

MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING OF THE ALBEMARLE COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD
Thursday, August 14, 2025
[Meeting Video Link](#)

Roll Call - UPON THE ROLL BEING CALLED, THE FOLLOWING WERE PRESENT:

Board Members - Dr. Kate Acuff, Dr. Rebecca Berlin, Ms. Ellen Osborne, Mr. Graham Paige, Ms. Leslie Pryor, and Ms. Allison Spillman

Absent – Ms. Judy Le

Staff Members - Superintendent Matthew Haas; School Division Counsel Josiah Black; Assistant Superintendent Patrick McLaughlin; Assistant Superintendent Daphne Keiser; Assistant Superintendent Chandra Hayes; Chief Operating Officer Rosalyn Schmitt; Chief of Human Resources Dan Redding; Acting Public Affairs and Strategic Communications Officer Jennifer Butler; Clerk of the Board Christine Thompson; and Administrative Support Specialist Lauren Crawford

AGENDA ITEM NO. 1.0 OPENING ACTIVITIES

Agenda Item No. 1.1 Call to Order - At 6:30 p.m., Chair Acuff called the Albemarle County School Board meeting to order.

Agenda Item No. 1.2 - Roll Call

Agenda Item No. 1.3 - Pledge of Allegiance

Agenda Item No. 1.4 - Moment of Silence

AGENDA ITEM NO. 2.0 APPROVAL OF AGENDA - Ms. Osborne offered a **motion** to approve the agenda. Dr. Berlin seconded the **motion**. **A voice vote was taken, and the motion passed unanimously (6-0).** [Ms. Le was absent]

AGENDA ITEM NO. 3.0 ANNOUNCEMENTS

Agenda Item No. 3.1 School Board Superintendent Business

Dr. Chandra Hayes reported out on the ACPS annual [New Teacher Academy & Preservice Week](#)

Dr. Daphne Keiser After-Action Report: [2025 Back to School Bash](#)

Superintendent Haas recognized School Board Member-at-Large Allison Spillman for receiving national recognition from Everytown for Gun Safety's Be SMART program. Ms. Spillman was nominated by Mike Box, chapter lead for Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America, for her leadership in promoting secure firearm storage and community safety. Superintendent Haas noted the significance of this honor in light of the Board's February 2024 resolution supporting secure firearm storage and the division's subsequent collaboration with the Be SMART program. He congratulated Ms. Spillman on behalf of the entire school community, commending her dedication to the safety and well-being of students and families.

Superintendent Haas thanked all ACPS staff for ensuring a successful early opening of the school year. He noted that over the first two days he visited all 29 schools and centers and observed bus drivers welcoming students, building services staff preparing facilities, grounds crews catching up after summer rains, and child nutrition teams serving healthy meals. He highlighted teachers and instructional assistants

engaging students in lessons, counselors and nurses supporting student needs, office staff welcoming families, and administrators, directors, and central office staff providing visible leadership and support. He emphasized teamwork across HR, finance, curriculum, and technology in making the earlier start possible, and commended staff for creating safe, caring, and well-prepared environments for students. Superintendent Haas expressed gratitude on behalf of the administration, families, and community for the strong and inspiring start to the year.

Agenda Item No. 3.2 Spotlight on Education

Honoring the Late Charles “Chuck” Pace - The Board welcomed family members in attendance: Mr. Pace’s wife Anne Marie; daughters Madeline and Callie; brother Michael Pace; and sister Margaret Leckrone with her husband, David Leckrone, who donated a kidney to Mr. Pace in 2002 and is a longtime ACPS teacher. The Board expressed appreciation to the family on this sad but celebratory occasion honoring Mr. Pace’s life.

Presentation of General Assembly Resolution - Delegate Katrina Carlson, a former School Board colleague, presented a resolution introduced in the General Assembly. Delegate Katrina Callsen, a former School Board colleague, presented a resolution she introduced in the Virginia General Assembly honoring Mr. Pace. Delegate Callsen noted it was her privilege both to know Mr. Pace and to write this resolution in his honor. She remarked that the resolution was unanimously adopted by all 140 members of the General Assembly and will remain permanently recorded in the Assembly’s roll books as a tribute to his memory. Delegate Callsen expressed gratitude to the family for sharing Mr. Pace’s service with the students and community, and for allowing his legacy to be honored in this way. [House Joint Resolution No. 597](#)

The School Board also presented a tribute letter in his honor. The Board recognized the commitment and service of the late Charles Pace as both a School Board member and a member of the Albemarle County community. [School Board Tribute](#)

