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Albemarle County
School Board Office

At-Large

School Board Member Application

Applications must be received no later than 5:00 p.m. on Friday, August 21, 2026

Name Heidi Gilman Bennett

Home Address [REDACTED]

**You must be registered to vote in Albemarle County. You can determine this by checking your voter card or by calling the Voter Registration Office at 434.972.4173.*

Phone [REDACTED] Cell Phone [REDACTED]

Email [REDACTED]

Do you currently have children/grandchildren in ACPS? ☒ YES ☐ NO

If no, have you had children/grandchildren in ACPS? ☐ YES ☐ NO

How long have you resided in Albemarle County 7 years

Have you previously served on the Albemarle County School Board or an Albemarle County Public Schools Committee or Council?

If so, please explain your previous committee/council work.

Yes. See attached for details, including:

- Henley PaTSO President 2020-21
- Parent Council Representative: Community Lab School 2021-23
- Albemarle Foundation for Education: Founding Board Member 2022-24
- Family Council Officer / Chair 2022-26

Please indicate why you are interested in serving on the School Board.

Please see attached statement.

Please indicate where appropriate, areas in which you have experience or knowledge:

- | | |
|---|--|
| ☐ School Construction | ☒ Research |
| ☒ Education/Curriculum | ☒ Strategic Planning |
| ☒ Databases | ☒ Finance/Budget |
| ☒ Community Engagement | ☒ Nonprofit and Human Services |
| ☒ Public Administration | ☐ County Government |
| ☒ Policy Development | ☒ Statistics/Demographics |
| ☒ Governance | ☒ Other |

Please further describe the experience, education, and leadership skills you would bring to the School Board.

Please see statement and resume attached.

Indicate if you are attaching additional information pertinent to this application.

- ☒ Attachments are provided
☐ No attachments were necessary

Signature Heidi Gilman Bennett Date August 19, 2026

Please be advised that, upon submission, this application and any supporting documents become public records and may be disclosed or published by Albemarle County Public Schools.

Applications may be submitted by email or delivered/mailed to:

M. Christine Thompson, Clerk of the Board
Albemarle County School Board
401 McIntire Road, Room 345
Charlottesville, VA 22902

Phone: 434-296-5820

cthompson@k12albemarle.org

Heidi Gilman Bennett
ACPS School Board At-Large Seat
Application Supplement

Q1 – Why are you interested in serving on the ACPS School Board?

In this time of upheaval for ACPS leadership, I believe we have the opportunity to construct a more effective public school system that delivers on the promise that *every* student will thrive. I am applying to serve on the ACPS School Board because my combination of experience and involvement means that I'm uniquely ready to serve on Day One.

Our school division has the right elements available – outstanding teachers and staff, highly-engaged families, and a powerfully diverse population of students. We have substantial financial resources to leverage, supportive County government leaders, strong state representatives, a community that genuinely values public schools, and a School Board that cares deeply about students.

Building a more effective public school system requires a set of skills & qualities that I possess and would be honored to put to use:

- Trust – My earned reputation is for transparency and teamwork. I have prioritized finding common ground amongst stakeholders with deeply-held beliefs. I've built relationships across all 26+ schools, academies and programs during my tenure as a leader of Family Council.
- Knowledge – Following a decades-long career in national PreK-12 education, I've spent 7 years deeply engaged in the local ACPS system. My focus has consistently been on strengthening and supporting people, programs, research and leadership.
- Hard Work – I genuinely relish deep-dives into data, articulating key insights to ensure informed policy analysis, and solid communication with stakeholders.
- Determination – Not only do I believe in an ACPS where all children thrive, I am committed to the long, slow work of co-creating that system in partnership with members of our community who have diverse life experiences.

Our community is demanding safety and success for all children and youth. I am humbly ready to tackle this challenge as a member of the School Board team.

Q2 – Please further explain your experience(s) as indicated in the list, including any leadership skills, education and experiences.

