

Board-to-Board, February 2025

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

Albemarle County School Board Makes Appointment to Rio Magisterial District Seat—At its January 23 meeting, the Albemarle County School Board voted unanimously to appoint Ms. Leslie Pryor as its newest member, representing the Rio Magisterial District. Pryor fills the vacancy left by the passing of Mr. Chuck Pace, who served the district with distinction before his death in December 2024.

Pryor was selected following a robust appointment process that included a public application period, candidate interviews, and a community input session. Seven Rio District residents applied to fill the vacancy, and the school board carefully reviewed each application before conducting interviews during a special public meeting on January 16. The board also held a public hearing on January 23 to gather additional feedback from the community before making its final decision.

Pryor brings a wealth of academic and professional experience to the board. She is a graduate of Virginia State University and is currently completing her Master of Public Safety at the University of Virginia. She currently serves as the Program Associate and Alumni Coordinator at the University of Virginia's Sorensen Institute and has previously worked at Region Ten, the Ronald McDonald House, and the Department of Corrections. Among her wide-ranging community service, she has acted as a board member for the Virginia Probation and Parole Association, Chapman Grove Baptist Church, and the National Association of Drug Court Professionals. She has also coached basketball at Charlottesville High School and for Charlottesville Parks and Recreation, where she was honored as Coach of the Year. Her decision to seek the school board position stems from her deep commitment to serving Albemarle County's youth, families and employees with integrity, competency, dedication and compassion.

"I am honored to have this opportunity to serve our community," said Pryor. "My focus will be on increasing teacher pay and incentives, enhancing facilities to ensure safety for students and employees, collaborating with neighboring school divisions, and ensuring all children—regardless of socio-economic background, race, ethnicity, or gender—have what they need to succeed in school."

Pryor's term as the interim representative will run through December 31, 2025. The Rio District seat will appear on the general election ballot on November 4, 2025, with the elected candidate serving a full four-year term.

In the coming weeks, Pryor will receive a comprehensive orientation and briefing from the School Division Counsel, Clerk, and other board members. Her first official meeting as an Albemarle County School Board member is scheduled for February 13, 2025.

Superintendent Dr. Matthew Haas Issues Statement Ensuring Safe and Welcoming Schools—Also at the January 23 School Board meeting, Superintendent Dr. Matthew Haas presented the following statement ensuring our community that our schools will continue to be safe and welcoming spaces.

Dear Members of the Albemarle County School Board,

Thank you for the opportunity to address an important topic on the minds of many in our community. Recent inquiries about the potential impact of immigration-enforcement activities on our schools have prompted timely discussions and preparations within our leadership team and School Board.

Above all else, I want to assure our students and their families that our schools are—and will remain—a safe and welcoming place for all. Albemarle County Public Schools does not, and may not, and will not ask students or families about their immigration status. Furthermore, all student education records are private and protected by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). These records will not be shared with any government agency unless presented with a valid warrant or judicial subpoena.

We understand the concern about immigration officials potentially appearing at our schools. Recently, I was asked about the role of our School Resource Officers. Let me be clear: students or their family members will not be questioned, detained, or taken into custody on ACPS premises except when a law enforcement officer presents a valid warrant for an arrest on criminal charges.

Even in those rare circumstances, our protocol requires school-based leaders to notify the School Division Counsel, who will manage all interactions with law enforcement.

We recognize that school bus stops are an extension of our schools and play a critical role in providing students with access to education.

Following federal policies' guidance, school bus stops, like school campuses, have long been considered “sensitive locations.” Immigration enforcement actions at these locations have been strongly discouraged.

Recent changes to immigration enforcement policies have eliminated previous guidelines that restricted immigration officers from making arrests at sensitive locations such as schools and churches. These changes could potentially allow officers to conduct enforcement activities in these locations.

It is important to note, however, that such actions are still subject to legal protocols, including the need for a warrant in certain circumstances. FERPA, which protects student education records, remains in effect and should continue to safeguard private student information unless specific exceptions apply under the law.

We will do everything we can to ensure that public schools and associated spaces remain safe and secure for students and families.

We encourage any family concerned about immigration enforcement at or near schools or school bus stops to contact us or trusted community partners. We aim to provide support, information, and resources to ensure all students can safely travel to and from school and attend school in peace.

