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

Electronic School Board: In an effort to improve efficiencies in the School Board office and to make the work of the School Board more transparent to the public, the Albemarle County School Board began using a paperless product known as ElectronicSchoolBoard, beginning February 6th. All board agendas, documents, minutes, and policies are housed at the ElectronicSchoolBoard site, <http://esb.k12albemarle.org>.

Board members – and the general public – may view items related to a specific board meeting from any computer with an Internet connection. Paper copies will no longer be produced. The system also adds the increased functionality of searchable minutes, agendas, supporting documents and policies.

National Merit Finalists: Twenty Albemarle County high school students have been selected as finalists in the 2009 National Merit® Scholarship program. Nine Albemarle High school students received the distinction: John F. Elder, Roger Fan, Cameron K. Hill, Valentina S. Moshnikova, Amy L. Pugh, Ariel L. Schwartz, Caitlyn M. Suhler, Duncan C. Townsend, and Matthew E. Truwit. Western Albemarle High School produced seven finalists: Caroline Barnes, Joshua Dugan, Elizabeth Hexter, Joanna Moody, Samantha Rivkin, Wesley Swank, and Whitney Wenger. Katherine Downs, Patricia Fernandez, Stephen Lander, and Timothy Pianta were the four students from Monticello High school to each win a *Certificate of Merit* for the competition and progress to the finals for college scholarship opportunities.

The students were selected for this prestigious honor out of nearly 1.5 million high school students in the United States who take the PSAT (Preliminary Scholastic Assessment Test) and NMSQT® (National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test) examinations each fall.

This is the largest number of National Merit® finalists in Albemarle County Public Schools' history.

Virginia Index of Performance Awards: Governor Kaine announced in January the schools that received his Virginia Index of Performance Award for Educational Excellence. Three of the 162 schools announced were Albemarle County Schools. In addition, 14 Albemarle County Schools were commended by the Board of Education, receiving either the VIP Excellence Award or VIP Competence to Excellence Award.

The following schools earned the Governor's Award for Educational Excellence:

- Hollymead Elementary
- Meriwether Lewis Elementary
- Murray Elementary

The following schools earned the Board of Education's Excellence Award:

- Albemarle High
- Baker-Butler Elementary
- Broadus Wood Elementary
- Brownsville Elementary
- Cale Elementary
- Crozet Elementary
- Monticello High
- Scottsville Elementary
- Stone-Robinson Elementary
- Stony Point Elementary
- Western Albemarle High
- Woodbrook Elementary

The following schools earned the Board of Education's Competence to Excellence Award:

- Red Hill Elementary
- Murray High

Representatives from Hollymead, Murray and Meriwether Lewis Elementary Schools attended the awards ceremony with Governor Kaine on February 16th.

Virginia Students' AP Scores Rank 3rd in Nation; ACPS Students Top State Averages: The College Board announced in its fifth annual Advanced Placement Report to the Nation that Virginia students ranked third nationally in AP achievement for the second straight year. The report uses the percentage of students who score a 3 or higher on their AP test – considered a passing score – as the criteria. Of Virginia's 2008 public school graduates, 21.3 percent received a grade of three or better on at least one AP examination. Only two states, Maryland and New York, had higher percentages of seniors receiving grades of three or better. The national average for the class of 2008 was 15.2 percent.

In Albemarle County Public Schools, 64 percent of students taking at least one AP exam earned a score of 3 or higher, far exceeding the state and national averages. In 2008, 28 percent of high school students were enrolled in at least one AP course, and of those 87.5 percent took the AP exam. Data for the percentage of students receiving a passing score at the individual high schools is as follows: Albemarle High: 62.4 percent with 370 test-takers, Monticello High: 45.3 percent with 267 test-takers, and Western Albemarle High: 82.3 percent with 305 test-takers.

MESA: The Math, Engineering and Science Academy (MESA), which will open August 2009 at Albemarle High School, is now accepting applications for 9th and 11th graders. MESA offers a four-year college preparatory program designed to lead to a career pathway in engineering. Students will work in a laboratory environment designed to provide authentic experiences in mathematics, engineering and science.

