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Dear Steve, Diantha, Pam, Eric, Barbara, Jason, and Ned:

On Monday, the most important School Board meeting of the year will center our attention on how best to serve our learners. The values we hold dear – excellence, young people, respect, and community – should drive our efforts as we review, revise and develop the best strategic focus for Albemarle County Public Schools. This is essential to our success in achieving the lofty goals we have set for every student.

Recently, a teacher said to me: “Excellence will always be a moving target for educators. When we remove barriers so learners gain access to the best we have to offer that’s when we’ll see more passion, interest, persistence, and confidence in students about their work. No one gets to excellence as a teacher or learner without that. Those define what I want for my students – and me.”

We certainly have made some progress in removing those barriers. Over the last decade, we have increased the customized options available to young people in our schools – such programs as charter schools, academies, AVID, performing and visual arts, and extracurricular activities. We have worked to align curriculum, assessment, and instruction through implementation of the Framework for Quality Learning, professional learning communities, the summer CAI Institute, the annual Making Connections conference and the implementation of the instructional coaching model.

We can point to the success of these initiatives in both the quantitative and qualitative data we collect analyze and report upon each year. We need to continue to press forward. The challenges we face – providing access to experienced and capable educators, to competitive learning technologies and resources, and to contemporary learning opportunities for all young people – will not get easier.

The Superintendent’s cabinet has put in place measures to initiate, support, monitor, and evaluate our continuous progress--through a formalized assessment of how programs are implemented, in the setting of division goals and priorities, by approval of departmental and school improvement goals, and with thoughtful and credible employee performance appraisals.

Critical areas for our strategic focus should include:

- 1) Envisioning a new northern contemporary high school as an outcome of a long-range planning committee process as well as capital investment needs in school facilities that must respond to the dynamic needs of 21st century learners.
- 2) Engaging the community in appraisal of the school division’s vision, mission, goals and core values and evaluating each of these against the rapid shifts that are occurring in our communities, in the workforce, and within colleges as we move through the second decade of the 21st century.



- 3) Creating a human resource action plan to systemically build capabilities among current and future employees that advance them along professional learning pathways. These capabilities should support a commitment to and an engagement with those competencies and skills that deliver learning, teaching and leadership excellence in Albemarle County Public Schools.
- 4) Ensuring that all graduates are equipped with the lifelong learning competencies to successfully enter adult citizenship, the workforce, and post-graduate education.
- 5) Building a culture of thought, creativity and idea generation among educators and young people that embodies the entrepreneurial spirit of America's strength as a nation of inventors, creators, designers, engineers, builders and solution-finders. These will be the economic, scientific and educational imperatives through the next decades of the 21st century.

I observed an activity in a school recently in which children described what they would love to accomplish if they lived to be 100 years old. Our 2012-13 entering kindergartners would be a cohort of 93 year-olds in 2100. I can only dream of the changes in this community, the state, nation, and world they will see. The rapidity of change accelerates daily as new technologies instantly and dramatically change the ways in which we live, work and play together as humans.

Consider: the virtual world exponentially accelerates learning opportunities for us all. The printing world grows more obsolete. Factory jobs that drove the way education was delivered at the beginning of the 20th century will never exist as they once did. Communities, too, will never exist as they once have. These transformative developments offer incredible opportunities and huge challenges as we chart the course of Albemarle County Public Schools.

I look forward to exploring these topics and to our discussion of how best we can mature these opportunities and manage the challenges when we meet on Monday. Our work together will reveal the next chapter in the story of our children's learning lives as well as how we will make our mark upon the future of our community, state and nation.

Regards,



Pamela R. Moran, Ed. D.
Superintendent of Schools