately through updated evidence of learning and skill-based measures and referenced the book *Off the Mark* by Jack Schneider as a resource on the topic.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 7.0 APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA

- 7.1 Approval of Consent Agenda
- 7.2 Personnel Action
- 7.3 Approval of the Minutes
- 7.4 Personnel Action – Athletic Coaches
- 7.5 For Action: Policy Review and Revision
- 7.6 Q&A Follow-Up, December 3, 2025 Joint CIP Work

Dr. Acuff offered a motion to approve the Consent Agenda. Ms. Le **seconded the motion. A roll call vote was called, and the motion passed unanimously (7-0):**

AGENDA ITEM NO 8.0 ITEMS PULLED FROM CONSENT AGENDA - None

AGENDA ITEM NO. 9.0 OTHER BUSINESS

- Agenda Item No. 9.0 Other Business by the Board Members and Superintendent - None**
- Agenda Item No. 9.1 Closed Meeting – None.**
- Agenda Item No. 9.2 Closed Meeting Certification – None.**

AGENDA ITEM NO. 10.0 ADJOURNMENT - At 7:41 p.m., hearing no objections, Chair Berlin adjourned the meeting of the Albemarle County School Board.

Chair

Clerk