

MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING OF THE ALBEMARLE COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD

Thursday, July 11, 2024

[Meeting Video Link](#)

ROLL CALL - UPON THE ROLL BEING CALLED, THE FOLLOWING WERE PRESENT:

BOARD MEMBERS - Dr. Kate Acuff, Dr. Rebecca Berlin, Ms. Judy Le, Ms. Ellen Osborne, Mr. Chuck Pace, Mr. Graham Paige, and Ms. Allison Spillman

ABSENT – None

ALSO, IN ATTENDANCE - Superintendent Matthew Haas; School Division Counsel Josiah Black; Assistant Superintendent Clare Keiser; Assistant Superintendent Patrick McLaughlin; Assistant Superintendent Daphne Keiser; Assistant Superintendent Chandra Hayes; Chief Operating Officer Rosalyn Schmitt; Chief Technology Officer Christine Diggs; Public Affairs and Strategic Communications Officer Helen Dunn; and Clerk of the Board Christine Thompson

AGENDA ITEM NO. 1.0 CLOSED MEETING - At 5:45 p.m., Dr. Acuff 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:

1. Subsection 1 for the discussion, consideration, or interviews of prospective candidates for employment and the assignment, appointment, promotion, performance, demotion, salaries, disciplining, or resignation of specific public officers, appointees, or employees of any public body. The purpose of this item is to review and discuss: one (1) administrative appointment; and two (2) administrative employee matters; and
2. 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; the purpose of this item is to discuss a petition submitted to the School Board and potential litigation concerning a student-placement dispute. Ms. Osborne seconded the **motion**. **Roll was called, and the motion passed by the following recorded votes:**

AYES: Ms. Osborne, Dr. Acuff, Dr. Berlin, Mr. Pace, Ms. Spillman, Mr. Paige, and Chair Le.

NAYS: None.

ABSENT: None.

Motion carried by a 7:0 vote.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 2.0 OPENING ACTIVITIES

Agenda Item No. 2.2 Call to Order - At 6:30 p.m., Chair Le called the Albemarle County School Board meeting back to order.

Agenda Item No. 2.1 Closed Meeting Certification - At 6:31 p.m., Dr. Acuff 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. Ms. Spillman seconded the **motion**. **Roll was called, and the motion passed by the following recorded votes:**

AYES: Mr. Paige, Ms. Osborne, Dr. Acuff, Dr. Berlin, Mr. Pace, Ms. Spillman, and Chair Le.

NAYS: None.

ABSENT: None.

Motion carried by a 7:0 vote.

Dr. Acuff offered a motion to Deny the Petition to Grant an Additional Year of Pre-School during the 2024-2025 School Year to Student A. Mr. Pace seconded the **motion. Roll was called, and the motion passed by the following recorded votes:**

AYES: Mr. Paige, Dr. Acuff, Mr. Pace, and Chair Le.
NAYS: Ms. Spillman, Dr. Berlin.
ABSTAIN: Ms. Osborne.
ABSENT: None.
Motion carried by a 4:2:1 vote.

Mr. Paige offered a motion to appoint Candidate A as Principal to Albemarle High School for th3 2024-2025 School Year. Dr. Acuff seconded the **motion. A voice vote was called, and the motion passed by the following recorded votes:**

AYES: Dr. Berlin, Mr. Pace, Ms. Osborne, Ms. Spillman, Mr. Paige, Dr. Acuff, and Chair Le.
NAYS: None.
ABSENT: None.
Motion carried by a 7:0 vote.

