

MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING OF THE ALBEMARLE COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD
Thursday, August 13, 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; Chief Human Resources Officer Dan Redding; and Clerk of the Board Christine Thompson

AGENDA ITEM NO. 1.0 CLOSED MEETING - At 5:30 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 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 several recent personnel issues. Ms. Le seconded the **motion**. **The motion passed unanimously with a voice vote of 7-0.**

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., 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**. **The motion passed unanimously with a voice vote of 7-0.**

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

Agenda Item No. 3.1 Approval of Agenda - Ms. Spillman moved to amend the agenda to add an update on Policy AG, Professional Boundaries, as Item 8.5. Dr. Acuff seconded the motion. **The motion passed unanimously with a voice vote of 7-0.**

AGENDA ITEM NO. 4.0 ANNOUNCEMENTS

Agenda Item No. 4.1 Spotlight on Education - ACPS Coding Camp - Kley Todd, Director of School Technology Services, and Learning Technology Integrators Jessa Miles and Katie Breaud, provided an overview of the 2026 ACPS Coding Camp. The presentation highlighted the camp's connection to the ACPS Strategic Plan, its focus on coding, creativity, growth mindset, and both screen-based and unplugged learning activities.

They also shared family feedback, examples of student learning through the design-thinking process, and the role of facilitators in supporting meaningful technology use. Looking ahead to 2027, staff identified goals of increasing access through additional sessions and transportation, expanding options for elementary and middle school students, and increasing the number of facilitators and professional learning opportunities.

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

Dr. Hayes provided her monthly Superintendent's update, highlighting the successful back-to-school event hosted by the Albemarle Foundation for Education, the positive start to the school year, and her visits to 26 school and division sites during the first two days of school. She thanked teachers, staff, public safety officers, volunteers, and division staff for their work supporting the opening of schools.

Dr. Hayes also provided an update on New Teacher Academy and pre-service activities. Approximately 190 teachers were welcomed to the division, including 62 novice teachers. She reviewed the ACPS Novice Teacher Support Network, a new two-year induction program for veteran teachers joining ACPS, and division-wide professional learning opportunities offered during pre-service week. More than 100 professional learning sessions were provided to support instructional practices, curriculum implementation, and high-quality learning experiences for students.

Mr. Redding provided an update on Professional Boundaries Policy training. He reported that more than 93% of staff had completed the training and that an asynchronous module had been developed for newly hired employees to complete before beginning work. The training applies to all employees, including temporary staff, substitutes, and coaches.

Dr. Acuff highlighted the success of the back-to-school event, including the distribution of backpacks, food, health services, and other community resources.

Ms. Le provided an update from the Advisory Committee for Environmental Sustainability regarding recycling, waste reduction, and sustainability efforts. ACES serves in an advisory role to the Superintendent and School Board on division sustainability goals.

Mr. Dillenbeck addressed the independent review related to recent division events, grading practices, student behavior, staff retention, technology use, and achievement gaps. The Board had previously called an August 4 special meeting to discuss the scope, cost, and structure of an independent review/investigation.

Chair Berlin highlighted the opening of Mountain View, the division's first new school in 24 years, and noted the community input that helped shape its upper and lower school model. She also recognized the work of staff in preparing schools for opening, including efforts to support the temporary location of ACE Academy at Lansdowne at the Boys & Girls Club. Appreciation was expressed to division staff, school employees, community partners, and the Boys & Girls Club for their work and support.

Ms. Osborne shared her experience attending new teacher orientation, school open houses, back-to-school events, and other opening-of-school activities throughout the division.

Ms. Spillman shared [remarks](#) recognizing her final meeting as a member of the School Board and reflected on her time serving the Albemarle County community.

Mr. Beard recognized Ms. Spillman at her final meeting as a member of the School Board and thanked her for her years of service to Albemarle County Public Schools. He acknowledged Ms. Spillman's experience, commitment to students, particularly marginalized students and students receiving special education services, and her dedication to the school community. Mr. Beard also expressed appreciation for Ms. Spillman's leadership and encouraged continued respectful and constructive dialogue within the community.