Introduction of the [2025-2026 School Board Student Representatives](#)

AGENDA ITEM NO. 4.0 PUBLIC COMMENT

Karen Egan, Rivanna - Ms. Egan spoke regarding school capacity challenges, with a focus on high schools. She noted that Albemarle High School has been significantly over capacity for many years, currently enrolling nearly 1,950 students and relying on 16 temporary trailers. She emphasized inequities in funding per student and the concentration of low-income students at AHS, while pointing to ongoing residential growth in the northern feeder area. She also highlighted that Western Albemarle High School is over capacity by nearly 200 students, with eight classrooms in trailers, and Monticello High School is also over capacity. Ms. Egan urged the Board to pursue immediate and long-term solutions, including the construction of a new high school and an addition at Western, stressing that waiting only increases costs, perpetuates inequities, and places students and staff in inadequate facilities.

Bridgette Rodgers, Rivanna - Ms. Rodgers spoke about school capacity and long-term planning. She recalled a 2017 joint meeting of the Planning Commission and School Board, noting that despite significant changes in housing and population growth, outdated talking points about declining enrollment are still repeated. Ms. Rodgers cited approval of over 13,000 new residential units countywide and stressed that schools are overcrowded as a result. She observed that the 2016 bond referendum was successful but did not lead to a new high school, and that learning centers have not addressed capacity needs. She urged the Board to commission an independent engineering study to assess facility needs objectively and to work closely with

the Board of Supervisors on a comprehensive plan. Ms. Rodgers emphasized that decisive, collaborative leadership is necessary to leave a legacy of bold action that supports students and schools.

Rashmi Ghel, White Hall - expressed concerns about school capacity and facility conditions. She noted that both Albemarle and Western Albemarle High Schools rely on trailers—described as “villas” or “cottages” by the division, that were intended to be temporary but have become permanent fixtures. Western currently has eight trailer classrooms and remains nearly 200 students over capacity. She highlighted safety concerns and the disconnect these spaces create for students. Ms. Ghel questioned the accuracy of enrollment projections, citing higher actual enrollment than projected and incomplete accounting for approved but unbuilt housing developments. She also noted the impracticality of using learning centers for Western feeder pattern students, including transportation challenges. She urged the School Board, Board of Supervisors, county staff, and outside consultants to work collaboratively and regularly on solutions, stressing the urgent need for a new high school and expansion at Western.

Robert Perez, Rivanna - Mr. Perez spoke about school capacity concerns. He shared that his family moved to Albemarle in 2022, drawn by the strength of the school system, and noted his own experience attending overcrowded urban schools with trailer classrooms. Mr. Perez observed continued housing growth in the northern part of the county and stressed that capacity challenges are not new but become more costly the longer the action is delayed. While acknowledging innovative approaches such as learning centers, he emphasized that large, traditional high schools continue to serve as important focal points for communities. He urged the Board to move forward with building a new northern high school as soon as possible, noting that financial and political costs will only increase if the issue is postponed.

Chris Dilbeck, Rivanna - Mr. Dilbeck, a 2005 graduate of Albemarle High School, spoke regarding the grading policy. He expressed concern about the 50% minimum score provision, stating that it appears inconsistent with the policy’s emphasis on grading based solely on achievement and may allow students to pass without completing significant coursework. Mr. Dilbeck acknowledged improvements in the current policy, including the revision policy, which he felt would have benefited students in his time. He recommended potential adjustments such as limiting minimum scores to a fixed number of assignments, linking them to the revision policy, or designating certain “critical assignments” that must be completed to pass. He also suggested clarifying the use of incomplete or “insufficient evidence” grades in the 2026 policy to define criteria more clearly.

5.0 APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA - Ms. Osborne offered a **motion** to approve the agenda. Mr. Paige seconded the **motion**. **A voice vote was taken, and the motion passed unanimously (6-0).** [Ms. Le was absent]

5.1 Approval of Consent Agenda

5.2 Personnel Action

5.3 Religious Exemption

5.4 Religious Exemption

5.5 Religious Exemption

5.6 Religious Exemption

5.7 Religious Exemption

5.8 Religious Exemption

5.9 Approval of the Minutes

5.10 2025.2026 School Crisis Plan

5.11 For action: Policy Review and Revisions

5.12 Property Acquisition Update (Information Only)

5.13 For Information: Establishment of Meeting Time, Date and Place 2026 and the FY 2026/2027 Budget Development Calendar

AGENDA ITEM NO. 6.0 ITEMS PULLED FROM CONSENT AGENDA – None.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 7.0 – SCHOOL DIVISION BUSINESS

Agenda Item No. 7.1 [High School Facilities Planning](#) - Staff provided background information about capital planning for high schools and alternatives for moving forward. The purpose of the session was for the School Board to discuss and provide feedback about their long-term vision for adding building capacity for high school students. The Long-Range Planning Advisory Committee (LRPAC) will incorporate School Board feedback into their annual recommendation in October.