- Agenda Item No. 2.3 - Roll Call**
- Agenda Item No. 2.4 - Pledge of Allegiance**
- Agenda Item No. 2.5 - Moment of Silence**

AGENDA ITEM NO. 3.0 APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Agenda Item No. 3.1 Approval of Agenda – Dr. Berlin offered a **motion** to approve the agenda. Mr. Paige seconded the **motion. A voice vote was called, and the motion passed with the following recorded votes:**

AYES: Dr. Berlin, Mr. Pace, Ms. Osborne, Ms. Spillman, Mr. Paige, Dr. Acuff, and Chair Le.
NAYS: None.
ABSENT: None.
Motion carried by a 7:0 vote.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 4.0 APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA

- 4.1 - Approval of Consent Agenda
- 4.2 - Approval of the Minutes
- 4.3 – For Information: Establishment of Meeting Time, Date and Place 2025
- 4.4 – For Action: Policy Review and Revision
- 4.5 - For Information: Policy, Review and Revision
- 4.6 - Personnel Action
- 4.7 – Solar Power Purchase Agreement for ten (10) Albemarle County Public School Facilities

Dr. Berlin offered a motion to approve the Consent Agenda. Ms. Spillman **seconded the motion. A voice vote was called, and the motion passed with the following recorded votes:**

AYES: Dr. Berlin, Mr. Pace, Ms. Osborne, Ms. Spillman, Mr. Paige, Dr. Acuff, and Chair Le.
NAYS: None.
ABSENT: None.
Motion carried by a 7:0 vote.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 5.0 ITEMS PULLED FROM CONSENT AGENDA – Policy JGDA was pulled to under item 4.5 to allow the Albemarle County Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) to review the proposed changes.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 6.0 ANNOUNCEMENTS

Agenda Item No. 6.1 School Board and Superintendent Business

Dr. Chandra Hayes presented a summary of recent ACPS achievements in athletics and STEM education.

Several competitive swimmers from our ACPS community recently participated in the Olympic Trials, showcasing exceptional talent.

- David King competed in the 100m and 200m backstroke and the 100m butterfly.
- Sarah Czirjak participated in the 200m breaststroke.
- Thomas Heilman delivered a remarkable performance, winning the men's 200m butterfly. This victory has earned him a spot on the US Swim Team for the upcoming Paris 2024 Olympics, representing not only the United States but also Albemarle County proudly.

STEM Education Initiatives: In the realm of STEM education, Northrop Grumman has continued its 15-year support by sponsoring an enriching experience at Space Camp in Huntsville, Alabama.

This year, 22 students and four teachers from Henley, Journey, and Lakeside schools attended the camp. They engaged in activities focused on space travel, engineering challenges, and astronaut training among other STEM-related topics. The participating teachers attended the Space Academy for Educators, enhancing their skills in presenting STEM concepts, which will improve STEM instruction and career awareness in our schools. Upon their return, the teachers plan to share their experiences with peers during their DPLC meetings. Our communications team is also preparing to highlight these experiences more broadly within our community.

Thank you to the families of these young scholars for their support and to Northrop Grumman for their continued partnership. We look forward to the positive impact these experiences will have on our students and community.

Agenda Item No. 6.2 Spotlight on Education – Dr. Daphne Keiser presented an overview of the contributions and associated educational initiatives supported by the 100 Black Men of Central Virginia, focusing on enhancing the educational and social development of African American male students within our community. Joining her were Mr. James Watson, President 100 Black Men of Central VA; Ms. LaNika Barnes, AHS Teacher; Dr. Pamela Venable, WMS Teacher; and Ms. Pearl Early, Student Support Program Manager.

100 Black Men of Central Virginia: This organization is dedicated to improving community quality of life and addressing the achievement gap faced by African American male students through mentoring and support. Their efforts this summer included supporting Albemarle County Schools scholars at both the 2024 MQ Summer Academy and the Nesby Junior Summer Academy.

M-Cubed Summer Academy: The M-Cubed Summer Academy, an algebra readiness program, aligns with the organization's mission to eliminate the academic achievement gap. It employs a learning philosophy that integrates real-world problems and culturally relevant resources into the curriculum, fostering a natural and engaging learning environment. The program particularly aims to boost enrollment and completion rates of African American males in advanced academic tracks while in middle school.

National Society of Black Engineers (NESBY): NESBY is a global nonprofit organization focused on the advancement of black engineering students and professionals. It offers its members leadership training, professional development, mentoring, and career development services. The Nesby Junior program, which is their main K-12 initiative, encourages students to explore how engineering and technology intersect with the world around them, promoting academic excellence, leadership, and teamwork.