Students who apply for the academy will be notified in April of their admissions status. Students at MESA must attend Albemarle High School; the School Division has established a process for accepted students who reside in other high school districts to obtain a waiver to attend MESA. The academy will accept 25-30 9th graders and 25-30 11th graders for fall admission. Information about MESA can be found by visiting the division website at <http://www.k12albemarle.org/MESA>.

School Division Calendar for 2009-2010: The School Board approved the School Division Calendar for 2009-2010 on February 26th. The 2009-10 calendar includes 180 student days and 13 non-student professional learning days for teachers, with school for students scheduled to begin on August 25, 2009. It also includes 4 professional responsibility days and 3 staff development days for teachers (outside of regularly scheduled time), bringing the total number of teacher days to 200.

The calendar includes a 10-day winter break and a 5-day spring break. In addition, there are 7 inclement weather make-up days included, 5 of which occur immediately following the last proposed day of school. The calendar was created by a joint committee consisting of representatives from Albemarle County and Charlottesville City Schools. The two divisions have agreed to adopt the same calendar in order to assist the community with scheduling and to ensure parity. The committee developed three drafts and received public comment beginning in November 2008.

Instructional Coaching Update: The School Board gave direction to the School Division on February 3 (check this date – the date the budget was approved) to continue with the implementation of the Instructional Coaching Model reorganization. Under this model, division- and schools-based instructional support positions will be reorganized into five centrally managed coaching teams that will serve several elementary, middle or high schools. Each team will be managed by a Lead Instructional Coach, who will have supervisory and compliance duties, and who will report to either the Director of Elementary or Director of Secondary Education. Instructional Coaches will be standard teaching contract positions and will work to help classroom teachers implement effective instructional strategies and the Division's Framework for Quality Learning across all schools.

The centrally managed, schools based model for the Instructional Coaching teams is similar to the Division's existing Novice Teacher Network and Math Specialist models, both of which have proven successful over the past three years at raising levels of achievement in students by working with teachers to improve daily learning experiences. The reorganization also accomplishes just over \$1 million in savings through the reduction of 10 full-time equivalent positions, 5 at the central level, and 5 allocated among the Division's 26 schools. At this time, the Division is confident that employees who are affected by the reductions will be placed in alternate positions for which they are certified that will become available through attrition. Hiring decisions for the Lead Coaches were announced in late February and are expected in early March for Instructional Coaches. Selected candidates will begin training and team building immediately in order to be prepared for full implementation for the 09-10 school year.

Swimming Discussion Update: The School Board on February 12th reviewed the information regarding use of capital funds to enclose a swimming pool in the County. After reviewing the materials that were provided to the Board of Supervisors and discussing the issue among the Board, the Board approved a recommendation to the Board of Supervisors that consideration of capital requests for swimming facilities occur through the appropriate CIP processes, ensuring greatest need projects receive highest funding priority.

Golden Apple Awards: Nominations are being sought through March 4th for the 2009 Golden Apple Awards, which honor outstanding educators from each Albemarle County and Charlottesville City school, including CATEC, as well as area private schools. These awards are sponsored by Better Living Building Supply & Better Living Furniture.

Milken Educator Award: Virginia Superintendent of Public Instruction, Dr. Patricia Wright, and Dr. Jane Foley of the Milken Foundation surprised Dr. William Sterrett, principal of Woodbrook Elementary School, with the news that he was one of 80 elementary educators nationwide to receive a Milken Educator Award for 2008.

The Milken Educator Awards were conceived by Lowell Milken, chairman and co-founder of the Milken Foundation, to recognize the importance of outstanding educators and encourage talented young people to enter teaching. Unlike most teaching awards, the Milken Educator Awards have no formal nomination or application process. Each year exceptional teachers, principals, and specialists – recommended without their knowledge by a blue-ribbon panel appointed by each state’s department of education – are stunned with the news of their awards.

The recipients are honored in early to mid-career for what they have achieved and for the promise of what they will accomplish. Established in 1985, the Award alternates yearly between elementary and secondary educators. The 2008 recipients will receive their \$25,000 checks during the Milken National Education Conference in April 2009.

Dr. Sterrett was recognized on February 19, 2009 in Richmond by the Virginia Board of Education and the General Assembly.

March Meetings: The School Board will hold its regular meeting on March 12th and its regular work session on March 26th.