



MINUTES
CHARLOTTESVILLE CITY SCHOOL BOARD MEETING
Booker T. Reaves Media Center, Charlottesville High School
Thursday, January 9, 2025 (5:00 PM)

Closed Meeting of the Charlottesville City School Board was held on January 9, 2025, at 3:30 p.m., in the Division Annex/SPED Conference Room.

PRESENT: Ms. Burns, Ms. Cooper, Ms. Dooley, Mr. Meyer, Mr. Morse, and Ms. Torres

ABSENT: Ms. Richardson

STAFF PRESENT: Dr. Royal A. Gurley, Jr., Superintendent, Dr. Katina Otey, CAO and Hearing Officer, Rodney Jordan, Buford Principal, and Maria Lewis, Director of Human Resources

OTHERS PRESENT: Student EXP01092025-01 and Parent/Guardians

1.1 Call to Order: Dr. Gurley, Superintendent, called the closed session meeting to order at 3:31 p.m.

1.2 Closed Meeting: At 3:31 p.m. Mr. Morse offered a motion to go into a Closed Session as authorized by the Virginia Freedom of Information Act, Sections 2.2-3711 (A) (1) (2) for the purpose of discussing personnel matters and student disciplinary matters. Ms. Dooley seconded the motion, the motion passed with Ms. Burns, Ms. Cooper, Ms. Dooley, Mr. Meyer, Mr. Morse, and Ms. Torres voting aye. 6 ayes, 0 nays.

1.3 Closed Meeting Certification: At 4:46 p.m. Mr. Morse 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. Ms. Burns seconded the motion, the motion passed with Ms. Burns, Ms. Cooper, Ms. Dooley, Mr. Meyer, Mr. Morse, and Ms. Torres voting aye. 6 ayes, 0 nays.

Action: Ms. Torres offered a motion to uphold the Superintendent's recommendation for Expulsion for Student EXP01092025-01. Mr. Morse seconded the motion, the motion passed with Ms. Burns, Ms. Cooper, Ms. Dooley, Mr. Morse, and Ms. Torres voting aye. 5 ayes, 1 nay. Mr. Meyer voted nay.

The board recessed from 4:47 p.m. until 5:00 p.m.

2.1 Moment of Silence: Dr. Royal A. Gurley, Jr., Superintendent, asked all present to observe a moment of silence.

3.1 Pledge of Allegiance: The board began the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America.

4.1 Roll Call of Board Members:

The following Board Members were present:

Ms. Amanda Burns
Ms. Emily Dooley

Ms. Shymora Cooper
Mr. Dom Morse

Mr. Chris Meyer
Ms. Lisa Torres

Ms. Nicole Richardson
Anya Hudock,
Student Representative

The following Board Members were absent: None

The following Staff Members were present:

Dr. Royal A. Gurley, Jr.	Dr. Katina Otey
Mr. Pat Cuomo	Ms. Kim Powell
Ms. T. Denise Johnson	Ms. Maria Lewis
Ms. Rachel Rasnake	Ms. Renee Hoover
Ms. Beth Cheuk	Ms. Leslie Thacker
Ms. Julia Green	

The following Staff Members were absent: Ms. Carolyn Swift

5.1 [Elect a Chairperson](#): In accordance with School Board Policy, BCA, School Board Organizational Meeting, the School Board will elect a Chair of the Board. Ms. Torres made a motion, seconded by Mr. Meyer, to approve Emily Dooley as Chair of the Board. Upon a roll-call vote, the motion carried with Ms. Burns, Ms. Cooper, Ms. Dooley, Mr. Morse, Mr. Meyer, Ms. Richardson, and Ms. Torres, voting aye. 7 ayes, 0 nays.

Mr. Meyer expressed gratitude to Ms. Torres for her exceptional leadership as the previous Chair. He commended her on effectively facilitating meetings and ensuring that the interests of all board members were considered and incorporated into the agenda. Mr. Meyer conveyed his high expectations for Ms. Dooley as the new Chair and expressed his anticipation for her leadership in the coming year.