Impact on Underrepresented Students: For the past 16 years, the M-Cubed and Nesby Jr. Summer Academies have been pivotal in supporting historically underrepresented students in STEM fields. These programs, along with their year-round activities, create safe, affinity-based spaces that empower students of African American descent to advocate for themselves and excel academically.

Dr. Keiser thanked everyone for their continued support of these vital community partnerships and educational programs. ACPS looks forward to fostering further success among our students through these collaborative efforts.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 7.0 PUBLIC COMMENT- There were no public speakers.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 8.0 – SCHOOL DIVISION BUSINESS

Agenda Item No. 8.1 – [Southern Feeder Pattern Elementary School Name Recommendation](#) - Pursuant to Board approval on May 23, 2024, staff is proceeding with Construction Documents and Bidding phases for a new elementary school within the division's Southern Feeder Pattern for students in grades 3-5 in close proximity to Mountain View Elementary School. In accordance with policy FA, the Superintendent is recommending a name for the new school for the Board's approval.

Board clarification questions:

The current school would be named *Mountain View Primary School*, with the new school named *Mountain View Upper Elementary School*.

The name change would take effect when the newly built school opened.

This item will be on the August 8, 2024, agenda for action.

Agenda Item No. 8.2 – [Instructional Technology Update](#) - ACPS Learning Technology presented the Board on how the Department of Technology uses student, staff, and family feedback in support of positive student outcomes.

Ms. Spillman raised concerns about excessive technology use among students, as reported by parents. She expressed interest in understanding the features and implementation of Lightspeed, a monitoring software, and asked if it was similar to another program called Go Guardian. Staff confirmed that Lightspeed and Go Guardian are similar, both offering comparable features. The choice of Lightspeed over Go Guardian was due to its compatibility with the existing web filters. They acknowledged the challenges with students bypassing system controls, such as using VPNs to access restricted content like YouTube and inappropriate materials, which disrupts the classroom environment. The staff mentioned that Lightspeed would help address these issues by allowing teachers to see when students are circumventing the system, and it provides the functionality to create customized block lists to further control access. The complexity and effectiveness of Lightspeed in handling these issues were acknowledged, with a commitment to provide more detailed information on its operation and implementation in classrooms to better address constituent concerns.

Ms. Spillman inquired whether individual teachers are responsible for creating their own block lists or if there will be a general block list maintained for the entire division or school network. Staff clarified that while there is an existing filter system managed by Lightspeed, which blocks the most egregious inappropriate content, some VPN users still bypass these filters. Teachers, at least initially, will need to create their own custom block and allow lists to handle specific classroom needs. The division does not directly maintain the filter; however, it is continuously tweaked and updated as new challenges arise to ensure it captures a majority of inappropriate material. This approach allows for both broad protection at the division level and tailored control at the classroom level.

Staff shared that Lightspeed is the provider of the school's internet filter and highlighted the purchase of a cluster management tool bundled with a platform called Digital Insight. This new tool will offer usage data that was not previously captured effectively. They emphasized that integrating Digital Insight will allow for better data-driven decisions, particularly in aligning technology spending with actual educational outcomes such as SOL scores and closing achievement gaps. Ms. Spillman suggested that this comprehensive data analysis would be crucial for budgeting and ensuring the effective allocation of resources towards technology that yields tangible academic improvements.

Ms. Spillman expressed concern about the lack of formal typing instruction in the curriculum, recalling personal experiences learning to type on a typewriter. She inquired about any existing plans to teach typing skills to students. Staff responded that there are currently no specific plans in place for formal typing instruction. They mentioned the necessity of collaborating with the Department of Instruction to consider integrating typing skills into the curriculum if there is interest from the board. Additionally, the staff noted that while they are not fully versed in all the computer science standards, typing is not specifically mentioned, although the standards were recently revised. Further research and discussions would be required to explore the possibility of adding typing instruction.