Chair Berlin provided an update on the process to fill the vacant At-Large School Board seat. She noted that application information was available on the ACPS website and that the Board was required to appoint a new member by September 28. She stated that additional information regarding the interview process and special meeting would be shared once scheduled and encouraged interested applicants to review the information online or contact the School Board Office for assistance.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 5.0 PUBLIC COMMENT

Keith Jackson, Samuel Miller district, addressed the Board regarding the school bus stop serving the Turner Mtn. neighborhood. He thanked the Board and ACPS Transportation for their attention to the issue and acknowledged the operational considerations involved in establishing bus routes and stops. Mr. Jackson expressed concerns about student safety at the current stop near the intersection of Turner Mtn Road and Rte. 250, citing traffic speed and volume, visibility, the passing lane, and conditions during student pickup and drop-off times. He asked ACPS Transportation to reconsider the location and restore the previous stop within the neighborhood or identify another safe interior location. He also requested that the site be evaluated during the actual morning and afternoon bus stop times.

Jimmy Belew with the Scottsville district addressed the Board regarding transparency, public trust, and the independence of the investigation involving ACPS. He referenced statements attributed to the Commonwealth's Attorney's Office and expressed concern about the public's confidence in the school division and the Board's handling of recent matters. He urged the Board to use an investigator with no prior ties to ACPS and asked what steps would be taken to rebuild public trust. Mr. Belew also shared a positive experience with school staff who assisted his family in helping his child return to school and expressed appreciation for their support.

Christina Ra, Rivanna district, addressed the Board regarding the independent investigation involving ACPS. She referenced statements attributed to the Commonwealth's Attorney's Office and expressed concern about the division's prior handling of Title IX matters and the need for an investigation that is fully independent of ACPS. She urged the Board to ensure that individuals or firms with existing relationships to the division are not involved in shaping the scope or findings of the review. Ms. Ra also raised concerns about student technology use and screen time. She referenced a family survey conducted across multiple schools, stated that technology was a leading concern among respondents, and asked the Board to consider establishing a screen time policy and to involve families in future decisions related to technology use.

Sarah Paulsworth, parent of an ACPS student, addressed the Board regarding concerns about transparency, mandatory reporting practices, and the division's handling of matters related to a former school principal and a criminal investigation. She referenced records obtained through FOIA and statements attributed to the Commonwealth's Attorney's Office and questioned whether required reports had been made in a timely manner. Ms. Paulsworth also expressed concern about the renewal of the former principal's contract and the consistency of the division's response to leadership accountability. She urged the Board to examine the division's reporting practices, oversight, and handling of the matter.

Nathan Moore from the Rio district expressed appreciation for Ms. Spillman's service on the School Board and praised her willingness to ask difficult questions, support teachers and staff, and advocate for vulnerable students. The speaker specifically recognized Ms. Spillman's support for transgender students, students with disabilities, students experiencing mental health challenges, and others who may feel marginalized. Mr. Moore also expressed concern about

the harassment and threats Ms. Spillman and her family had experienced and encouraged Board members to continue advocating for all students.

Superintendent William Coles expressed concern about the school division's academic performance and stated a strong desire to see significant improvement in the 2025–2026 data. He said his organization intends to review the issues outlined in a recent letter in greater detail and hopes to see systemic changes that improve educational outcomes for all students. Superintendent Coles encouraged the Board and division staff to work toward making the school system a statewide model and invited Board members to attend future meetings focused on school improvement plans and student outcomes.

Joellen Pisarczyk of the Whitehall district criticized the Board's decision to hire a law firm to conduct an independent review related to allegations of sexual abuse and misconduct in ACPS schools, arguing that the firm's prior representation of the division creates a conflict of interest and undermines public trust. She referenced a recent U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights initiative focused on preventing adult sexual abuse in schools and stated that staff, families, and others may report concerns directly to federal authorities. Ms. Pisarczyk urged the Board to end its current arrangement and retain a fully independent outside entity to conduct the investigation, stating that doing so would provide greater transparency, accountability, and confidence for affected families and the community.

Bill McCaskill, a Samuel Miller resident, asked the School Board to consider allowing LifeWise Academy to provide release-time religious instruction to interested students. He described LifeWise Academy as a nonprofit organization that offers voluntary, off-campus biblical instruction during the school day with written parental permission at no cost to the school division. He said the proposal would support parental choice and provide an additional educational option for families who want it. He also stated that biblical instruction can reinforce values such as honesty, compassion, respect, responsibility, forgiveness, and service to others.

Nancy Koenig of the Scottsville district encouraged the School Board to use the new academic year and administration as an opportunity to focus on student achievement, address achievement gaps among students from different income levels, and rebuild public trust. She asked whether the public will receive a complete report. Ms. Koenig also questioned the need for social-emotional coaching positions, raised concerns about the role of guidance counselors, and called for a review of internet filtering practices to ensure equal access to lawful political websites. She urged the Board to reconsider future school construction in light of declining and projected student enrollment.