To further support our schools and families, our Office of Community Engagement has distributed written materials outlining these protocols and resources available to families who feel they may be facing immigration-related challenges. We are also fortunate to work closely with a network of community partners to ensure families have access to the support they need.

While none of us can predict the future, we remain committed to our core values of equity, excellence, community, and well-being.

We stand ready to protect and support all students, staff, and families to the fullest extent of our abilities.

Thank you for your continued trust and collaboration as we navigate this together.

Dr. Matthew S. Haas
Superintendent

Albemarle County School Board Honors Legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. at Meeting—The Albemarle County School Board celebrated Martin Luther King, Jr. Day by reading a proclamation honoring Dr. King’s legacy at the January 23 meeting.

Mr. Graham Paige read the proclamation, which was unanimously approved. The proclamation, which can be found attached to the end of this report, recognizes the alignment of Albemarle County Public Schools’ (ACPS) goals — equity, excellence, family and community, and wellness — and Dr. King’s vision of a more equitable and inclusive society.

Albemarle County Public Schools Not Affected by PowerSchool Data Breach—In December 2024, PowerSchool, the student information system (SIS) used by Albemarle County Public Schools (ACPS) and many surrounding school districts, became aware of a data breach through their customer support system, PowerSource. Although this breach affected some local divisions, this incident **did not affect** ACPS student data.

To further ensure the safety of student data, ACPS conducted an internal review of our PowerSchool SIS server logs and found no evidence of unauthorized access. While there is no cause for concern at this time, ACPS remains committed to safeguarding staff, student, and family information by adhering to established data security practices.

High School Freshmen Receive Mental Health First Aid Training—Starting on January 29, 2025, Albemarle County Public Schools will provide Teen Mental Health First Aid (tMHFA) training for 9th-grade students. This program teaches teens how to recognize and respond to signs of mental health and substance use challenges in their friends and peers.

The training will help students:

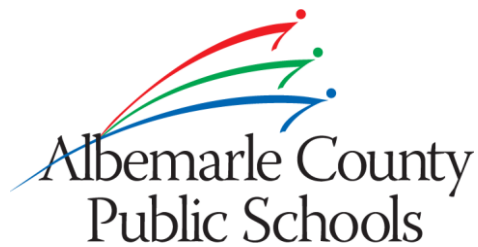
- Understand mental health challenges.
- Learn how to support their friends with kindness and action.
- Know when to ask a trusted adult for help.

The training will be taught by certified school staff and Region Ten professionals. Topics include school violence and suicide, which some students may find upsetting. Families are encouraged to talk with their teens about these subjects before or after the training.

Training Details:

- **Session 1:** Understanding mental health, how trauma and social media affect teens, and the importance of building a supportive and understanding community.
- **Session 2:** How to help peers in a mental health crisis, including using a 5-step action plan.
- **Session 3:** Building resilience and responding to substance use challenges.

More information about the training and resources for families can be found on the [Teen Mental Health First Aid \(tMHFA\)](#) web page.



Proclamation Celebrating Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

WHEREAS, just a century after the Emancipation Proclamation, in 1963, Dr. King and allied forces marched on Washington and delivered the revered “I Have a Dream” speech, advocating for the end of racial segregation and societal inequality; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and other civil rights leaders devoted their lives to the expansion of civil rights and public service to *all* Americans; and

WHEREAS, in honoring his legacy, Martin Luther King, Jr. Day is the only federal holiday designated as a National Day of Service to encourage all Americans to volunteer to improve their communities; and

WHEREAS, Albemarle County Schools’ mission is, “Working together as a team, we will end the predictive value of race, class gender, and special capacities for our children’s success through high-quality teaching and learning for all. We seek to build relationships with families and communities to ensure that every student succeeds. We will know every student.” ACPS values are centered around equity, excellence, family and community, and wellness; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT PROCLAIMED, that Albemarle County Public Schools do hereby honor and celebrate January 20, 2025, as Martin Luther King, Jr. Day and encourage our employees and residents to work towards his vision for a more equitable and inclusive society.

Signed this 23rd day of January 2025

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Katherine L. Acuff", written in black ink.

Katherine L. Acuff, School Board Chair
Albemarle County Public Schools