

A Work Session of the Albemarle County School Board was held on February 28, 2019 at 6:30 p.m., Lane Auditorium, Albemarle County Office Building, 401 McIntire Road, Charlottesville, Virginia 22902.

PRESENT: Mr. Stephen Koleszar; Dr. Kate Acuff; Ms. Katrina Callsen (arrived at 5:35 p.m.); Mr. Graham Paige; and Mr. Jason Buyaki.

ABSENT: Mr. David Oberg and Mr. Jonathan Alcaro.

STAFF PRESENT: Dr. Matthew Haas, Superintendent; Ms. Rosalyn Schmitt, Chief Operating Officer; Ms. Debbie Collins, Deputy Superintendent; Dr. Clare Keiser, Assistant Superintendent; Dr. Bernard Hairston, Assistant Superintendent; Mr. Ross Holden, School Board Attorney; and Mrs. Jennifer Johnston, Clerk.

Agenda Item No. 1.1. Closed Meeting.

At 5:34 p.m., Mr. Koleszar offered a **motion** that the Albemarle County Public School Board go into a closed meeting as authorized by the Virginia Freedom of Information Act, section 2.2-3711(A) of the Code of Virginia under subsection 1 for discussion, consideration or interviews of prospective candidates for employment; assignment, appointment, promotion, performance, demotion, salaries, disciplining or resignation of officers, appointees or employees of the School Board; and subsection 8 for consultation with legal counsel employed or retained by the School Board regarding specific legal matters requiring the provision of legal advice by such counsel. Mr. Buyaki **seconded** the motion, **and the motion passed with Ms. Callsen and Mr. Alcaro absent.**

Agenda Item No. 1.2. Closed Meeting Certification.

Mr. Koleszar offered a **motion** that the Board certify by recorded vote that to the best of each Board member's knowledge, only public business matters lawfully exempted from the open meeting requirements of the Virginia Freedom of Information Act and identified in the motion authorizing the Closed Meeting were heard, discussed or considered in the Closed Meeting. Mr. Buyaki **seconded** the motion. **Roll was called, and the motion passed by the following recorded votes:**

AYES: Mr. Buyaki, Mr. Koleszar, Dr. Acuff, Mr. Paige, and Ms. Callsen.

NAYS: None.

ABSENT: Mr. Oberg and Mr. Alcaro.

Motion carried by a 5:0:2 vote.

Agenda Item No. 1.3. Call to Order.

At 6:30 p.m., Mr. Paige, Vice-Chair, called the meeting of the Albemarle County School Board back to order.

Agenda Item No. 1.4. Pledge of Allegiance.

Agenda Item No. 1.5. Moment of Silence.

Agenda Item No. 2.1. Approval of Agenda.

Mr. Buyaki offered a **motion** to approve the agenda. Mr. Koleszar **seconded** the motion, **and the motion passed.**

Agenda Item No. 3.1. Approval of Consent Agenda.

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3.2. Learning Cottage Lease

3.3. One-Time Funding for School Security, mobile classroom setup, classroom technology, and library management system

- 3.4. Algebra Readiness FY18-19
- 3.5. Project Graduation FY 18-19
- 3.6. Personnel Action
- 3.7. 2019 PREP Operating Agreement
- 3.8. For Action: Policy Reviews and Revisions – Personnel
- 3.9. For Action: Policy Review and Revision
- 3.10. For Action: Appropriation Request for First Grade Classroom Furniture Replacement

Mr. Buyaki offered a **motion** to approve the consent agenda. Mr. Koleszar **seconded** the motion, **and the motion passed.**

Agenda Item No. 4.0. Items Pulled from the Consent Agenda. None.

Agenda Item No. 5.1. Announcements.

Dr. Acuff said that she met with a member of the Board of Supervisors. They requested that the Board of Supervisors only receive the School Board's funding request.

Dr. Haas said that tomorrow morning at 8:00 a.m. he and County Executive Jeff Richardson will be presenting their respective funding requests to the Board of Supervisors and the community.