Brigitte Rodgers of the Rivanna district spoke about parental consent, student privacy, and the use of educational technology. She argued that current and proposed policies rely too heavily on opt-out provisions rather than requiring affirmative parental consent for one-on-one interactions, student photography, and the use of certain technology platforms. She also raised concerns about student data privacy, noting lawsuits involving educational technology companies and questioning whether parents have enough information or control over how student data is collected and used. Ms. Rodgers expressed frustration with efforts to obtain information about how much time their children spend on ACPS-issued devices and the number of programs available to students. She urged the division to consider stronger consent requirements and clearer opt-out options for educational technology.

Sidney Martin shared concerns about the handling of her son's special education services, student records, and interactions with school staff and social services. She alleged that division procedures were bypassed, that unauthorized actions were taken involving her son, and that required specialized education services were not provided. She specifically raised concerns about a staff member's involvement in the matter and alleged that staff members connected to the complaint were permitted to manage or control records related to the investigation. She also alleged that restricted student information was shared without proper authorization. Ms. Martin criticized the division's response to the reported policy violations and characterized the lack of action as a failure to adequately protect vulnerable students.

David Storm, chair of the Long-Range Planning Advisory Committee and a parent at Mountain View Elementary School, thanked the School Board for its long-term support of the school expansion and new facility. He noted that discussions about expanding Mountain View date back to 2017 and said the completed school reflects years of commitment despite delays associated with COVID-19 and changes to the Capital Improvement Plan. Mr. Storm praised the design of the new school, describing it as bright, open, welcoming, and well suited to students. He also thanked Building Services

staff for their work on the project. He expressed particular appreciation for the Board's decision to keep the school community together, including families from Southwood and students participating in dual-language instruction, while adopting a primary and upper-school model. He concluded by saying that every student in the division deserves a school environment that is equally welcoming and inspiring.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 6.0 APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA – Ms. Spillman offered a motion to approve the Consent Agenda. Mr. Dillenbeck **seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously with a voice vote of 7-0.**

- 6.1 Approval of Consent Agenda
- 6.2 Personnel Action
- 6.3 Approval of the Minutes
- 6.4 2026-27 School Crisis Plans
- 6.5 2026-2027 Course Additions
- 6.6 Personnel Action – Athletic Coaches
- 6.7 Religious Exemption #1
- 6.8 Religious Exemption #2
- 6.9 Religious Exemption #3
- 6.10 Religious Exemption #4
- 6.11 Religious Exemption #5
- 6.12 Religious Exemption #6
- 6.13 Religious Exemption #7
- 6.14 Religious Exemption #8
- 6.15 Exemption from Compulsory Attendance
- 6.16 For Review: Establishment of Meeting Time, Date and Place for 2027 and the FY2027-28 Budget Development Calendar

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

The School Board took a break from 8:07 p.m. to 8:17 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 8.0 SCHOOL DIVISION BUSINESS

Agenda Item No. 8.1 [FY 27 Budget Updates](#) – Director of Planning and Budget Maya Kumazawa provided an update on the FY 2026-27 budget, noting that revised state funding projections are expected to increase School Fund revenues by approximately \$2 million. The additional state funding reflects increases related to compensation, sales tax projections, infrastructure and operations funding, and special education support.

Of the additional revenue, approximately \$500,000 supports the 0.25% salary increase approved in July, with the remaining funds recommended for expenditure contingencies. Potential uses include enrollment-related costs, fuel, policy training, and technology replacement. Staff noted that maintaining the contingency provides flexibility as actual revenues and expenditures become clearer during the fiscal year.

The additional funding was scheduled to come forward through an appropriation request, followed by a first-quarter financial report in November or December. Staff also planned to begin discussion of the FY 2027-28 budget process and priorities.

Agenda Item No. 8.2 Race Matters in School Communities Series - Representatives from the Counseling Alliance of Virginia (CAVA) provided an overview of their three-year partnership with Albemarle County Public Schools through the Race Matters in School Communities series. The presentation highlighted the program's efforts to foster understanding, strengthen relationships, and support constructive dialogue among students, families, staff, and community members in ways that strengthen school climate and support student success. CAVA also previewed professional learning opportunities planned for the 2026–27 school year with the School Board and Student Senate that are designed to build participants' capacity to engage across diverse perspectives and contribute to welcoming and inclusive school communities.

[Scope of Work](#)

[Race Matters in Schools Retrospective](#)

Gene Cash Jr. and LaTasha Edwards of the Counseling Alliance of Virginia presented a retrospective of the Race Matters in Schools work conducted with ACPS from 2023-2026. The work has included Race Matters cohorts, professional development, leadership and student sessions, diversity resource teacher training, mental health support, and reviews of both the Bellwether report and ACPS Anti-Racism Policy.

