MINUTES
CHARLOTTESVILLE CITY SCHOOL BOARD MEETING
Thursday, November 5, 2026 (5:30 p.m.)
Booker T. Reaves Media Center, Charlottesville High School
1400 Melbourne Road, Charlottesville, VA
Video Link

A Closed Meeting of the Charlottesville City School Board was held on Thursday, November 5, 2026, at 4:30 p.m., in the Division Annex Exceptional Education Conference Room, 1400 Melbourne Road, Charlottesville, VA.

Board Members Present: Zyahna Bryant, Amanda Burns (Vice-Chair), Shymora Cooper, Emily Dooley, Chris Meyer, Nicole Richardson, Lisa Torres (Chair)

Board Members Absent: None

Executive Leadership Team & Staff Present: Dr. Royal A. Gurley, Jr. (Superintendent), Maria Lewis (Chief Human Resources Officer), and Leslie Thacker (Board Clerk).

Call the Closed Session to Order: Lisa Torres, School Board Chair, called the closed session meeting to order at 4:30 p.m.

1.1 Closed Meeting: At 4:30 p.m., Ms. Dooley made a motion to convene in Closed Session as authorized by Section 2.2-3711 (A)(1) of the Code of Virginia for the discussion of personnel matters. Ms. Richardson seconded the motion, and the motion passed with Ms. Cooper, Ms. Dooley, Mr. Meyer, Ms. Richardson, and Ms. Torres voting aye. 5 ayes, 0 nays. Ms. Bryant and Ms. Burns arrived following this action.

1.2 Closed Meeting Certification: At 5:18 p.m., Ms. Dooley made a motion that the board certify the closed meeting by recorded vote. Ms. Burns seconded the motion, and the motion passed with Ms. Bryant, Ms. Burns, Ms. Cooper, Ms. Dooley, Mr. Meyer, Ms. Richardson, and Ms. Torres voting aye. 7 ayes, 0 nays.

Action: None

The Board was recessed from 5:18 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.

1.3 Call to Order (5:30 p.m.): School Board Chair Lisa Torres called the public meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

2.1 Moment of Silence: The Board observed a moment of silence.

3.1 Pledge of Allegiance: The Board began the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America.

4.1 Roll Call of Board Members: Roll call was conducted to confirm attendance.

Board Members Present: Zyahna Bryant, Amanda Burns (Vice-Chair), Shymora Cooper, Emily Dooley, Chris Meyer, Nicole Richardson, Lisa Torres (Chair)

Board Members Absent: Caja Edwards (Student Representative)

Executive Leadership Team & Staff Present: Dr. Royal A. Gurley, Jr. (Superintendent), Dr. Anna Isley (Chief Academic Officer), Kim Powell (Chief Operations Officer), Renee Hoover (Chief Financial Officer), Pat Cuomo (Director of Technology), Rachel Rasnake (Director of Student Services), Carolyn Swift (Director of Assessment and Accountability), Amanda Simalchik (Director of Community Relations), Carlton Jones (Director of Nutrition Services), Rodney Jordan (Director of Facilities and Operations), Julia Green (Board Deputy Clerk), Maria Lewis (Chief Human Resources Officer), and Leslie Thacker (Board Clerk).

Executive Leadership Team & Staff Absent: Dr. Lamont Trotter (Director of Organizational Supports)

5.1 Approval of Proposed Agenda: Ms. Dooley made a motion to approve the proposed agenda. Mr. Meyer seconded the motion. Ms. Burns offered a friendly amendment to remove Item 8.1 (Charlottesville High School Student Representative Report) because Ms. Edwards was away on a college visit, allowing Callie Sun to present remarks during regular student comment instead. Ms. Dooley accepted the friendly amendment, and the amended motion passed with Ms. Bryant, Ms. Burns, Ms. Cooper, Ms. Dooley, Mr. Meyer, Ms. Richardson, and Ms. Torres voting aye. 7 ayes, 0 nays.

Student and Staff Recognitions

6.1 National School Psychology Week: Rachel Rasnake, Director of Student Services, recognized Charlottesville City Schools' five school psychologists for their dedicated service and presented the Proclamation designating November 9–13, 2026, as National School Psychology Week under the theme "Inspire Connection." Ms. Dooley made a motion to approve the proclamation as presented. Ms. Cooper seconded the motion, and the motion passed with Ms. Bryant, Ms. Burns, Ms. Cooper, Ms. Dooley, Mr. Meyer, Ms. Richardson, and Ms. Torres voting aye. 7 ayes, 0 nays.

6.2 Family Engagement Month: Bianca Allen, Family Engagement Coordinator, presented division-wide recognitions celebrating November as Family Engagement Month, highlighting the essential role of strong family-school partnerships, the Community Schools model, EdZone lockers, school food pantries, PTOs, and family workshops in driving student achievement, school belonging, and community connection.

6.3 Virginia School Boards Association (VSBA) Academy Awards: Amanda Simalchik, Director of Community Relations, honored School Board members and division leadership for earning professional development credits through the VSBA Academy between July 1, 2025, and June 30, 2026: Certificate of Recognition (15 credits): Shymora Cooper, Chris Meyer, and Nicole Richardson; Award of Achievement (24 credits & Bronze pin): Dr. Royal A. Gurley, Jr.; Award of Excellence (48 credits in 2 years & Silver pin): Emily Dooley; Award of Honor (66 credits in 2 years & Gold pin): Amanda Burns; Award of Distinction (84 credits in 2 years & Starfish pin): Lisa Torres.

