

MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING OF THE ALBEMARLE COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD
Thursday, March 13, 2025
[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. Graham Paige, Ms. Leslie Pryor, and Ms. Allison Spillman, and Student Representative Margaret Lee

ABSENT – None

ALSO, IN ATTENDANCE - Superintendent Matthew Haas; School Division Counsel Josiah Black; Assistant Division Counsel Erin Stone; 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 5:30 p.m., Ms. Osborne 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 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 discuss: the nomination of a principal; and appointment to the Long Range Planning Committee; and possible reductions in staffing for the 2025-2026 school year. Ms. Le seconded the **motion**. **A voice vote was taken, and the motion passed by the following recorded votes:**

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

NAYS: None.

ABSENT: None.

Motion carried by a 7:0:0 vote.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 2.0 OPENING ACTIVITIES

Agenda Item No. 2.1 Call to Order - At 6:30 p.m., Chair Acuff called the Albemarle County School Board meeting back to order.

Agenda Item No. 2.2 Closed Meeting Certification - At 6:31 p.m., Ms. Le 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. Paige seconded the **motion**. **A voice vote was taken, and the motion passed by the following recorded votes:**

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

NAYS: None.

ABSENT: None.

Motion carried by a 7:0:0 vote.

Ms. Osborne offered a **motion** that the Board approve the recommended personnel action as discussed in the closed meeting. Ms. Le seconded the **motion**. **A voice vote was taken, and the motion passed by the following recorded votes:**

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

Ms. Spillman offered a **motion** to appoint Lindsay Snoddy as the At-Large representative to the Long-Range Planning Advisory Committee. Ms. Le seconded the **motion**. **A voice vote was taken, and the motion passed by the following recorded votes:**

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

Ms. Le offered a **motion** to appoint Ms. Christie H. Isaiah as the Principal to Woodbrook Elementary School effective immediately. Mr. Paige seconded the **motion**. **A voice vote was taken, and the motion passed by the following recorded votes:**

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

Agenda Item No. 2.3 - Roll Call

Agenda Item No. 2.4 - Pledge of Allegiance

Agenda Item No. 2.5 - Moment of Silence – Chair Acuff asked those in attendance and listening to keep the family and loved ones of the Journey Middle School student in their thoughts during this time of loss.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 3.0 APPROVAL OF AGENDA - Ms. Le offered a **motion** to approve the agenda. Ms. Spillman seconded the **motion**. **A voice vote was taken, and the motion passed with the following recorded votes:**

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

AGENDA ITEM NO. 4.0 ANNOUNCEMENTS

Agenda Item No. 4.1 Spotlight on Education - Walton Middle School proudly celebrated the achievements of its history students, guided by 8th Grade Social Studies teacher and Lead Social Studies Teacher, Alex Groff. Under his leadership, students demonstrated exceptional dedication to historical inquiry, research, and presentation—excelling at both the district and state levels.

At the recent district-level National History Day competition held at Mary Baldwin University, several Walton students earned top honors for their outstanding projects. Representing Walton at this event were Jack Croll, Owen Gordon, Naomi Palmer, and Anna Palmer. These students first showcased their historical knowledge and research skills at Walton’s second annual National History Day Expo, held on February 18, 2025.

The Expo, which involved 342 students, was a collaborative effort among the History, English Language Arts (ELA), Learning Technology Integration (LTI), and Special Education departments. Students advancing to the district competition participated in a variety of categories—including essays, exhibits, websites, and documentaries—all centered on the theme **“Rights and Responsibilities in History.”** Their impressive performance highlighted the depth of their research and storytelling, with multiple students placing in their respective categories.

Student projects are available for public viewing at k12albemarle.org/nhd2025.

In a separate achievement, Walton Middle School 8th grader Lille Kenney won the **state-level Veterans of Foreign Wars Patriot’s Pen essay competition**. Her powerful writing earned recognition from the Louisa VFW, along with a \$2,750 award and the honor of advancing to the national competition, where she placed 17th out of 53 finalists across the country.

Lille’s success is a testament to the strength of Walton’s student writers and their ability to shine on a national stage.

Congratulations to Mr. Alex Groff and all Walton Middle School students for their outstanding accomplishments in both history and writing competitions!

Agenda Item No. 4.2 School Board Superintendent Business – None.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 5.0 PUBLIC COMMENT

Laura Harrison (Rio District) Ms. Harrison urged the Board not to approve budget items that expand the School Resource Officer (SRO) program, increase student surveillance, or eliminate student safety coach positions. She criticized the lack of data on the SRO program's impact and questioned the validity of cited surveys, noting that 14.7% of students reported feeling unsafe around SROs. She argued that continuing the SRO program contradicts the division’s anti-racism policy and commitment to inclusive, data-driven decision-making. She expressed concern that SRO presence, especially in light of a recent executive order mandating local law enforcement collaboration with ICE, could endanger immigrant students. She called on the Board to retain safety coaches and resist policies she sees as contributing to rising authoritarianism.

