



# Board-to-Board

November 2008

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*A monthly report from the Albemarle County School Board to the Albemarle County Board of Supervisors*

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**On-Time Graduation Rates:** On October 8<sup>th</sup>, the Virginia Department of Education released the On-Time Graduation Rate for all schools in Virginia. This new metric allows students to be tracked throughout their high school career – even if they transfer to another school – and groups students into “cohorts” to determine how many earn a board-certified diploma within the expected four years of high school.

This year’s On-Time Graduation Rate represents students who entered the ninth grade for the first time in 2004 and reflects the percentage of those students who earned a standard, advanced studies, modified standard, special or general achievement diploma by June 2008. In Albemarle County, 87.2 percent of students who entered one of the four county public high schools in fall 2004 graduated in 2008. This percentage exceeds the state average of 81.3 percent. The On-Time Graduation Rate also reports disaggregated data for No Child Left Behind Subgroups (white, black, Hispanic, students with disabilities, students with Limited English Proficiency, students identified as economically disadvantaged). Albemarle County Schools met or exceeded the state average for on-time graduation in **all** membership groups, and significantly outperformed the state in the graduation rate for African-American students.

**National Merit Semi-Finalists:** Albemarle County Public Schools has an unprecedented number of National Merit Semi-Finalists and commended students, according to the results of the 54<sup>th</sup> annual National Merit Scholarship Program. A total of 21 seniors in Albemarle County schools were named semi-finalists, and 65 students were named commended students as a result of their performance on the Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test (PSAT), taken last October. In addition, Albemarle High School had three African-American students named National Achievement Program Outstanding Participants. There were more than double the number of semi-finalists this year (8 in 2006-07 and 21 in 2007-08). There was a similar increase for commended students (35 in 2006-07 and 65 in 2007-08). Albemarle High School has had the largest increases, with their number of commended students and semi-finalists tripling. Albemarle County Schools pays for all sophomores and juniors to take the PSAT each October. The practice on the PSAT as a sophomore, coupled with the detailed analysis of scores and questions a student receives, helps them to improve their performance for their junior year, when their test results qualify them for the National Merit Program.

Of the 21 semi-finalists, 10 are from Albemarle High School, seven are from Western Albemarle High School, and four are from Monticello High School. These academically talented high school seniors will continue in the competition for National Merit Scholarships that will be awarded in the spring.

**Long-Range Facilities Master Plan:** Albemarle County Public Schools will begin a comprehensive, data-driven, long-range facilities master plan this month. This process will look at school buildings, student enrollment projections, county designated growth areas and student achievement data to determine the best ways to prepare students to compete in a global economy.

The long-range planning process will be done in three phases, corresponding to the three feeder patterns within the division. Phase I will be the Southern Feeder Pattern, concentrating on the three smaller elementary schools in the area, Yancey, Red Hill and Scottsville. This phase is expected to culminate with a recommendation for facilities in the Southern Feeder Pattern being presented to Dr. Moran in May 2009. The first community meeting was held Thursday, October 30 at Monticello High School to solicit input from families in the Southern Feeder Pattern. A web site for the program has also been established.

**Synthetic Turf Fields Update:** At its September 27, 2007 meeting the Board agreed that it would accept a donation of \$975,000 from a private donor toward the purchase of synthetic turf fields for each of the three comprehensive high schools, provided that each school fundraised the remainder of the costs to construct these fields. At that time, the Department of Parks and Recreation planned to designate funds toward the fields in the amount of \$75,000 per field. However, as of September 2008, Parks and Recreation staff has indicated that the Board of Supervisors will not re-appropriate the monies to Parks and Recreation that was planned for turf fields.

Using figures from the vendor selected by the division, staff estimates the cost for purchasing and installing each synthetic turf field to be \$685,000 if all three fields are installed during the same period. Costs would increase if the fields were installed at different times. Using the \$685,000 estimate, each school must fundraise \$360,000. The information that Parks and Recreation funding cannot be counted at this time makes major fundraising more urgent at each school.

After meetings this fall between legal, purchasing, Athletic Directors, Building Services, Parks and Recreation, representatives of General Sports Venue and the Timmons Group, staff determined that a preliminary engineering study is needed to address runoff and water storage issues, as well as a geotechnical study of existing soil conditions, and would determine whether any additional costs must be incurred for runoff or water storage. The approximately \$5,000 to \$5,500 cost of the study would be paid by the three high schools' booster funds. In addition, permits for the work will be needed from Community Development. The Athletic Directors would like the work to be completed prior to the start of the spring 2008 sports season or the start of the 2009 season at the latest. General Sports Venue could meet either timeline, but prefer to work this winter and on one contract for all three high schools.

In addition, two prospective donors recently shared with Albemarle and Monticello staff their desire to make significant donations to the turf field project and receive recognition through facility naming. The School Board asked that the current proposals be provided to the Board for review and for policy language to be developed for the future.

**Compensation work session:** On October 23, the School Board held a work session on compensation. The superintendent brought forward various options for compensation for the 2009-2010 school year, ranging from no employee raises but covering the expected 12 percent increase in health care costs, to funding the recommended raises that would keep the division on track for its adopted compensation strategy of being in the top quartile of our competitive market.