7.1 Comments from Students: Callie Sun, Charlottesville High School student representative (March–May term), delivered remarks written by current representative Caja Edwards alongside her own reflections on concluding her term on the dais. She highlighted student leadership, the debut of CHS's first Girls Flag Football Club at its inaugural jamboree, a newly organized basketball halftime dance group, and the launch of "Fun Friday," recommending that it become a monthly tradition to strengthen school spirit and student belonging.

7.2 Comments from Members of the Community:

- Mary Dwyer, a third-year social studies teacher at Charlottesville High School, addressed the Board regarding substitute staffing and budget savings. Citing an initiative in El Paso, Texas, she urged the Board to consider requiring salaried central office employees—including the Superintendent—to serve as substitute teachers for eight days per school year. She stated that such a program could save millions in substitute expenditures, protect teacher planning periods, relieve front-office staffing pressures, and allow central office leaders to experience full-period instruction and engage directly with students.

8.1 Charlottesville High School Student Representative Report: Removed during approval of the amended agenda under Item 5.1; remarks were delivered under Item 7.1.

9.1–9.8 Adoption of Consent Agenda: Adoption of Consent Agenda; Personnel Recommendations; Minutes (October 1, 2026 Regular School Board Meeting, October 8, 2026 Budget Work Session, and October 29, 2026 School Board Meeting with Legislators); Business, Financial, Routine Reports (Renee Hoover); Committee Appointment for the Adoption of High Quality Instructional Materials: Literacy and Science; and New VSBA Policy JBB: Equal Access to Public Education and Protection of Immigration and Citizenship-Related Information (presented by Carolyn Swift pursuant to HB836, mandating local school boards to adopt policies securing the right to a free public education and prohibiting discrimination based on citizenship or immigration status by December 31, 2026).

Ms. Bryant made a motion to approve the Adoption of the Consent Agenda. Ms. Dooley seconded the motion, and the motion passed with Ms. Bryant, Ms. Burns, Ms. Cooper, Ms. Dooley, Mr. Meyer, Ms. Richardson, and Ms. Torres voting aye. 7 ayes, 0 nays.

Questions/Discussion:

- Mr. Meyer asked for clarification on Item 9.6 regarding a $9.7 million state building grant referenced in the financial reports. Ms. Powell confirmed that CCS was awarded a $9.7 million School Construction Assistance Program (SCAP) grant for the new Charlottesville Early Learning Center (following an $18M+ SCAP grant previously secured for the middle school), which helps reduce value-engineering pressure during design.
- Ms. Burns noted that an estimated $4 million funding gap remains before construction bids open in July and asked how this will impact upcoming City Council Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) budget requests and coordination with the City following former City representative Mike Goddard's transition to a new role. Ms. Powell responded that the division will utilize bid-additive and bid-deduct strategies and will review updated CIP figures at an upcoming CIP update meeting before winter break, which was scheduled following the local 1% sales tax referendum results.

10.0 Items Pulled From Consent Agenda: None.

Action Items

11.1 Action 2027–2028 Program of Studies / College & Career Readiness: Dr. Anna Isley, Chief Academic Officer, and Rachel Rasnake, Director of Student Services, presented the final 2027–2028 Program of Studies for formal Board adoption following its introduction on October 1, 2026. Dr. Isley reported that based on educator review, the proposed Pre-Algebra 7–8 Compacted course was removed to preserve flexible pacing, natural on-ramps and off-ramps, and 7th-grade SOL alignment while preventing locked-in testing trajectories; the division will instead maintain the proven Pre-Algebra 7 Accelerated model with in-class extensions in alignment with math acceleration legislation. Ms. Burns made a motion to approve the 2027–2028 Program of Studies as submitted. Ms. Dooley seconded the motion, and the motion passed with Ms. Bryant, Ms. Burns, Ms. Cooper, Ms. Dooley, Mr. Meyer, Ms. Richardson, and Ms. Torres voting aye. 7 ayes, 0 nays.

Discussion/Questions: None.

11.2 Action Policy Updates - Policy BDDH (Public Participation at School Board Meetings): Chair Lisa Torres and Carolyn Swift, Director of Assessment and Accountability, presented the revised Policy BDDH for action, incorporating the directed line-by-line revisions from the October 1 meeting. The approved revisions included adding mandatory Virginia Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) closed-meeting statutory language, removing pre-meeting registration cut-offs and physical address mandates, preserving sign-up availability at the podium, and maintaining both beginning and end public comment sessions for in-person and virtual speakers. Ms. Burns made a motion to adopt Policy BDDH as revised. Ms. Cooper seconded the motion, and the motion passed with Ms. Bryant, Ms. Burns, Ms. Cooper, Ms. Dooley, Mr. Meyer, Ms. Richardson, and Ms. Torres voting aye. 7 ayes, 0 nays.