Mr. Koleszar said that last Saturday was Winter Songs with eleven choirs from ten different schools. It was a fabulous concert.

Dr. Haas said that he joined 26 educators at Montpelier this past weekend for a workshop on Reframing the Narrative.

Agenda Item No. 6.1. School Board/Superintendent Business.

Dr. Haas said that he informed the Board at a previous meeting that staff would investigate an incident involving a teacher's lesson at Greer Elementary School. He provided an update on what staff had found out.

Agenda Item No. 6.2. Anti-Racism Policy.

Dr. Hairston provided for the Board's consideration a proposed anti-racism policy. He said that the School Board directed staff to develop an Anti-Racism policy in July of 2018.

Mr. Koleszar offered a **motion** to adopt the anti-racism policy. Dr. Acuff **seconded** the motion. Mr. Paige asked for discussion concerning the policy. Mr. Koleszar said that this is not just a policy but it is an anti-racism project. We are committing as a Division to eliminate racism from the Division. This is a great policy, and it is a great first step. Mr. Paige said that the policy is a great start. **Roll was called, and the motion passed by the following recorded votes:**

AYES: Ms. Callsen, Dr. Acuff, Mr. Koleszar, Mr. Paige, and Mr. Buyaki

NAYS: None.

ABSENT: Mr. Oberg and Mr. Alcaro.

Motion carried by 5:0:2 vote.

Agenda Item No. 6.3. Standards of Student Conduct/Dress and Imagery Display Focus.

Dr. Haas provided for the Board's consideration and focus on the standards of student conduct/dress and imagery display. According to the ACPS School Board Policy regarding standards for student conduct,

“Every student has a right to a quality education in an environment that is conducive to learning and free of disruption. Conversely, every student has the responsibility not to deny that right to others. Accordingly, the School Board has adopted policies and regulations designed to encourage good citizenship, reasonable standards of behavior, and a favorable atmosphere for learning and to discourage conduct that adversely affects the health and welfare of the students and staff.”

More specifically, with regard to student apparel, the ACPS School Board Policy states the following standard with regard to student apparel:

“Students are expected to dress appropriately for a K-12 educational environment. Any clothing that interferes with or disrupts the educational environment is unacceptable. Clothing with language or images that are vulgar, discriminatory or obscene, or clothing that promotes illegal or violent conduct, such as the unlawful use of weapons, drugs, alcohol, tobacco, or drug paraphernalia or clothing that contains threats such as gang symbols is prohibited.”

Dr. Haas presented a draft action and communication plan that has been collaboratively developed with school administrators to the Board to communicate to students, families, and staff, specific and timely requirements for students to be prohibited from wearing or displaying of symbols of a hatred and / or symbols that glorify the Confederacy, white supremacy, or Nazism.

There are no proposals under consideration from the superintendent that would change our dress code’s viewpoint neutral policy.

The Unite the Right Rally on August 12, 2017, less than two years ago, had a very negative impact on the Charlottesville / Albemarle Community. Albemarle County students were injured in the violence perpetrated upon our community by people who displayed symbols of white supremacy and hatred, including Confederate imagery.

Our School Health Advisory Board recently expanded upon these concerns, writing in part that:

- Multiple articles in the lay press reference studies showing the negative effects of racism or perceived racism on health, learning, and school performance.
- Exposure to symbols that are perceived as discriminatory or threatening in the school setting can affect the physical health of our students as well as their ability to learn.
- Overtly racist and violent groups have adopted Confederate symbols.
- Racist symbols undermine the stated core value of ACPS that every student "has the right to safety, mutual respect, and learning."