Ms. Spillman praised the adaptive technology used by the school, sharing about how it significantly helped both her special needs child and nonverbal autistic niece. She then shifted focus to questioning the efficacy of surveys used to evaluate educational technology. Specifically, whether these surveys, which often focus on user satisfaction, effectively measure academic success or improvements derived from individual software or technology tools. The staff acknowledged the importance of the question and explained that while surveys do ask about user satisfaction, they also tie back to academic data sets to evaluate the effectiveness of the technology. The staff encouraged Ms. Spillman to examine the survey results more closely, noting that beyond subjective likes, the surveys provide insights into how students perform on assessments related to the technology in question, thereby offering a more comprehensive measure of its impact on academic success.

Dr. Acuff inquired about the number of students who lacked access to high-speed internet, emphasizing the broader issue of family access within the community. She asked for recommendations on addressing these challenges, particularly whether many families still face these issues. Staff highlighted ongoing efforts in partnership with the County of Albemarle's broadband office, which aimed to achieve universal broadband access by 2020. For families outside the Comcast service area, the provision of hotspots has been a temporary solution. The decrease in hotspot requests suggests improving connectivity, but the staff also acknowledged the need to boost the visibility and promotion of this program, especially now that the acute phase of the COVID-19 pandemic has passed, ensuring it remains a priority and that community needs are continuously met.

Dr. Acuff asked whether there had been any correlation studies between SOL or achievement data and access to high-speed internet at home, expressing uncertainty about the availability and reliability of such data. The staff explained that they had not conducted detailed analyses correlating SOL or achievement data with home internet access, mainly due to challenges in obtaining accurate data. This difficulty was compounded during the COVID-19 pandemic when data collection was primarily survey-based and not as reliable. They mentioned that such questions were included on enrollment forms but are no longer actively surveyed. However, they noted a significant reduction in the percentage of students without high-speed internet, attributing this improvement to efforts by the broadband office, which was a positive development despite the lack of detailed data analysis.

Ms. Spillman emphasized the importance of communicating updates and positive developments to families, especially regarding internet accessibility improvements. She expressed concern that not all families might be aware of these advancements since not everyone watches the board meetings. She strongly recommended the implementation of a comprehensive communication plan to ensure that all families are informed and can prepare for the upcoming school year with this encouraging news in mind. Ms. Spillman concluded by thanking staff for the thorough report and expressed appreciation for the detailed information provided.

Ms. Osborne thanked the Technology Department for their presentation and stated that it was very thorough, and it was very clear that they were a superior department.

Agenda Item No. 8.3 – [Transportation Update](#) - This transportation update provided summary information of how the transportation department ended the 2023-2024 school year, an overview of the information about the department, and updates for the opening of the 2024-2025 school year.

Dr. Berlin asked if the staffing shortages mentioned included both driver and non-driver positions within the transportation office. Ms. Gellner confirmed that both driver and non-driver positions are currently unfilled. She recently hired a new trainer who will start next week and is excited about this addition. However, she also noted the departure of an area transportation supervisor at the end of the school year, with a replacement starting by late July or early August. Additionally, there are still open positions for an area transportation supervisor, a routing specialist, a dispatcher, and an assistant director that need to be filled.

Dr. Berlin asked Ms. Gellner what her primary concerns were within her role as the Director of Transportation. Ms. Gellner expressed optimism about the current situation, noting a feeling of reassurance about the direction things are heading. She highlighted the process of filling new positions, particularly an operations manager, which will enable better delegation and efficiency within the team. She shared a personal connection to the team, citing previous experiences and the hardworking nature of long-standing colleagues as reasons for their return and confidence in the department's future. Her primary focus for the next school year is enhancing support systems, particularly through training in student management for new drivers to ensure they feel supported. Ms. Gellner mentioned a supervisor retreat scheduled for August 9th, aimed at building cohesion and ensuring that new leaders and drivers feel well-equipped and confident in their roles, and

emphasized the importance of continuous collaboration with human resources to maintain the efficacy and morale of the team.