Discussion/Questions:

- Mr. Meyer expressed initial reservations regarding the scope of policy revisions but noted his support after confirming that legal counsel vetted the changes for First Amendment compliance.
- Dr. Gurley confirmed that legal counsel advised that public comment is not mandated by state code and that procedural rules governing comment periods do not infringe upon First Amendment rights.

Items for Discussion

Procedural Motion: Ms. Burns made a motion to move Item 12.5 (Office of Strategic Initiatives Update) to the start of the discussion items (12.1) to accommodate attending community partners. Ms. Dooley seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously (7–0).

12.5 (Moved to First) Office of Strategic Initiatives Update (Community Resources and Partnerships): Dr. Denise Mulford, Director of Strategic Initiatives, Bianca Allen, FACE Coordinator, Carlton Jones, Director of Nutrition Services, Chris Carr, COO of the Piedmont Family YMCA, and representatives from Charlottesville Parks & Recreation presented updates on the division's Community Schools framework and partner programs:

- Community Schools Overview & Infrastructure (Dr. Mulford): Reviewed the four Community Schools pillars (Integrated Student Supports, Extended and Enriched Learning Time, Family and Community Engagement, and Collaborative Leadership and Governance). Reported that the Community Schools van—launched in February 2026—logged 20 trips last spring and over 40 trips since August 1, including regularly transporting ISAEP students to PVCC for GED testing, alongside summer literacy kit distributions.
- Integrated Student Supports (Ms. Allen): Reported distribution of over 15,000 pounds of food and 630 break bags through the Emergency Food Network and Young Knights Market; over 1,000 visits and 17,000+ hygiene and school supply items distributed via EdZone lockers (in partnership with the Chris Long Foundation); over 400 winter coats distributed; and on-site mental health counseling via clinical partnerships.
- Snow Day Meal Service (Mr. Jones): Outlined the second year of snow-day hot meal service at Charlottesville Middle School (12:00–2:00 p.m., beginning on the second consecutive closure day, weather and safety permitting) operating under two USDA waivers permitting service during unanticipated closures and parent/guardian pickup on-site (home delivery is prohibited under USDA rules).
- Extended Learning – Piedmont Family YMCA (Mr. Carr): Reported zero waitlists across all six elementary school after-school sites (316 students served: 48 via DSS funding, 168 via a 9-tier income-based braided funding model, plus discounted teacher rates), a new after-school program at the Charlottesville Early Learning Center (24 enrolled), out-of-school day camps (including a Nov. 3 camp featuring UVA football players), and Summer Learning Academy enrichment.
- Extended Learning – Charlottesville Parks & Recreation: Shared updates on youth recreation and out-of-school community programming.

Discussion/Questions:

- Ms. Bryant asked Ms. Allen to share details on the active winter coat drive. Ms. Allen noted the drive runs through Friday, November 20, via Amazon and Walmart wish lists or direct drop-off at Charlottesville High School.
- Ms. Burns asked Mr. Jones whether community partners may transport families to Charlottesville Middle School to pick up Snow Day meals. Mr. Jones confirmed that under the USDA waiver, community partners can bring families to the CMS site to receive meals.

12.1 Key Performance Indicators (KPI): Data Dashboard / Accreditation Framework: Carolyn Swift, Director of Assessment and Accountability, presented the 2025–2026 Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) School Performance and Support Framework (SPSF) accountability results alongside progress on the 2023–2028 *Better Together* Strategic Plan Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and updates to the division data dashboard:

- Accreditation & School Performance Framework: All eight Charlottesville City Schools earned 80+ overall points and achieved 100% Full Accreditation, with seven of eight schools improving their scores over the prior year (Sunrise Elementary earned a Distinguished rating with 97.6 points, while the remaining seven schools scored between 81.2 and 89.1 points). Due to statewide threshold increases, six schools (Trailblazer, Greenbrier, Tall Oaks, Jackson-Via, CMS, and CHS) were federally identified for Targeted Support and Improvement (TSI) for specific student groups, adjusting their final state designation to *Approaching Expectations* despite overall scores above 80. Ms. Swift also reviewed upcoming state accountability transitions under SB200/HB299, including four-year phase-ins for new cut scores, percentile-based reporting on a 100-point scale, and compressed two-week spring testing windows in grades 7–12.
- Priority 1 – Increase Academic Achievement: CCS met its strategic math proficiency target of 70% in SY 2025–2026 (up from 55% in 2021, growing at 3x the state rate and narrowing the gap against the Virginia state average from 8.16 to 3.38 percentage points). Reading pass rates held steady at 67% amid increased test rigor toward the 75% proficiency target. For the CHS Class of 2026, the on-time graduation rate was 90% (compared to the 93.5% state average), 99.4% of graduates reported a post-secondary plan, and CHS scored 19.03 out of 25 points on 3E Readiness (Employment, Enrollment, and Enlistment).
- Priority 2 – Provide a Culture of Safety, Wellness & Belonging: Reported continued progress toward reducing chronic absenteeism to under 15% (with a division shift toward under 10%), met the Social Emotional Learning (SEL) benchmark with DESSA assessment scores rising from 83% to 86%, and highlighted investments in dedicated mental health professionals, Care & Safety Assistants, and campus security enhancements.
- Priority 3 & Priority 4 – Staff Support & Effective Operations: Met division targets for 100% licensed staffing by September 1, 92% teacher retention (exceeding the 90%+ benchmark), 90% of staff trained in culturally competent teaching, SIOP, or co-teaching practices, elimination of bus waitlists, 100% budget alignment to strategic priorities, and completion of CMS modernization and 5th-grade elementary reintegration milestones.