Dr. Berlin Board asked staff to explain the meaning of “alternative delivery models.”

Mr. Wertman responded that historically ACPS has used the *design-bid-build* method, where an architect designs the project, the Board approves at design development, and bids are then solicited and awarded to a general contractor as required by law. He noted that other methods exist, including *construction management at risk* (used in the first phase of the Crozet Elementary project), where a construction management firm is engaged earlier to coordinate trade contracts, and *design-build*, in which the contractor is hired first and manages the architect/engineer. He emphasized that each approach has pros and cons, and offered to prepare slides for the September 11 meeting outlining those. Additionally, Mr. Wertman explained that alternative *financing mechanisms* are available, such as public-private partnerships (PPEA), which some Virginia school divisions have used. While this model allows for private financing, staff cautioned that it generally carries less favorable borrowing rates compared to the County’s triple-A bond rating.

Dr. Berlin requested that staff provide additional information at the September meeting on alternative delivery models, with particular focus on timing and cost implications. The member also expressed interest in learning more about Public-Private Partnership (PPEA) options and requested examples from other Virginia school divisions that have utilized this approach.

Ms. Spillman asked why staff combined enrollment numbers for all comprehensive high schools when discussing capacity conflicts. She expressed concern that the combined figures may be misleading, as they obscure school-specific challenges, particularly at Western Albemarle and Monticello, while focusing heavily on Albemarle High School (AHS). She noted that enrollment at division centers and academies appears well below capacity and questioned whether grouping them into the analysis gives an accurate picture.

Ms. Kumazawa explained that the combined numbers were intended as a summary but acknowledged that school-specific capacity data would be more useful. They agreed to provide a table by school. She further noted that the most pressing concern is Western Albemarle and that short-term relief there could follow recommendations from the Western Albemarle High School facility master plan, which included adding 10–12 classrooms. However, Ms. Kumazawa emphasized the need to set a long-term vision first, as those decisions will guide short-term strategies.

Ms. Spillman also raised questions about the long-term expansion of AHS, noting public concerns about it becoming a “mega high school” and the potential inequities compared to smaller schools. She asked whether staff had conducted studies or gathered feedback from students and staff about learning in such a large environment. She also emphasized the tension between short-term fixes and long-term planning, and requested additional data for decision-making, including:

- Actual enrollment numbers in centers and academies compared to their stated capacities.
- Analysis of whether these facilities are solving capacity challenges equitably across schools.

- Consideration of whether resources should be redirected if centers are under-utilized by students outside AHS's feeder pattern.

Ms. Spillman asked for clarification on the color-coded evaluation chart, noting that the meaning of colors such as yellow and green, and red was unclear. She requested more detail on how the categories are scored, specifically why a new high school shows demographics in green when past feedback indicated concerns about equity and diversity in the northern feeder pattern. She suggested this may be tied to potential redistricting but asked for confirmation. She also questioned why transportation for a new high school was rated red, since placing a school closer to neighborhoods could reduce transportation challenges.

Ms. Spillman further commented on funding mechanisms, noting the importance of bond referenda and sales tax revenue to increase capital improvement funding. She emphasized that long-term solutions also depend on state-level leadership and support for public education, and pointed out that Albemarle has not held a bond referendum since 2016, while many other counties conduct them more regularly.

Mr. Paige noted that many community speakers raised concerns about school capacity and encouraged them to share those concerns directly with the Board of Supervisors. He questioned whether Supervisors and the Long Range Planning Commission had been made aware of the school capacity data presented to the Board.

Ms. Kumazawa responded that a joint work session with the Board of Supervisors is scheduled for December, and staff can prepare materials to support that discussion. She added that the information presented tonight is new, compiled over the past few months, and has not yet been shared outside of the School Board.

Mr. Paige requested that this information be shared with the Board of Supervisors.