In my 30+ year professional career (see attached resume), high-quality public schools have always been my focus. My expertise is helping education organizations achieve both mission and financial sustainability.

During both paid and volunteer work, I strike a balance of diving deep into details and “standing on the balcony” to absorb the big picture. I’ve been sought out by “dream clients” in K-12 and early childhood education for my ability to create a well-defined pathway to organizational success.

My formal education includes a Stanford degree in linguistics and education, plus a Masters in Business Administration from UC Berkeley. I’ve worked in elementary school classrooms, designed innovative tools to support classroom teachers, and interpreted academic research to strengthen student outcomes. I’ve interviewed top school district administrators across the country, partnered with foundations and non-profit leaders, and built collaborative feedback processes built on authentic engagement. Also, I’ve analyzed financial statements, partnered with legal & communications professionals, and balanced risk with opportunity.

I am the parent of an ACPS high school student plus a recent APCS graduate currently pursuing engineering at Virginia Tech. My kids have benefitted from project-based learning at Community Lab School, the Environmental Studies Academy, strong performing & visual arts programs, and most of all, from incredibly talented and dedicated teachers.

As a volunteer, my personal interests and efforts align strongly with ACPS priorities, including reading & math outcomes, capital improvement planning, strategies for equitable funding, English learners, disability justice, and strengthening community engagement. With Family Council, I’ve enjoyed diving into the top concerns of ACPS families, from technology use to behavior/discipline and talent development. I’m always motivated to ensure that *all* families are connected with resources to help their children succeed.

Locally, I’ve been honored to participate in two community leader fellowships: Southern Pilgrimage and Leaders Lab. Through these intensives, I’ve built a stronger understanding of Albemarle’s painful history of slavery, race-based segregation, and ugly conflicts. And, I’ve also been inspired by civil rights movements, and become a member of multiple cohorts of strong local leaders. I do not have all the answers, but I am deeply committed to leveraging the strengths of our community to co-create a more just school system.

Heidi Gilman Bennett
Applicant for ACPS School Board At-Large Seat

Local Leadership

2026	Southern Pilgrimage – Civil rights fellowship hosted by UVA & Monticello
2022-26	Family Council for ACPS – Chair & Officer
2023-24	Leaders Lab – Fellowship hosted by Charlottesville Regional Chamber of Commerce
2022-24	Albemarle Foundation for Education – Founding Board Member
2021-23	ACPS Parent Council – Community Lab School Representative
2021-22	Families Helping Families – Teacher appreciation for over 1,000 ACPS educators
2020-21	Henley PaTSO – President

Professional Experience

HGB Consulting LLC – Independent Consultant

2006-19 Strategic projects for education organizations seeking to bridge mission and sustainability. Specialize in high-quality public schools & early childhood programs. Work at intersection of research, policy/data, marketing, content development, and business.

Clients: George Lucas Education Foundation, Sesame Workshop, Kindermusik, Ounce of Prevention Fund, Acelero & Shine Early Learning, HighScope Educational Research Foundation, Teachstone, Teaching Strategies, Disney, Scientific Learning, Children's Progress, and others.

Sample work:

- Define investment strategy to advance research on project-based learning across K-12 portfolio.
- In-depth interviews with K-12 administrators to deepen impact.
- Analyze data and policies on early childhood teacher certification and professional development.
- Overview of funding, key players and dynamics in early childhood school systems.
- Review curriculum & assessment for K-3 literacy and reading.

Scholastic Education. New York, NY

2005-06 **General Manager**
Provided leadership and strategic direction for \$8+ million school business in Early Learning. Directed marketing, product development, and overall business for PreK and K-3 curriculum.

2002-05 **Director of Product Marketing**
Managed portfolio of PreK – 3rd grade offerings with \$24 million+ annual revenue in businesses including early childhood, primary grade reading, and English language learning.