Discussion/Questions:

- Mr. Meyer noted that 22 out of 24 school components were trending in the right direction and confirmed that while cut scores and state thresholds are rising, CCS is generally moving ahead. Ms. Swift clarified that state thresholds for student groups represent a moving target calculated annually after testing. She noted that student groups require a minimum of 15 students to trigger federal identification, meaning elementary schools with smaller student group sizes previously avoided TSI identification; however, the return of fifth-grade cohorts to elementary schools may increase group sizes and potential TSI identifications.
- Ms. Bryant expressed gratitude for the detailed data presentation, emphasizing that achieving full accreditation is a significant accomplishment that should not be taken for granted. She highlighted the remarkable progress at Summit Elementary, noted her excitement for upcoming literacy discussions, and raised important considerations regarding the challenges of compressed spring testing windows and fostering broader community accountability to support all student groups.
- Ms. Swift acknowledged the shared commitment required across the division and expressed appreciation for the recognition of full accreditation, noting that every school exceeded the 80-point benchmark—a notable advancement after four schools fell below that threshold the previous year. She highlighted Summit Elementary's progress, emphasizing the significance of avoiding federal identification for two consecutive years following prior designations, and reaffirmed the division's commitment to celebrating their growth. Addressing the compressed two-week spring testing window, Ms. Swift

explained the operational challenges it creates, particularly for eighth graders taking five assessments. She noted that when students qualify for expedited retakes across multiple tests, the division must deliver comprehensive remediation and retesting within that narrow timeframe. She shared that planning is currently underway with middle and high school leadership to navigate these scheduling demands effectively.

- Ms. Burns expressed gratitude to Dr. Gurley, the administrative team, teachers, and staff throughout the division. She emphasized that success stems from a collective effort, specifically commending nutrition staff for preparing students for exams and the school day, as well as transportation and maintenance personnel. She highlighted that when every team member takes ownership of their role, it produces positive division-wide outcomes.
- Turning to the constraints of the state testing window, Ms. Burns identified it as a critical legislative issue impacting students and staff. She underscored the responsibility of elected school board members to advocate to state lawmakers—such as Senator Deeds and Delegate Katrina Callsen—to ensure they understand the direct, practical consequences of state-level decisions on local school divisions. Reflecting on a recent legislative meeting, she voiced hope that local concerns were heard, while stressing the ongoing need for school boards and community advocacy to inform legislators about the human impact of their policy decisions.
- Ms. Cooper thanked staff for the detailed presentation and expressed appreciation for the dedicated efforts across the division to achieve positive student outcomes. She commended Principal Johnson and the team at Summit Elementary for their hard work and progress, noting her personal connection as a parent of students who attended the school, and congratulated school administrators and staff division-wide for their dedication to student success.
- Ms. Dooley concurred with previous comments, noting that as a former testing coordinator, the compressed two-week testing window presents significant operational challenges. She questioned the potential consequences of non-compliance, emphasizing that the requirement is impractical. Additionally, she recommended creating an executive summary of the framework data and legislative concerns to share with the City Council.
- In response to an inquiry from Ms. Torres regarding state support for schools designated as Approaching Expectations, Ms. Swift explained that Targeted Support and Improvement (TSI) represents the lightest tier of state identification. Under typical circumstances, divisions apply for federal grants to fund selected evidence-based practices; however, current state allocations prioritize CSI and ATSI schools due to stricter requirements, leaving no federal funding for TSI schools this year. Consequently, CCS is leveraging Title II funding alongside walkthrough and instructional data to implement targeted evidence-based practices, with plans to sustain these interventions into the next academic year. Additionally, in response to Ms. Torres's question regarding state-level advocacy, Dr. Gurley noted that division leadership continues to elevate concerns—specifically around the legislatively mandated two-week testing window and the burden of five SOL assessments for eighth graders—to State Superintendent Conway and state lawmakers.

12.2 **Dairy/Gentry – School Road Change**: Kim Powell, Chief Operations Officer, and Kyle Rodland, Safe Routes to Schools Coordinator for the City of Charlottesville, delivered a presentation on proposed roadway adjustments and traffic-calming initiatives along the Dairy/Gentry school corridor at the Charlottesville Early Learning Center campus, supporting Strategic Priority 2 (Provide a Culture of Safety, Wellness & Belonging):

- Safety Concerns & Rationale: Highlighted the necessity of the street adjustments to mitigate recurring safety risks near the facility, including motorist speeding (averaging 21 mph within the 15 mph zone), vehicles illegally bypassing stopped buses, and traffic bottlenecks during pickup and drop-off times.
- Proposed Street Modifications: Outlined plans to restrict general public cut-through travel on the school-owned portion of Gentry Lane by installing physical barriers at both access points, while preserving entry for school buses, staff, family vehicles, Charlottesville Area Transit (Route 9), emergency services, and delivery traffic.