Dr. Berlin asked for clarification on Slide 13 regarding K–12 student yields, noting that rising housing costs may affect enrollment patterns as families with children move into new developments. She shared calculations suggesting that projected new dwellings could add 460–1,400 high school students and asked over what time frame this growth would occur, and how staff calculated the impact of different housing types such as townhouses.

Ms. Kumazawa responded that the orange dotted line on the projections represents ACPS modeling, while the blue line (PEA) incorporates data from the development pipeline. She explained that staff used historical data on how quickly new housing units are built to stagger projected growth and overlay it on existing enrollment projections. While this model shows more aggressive growth in later years, she noted that the overall trend remains consistent with ACPS projections. Additional comparison lines on the chart reflect three different Weldon Cooper population projections.

Ms. Spillman asked for additional information on the Public-Private Education Facilities and Infrastructure Act (PPEA) model, noting that several members of the Board of Supervisors have expressed interest in this option. She reported that Supervisors have discussed PPEA with developers as a possible alternative to traditional bonding and suggested the School Board further explore this approach if there is interest from the County's side.

Ms. Osborne asked whether there is an ideal size for a high school, noting that very large schools can feel overwhelming and asked if studies exist on optimal school size.

Ms. Schmitt responded that staff had previously discussed school sizes and conducted a community survey, including at the high school level. She stated that staff would bring that data back to the Board for review.

Ms. Spillman asked whether zoning changes in the City of Charlottesville have been considered in enrollment projections. She expressed concern that such changes could push more residential development into the County, potentially making current projections overly conservative.

Ms. Pryor asked whether the 2006 Western Albemarle High School study is still available in addition to the 2017 High School Center study.

Mr. Wertman responded that the 2006 study is available but is very limited in scope, approximately five pages. It primarily identified where additions could be made at Western Albemarle and included a cost estimate, which is now outdated. The most useful element is the graphic included in the slide presentation. Staff offered to provide the study to Board members.

Ms. Schmitt clarified the process and expectations for the facilities planning discussion. She commended Ms. Kumazawa and Mr. Wertman for consolidating a large amount of complex information into a digestible format. She explained that the purpose of this stage is not to finalize a detailed vision for a new high school or specific additions, but rather to provide the Board with enough context to give staff general direction. This guidance will allow staff to further develop details such as athletic facilities, land options, and delivery methods. She emphasized that the process would include opportunities for input from staff, students, long-range planners, and the public. Board direction at this stage will guide the next steps, but decisions will continue to be refined over time.

Chair Acuff recalled the Board's 2017–2018 discussions on high school capacity, noting that at the time a new high school was deemed financially infeasible. The "center model" was developed instead, emphasizing modernization, small expansions, and strategically located centers between Albemarle and Western. She expressed frustration that despite two new facilities opening and another planned, the division will still rely on more than 50 trailers, with all high schools undersized for current enrollment.

Chair Acuff emphasized the need to consider not only construction costs but also long-term operating costs, given recent tight budget cycles. She noted that one of the original rationales for the center model was its cost efficiency and reduced disruption to students. However, she stated that the current model does not adequately address capacity issues.

Chair Acuff further questioned whether funding a new high school would consume capital resources to the extent that it would delay or prevent other needed projects for a decade and requested clarity on this point from long-range planning.

Dr. Berlin emphasized the importance of framing school capacity challenges in human terms. She shared the example of her own son, who attended Albemarle County schools from preschool through graduation, took a gap year, completed four years of college, and began his career, all within the span of time during which no new schools were opened in the county.

Dr. Berlin noted that while the division is now preparing to open two new schools, it is critical to view school construction through the lens of students' experiences and lifespans. Dr. Berlin stressed the need to prioritize facilities that support students and underscored the responsibility of the Board and community leaders to advocate for continued investment in public schools.

Chair Acuff expressed concern that the original center model was intended to be paired with significant modernization of existing schools. She cautioned that requesting \$200 million solely to address capacity could result in building one new high school while leaving other facilities, many of which are over 50 years old - unimproved. Chair Acuff thanked staff for the presentation and looked forward to the Board's continued discussion in September.

AGENDA ITEM No. 8.0 OTHER BUSINESS

Agenda Item No. 8.1 Other Business by Board Members and the Superintendent – None.

Agenda Item No. 8.2 Closed Meeting – None.

Agenda Item No. 8.3 Closed Meeting Certification – None.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 10.0 ADJOURNMENT - At 8:24 p.m., hearing no objections, Chair Acuff adjourned the meeting of the Albemarle County School Board.

Chair

Clerk