Dr. Acuff asked about staff turnover, specifically if stay or exit interviews had been conducted to understand why employees are leaving or staying, despite the department now offering higher salaries than other regional transportation services. Ms. Gellner acknowledged that while they personally haven't conducted exit interviews, the Human Resources department has compiled substantial qualitative data. She referenced recent Gallup survey data, which was discussed briefly at the end of the school year and will be further analyzed at the upcoming supervisor retreat to inform departmental strategies. Staff plans to adopt effective protocols to facilitate deeper discussions about employee needs and concerns, particularly focusing on training for new staff to ensure they feel capable and supported in their roles.

Mr. Pace asked about the possibility of deploying 14-passenger buses for small team athletic trips at high schools, and whether coaches could drive these buses. Bill Morse, the program manager for routing and trips, clarified that while the district has 14-passenger buses, there are specific regulatory requirements for drivers. To operate these buses, drivers must have a special endorsement on their driver's license, similar to the training required for CDL drivers, but not a CDL itself. This training is extensive, and not all coaches may be interested or able to complete it due to its length and complexity. Additionally, he noted that any vehicle designed to transport more than 10 passengers requires this special endorsement by state law.

Mr. Paige raised concerns about the appearance of some of the school buses, noting that several had peeling paint on the hood. He expressed worry about the negative impression this could create about the district. Additionally, concerns were mentioned regarding the outdated signage in front of the district offices. Staff acknowledged the concerns about the bus' appearance and the signage. Dan Megan, the fleet manager, is already planning maintenance activities over the summer, which would address these issues by allowing more opportunities for direct upkeep of the buses.

Chair Le referred to the previous year's start, where there were 12 open routes for approximately 10,000 students requesting transportation. She asked if the current year, with nine open routes, had a similar number of transportation requests or if it had changed. Ms. Gellner confirmed that the number of students requesting bus service this year is slightly lower, about 100 or so fewer than last year, but still close to the 10,000 mark. She noted that the final numbers had not yet been determined and that they would be discussing potential adjustments with lead drivers and principals the following week. She also mentioned a noticeable decline in transportation requests, which they viewed as a positive shift, indicating that more people are checking in advance for available routes.

Agenda Item No. 8.4 – Break – The Board took a break from 8:07 p.m. to 8:17 p.m.

Agenda Item No. 8.5 – [Community in Schools Update](#) - This was the second part of a two-part report (the first part was presented on 6/13/24) providing an update from the Office for Community Engagement (OCE). During the evening's presentation, Dr. Daphne Keiser, Assistant Superintendent & Mr. Patrick Brennan, Founder & CEO of Communities in Schools (CIS) Northern Virginia (NOVA), shared information regarding the CIS Model and the launching of programming for the Lambs Lane Campus (Greer ES, Journey MS, AHS) and Red Hill ES for SY 2024-2025. The CIS Model focuses on magnifying each student's potential by connecting students to caring adults and community resources. Each school has a program coordinator who serves students daily, providing whole-school programming, as well as tier I & tier II support for their caseload. CIS builds a network of partners, including businesses, volunteers, social service agencies, health care providers, community foundations, and educators who help students stay focused in school, and build on experiences and skills, supporting students so they can be successful.

Ms. Spillman inquired about the differentiation between the existing safety and social emotional coaches in schools and the new role of CIS (Communities in Schools) coordinators. She asked how these roles would integrate and collaborate within the schools. Dr. Daphne Keiser explained that CIS coordinators have a distinct role focusing primarily on conducting initial needs assessments for students and families and working closely with school administrators to address these needs. Unlike the existing coaches, CIS coordinators actively collaborate with community partners to bring external resources into schools. They are involved in creating whole school programming and managing cases for up to 50 students by providing Tier 2 and Tier 3 supports, which align closely with the school's goals and initiatives. Dr. Keiser further clarified that the work of CIS coordinators is organized into three main areas: tutoring and mentoring, support for basic needs, and social emotional learning combined with family and community engagement. She confirmed that social emotional coaches from ACPS would collaborate with CIS coordinators specifically on social emotional aspects to ensure there is no overlap and that efforts are synergistic.