- Outreach & Next Steps: Announced upcoming joint community informational sessions hosted by municipal and division representatives, starting with a neighborhood briefing on November 16, 2026, at CELC, followed by a broader facility construction update in December 2026 to review design details and address community questions.

Discussion/Questions:

- Mr. Meyer expressed support for the plan, emphasizing the importance of keeping students safe and affirming that the street functions as the school's driveway rather than a public pass-through street.
- Ms. Burns clarified with staff whether any formal Board action or vote was required for the change, and staff confirmed that no action was needed.
- Ms. Richardson requested that translation services be provided at the upcoming public information sessions for non-English-speaking families, which staff confirmed would be arranged.

12.3 Literacy Update: Stacy Reedall, Literacy Coordinator, delivered a report on division-wide curriculum implementation and student progress monitoring, supporting Strategic Priority 1 (*Increase Academic Achievement*):

- Overview & Initial Outcomes: Highlighted that as of Spring 2026, 80% of students achieved a mark of "C" or better in English courses (correlating with a 78% reading pass rate on MAP assessments) and 82% of kindergarten students met end-of-year early literacy benchmarks, emphasizing targeted efforts to reduce academic failure rates by at least 10% for Black students and students with disabilities.
    - Early Literacy (VALLS Data): First-grade metrics demonstrated a 10-percentage-point reduction in high-risk readers (falling from 31% to 21%) and an expansion of low-risk readers (46% to 54%) driven by structured instruction; kindergarten performance remained steady, while second-grade low-risk readers grew to 43%.
    - NWEA MAP Reading Growth: Elementary reading proficiency across the division rose to 64% on Fall assessments (up from 62% in Fall 2025). Notable gains among Black student cohorts included fourth graders reaching 40% proficiency (an 11-percentage-point increase) and third graders attaining 41%.
    - Virginia Literacy Act (VLA) Implementation: Multi-disciplinary teams comprising reading specialists, classroom educators, special education staff, and ESL specialists are executing mandated individual student reading plans, supported by strategic staffing shifts such as allocating four reading specialists to Jackson-Via Elementary.
    - Secondary Level Reading Trends: CMS reading proficiency advanced to 64% (a 2-percentage-point increase over Fall 2025) utilizing a daily 30-minute "WIN" intervention period; CHS achieved 78% reading proficiency on MAP testing (up 4 percentage points), with 80% of the Class of 2027 securing writing credits via local performance assessments.

Discussion/Questions:

- Ms. Dooley inquired about tracking longitudinal cohort progress in early elementary grades given shifts in VALLS risk threshold criteria across grade levels. Ms. Reedal explained that VALLS measures escalating developmental skills per grade—ranging from initial letter sounds in Kindergarten to multi-syllabic decoding in Grade 2—and noted that NWEA MAP assessments are utilized beginning in Grade 3 for standardized cohort tracking over time.
- Mr. Meyer asked whether reading instruction continues to rely heavily on Chromebooks or if physical texts have been restored. Ms. Reedal confirmed a deliberate division-wide transition back to print literature to decrease screen usage, noting that all students receive physical copies of complex grade-level literature, including *Song for a Whale* in 4th grade, *The Lightning Thief* and *Project Hail Mary* in middle school, and *The Odyssey* and *Fences* at the high school level.
- Ms. Torres queried whether current time allocations for daily literacy instruction are adequate. Ms. Reedal expressed confidence in the dedicated daily reading block structure for explicit phonics, guided

reading, and writing, while highlighting ongoing work to embed disciplinary literacy across core content areas such as science.
- Ms. Torres requested details regarding FTE allocation methodologies for elementary reading specialists. Ms. Reedal clarified that reading specialist staffing allocations are determined directly by student reading plan counts and intervention demands at each school site.

12.4 EL Program Update: Dr. Jeannie Pfautz, English Learner Instructional Specialist, presented an overview of English Learner (EL) services, student enrollment trends, VDOE accountability progress, and strategic next steps, supporting Strategic Priorities 1, 2, and 3:

- SSAS Grant & Staffing Transition: Reported that funding for the federal School Support for Afghan Students (SSAS) grant ended on September 30, 2026. The grant served 53 families (250 students), funded summer camp participation (22 students in 2025; 52 in 2026), and supported restorative justice partnerships with Central Virginia Community Justice (CVCJ) at CMS and CHS. Four bilingual staff members previously funded by the grant have now been transitioned to local funding.
- Enrollment & Welcome Center Trends: In 2025–2026, the Welcome Center enrolled 138 English learners (down from 214 in 2024–2025), with 32% transferring from out of state, 29% from Albemarle County, 15% directly from another country, and 29% of new kindergarten ELs entering from CCS Pre-K. A total of 161 ELs transferred out of the division, 49 graduated, and 63 exited ELD services. Refugee resettlement is currently paused.
- Accountability & School Performance: Highlighted that 62% of elementary ELs made language progress (exceeding the 58% state target). Tall Oaks Elementary ranked in the Region 5 Top 5 for EL Progress at 81% (including 89% of 4th graders making progress), though it remains federally identified as a gap group. CMS also achieved Region 5 Top 5 recognition with 59% of ELs making progress (72% in 8th grade). At CHS, the EL graduation rate reached 91%, seniors earned the Seal of Biliteracy in Dari, Arabic, and Swahili for the first time, and among "Ever English" learners (exited 5+ years), 46% take advanced math and 70% take AP/DE courses. High SOL pass rates were highlighted for former ELs across reading, math, and science.
- Challenges & Strategic Next Steps: Identified chronic absenteeism as a primary challenge (24% at CMS; 44% at CHS) alongside federal TSI gap-group identifications at Tall Oaks and CHS. Key priorities include Title III Federal Program Monitoring, SIOP instructional strategy implementation, aligning ELD materials with WIDA standards, refining Multilingual Learning Facilitator roles, and partnering with F.A.C.E. and ParentSquare to strengthen family engagement.