- Management – Established new product marketing role. Trained national field solutions staff. Built relationships with academic authors. Hired and managed team.
- Strategy – Articulated opportunities based on market research, federal funding and policy, financial trends, competitive landscape, and industry shifts for print and technology. Created publishing plans, specified requirements for new programs, drove approvals, and established working P&Ls.
- Marketing – Defined positioning, pricing and configurations. Developed collateral, sales presentations, and support tools. Published efficacy studies & research papers, plus funding toolkits.

LeapFrog – School Product Manager. Emeryville, CA

2000-02 Major contributor to start-up school business focused on technology-based reading. Brought in to translate academic advisors' input for business leaders. Created rules for how the LeapPad divided English words into letters and sounds.

- Proposed and managed re-release of consumer titles into school offerings.
- Managed launch of new Quantum Pad hardware for schools.
- Created and launched of high interest/low level reading series. Negotiated licensing agreements.

Apple Computer – Product Manager Intern. Cupertino, CA

Summer 2000 Launched Power Mac G4 Cube at Macworld NY. Developed sales presentation aligned with Apple brand. Communicated to customers, customer service teams, and press.

Tenth Planet – Product Manager & Content Lead. Half Moon Bay, CA

1996-99 Designed, developed and shipped 6 innovative school literacy programs that integrated technology with hands-on teacher-led instruction. Company was one of first venture-backed ed tech start-ups.

- Product Design and Development – Defined curriculum and instructional design for software and hands-on lessons. Directed team of engineers, artists and audio/video producers. Conducted user-testing. Developed teacher guides. Guided brainstorming, wrote scripts, and visualized animations.
- Management – Led team through transition from independent start-up to subsidiary of large publisher. Streamlined development process to reduce costs and decrease time-to-market. Managed internal and external writers and editors. Recruited and managed relationship with academic advisors.
- Product Marketing – Defined key messages and wrote copy. Analyzed competition and market. Presented at conferences, sales trainings, and to venture capital Board and investors.

1995-96 Dr. Robert Calfee Associates – Consultant. Stanford, CA

Developed manipulatives-based elementary phonics curriculum with Stanford faculty. Led professional workshops for teachers implementing explicit, systematic phonics in “whole language” schools.

1994-95 University of Colorado – Research Associate. Boulder, CO

Taught remedial reading to elementary school students in grades 2-5 in a Boulder Public School. Designed software based on Institute for Behavioral Genetics research on orthographic speech segmentation. Assessed children for UC Cognitive Psychology study on remediation of dyslexia.

1993-94 Project Read – Computer Lab Manager. Menlo Park, CA

Supported adult learners, families and volunteer tutors in non-profit literacy program in public library. Created publicity materials. Wrote grant to maintain funding. Trained and recruited volunteers.

Education

May 2001 **University of California, Berkeley**
Haas School of Business: Master of Business Administration

Winner, 1st National Social Venture Business Plan Competition & Best Pitch.
Founder, Haas Education Club.
Haas Board Fellows Program – Exploratorium.
International Business Development Consultant – Ashesi University in Ghana.

March 1994 **Stanford University**
A.B. in Linguistics with Honors in Education

School of Education Thesis – History of US reading instruction.
Cap and Gown Honorary Society.
Dancer and Choreographer: Viennese Ball, Gaieties, Ram’s Head Musicals & Dollies with LSJUMB.

ACPS Appointments and Service

2020-2021

- **Henley PaTSO President** – Elected to serve during pandemic. Created Henley Families Facebook group for parent-to-parent support. Initiated online fundraising. Supported families in need via Giving Tree & Families Helping Families. Invited speaker at Parent Council about equitable fundraising strategies.