Michelle Benedict (Samuel Miller District) Ms. Benedict, a parent and teacher at Albemarle High School, spoke against the proposed reduction of mental health support specialist positions from three to one at AHS. She highlighted the vital role these specialists play in student well-being and academic success, both as a parent and an educator. She emphasized that counselors are already overextended, and that mental health support staff provide essential services for students experiencing a range of emotional challenges. She encouraged the Board to maintain all three positions, likening the support specialists to steady, grounding breaths that sustain students' mental and emotional health.

Amanda Moxham (Rio District) Ms. Moxham voiced opposition to the expansion of SROs in schools, highlighting the lack of evidence supporting their effectiveness and pointing out the negative impact on students of color and those with disabilities. She argued that SROs contribute to the school-to-prison pipeline and that school discipline should remain a school matter, not involve police. She emphasized the need for alternative support, such as mental health resources.

Larissa Golovanev (Jewett District) As a school counselor, she expressed concern over the proposed cuts to mental health support specialists at Albemarle High School. She explained the significant mental health needs at the school and the importance of these specialists in addressing Tier 3 mental health issues. Cutting these positions would worsen the situation.

Jennifer Middlesworth: Representing the ISAP program, she criticized the decision to hold a separate graduation ceremony for ISAEP students, which she claimed dishonored educational plans and undermined trust. She highlighted the negative impact on students who had already planned their participation in the traditional graduation ceremony.

Susan Tracy: She echoed concerns about the exclusion of ISAEP students from the main graduation ceremony, stressing the unjust nature of the decision and the harm it would cause to students who have faced significant challenges. She called for the administration to honor their commitment and allow these students to walk at graduation.

Jim Dillenbeck (Rio District): He voiced multiple concerns about the education system, including ineffective mid-year assessments, a lack of support for teachers dealing with behavioral issues, and the growing problem of experienced teachers leaving the system. He also praised some recent positive developments, like the new cell phone policy at Albemarle High School and the return of a beloved principal.

Renee Branson (Rio District): A parent of an ISAEP student, she also spoke against the decision to exclude ISAEP students from graduation. She emphasized the importance of recognizing these students' achievements and the harm that would result in denying them the same celebration as their peers.

Emily Mahon (Rio District): She expressed concerns about the proposed addition of SROs to schools, arguing that their presence conflicts with the district's anti-racism policy and undermines efforts to provide mental health support. She urged the board to reject expanding SROs and instead invest in mental health and safety coaches.

Jan Ortuno (Rio District): She opposed adding more SROs, arguing that the role of SROs is misunderstood and not suited to prevent school conflicts. She also questioned the budgetary decisions regarding weapons detection systems and security staff and highlighted the disproportionate impact on students of color.

Aubrey Israel Hampton (Rio District): She read a statement from a former student expressing concern over the shift from safety coaches to SROs. The statement highlighted the racial equity concerns, pointing out that the presence of SROs disproportionately impacts Black students and contributes to the school-to-prison pipeline. She urged the board to prioritize mental health support and restorative justice over policing.

Superintendent Matthew Haas addressed the concerns about ISAEP students being excluded from graduation, apologizing for the stress this caused. He clarified that he had only learned of the issue recently, and immediately informed the school involved that ISAEP students would indeed be allowed to participate in the graduation ceremony. He emphasized that the ISAEP program is designed to help students complete their education, and **all students** who finish the program should have the opportunity to be recognized at graduation. He reassured the parents and families that the situation has been resolved.

6.0 APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA - Ms. Osborne offered a motion to approve the Consent Agenda. Ms. Spillman **seconded the motion. A voice vote was taken, and the motion passed with the following recorded votes:**

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

NAYS: None.

ABSENT: None.

Motion carried by a 7:0:0 vote.

- 6.1 Approval of Consent Agenda
- 6.2 Approval of the Minutes
- 6.3 Religious Exemption
- 6.4 Exemption for Compulsory Attendance
- 6.5 For Information: Policy Review and Revisions
- 6.6 Proposed 2026-2027 School Year Calendar
- 6.7 For Action: SPED Program – Leased Space Agreement
- 6.8 Donations & Reimbursements to School Division FY25 – 2nd Quarter
- 6.9 Carl D. Perkins – Local Plan for Career & Technical Education in ACPs

AGENDA ITEM NO. 7.0 ITEMS PULLED FROM CONSENT AGENDA – None.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 8.0 – SCHOOL DIVISION BUSINESS

Agenda Item No. 8.1 School Board Approval of the [FY 26 Funding Request](#) - Following the presentation of the Draft Funding Request, two Budget Work Sessions and a Public Hearing, the School Board is asked to approve the Funding Request for FY 26.