5.2 [Elect a Vice Chair](#): In accordance with School Board Policy, BCA, School Board Organizational Meeting, the School Board will elect a Vice-Chair of the Board. Ms. Torres made a motion, seconded by Ms. Cooper, to approve Amanda Burns as Vice-Chair of the Board. Upon a roll-call vote, the motion carried with Ms. Burns, Ms. Cooper, Ms. Dooley, Mr. Morse, Mr. Meyer, Ms. Richardson, and Ms. Torres, voting aye. 7 ayes, 0 nays.

5.3 [Appoint Clerk and Deputy Clerk of the Board](#): In accordance with School Board Policy, BCA, School Board Organizational Meeting, the School Board will, upon recommendation of the Superintendent, appoint a Clerk and Deputy Clerk of the Board. Ms. Torres made a motion, seconded by Mr. Meyer, to approve Leslie Thacker as Clerk and Julia Green as Deputy Clerk of the Board. Upon a roll-call vote, the motion carried with Ms. Burns, Ms. Cooper, Ms. Dooley, Mr. Morse, Mr. Meyer, Ms. Richardson, and Ms. Torres, voting aye. 7 ayes, 0 nays.

6.1 [Approval of Proposed Agenda](#): Mr. Morse made a motion, seconded by Ms. Torres, to approve the proposed agenda. Upon a roll-call vote, the motion carried with Ms. Burns, Ms. Cooper, Ms. Dooley, Mr. Morse, Mr. Meyer, Ms. Richardson, and Ms. Torres, voting aye. 7 ayes, 0 nays.

7.1 [Comments from Students](#): There were none.

7.2 [Comments from Members of the Community](#):

- Derek Hartline, Jackson-Via Teacher, and City Resident, expressed his continued concern about the accumulation of leaves in the Jackson-Via staff parking lot, exacerbated by overgrowth along the fence line. Despite the lot being cleared of leaves before the New Year, the overgrowth remains, raising safety concerns. Mr. Hartline voiced his disappointment with the lack of action to address this issue, recalling the November 25th fire incident. He emphasized the need for a safe parking environment for staff and announced his intention to personally clear the fence line once the snow melts, mirroring his successful past efforts in maintaining the school's interior courtyards.

8.1 Student Representative Report: Anya Hudock, Student Representative, reported positive feedback from the CHS student body regarding the no-phone policy, particularly the involvement of student council advisors in phone collection, which has led to increased focus and reduced conflicts. She also noted positive feedback on the phone system at Buford Middle School. Students expressed curiosity about the recent removal of personal devices from the Wifi and inquired about its continuation next year. Concerns were raised about the AP Biology class, specifically regarding the availability of an in-person teacher next year. Students also expressed dissatisfaction with the current lunch options, requesting more filling and nutritious meals. The senior class appreciated the off-campus lunch privilege and hoped it would be extended to future classes. Regarding the arts, students requested increased funding, access to cameras for portfolio building, and an adequate supply of high-quality art materials. Overall, students expressed satisfaction with the school year and appreciated being heard and involved in school decisions.

9.1 Johnson Elementary ENERGY STAR Recognition: Kirk Vizzier, Energy Management Coordinator for the City of Charlottesville, and Jill Greiner, Water Efficiency Program Coordinator for the City of Charlottesville, recognized Johnson Elementary School for receiving an Energy Star Certified Building recognition. Energy Star Certified Buildings outperform 75% of similar buildings nationwide, uses 25.1% less energy per square foot than the national median, and compared to the national media, prevents 88.2 metric tons of greenhouse gas emissions each year.

10.1-4 Adoption of Consent Agenda: The following items were included in the consent agenda; [Personnel Recommendations](#), [Minutes - December 5, 2024 School Board Meeting](#), and [Business, Financial, Routine Reports](#). Ms. Cooper made a motion, seconded by Ms. Burns, to approve the adoption of the proposed consent agenda. Upon a roll-call vote, the motion carried with Ms. Burns, Ms. Cooper, Ms. Dooley, Mr. Morse, Mr. Meyer, Ms. Richardson, and Ms. Torres, voting aye. 7 ayes, 0 nays.

Action Items

11.1 Approval - School Name Review Update: On December 5, 2024, Dr. T. Denise Johnson, Supervisor of Equity and Inclusion, presented the Board with an update on the elementary school name review process, including recommendations from the review committees. Based on the committees' work and community input, the Superintendent recommended the following actions:

- Approve the name change for Burnley-Moran Elementary School to Sunrise Elementary School.
- Approve the name change for Johnson Elementary School to Tall Oaks Elementary School.
- Approve retaining the current names for Greenbrier Elementary School and Jackson-Via Elementary School.