**Updated Adequate Yearly Progress Results for 2007-08:** At the September 11<sup>th</sup> meeting the School Board received a report on Albemarle County Public Schools' Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) status, as released by the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE). According to the VDOE, 19 of 25 Albemarle County Public Schools made AYP for the 2007-08 school year as defined by the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act.

The County appealed the AYP status for two schools and the division overall. On October 1<sup>st</sup> the division was notified that the VDOE reversed its decision regarding the division's AYP status due to data reporting errors. Albemarle County Public Schools met all 29 indicators under the federal No Child Left Behind Act and the division made AYP for 2008.

In addition, the status of Burley Middle School was also reversed by the VDOE. Burley now also makes AYP for 2008, bringing the total number of Albemarle County schools making AYP to 20.

The third appeal was also granted on behalf of Agnor-Hurt Elementary School. Agnor-Hurt now meets 28 out of 29 indicators missing making AYP by one indicator.

**State Superintendent Visit to Woodbrook Elementary:** On October 30, new State Superintendent Patricia I. Wright visited Woodbrook Elementary School, along with other state and national education policymakers. Her visit was to congratulate both Woodbrook Elementary and its principal, Dr. William Sterrett, for its outstanding achievement and phenomenal progress. Woodbrook Elementary was named a Title I Distinguished School, and received the Governor's Award for Educational Excellence. Dr. Sterrett has been recognized as a leader in education; he will present some of his efforts to improve mathematics instruction and problem-solving skills at the Virginia Association of Curriculum and Development conference in December. Local and legislative dignitaries were on hand to congratulate Dr. Sterrett and the school.

**Telephone Town Hall November 12:** On November 12, the Albemarle County School Board will host its second Telephone Town Hall to obtain constituent input on the Superintendent's Funding Request. Between 7:00 and 7:15 p.m., 24,000 households in Albemarle County and all ACPS employees will be called at their home phone and invited to participate in this Telephone Town Hall meeting. Participants will be asked polling questions, have the opportunity to ask questions of panelists and hear from the School Board chair, vice-chair, superintendent, assistant superintendent and the executive director of fiscal services about the budgetary implications for various programs and services. Constituent input gathered from this meeting will help inform the Superintendent's Funding Request, which will be presented to the Board in December.

**Baldrige Employee Survey:** As part of the Division's work to implement the Baldrige Continuous Improvement Model and to make an application for the Division for SPQA status, all employees were polled on October 20 via a data collection tool to determine baseline Baldrige Quality data. The Quality Council continues to meet monthly, and various subcommittees are working to implement both recommendations from the Resource Utilization Study and to complete the work necessary for the division to file its SPQA application in 2009.

**Students Make a Difference Day:** At its October 9<sup>th</sup> meeting, the School Board proclaimed Saturday, October 25<sup>th</sup> Albemarle County Public Schools Students Make a Difference Day. This is the 6<sup>th</sup> year that ACPS has participated in this national community service program. All 27 schools, as well as division offices created service projects that are in place during the month of October, the week of October 25<sup>th</sup>, or on that date. These projects range from collecting stuffed animals for Iraqi orphans, to preparing food for the Salvation Army's soup kitchen, to collecting books and toys for BookLift and ToyLift to collecting items for the SPCA and the Blue Ridge Area Food Bank, to working with local partners such as Barrett Learning Center and the Senior Center to do mulching, painting, or other necessary work.

**Project Management Oversight Committee:** At the August 28<sup>th</sup> work session, the School Board discussed the use of a balanced scorecard and implementation of a formal project management process

to support implementation of the Division's Framework for Quality Learning (FQL), Professional Learning Community (PLC), and Teacher Performance Appraisal (TPA). Six division-level projects were identified in September and October for implementation using this process. A Project Management Oversight Committee was created to monitor the progress of these projects as they are implemented. The group met for the first time in October and received reports on the six projects, which include a conversion to an Electronic Board Packet system for the School Board, the implementation of a new Student Data Management System, and the creation of Professional Development Plans for each of the division's schools, among other projects.

**Teen Driver Safety Week partnership with State Farm:** Albemarle County Public Schools partnered with State Farm Insurance in October to promote Teen Driver Safety. Governor Kaine declared October 19-26 Teen Driver Safety Week and advocated a campaign to reduce distracted driving and increase the use of seatbelts and defensive driving tools. Representatives from State Farm visited all ACPS high schools and delivered presentations about safe driving, and high schools conducted safety belt awareness campaigns and a survey of students, faculty and parents to determine how many were wearing their seatbelts as they left school property. Students, driver's education, and Health/PE teachers at Albemarle high schools worked together to promote the campaign through broadcast announcements, posters, in-class lessons, and guest speakers, as well as local media appearances. Articles for parents will be included in high school quarterly newsletters to offer tips for reducing automobile accidents involving teens. Resources were also added to a Driver Safety web page on the Division's home page.

**November Meetings:** The School Board will hold its regular meeting on November 6 and a work session on November 13, 2008. In addition, there is a joint meeting with the Board of Supervisors scheduled for November 7<sup>th</sup> and a tentative student conduct meeting scheduled for November 24<sup>th</sup>.