Discussion/Questions:

- Ms. Bryant expressed appreciation for the presentation and highlighted the high enrollment rates of English learner students in Advanced Placement and Dual Enrollment courses, commending staff for their dedication to supporting student achievement.
- Mr. Meyer inquired about overall EL enrollment trend projections, the impact of national refugee resettlement limits, and student exits from the program. Dr. Pfautz noted that while refugee resettlement remains paused, overall enrollment stays dynamic due to incoming level-one English learners. Meyer also asked about targeted interventions for high school EL students facing chronic absenteeism due to work or family responsibilities. Dr. Pfautz explained that the team collaborates with school counselors, Multilingual Learning Facilitators, and community partners to offer flexible scheduling, mobile application outreach via ParentSquare, and tailored support pathways that cultivate strong student belonging.
- Ms. Burns inquired about student extracurricular engagement, specifically asking about the status of the cricket club at Charlottesville Middle School. Dr. Pfautz confirmed that the cricket club remains active and is expanding to pair sports recreation with academic tutoring and peer mentoring.
- Ms. Burns also asked about student transfer trends and whether families relocating outside the division were leaving due to regional cost of living. Dr. Pfautz reported that while cost of living remains a factor,

many recent transfers represent positive financial transitions, with families purchasing homes in neighboring jurisdictions such as Greene County.

12.6 The PIVOT Program: Dr. Denise Mulford, Director of Strategic Initiatives, presented an overview of the PIVOT program in Dr. Lamont Trotter's absence, focusing on alternative support pathways, student engagement, intervention strategies, referral criteria, staffing, and support services:

- Program Mission & Purpose: Detailed the PIVOT program framework designed to provide targeted alternative learning environments, personalized academic instruction, and intensive behavioral interventions for students needing structured support outside the traditional classroom setting.
- Referral Criteria & Student Placement: Outlined the formal administrative referral process governing student entry into PIVOT, which targets qualifying Level 4 and Level 5 disciplinary infractions under the Student Behavior and Administrative Response (SBAR) guidelines while maintaining active parent/guardian consultation and multi-tiered intervention reviews.
- Intervention Strategies & Academic Continuity: Highlighted small-group instruction, restorative justice practices, social-emotional learning, and dedicated case management aimed at addressing root causes of behavioral challenges, preserving course credits, and supporting progress toward graduation.
- Staffing Model & Support Services: Reviewed the multidisciplinary team structure supporting PIVOT students, including certified core content teachers, special education staff, mental health counselors, and behavior interventionists, supported by strategic reallocation of vacancy savings where applicable to ensure optimal staffing ratios.
- Family Partnership & Re-entry Pathways: Emphasized required family intake orientation, ongoing check-ins, clear behavioral milestone tracking, and structured reintegration plans to ensure smooth transitions for students returning to their base schools.

Discussion/Questions:

- Ms. Dooley asked about the budget impact of staffing the PIVOT program (one lead position and one instructional assistant) for the current year and moving forward. Dr. Gurley explained that an existing division staff member will be reassigned to lead the program (supported by high school staff pushing in during duty periods), while Ms. Hoover identified vacancy savings to fund the instructional assistant position for the remainder of the school year before building it into next year's budget.
- Ms. Burns asked how families will be included in the process so they understand why their child is placed in the program, whether attendance is optional, and how the program fits into the broader disciplinary continuum if enrollment approaches the eight-student daily cap. Dr. Mulford noted that while family engagement has primarily focused on re-entry conferences, staff will explore proactive intake conversations with families; confirmed that placement is mandatory rather than optional; and explained that the division is starting with a soft rollout of eight students at the Annex before evaluating capacity for next year. Dr. Gurley added that PIVOT sits along a continuum between in-school restorative practices and out-of-school suspension.
- Ms. Bryant expressed support for the program and emphasized the importance of involving families through a shared accountability structure.
- Ms. Torres asked whether future expansion would merge middle and high school students or designate separate spaces closer to Charlottesville Middle School, and noted the quick turnaround required for teacher coursework coordination and wraparound support. Dr. Mulford explained that staff will evaluate space options as the program potentially expands to CMS and LMA during the spring build-out, and expressed excitement about the impact of one-on-one goal setting on students' long-term trajectories.
- Ms. Burns emphasized ensuring students with IEPs receive required accommodations and suggested assigning a dedicated staff member to push in and build mentoring relationships. Dr. Mulford shared that, following discussions with the CHS administrative team, the updated intake process will ensure IEP/504 accommodations are on file, designate support staff to manage those accommodations, and provide school counselors with transcript access to individualize support.