Ms. Spillman asked for clarification on how students are selected for case management within the school, specifically inquiring about the criteria and process used to identify students who will receive services. Dr. Keiser explained that the process involves close communication with the school's principal and leadership team. They consider various data points about students within the building to make informed decisions. The selection is also guided by the school's specific academic, disciplinary, or attendance goals. For example, a student might be chosen based on low performance indicators like risk scores, indicating they could significantly benefit from additional support. This data-driven approach ensures targeted assistance to students who most need it.

Ms. Spillman inquired about the actual cost implications for Albemarle County Public Schools (ACPS) concerning the implementation of the new CIS program, questioning whether these costs were included in the current year's budget and seeking clarity on the financial sustainability of the program. Dr. Keiser explained that initial one-time funds had been identified to support the CIS program as a three-year investment. Additionally, part of the financial strategy includes fundraising efforts, with the largest portion of funding expected to come from grants managed by CIS. She acknowledged Ms. Spillman's concerns about the risks of relying on fundraising and grant funding, especially the potential challenges of maintaining program continuity if anticipated funds fail to materialize. However, she reassured the commitment to the program was strong and implied optimism about meeting the financial requirements through the identified strategies.

Dr. Acuff added to the discussion by mentioning ongoing efforts to secure additional support, noting that Dr. Kaiser and Mr. Brennan had presented the program to the Albemarle Foundation for Education. The foundation board expressed strong interest in supporting the initiative and is actively planning to aid in fundraising efforts for the fall launch of the program. Dr. Acuff emphasized that this support aligns well with the overall strategic plans and goals of the foundation, indicating a positive outlook and commitment to the program's success.

Mr. Paige inquired about the career pathways available for students who may not be interested in pursuing college, specifically asking about partnerships that could cater to such students' needs. Mr. Brennan affirmed the importance of career pathways that are not solely focused on college preparation. He mentioned that career and technical education (CTE) programs offer various opportunities, highlighting the involvement of different industries across Virginia that support apprenticeship programs. These programs allow students to "earn and learn," providing practical, hands-on experiences aligned with their interests and career goals. The response emphasized the commitment to meeting students where they are and supporting their individual educational journeys, whether that leads to college or directly into the workforce.

Chair Le inquired about the source of the one-time funding. Chief Operating Officer, Ms. Rosalyn Schmitt explained that the funding originated from a learning recovery fund established by the board during the COVID-19 pandemic. This fund was intended to address learning loss and other educational disruptions caused by the pandemic. The money has been utilized for various purposes, including summer school and

other recovery efforts, with a significant portion remaining. The decision to use this fund for current strategies, including support for CSI (Comprehensive Support and Improvement) schools, was part of a broader effort to make the best use of available resources. She also noted that the continuation of funding is contingent on the school system's ability to demonstrate effective use of the initial funds, as external funders are keen to see their contributions lead to sustainable improvements.

Ms. Spillman asked whether the decision regarding the use of one-time funding was made before or after the board's budget decisions. Ms. Schmitt clarified that the decision to allocate the one-time funding occurred after the budget had been set. Initially, when the budget appeared more robust, certain initiatives were considered but later removed from the formal funding request. However, due to persistent interest and recognized needs from the schools, the topic continued to resurface. This led to creative thinking about alternative ways to fund these initiatives without depending on the main budget process.

Dr. Berlin asked for more details about the training and organizational placement of site coordinators, particularly inquiring about their training quality, the structure of their oversight, and their reporting dynamics within the school system. Mr. Brennan explained that CIS follows a structured accreditation process for training site coordinators, which includes best practices for both implementing the CIS model within schools and managing the business aspects of operating a 501(c)(3) organization. The training for site coordinators involves a series of modules that cover topics such as program implementation, assessment, goal setting, and data management. These modules emphasize the importance of coordinators tracking their interactions with students and the resources they bring into the schools.

There are unique challenges and skill sets required for site coordinators, who need to integrate into the school environment effectively while not being direct members of the school staff. He emphasized the importance of coordinators building relationships with students and navigating various school dynamics, all while respecting the directives and preferences of the school principal and other administrative staff. The coordinators operate under the invitation of the school, requiring them to adapt to the specific needs and expectations of each school. In addition to national training modules, there is state-level support that facilitates the sharing of best practices among coordinators throughout the Commonwealth. This comprehensive support system ensures ongoing development and alignment with educational goals across different levels of the organization.