Articles of Note:

Health Effects of Racism

- *We’re Sick of Racism, Literally*
Studies on racism and blood pressure and the body’s stress responses
- *Microaggressions don't just 'hurt your feelings'*
Impacts on mortality and depression
- *Scientists Start To Tease Out The Subtler Ways Racism Hurts Health*
Stress response to racism and effects on health—chronic stress; may be similar to Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) in children

- *How Racism Is Bad for Our Bodies*
Links to multiple studies on health effects

Performance and Learning

- *Learning and memory under stress: implications for the classroom*
Stress may impact memory retrieval and creative thinking.
- *Discrimination and the Stress Response: Psychological and Physiological Consequences of Anticipating Prejudice in Interethnic Interactions*
Students anticipating racial bias had increased blood pressure and reported more stress during presentations.
- *The Science of Why Taking Down the Confederate Flag Matters*
Seeing the Confederate flag may activate implicit biases.
- *Effects of Stereotype Threat, Perceived Discrimination, and Examiner Race on Neuropsychological Performance: Simple as Black and White?*
Effect of stereotype threat, perceived racism, and race of examiner on results of neuropsychic testing.

From our Standards of Student Conduct:

“Each student has the right to expect an educational environment in which he can strive to achieve his/her intellectual potential. The most important student responsibility is to avoid disruptive conduct that infringes on the rights of others. Students, parents and school personnel are expected to cooperate in efforts to ensure a learning environment free of disruption.”

And that, “any behavior is unacceptable if it interferes with the rights of others.”

Dr. Haas’ plan was that:

In March will send out a communication directly to all students, families and staff including the following draft statement:

Beginning at the start of the school day on March (TBD), symbols, lettering or insignia associated with organizations that promote racial hatred or violence or that support white supremacy, to include Confederate symbolism and other racist imagery, such as the swastika, are not permitted in our schools because they cause substantial disruption, interfere with our educational responsibilities, and may lead to further unrest in the future.

The implementation timeline:

February 19 & 20 Principals Meetings

February 20-28 Meet with school admin teams to discuss direction, process and why; Finalize timeline and direction

February 28 School Board Meeting: Board adopts Anti-Racism Policy and Superintendent shares direction for Standards of Conduct

March 1-7 Principals share direction with their school staffs at faculty meetings

March 6 Principals Meeting: Review and clarify questions and processes

March (TBD) Division-wide communication to students, staff and families

March (TBD) Implementation

March (TBD) Asst. Principal Meeting: Review and clarify questions and processes

March – July 2019 Staff and Board meetings include data collected on incidents and actions
2019-20 Standard Operating Procedure

Dr. Acuff feels that this is a promising way to go. She asked how will the teacher and staff dress code be handled.

Mr. Buyaki asked if this is what Dr. Haas wants to do this if the dress code policy changes. He then said that if this direction is followed then it will be in violation of the current dress code policy. Will we enumerate a list of all hateful symbols or just confederate imagery?

Mr. Koleszar asked Dr. Haas if he was asking for direction to implement this or is he going to do it anyway.

Mr. Paige said he realized what was said but this, should not have been listed as action.

Dr. Acuff asked that information sent to parents be shared with the Board.

Agenda Item No. 6.4. Perspective of Board Members on Student Apparel and Expression.

Mr. Paige said that the Board had discussion at its last meeting on student apparel and expression. At that time the Board asked that the discussion continue.

According to the ACPS School Board Policy regarding standards for student conduct,

“Every student has a right to a quality education in an environment that is conducive to learning and free of disruption. Conversely, every student has the responsibility not to deny that right to others. Accordingly, the School Board has adopted policies and regulations designed to encourage good citizenship, reasonable standards of behavior, and a favorable atmosphere for learning and to discourage conduct that adversely affects the health and welfare of the students and staff.”

More specifically, with regard to student apparel, the ACPS School Board Policy states the following standard with regard to student apparel:

“Students are expected to dress appropriately for a K-12 educational environment. Any clothing that interferes with or disrupts the educational environment is unacceptable. Clothing with language or images that are vulgar, discriminatory or obscene, or clothing that promotes illegal or violent conduct, such as the unlawful use of weapons, drugs, alcohol, tobacco, or drug paraphernalia or clothing that contains threats such as gang symbols is prohibited.”