- Ms. Burns asked for clarification regarding which disciplinary offenses are ineligible for the program, requesting a follow-up report detailing the specific Student Behavior and Administrative Response (SBAR) categories—particularly Level 4 and Level 5 offenses—that qualify for PIVOT placement. Dr. Mulford confirmed that specific SBAR thresholds apply and noted Dr. Trotter can provide that breakdown.

12.7 **2027–2028 School Year Calendar**: Dr. Anna Isley, Chief Academic Officer, Renee Hoover, Chief Financial Officer, and Dr. Royal A. Gurley, Jr., Superintendent, presented an informational update on the draft 2027–2028 academic calendar:

- Historical Analysis & Instructional Days (Dr. Isley): Reviewed historical adopted calendars back to 2010 (consistently 180 student days and 194 teacher days through SY 2021–2022, shifting to 176–178 student days and 191–192 teacher days from SY 2022–2023 to the present). Note that the proposed 2027–2028 drafts restore 180 instructional student days and 195 teacher days—exceeding Virginia's 990-hour (165-day) minimum to safeguard academic achievement against weather closures and honor collective bargaining agreements tying support staff contracts to 180 student days and teacher contracts to 200 days.
- Community Survey Feedback & Scheduling Iterations (Dr. Isley): Reported that the first community survey (~470+ respondents) showed 72% approval or neutrality, with families appreciating alignment with Albemarle County Public Schools (ACPS), preservation of major breaks, and moving teacher grading workdays immediately after the end of each quarter. A second draft (~200 respondents, ~70% approval/neutrality) resolved isolated midweek days off (such as standalone mental wellness days) by grouping breaks, though respondents pushed back on an early August start (August 11) and extending two days into June.
- VRS & Legal Counsel Payroll Parameters (Ms. Hoover): Explained that per legal counsel and Virginia Retirement System (VRS) guidance, extending a 10-month contract (starting August 1) into any day of June reclassifies 10-month employees as 11-month contract employees through June 30. While budget-neutral, an 11-month shift would disrupt payroll systems, alter VRS records, eliminate the 20-pay cycle, and delay retiring employees' first pension checks by two months. To avoid pay disruptions, Ms. Hoover recommended maintaining a student start date prior to August 15 (preserving the August 15 first paycheck) and concluding the school year by May 31.
- Revised Timeline & Committee Guardrails (Dr. Gurley): Announced that the previously posted draft calendar was removed and directed Dr. Isley to reconvene the calendar committee under clear parameters: maintaining 180 student days, starting prior to August 15, and ending prior to May 31 (regardless of when Memorial Day falls). Noted he had updated Mr. Salvetier regarding the adjustment and outlined a revised adoption schedule: first read in December 2026 and formal Board action in January 2027.

Discussion/Questions:

- Ms. Dooley asked whether Albemarle County Public Schools face similar VRS 11-month contract constraints. Dr. Gurley and Dr. Isley explained that ACPS support staff have historically never worked on non-student days and ACPS has not recently scheduled 180 student days, whereas CCS's collective bargaining agreement newly tied support staff schedules to student days; however, ACPS's desire to end in May and its adoption timeline align closely with CCS's revised schedule. Ms. Dooley emphasized that the committee must keep student outcomes as the primary focus rather than administrative or bureaucratic variables.
- Mr. Meyer asked what specific calendar changes directly improve academic performance and questioned whether half-days or days adjacent to holidays carry equal instructional weight, as well as whether five-day weeks outperform four-day weeks. Dr. Isley noted that restoring 180 full calendar days (preserving only a half-day on the final day) and grouping days off into consistent five-day weeks directly respond to academic and stakeholder priorities, though ending before May 31 while preserving 180 days

will require reducing some non-instructional days off. Mr. Meyer also asked how coordinating with ACPS improves student achievement; Dr. Gurley explained that ACPS alignment is a lower-tier priority aimed at supporting staff childcare needs, while Dr. Isley added that differing calendars disrupt joint programming and attendance at CATEC, where ACPS students make up the majority of enrollment.
- Mr. Meyer noted a five-day difference between the 195 scheduled teacher days and 200-day teacher contracts, asking whether five instructional days could be added to bring the student calendar to 185 days or whether professional development days could be shifted outside student days. Dr. Isley clarified that adding student days would conflict with collective bargaining agreements tying support staff contracts to 180 student days and carry significant budget implications, noting further that teachers routinely work beyond contract hours and that workdays have only been converted to student days during severe weather emergencies (such as converting a mental wellness day last year).

Board Response to Written Reports

13.1 **School Board Member Committee Reports**: Board members submitted written reports regarding committee meetings and community events: Ms. Dooley reported on moderating the realtor superintendent panel, attending the PREP Board meeting, and the Mentor Teacher Advisory Committee; Mr. Meyer reported on the Charlottesville Scholarship Program, youth sports, and referendum community outreach; Ms. Torres reported on the Gifted Advisory Committee, ELA adoption committees, and the legislative delegation work session.