The presenters discussed the progression from racial awareness and sensitivity toward greater racial responsibility and competency. Mr. Cash said the Bellwether report did not fully identify what he described as underlying tenets of white supremacy and emphasized that racial issues must be clearly recognized and named before meaningful change can occur. He also suggested strengthening the division's Anti-Racism Policy through more proactive education, training, and accountability.

Board discussion focused on how racial awareness may affect student achievement, discipline, access to advanced coursework, and students' sense of belonging. Mr. Cash said greater awareness of implicit racial biases among educators could influence instructional and disciplinary practices and help address disparities affecting Black students and other students of color. Ms. Edwards discussed the experience of Black students who may be the only student of their race in advanced classes and emphasized the importance of equitable access, support, and opportunity.

The presenters also discussed the importance of building more inclusive relationships among staff and students and increasing awareness of how individuals may unintentionally isolate or exclude others. The presentation identifies equitable instructional and disciplinary outcomes, increased family engagement, greater racial and cultural humility, and stronger support for students of color among its intended outcomes.

Board members reflected on previous racial sensitivity training and expressed interest in continued professional development. Members discussed making such training recurring, potentially annual, for the Board and staff. Recommendations for 2026-27 include a fourth Race Matters cohort, racial awareness and sensitivity training for School Board members, training for the Student Senate and Equity Change Teams, and establishment of a standing Racial Awareness and Sensitivity Core Team.

Agenda Item No. 8.3 [Equity through Collective Responsibility](#): Building the Conditions for Every Student to Thrive

Director of Equity Education Ayanna Mitchell and Equity Coordinators Megan Washburn, Dr. Melissa Hairston, and Will Donnely provided the School Board with an update on the progress, impact, and future direction of culturally responsive practices and equity initiatives across Albemarle County Public Schools. The presentation highlighted the 2026-27 Cultural Competency Framework, professional learning and credentialing, school and department partnerships, and efforts to expand culturally responsive practices beyond instructional staff to employees throughout the division. Building on the integration of the Office of Equity Education into the Department of Instruction, staff described how this

work has evolved from a separate initiative into a shared, division-wide responsibility embedded in instructional and operational leadership.

Board members discussed differences in Cultural Responsiveness Education credential completion among schools and asked whether participation has improved over time. Staff explained that school-level participation fluctuates from year to year and highlighted several middle and elementary schools that showed particularly strong engagement and completion during 2025-26. Staff emphasized that changes in completion rates should be viewed alongside broader factors such as school leadership, planning, instructional systems, staff turnover, and the size of each school.

Board members also asked whether lower completion rates at some of the division's more diverse schools indicated a pattern. Staff noted that higher staff turnover at some schools can significantly affect completion percentages and cautioned against drawing conclusions from the percentages alone. They said the more important question is how the training is being applied in practice and how new and novice teacher programming can ensure that culturally responsive education is built into onboarding regardless of a school's prior completion rate.

Discussion then turned to employees outside the instructional staff, including transportation, EDEP, School Resource Officers, teaching assistants, and classified employees. Staff described ongoing efforts to extend cultural competency training across these areas so that the work reaches all employees who interact with students, not only classroom teachers.

Staff also raised concerns about capacity, noting that the three Equity Coordinators each support multiple schools and programs, while also reviewing coursework and providing individual feedback to employees completing the training. Staff said limited staffing makes it difficult to provide the level of coaching and support they would like across all schools and departments. Board members noted that these staffing needs should be considered during future budget discussions, particularly as the division looks for ways to close achievement gaps and strengthen instruction.

The discussion concluded with recognition of the Equity team's work and the broader goal of moving beyond completion numbers to embedding culturally responsive practices into everyday instruction, leadership, and operations across the division.

Agenda Item No. 8.4 Attendance Update and Year-End Data Review – Educational Equity Data Scientist Dr. Russell Carlock provided an update on ACPS attendance efforts, including changes implemented during the 2025-26 school year, current attendance data, the division's tiered support system, and next steps. Changes included revised administrative procedures, creation of a division attendance team, increased use of data to support schools, expanded partnerships with community agencies, and improved coordination with the Attendance Multidisciplinary Team.

Dr. Carlock reported that chronic absenteeism improved during 2025-26, declining by 12% division-wide. The number of chronically absent students decreased from 2,000 in 2024-25 to 1,679 in 2025-26, while the overall attendance rate increased from 94.25% to 94.58%. This improvement represented approximately 7,809 additional student attendance days and an estimated \$703,000 in avoided remediation costs.