Ms. Le offered a motion to **Approve a School Board Funding Request of \$284,699,140 in Operating Funds and \$28,439,082 in Special Revenue Funds in Fiscal Year 26.** Ms. Osborne **seconded the motion.**

Discussions continued, with a specific focus on the addition of School Resource Officers (SROs). Board members raised concerns about the potential harm of SROs, particularly regarding their impact on the school-to-prison pipeline and students of color and disabilities. However, some board members also presented feedback from school principals and a local Parent Teacher Organization president, both of whom supported the presence of SROs, citing positive relationships between students and SROs.

Ms. Spillman offered an amendment to the motion to remove the funding for SROs from the 25-26 budget.

Ms. Le withdrew her previous motion.

Ms. Spillman offered a motion to **Approve a School Board Funding Scenario Removing Funding of the School Resource Officers.** Dr. Berlin **seconded the motion.**

A roll call vote was taken, and the motion failed with the following recorded votes:

AYES: Dr. Berlin, Ms. Spillman, Ms. Le

NAYS: Ms. Pryor, Ms. Osborne, Mr. Paige, Chair Acuff

ABSENT: None.

Motion failed with a 3:4:0 vote.

Ms. Le offered a motion to **Approve a School Board Modified Funding Scenario of \$284,699,140 in Operating Funds and \$28,439,082 in Special Revenue Funds in Fiscal Year 26.** This scenario would include adding Social Emotional Coaches and School Safety Coaches. Mr. Paige **seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion passed with the following recorded votes:**

AYES: Ms. Le, Ms. Osborne, Mr. Paige, Ms. Pryor, Chair Acuff

NAYS: Ms. Spillman, Dr. Berlin

ABSENT: None.

Motion carried by a 5:2:0 vote.

The School Board took a break from 8:01 p.m. – 8:11 p.m.

Agenda Item No. 8.2 [Division Mid-Year Data](#) – Quarterly Assessments

Staff Presentation and Board Discussion on Division-Level Monitoring of Student Learning and Support for Principals: Dr. Dallas Hitt and Mr. Craig Dommer presented a multi-layered approach to monitoring student learning and supporting principals.

The focus was on answering two key questions:

1. How does the division monitor student learning throughout the year across all schools?
2. How does the division support principals in using data to ensure effective teaching and student learning?

The approach includes aligned assessments, division-wide data protocols, and collaborative leadership structures. Data from benchmark assessments, progress monitoring tools, and classroom-based evidence is gathered and analyzed throughout the year to track student growth and identify areas of support. Principals receive regular support through Learning Walks, Principal Learning Teams, and Data Dives to review performance data and identify interventions.

- **Teacher Feedback on Quarterly Reports:**

Teachers' responses to quarterly reports have improved, with more teachers embracing the data's role in improving instruction. Initially, there was resistance due to unfamiliarity with the purpose, but over time, the reports have been seen as an opportunity for instructional adjustment rather than supervision. Feedback mechanisms for teachers include content advisory teams that review assessment instruments.

- **Concerns on Data Timeliness:**

One board member expressed concerns about the timing of the data release, noting that receiving it after the budget request limited the ability to adjust funding priorities. They suggested releasing mid-year data earlier next year to inform budget decisions. Additionally, there was a request to break down demographic charts to provide more insightful data.

- **Intervention Strategies:**

The division has implemented intervention plans for both reading and math, with a focus on students in need of additional support. While the reading intervention plans have been rolled out more widely, math interventions are still in the pilot phase. There was a discussion about whether the intervention programs are sufficient and if more interventionists are needed.

- **Improvement in Tier 1 Instruction:**

The division emphasized the goal of improving Tier 1 instruction to reduce the need for interventions. Teachers are receiving training on instructional strategies aimed at addressing student needs earlier. The focus is on ensuring all students receive high-quality instruction that reduces the need for interventions.

- **Concerns About At-Risk Categories:**

There was concern about the politicization of the “at-risk” categories and the impact it has on parent perceptions. It was noted that the assessments are not meant to predict final outcomes but to guide instructional focus. Some board members acknowledged that the data should be used to support teachers and principals in focusing on areas of need rather than as a definitive measure of success.

- **Support for Instructional Leadership:**

Board members expressed appreciation for the clarity on principals' roles as instructional leaders, emphasizing the importance of keeping them focused on instruction while avoiding micromanagement. There was a recognition that small class sizes have been crucial in supporting teachers and students this year.

The discussion highlighted the importance of using data to support both student learning and teacher development. Board members agreed on the value of improving instructional strategies and supporting principals with the right tools to guide their schools. Further conversations will focus on ensuring timely data delivery and addressing intervention needs.

No. 9.0 OTHER BUSINESS

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

Mr. Paige shared that the **Central Regional VSBA Conference** will be held on **March 18** in **Buckingham County**, where he serves as the Chair of the committee. He expressed disappointment that only **three board members** from Albemarle County will attend, despite the county being the largest in the region.

Agenda Item No. 9.2 Closed Meeting – None.

Agenda Item No. 9.3 Closed Meeting Certification – None.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 10.0 ADJOURNMENT - At 9:14 p.m., hearing no objections, Chair Acuff adjourned the meeting of the Albemarle County School Board.

Clerk

Chair