13.2 **Chronic Absenteeism – Written Report**: Rachel Rasnake submitted the Q1 Chronic Absenteeism Report. Division chronic absenteeism stood at 12.3% for the first quarter, representing a substantial decline from 18.6% at the close of 2025–2026, with significant reductions observed at CMS (11.4%) and CHS (16.9%).

13.3 **Periodic SRO Program Review Report**: Kim Powell submitted the first periodic School Resource Officer report of the 2026–2027 school year based on the September 23 workgroup review. The report noted zero juvenile arrests across CCS addresses calendar year-to-date, universal positive qualitative feedback from school communities, five SRO involvements out of 175 threat assessments, and documented student engagement activities.

14.1 **Pupil-Teacher Ratio 2026**: Maria Lewis submitted the annual Pupil-Teacher Ratio Report pursuant to Virginia Code § 22.1-253.13:2(M). Classroom pupil-teacher ratios across all six elementary schools averaged well below state caps (ranging from 14.73 at Summit to 18.07 at Sunrise). Total division K–12 enrollment was recorded at 4,230 students.

- Mr. Meyer observed positive upward trends across division metrics, noting sustained overall progress with only a single school reflecting lower performance than the previous academic year. He commended notable advancements at Charlottesville High School and highlighted a nearly 10-percentage-point decrease in chronic absenteeism at Charlottesville Middle School. He inquired whether these outcomes stemmed from newly implemented interventions or the continuation of prior-year strategies.
- Ms. Rasnake explained that effective attendance strategies originally developed at Walker Upper Elementary were successfully transitioned to CMS, emphasizing proactive direct outreach by classroom teachers to families following repeated absences. She added that established attendance habits build positive operational momentum as cohorts matriculate through grade levels, reinforcing long-term student engagement and consistent family routines.

14.1 **Comments from Members of the Community**: There were none.

15.1 **Board Member Comments**:

- Mr. Meyer offered a special recognition for Mr. O at Jackson-Via Elementary School upon his departure, expressing gratitude for his years of dedicated service safely crossing division students and families. Additionally, he expressed appreciation to the community for passing the 1% local sales tax referendum

and urged City Council to promptly enact the authorizing ordinance to generate capital project revenue. He extended specific thanks to parents Annie Suttle and Melissa Giachiari for leading community outreach, website development, and voter engagement efforts, noting that the successful referendum reflects strong public trust in division leadership and staff.

- Ms. Bryant expressed appreciation to the community for supporting the tax referendum, emphasizing that its passage will provide lasting improvements for division students well beyond the current Board's tenure. She urged the division to maintain an unwavering focus on core priorities—specifically student achievement and literacy—noting that while supplemental initiatives are valuable, academic growth must remain paramount and will require broad community involvement. She affirmed her commitment and that of her colleagues to advancing student success in partnership with local stakeholders. Concluding her remarks, Ms. Bryant thanked division educators, support staff, and administrative personnel across all facilities for their hard work, clarifying that rigorous data requests and critical inquiries from the Board reflect thorough governance rather than a lack of appreciation for staff efforts.
- Ms. Burns commended Ms. Bryant for her extensive dedication and tireless efforts in supporting the Fifth District congressional campaign, highlighting her travel of more than 4,500 miles across a geographic footprint comparable to the size of New Jersey. She commended her intentionality in hosting prominent leaders locally to spotlight both the achievements and ongoing needs of the Charlottesville area. Additionally, Ms. Burns expressed gratitude for Ms. Bryant's steadfast dedication to the school division and broader community.
- Ms. Burns also thanked Mr. Meyer for leading local outreach initiatives surrounding the 1% sales tax referendum. She emphasized that public support for the measure reflects deep trust in the school board and division leadership to deliver long-term, generational facility improvements.
- Turning to community safety, Ms. Burns noted the ongoing impact of gun violence and stressed the imperative to sustain collaborative dialogue. She invited parents, educators, and students to attend an upcoming "Let's Talk" session focusing on conflict resolution at the Cherry Avenue Boys & Girls Club, emphasizing the importance of centering student voices to equip youth with proactive resolution tools before conflicts escalate.
- Ms. Cooper commended administrators, school staff, and community partners for their collaborative work supporting student success and fostering inclusive learning environments across all schools.
- Ms. Torres expressed gratitude to division leadership, school staff, and community members for their engagement and highlighted key upcoming dates and division milestones.

17.1 <u>Superintendent's Comments</u>: Dr. Gurley shared updates on division-wide initiatives, thanked staff and families for their work during the start of the second quarter, and highlighted key division progress.

18.1 <u>Work Session Wrap-Up</u>: There were two requests from the Board:

- Compile an executive summary concerning school performance accountability and the legislative ramifications of House Bill 299 regarding the two-week testing window constraint
- A follow-up report outlining specific Student Behavior and Administrative Response (SBAR) categories that would be ineligible for placement in the PIVOT program.

19.1 <u>Upcoming Meetings</u>: Ms. Torres read the list of upcoming meetings.

20.1 <u>Adjourn</u>: The meeting adjourned at 9:58 p.m.

Lisa Torres, School Board Chair

Leslie Thacker, School Board Clerk