



Board-to-Board

August, 2015

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

Bus Contract to Save \$250,000—In August, the school division announced a new procurement program for school buses, switching from buying off the state contract to buying from the winner of a competitively-bid contract. Earlier this year, the school division awarded a five-year contract to Carter Machinery of Ashland, Virginia. The contract reduces the per-unit cost of a new school bus by \$1200; adds safety features recommended by bus drivers and provides the transportation department with commonality for its spare parts inventory. In addition to stable prices for five years, the new approach will reduce overall costs to taxpayers by at least \$250,000 over five years compared to state contract prices. The department already has been contacted by several other school divisions interested in a similar approach.

New School Year—The new school year began on Wednesday, August 19th with student registrations about 150 over projection. Most of the early increases were in the high schools. Enrollment numbers are historically volatile during the first few weeks of a new school year and do not become official for state revenue purposes until September 30. Among new developments from a year ago is Agnor-Hurt's multi-age classroom addition; the division of all Yancey Elementary School students into primary (K-2) and intermediate (3-5) teaching sections; the relocation of the Community Public Charter School to Murray High School; the expansion of the division's one-to-one technology initiative to all middle and high school students and some elementary grades and a new Student Services Officer to reduce truancy and drop-out rates and improve alternative education programs. Among projects to be completed during the new school year is a greenhouse and laboratory for the Environmental Sciences Academy, a new multi-purpose fitness and gymnasium at Henley Middle School and the installation of solar panels on the roofs of six schools.

Capital Improvement Budget—During its August 27th meeting, the School Board reviewed and discussed the final capital improvement program recommendations from the Long-Range Planning Advisory Committee. The five-year plan totals \$123 million, with \$18.8 million in the request for the next fiscal year. Above the line items, including maintenance, technology, school bus replacement and security enhancements total \$13.4 million. The Board discussion focused on two individual school project proposals—modernizations at Red Hill that range from \$1 million to \$3.9 million and a 300-student capacity expansion at Woodbrook that would cost \$13.5 million. The latter is seen as a solution to the recent strong enrollment growth among elementary school students in the urban ring. The Board will make a decision on its priorities at its September 10th meeting.

Strategic Priorities Update—During its August 13th meeting, the Board reviewed staff recommendations on proposed strategic priorities for 2015-17. The recommendations included six priorities identified by the Board in its June retreat that include effective teaching practices; professional development; contemporary learning spaces; expansion of an elementary school world language program; work-based learning to include field trips and the optimization of fiscal resources. An revised draft will be presented at the September 10th meeting.

Federal Government Visit—The U.S. Department of Education is been working with the White House Office of Science & Technology Policy on designing what the next generation of career and technical education (CTE) will look like. The department is responsible for setting CTE requirements that school divisions must meet to qualify for the federal Perkins Grant funds. They have expressed interest in learning more about how we are applying our maker curriculum and our CTE classes in entrepreneurship to modernize traditional instructional models and are planning a visit to and a meeting with us in early September.

Shannon Grants—Eight of our schools received a total of 12 grants from the Shannon Foundation to fund innovative classroom projects this year. The largest single grant for \$2,800 was awarded to Lisa Boyce, who teaches entrepreneurship and other CTE classes at Henley Middle School. She will use the funds to involve students in publishing an online environmental field guide to teach skills in math, English, science, engineering and the arts. Other grants were awarded to teachers from Baker-Butler, Red Hill and Stone-Robinson Elementary Schools, Jouett and Burley Middle Schools and Western Albemarle High School.

New Federal Grant—Greer Elementary School has received a \$34,500 fresh fruits and vegetables grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. With an emphasis on the purchase of local produce, the grant will furnish students with fresh fruits and vegetables outside of the breakfast and lunch programs and is designed to improve overall diet and promote healthier eating habits.

School Board website: <http://www2.k12albemarle.org/Pages/default.aspx>