Mr. Pace commented that knowing we must start with a small footprint; this program sounds perfect for Agnor and Woodbrook. Dr. Keiser stated that both schools are interested, and they are next on the list.

Dr. Acuff expressed confidence in the ability of the Albemarle Foundation for Education to support and facilitate fundraising efforts for the CIS program. She highlighted the advantages of backing an evidence-based program with a solid reputation, which would make fundraising endeavors more straightforward. Dr. Acuff noted that the program's impact and goals are clear and measurable, with planned assessments for each school to monitor progress. She expressed optimism about the potential to raise the necessary funds and described the CIS program as the most suitable option currently available for addressing both the emotional and educational needs of students. Additionally, she mentioned that the program's benefits extend beyond the schools, impacting the broader community, making it a valuable topic for community-wide discussions.

Ms. Spillman requested an update from Dr. Haas on the progress of the cell phone task force, especially in light of Governor Youngkin's recent executive order concerning cell phone use in schools. Dr. Haas provided a comprehensive update on the cell phone task force, detailing the formation and planning stages. He explained that all committee members have been selected, including parents, students, staff members, administrators and counselors from each school, and department members. The task force's communication strategy was already in place but was adjusted to include the governor's announcement.

He also mentioned a pilot initiative involving a middle school that will test a technology called "Yonder Pouch" with the 6th-grade class. This technology aims to manage cell phone usage effectively within the school environment.

Furthermore, Dr. Haas outlined the communication plan to keep families informed about the current cell phone policy and the objectives of the task force. This includes sending updates and reminders through various channels such as emails and paper flyers in first day packets. The primary goal of the task force, is to redefine the vision for cell phone use within the schools, establish what "cell phone-free learning" would look like across different school levels, identify the gaps between the current state and the vision, and explore technological solutions and strategies like the Yonder Pouch to achieve this vision.

Mr. Pace inquired about the goals for implementing the cell phone policy effectively by the start of the school year and aligning with the January 1st, 2025, deadline set by Governor Youngkin for compliance with new state guidelines.

Dr. Haas responded by aligning the upcoming state mandates with the school's existing policies, which already address concerns about distractions, addiction, and mental health issues related to cell phone use among students. He expressed confidence that the school's goals are in sync with the anticipated state guidelines—mainly to minimize distractions during instructional time, empower staff to manage cell phone use effectively, and enable students to learn how to responsibly handle technology.

Dr. Haas highlighted the inevitability of technology in education and emphasized the importance of adapting to its continuous evolution. He also mentioned an ongoing pilot program using new technology to manage cell phone usage, which, if successful, could be expanded across the school system. Dr. Haas conveyed optimism that the school's proactive measures would align well with any forthcoming state directives and that they are on track to meet the goals set for managing cell phone use in educational settings.

No. 9.0 OTHER BUSINESS

Agenda Item No. 9.1 Other Business by Board Members and the Superintendent

Ms. Spillman requested that staff include a reminder about safe gun storage in the back-to-school communications, either in the first day-of-school packet or via email. She emphasized the importance of this reminder given the start of a new school year, ensuring that safety measures are communicated effectively to the school community at the outset.

Chair Le reflected on the depth of the discussions about equity during the board meeting, highlighting how equity themes permeated various presentations and discussions. Despite recognizing the substantial work that remains, Chair Le expressed optimism about the direction in which the board and school district are moving. She appreciated the comprehensive consideration of equity issues, especially given that it was a routine July meeting, and acknowledged the positive momentum felt during the session. Chair Le voiced appreciation for the collective efforts of all involved, emphasizing a shared sense of progress and alignment among the board members.

Agenda Item No. 10.1 Closed Meeting – None.

Agenda Item No. 10.2 Closed Meeting Certification – None.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 11.0 ADJOURNMENT - At 9:20 p.m., hearing no objections, Chair Le adjourned the meeting of the Albemarle County School Board.

Clerk

Chair