2021 – 2022

- **WAHS** – With no active PTO, founded WAHS Families Facebook group with support of new principal. Co-managed Giving Tree fundraiser to support families in need.
- **Parent Council** – Served as Representative for Community Lab School.
- **Community Lab School** – Served on PTSO and built relationship with principal.
- **Families Helping Families** – Originated teacher appreciation for over 1,000 ACPS educators not supported by PTOs. Led fundraising, volunteer recruiting & management, and communications. (Effort continued annually via Family Council.) Nominated for “volunteer of the year” with United Way of Greater Charlottesville.
- **Private Citizen** – Presented to a community group on Panorama survey results, with emphasis on rigor & high expectations. Analyzed 3rd grade reading outcomes, interviewed educators & parents, and identified strategic pathway options for improvement. Presented to community group, individual School Board members, and then invited by Superintendent to present to division leaders. Resulted in RFP for instructional audit in Dec 2022 & 2023 Bellwether project.

2022 – 2023

- **Albemarle Foundation for Education** – Founding Board Member providing input on ByLaws & governance. Drafted mission & goals. Designed program & grants strategy. Left to focus on Family Council.
- **Parent Council Rep & Officer** – Started as Representative for Community Lab School, and then elected Officer. Energized declining membership & completed first update of ByLaws & Mission & Goals in over a decade. Major topic: Career Learning Communities.
- **Private Citizen** – Sole speaker in public hearing on budget (continued annually). Recommendations for family engagement as strategy for narrowing achievement gaps. Led book club on Districts That Succeed. Proposed volunteer handbook & support.

2023 – 2024

- **Private Citizen** – During bus transportation crisis, proposed “Safe Routes, Strong Schools” solutions. Suggested redistricting policy edits. Organized large “Albemarle Kids Can’t Wait” event to build community leader support for literacy improvements. Pushed for changes in student absence & buy-back policies & implementation.
- **Family Council Chair** – Launched Facebook page to share info & opportunities for engagement; authored most posts since launch. Oversaw org name change & branding. Defined consensus vote & advocacy process. Partnered with UVA Law Clinic to further revise ByLaws. Wrote & received grant from BamaWorks to fund Race Matters in School Communities pilot, collaborating with Agnor & Journey PTOs. Partnered with Dr. Hayes on transparent curriculum adoption process including input opportunities. Created family-to-family survey with Office of Community Engagement. Major topics: Reading Intervention, Middle School Evaluation (grading/homework, every-other-day schedule, unleveled classes, recess), Budget, School Safety, Accreditation.

2024 - 2025

- **Family Council Co-Chair** – Launched DonorsChoose district partnership in collaboration with Office of Community Engagement (raised nearly \$150K in first 2 years for teacher projects). Created Substack to share in-depth analysis with broader audience. Major topics: Elementary Math, SOL Scores, Classroom Behavior & Discipline, Hate/Discrimination, Capital Improvement Plan & School Overcrowding, Class Sizes, Safety, English Learners & Foreign Language in Elementary Schools. Attended LRPAC meetings & built relationships with Board of Supervisors. Year-long engagement with UVA Law Clinic with SEAC on disability evaluations & Child Find.

- **Private Citizen** – Feedback on Scholar Studios. In-depth review of School Resource Officer Memo of Understanding comparing to state model & other districts. Deep review of operating budget.

2025 – 2026

- **Family Council Officer** – Published Substack posts on school overcrowding & led Supervisor outreach on capital improvement including school visits. Topics: Talent Development, Struggling Learners, Access to Disability Evaluations & School-Based Interventions, Overuse of Technology, Grading, Student Clubs & Safety.
- **Private Citizen** – Feedback on AC44 land use plan re: families & children. Attended many SEAC and LRPAC meetings. Invited speaker at Crozet Community Assn on school overcrowding. Partnered with faith leaders on need for student bystander training in high schools. Support families seeking evaluations for potential disability.
- **WAHS** – Spring musical family volunteer coordinator, including grants to fund set-building tools and front-of-house improvements.

2026 – 2027

- **Family Council** – Ex-Officio member supporting Officer team.
- TBD