Attendance improved at 22 of 24 schools, although notable differences remain among individual schools. Greer Elementary was highlighted as a case study for its use of weekly attendance meetings, tiered student supports, attendance incentives, proactive teacher outreach, and direct family engagement.

Dr. Carlock also reviewed the multi-tiered attendance support system, which progresses from early outreach and monitoring to individualized attendance plans, intensive interventions, community-based supports, and, when necessary, referral to the multidisciplinary team and Court Services. He noted that court referrals have decreased since implementation of the multidisciplinary approach, while also acknowledging that the tiered system has not yet been fully implemented across the division.

For 2026-27, staff will focus on earlier outreach to families and students, stronger division-level support for school attendance teams, more consistent implementation of the tiered system, and increased collaboration with community partners, particularly for students requiring intensive support.

During discussion, Board members asked Dr. Carlock to explain how school minivans are used to support attendance. Dr. Carlock said schools may use the vehicles to conduct home visits and, when appropriate, transport students to school after confirming that an absence is not due to illness or another reason preventing attendance. He noted that administrators and other staff generally handle these attendance-related trips rather than classroom teachers.

Board members recognized the work of Greer Elementary Principal Steve Saunders and his staff for their attendance efforts and also thanked the Community Partnerships team for engaging families through back-to-school events and other outreach intended to encourage regular attendance.

The Board also discussed whether attendance efforts should place additional emphasis on particular grade levels. Members noted the importance of establishing strong attendance habits in pre-K and kindergarten and strengthening attendance during middle school to support longer-term improvement into high school. Dr. Carlock said division data shows some of the highest chronic absenteeism rates in kindergarten and 12th grade.

Dr. Carlock also explained that the division added a pre-K representative to its attendance team last year. Beginning in 2026-27, elementary schools with pre-K programs are expected to include a pre-K staff member on their school attendance team. Although pre-K students are not subject to Virginia's compulsory attendance requirements, staff said the division can provide the same types of attendance supports to help families establish consistent attendance habits early.

Agenda Item No. 8.5 - Dr. Russell Carlock provided an update on implementation of the **Professional Boundaries and Prevention of Sexual Misconduct and Abuse policy**. He reported that the required training had been successfully rolled out to administrators, teachers, and staff, but said implementation raised two areas where additional clarity was needed.

The first proposed amendment clarified the definition of a "one-on-one meeting" as an intentional, isolated encounter between an adult and an individual student outside normal group instruction, typically in an office or closed room with a window. The second addressed concerns about requiring parents or guardians to be copied on every email between staff and students. Dr. Carlock noted that such a requirement could create safety concerns, particularly when students contact counselors about personal safety, self-harm, or other sensitive matters. The proposed revision instead provides that student emails will be made available to parents upon request to the principal, while continuing to require staff to use ACPs-provided communication platforms and prohibiting the use of personal phones except through approved applications that provide appropriate access.

Board members noted that the revisions resulted from feedback received during implementation and emphasized the importance of revisiting policies when unintended issues arise rather than waiting for a regular policy review cycle. Members expressed support for treating the policy as an evolving document that can be adjusted as needed while maintaining its protections for students.

Dr. Acuff offered a motion to approve the Professional Boundaries and Prevention of Sexual Misconduct and Abuse policy as amended. Ms. Spillman **seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously with a roll call vote of 7-0.**

AGENDA ITEM No. 9.0 OTHER BUSINESS

Agenda Item No. 9.1 Other Business by Board Members and/or the Superintendent

Chair Berlin shared that the Board is planning a future work session on technology use in schools, particularly at the K-5 level, including research related to technology use and development. She and Dr. Hayes will work on scheduling the session, likely for October or November, with additional information to be shared with the Board.

Chair Berlin also reviewed the timeline for filling the vacant At-Large School Board seat. Applications will be accepted August 10 through August 21, and eligible applicants may reside anywhere in Albemarle County. Candidate interviews are scheduled for September 10, followed by a required public hearing during the week of September 14. The Board is scheduled to appoint the new At-Large member on September 24. Additional details regarding the interviews and public hearing will be provided as they are finalized.

Agenda Item No. 9.2 Closed Meeting – None.

Agenda Item No. 9.3 Closed Meeting Certification – None.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 10.0 ADJOURNMENT – At 10:05 p.m., hearing no objections, Chair Berlin adjourned the meeting of the Albemarle County School Board.

Clerk

Chair