Dr. Acuff thinks it might be worthwhile to see how Dr. Haas’ implementation of disruptive clothing works before we go forward.

Ms. Callsen applauded Dr. Haas for acting. She feels that it is needed. At this point, our Superintendent has said that confederate imagery is disruptive. The Virginia Education Association has said that this imagery is disruptive. The School Health Advisory Board has said that the imagery is disruptive, as well as our students. It would be a dereliction of our duty as a School Board to ignore this input and not act on it. She would not support banning confederate imagery if she felt that it was violating the First Amendment

Mr. Paige agreed with Ms. Callsen. He said he appreciates what Dr. Haas is doing but feels that the Board still needs to put it in the dress code policy.

Mr. Koleszar said he has been torn between what is morally the right thing that all students need to be treated with respect and dignity. He feels students have greater free speech rights than what is in the Tinker standard. On the other side, the testimony the Board has heard is compelling. On the policy side, he feels that it is philosophically wrong to ban the confederate flag but our policy should be neutral. Principals should take actions to protect our students if apparel is disruptive.

Ms. Callsen said that if what Dr. Haas is implementing is a ban on confederate imagery, she is happy with that and it has less chance of being negated.

Mr. Koleszar said that racism impacts student performance. Banning confederate imagery is not going to change the impact of racism in our Division. We need to go deeper.

Mr. Paige feels that we need to move forward to discuss a ban on confederate imagery.

Dr. Acuff said that she agrees that the Board needs further discussion on a ban of confederate imagery. She would like all Board members present for that discussion.

Ms. Callsen said schools are compulsory and there is not an option for students to stay away from classmates wearing confederate imagery.

Mr. Koleszar said his dream is that we can heal the racial divide. Part of healing that divide is people understanding different opinions.

Agenda Item No. 6.5. Break.

There was a break from 7:43 p.m. until 7:55 p.m.

Dr. Acuff left the meeting at 7:44 p.m.

Agenda Item No. 7.1. Public Comment.

Mr. David Green is a resident of the City of Charlottesville. He enrolled his children in Charlottesville City Schools because when he moved here he heard that Albemarle County Schools were intolerant to race issues. He applauded Dr. Haas for his action.

Ms. Toni Barskile said that the Board needs to ban confederate imagery.

Ms. Aubrey Israel Hampton shared a message from Lara Harrison. She said that Ms. Chan is racist. She said that it is dangerous to be a student of color in the Division.

Ms. Amanda Moxham lives in the Rio Magisterial District. She thanked Dr. Haas for putting forth a communication plan regarding banning confederate imagery. She demands an explicit policy that bans confederate imagery.

Ms. Baily Nickel lives in the Rio Magisterial District. She expressed appreciation for Dr. Haas' work to address confederate imagery. She addressed some statements made by Board members during the discussion on banning confederate imagery.

Mr. Matthew Christensen lives in the Rio Magisterial District. He said that confederate imagery is a gang symbol and should be banned.

Mr. Ben Doernberg lives in the Samuel Miller Magisterial District. He said that the Board has shown a lack of respect to the community when addressing banning confederate imagery. He asked that the Board ban hateful imagery.

Ms. Star Peterson lives in the City of Charlottesville. She said that it is frustrating to hear talk about the legality of action to address displays of racism.

Mr. Walt Heinicke lives in the City of Charlottesville. Dr. Haas displayed moral leadership with his work tonight. He said that administrative procedure is not the same as a policy.

Agenda Item No. 8.1. Other Business by Board Members/Superintendent. None.

Agenda Item No. 9.1. Closed Meeting – if needed. None.

Agenda Item No. 10.1. Closed Meeting Certification. None.

Agenda Item No. 11.1. Adjournment.

At 8:29 p.m., hearing no objections, Mr. Paige adjourned the meeting of the Albemarle County School Board.

Chairman

Clerk