Ms. Torres expressed appreciation for the work of the committees involved in the school name review process. She commended the thoroughness of the process, the dedication of the committee members, and the heart and soul invested by the individuals who participated, including school representatives and community members.

Ms. Torres made a motion, seconded by Mr. Morse, to approve the school name change for Burnley-Moran Elementary to Sunrise Elementary. Upon a roll-call vote, the motion carried with Ms. Burns, Ms. Cooper, Ms. Dooley, Mr. Morse, Mr. Meyer, Ms. Richardson, and Ms. Torres, voting aye. 7 ayes, 0 nays.

Mr. Myer made a motion, seconded by Mr. Morse, to approve the school name change for Johnson Elementary to Tall Oaks Elementary. Upon a roll-call vote, the motion carried with Ms. Burns, Ms. Cooper, Ms. Dooley, Mr. Morse, Mr. Meyer, Ms. Richardson, and Ms. Torres, voting aye. 7 ayes, 0 nays.

Ms. Burns made a motion, seconded by Mr. Morse, to retain the current name for Greenbrier Elementary. Upon a roll-call vote, the motion carried with Ms. Burns, Ms. Cooper, Ms. Dooley, Mr. Morse, Mr. Meyer, Ms. Richardson, and Ms. Torres, voting aye. 7 ayes, 0 nays.

Ms. Burns made a motion, seconded by Ms. Cooper, to retain the current name for Jackson-Via Elementary. Upon a roll-call vote, the motion carried with Ms. Burns, Ms. Cooper, Ms. Dooley, Mr. Morse, Mr. Meyer, Ms. Richardson, and Ms. Torres, voting aye. 7 ayes, 0 nays.

11.2 Approval - 2025-2026 Program of Studies: Dr. Katina Otey, Chief Academic Officer, introduced Dr. Justin Malone, CHS Principal; Rodney Jordan, Buford Principal; Summerlyn Thompson, Walker Principal; Lamont Trotter, Program Administrator for Lugo-McGinness Academy; and Dr. Stacey Heltz, Principal of CATEC and CTE Coordinator, presented the 2025-2026 Program of Studies for Board information on December 5, 2024. The 2025-2026 Program of Studies was presented for approval.

Questions/Discussion:

- Mr. Meyer inquired about the modifications made to the engineering program, specifically regarding the requirement for a master's degree in engineering for instructors. Dr. Otey confirmed that this requirement had been removed, allowing instructors with a technology foundation endorsement to teach certain courses.
- Ms. Torres raised concerns about potential differences in the student experience between online dual enrollment courses and in-person instruction. Dr. Coffey acknowledged that the online format might offer a different learning experience but emphasized that the program aims to provide students with access to engineering pathways while ensuring the availability of entry-level courses for all students. Dr. Gurley further explained that the requirement for a master's degree in engineering for dual enrollment instructors presents a significant staffing challenge.
- Ms. Torres inquired about the School Division's efforts to increase student exposure to engineering, particularly among younger students. Dr. Coffey highlighted the ISTEM program at Walker Elementary, emphasizing its focus on science and engineering. She also mentioned the planned engineering pathway at the new middle school, including potential offerings like a "wheel" in sixth grade for students to explore various fields. Dr. Coffey emphasized the importance of collaboration between science and engineering departments to provide students with a strong foundation in these areas.

Mr. Morse made a motion, seconded by Mr. Meyer, to approve the adoption of the program of studies. Upon a roll-call vote, the motion carried with Ms. Burns, Ms. Cooper, Ms. Dooley, Mr. Morse, Mr. Meyer, Ms. Richardson, and Ms. Torres, voting aye. 7 ayes, 0 nays.

Items for Discussion

12.1 Family Engagement and Restorative Justice in Education Update: Bianca Johnson, Coordinator of Family Engagement and Restorative Justice in Education, Bianca Johnson presented an update on family engagement and restorative justice initiatives within Charlottesville City Schools. Key highlights included the continued focus on meeting basic needs through partnerships with organizations like the Emergency Food Network and the Chris Long Foundation. Data was presented on the impact of these initiatives, including the distribution of food, hygiene supplies, and school supplies. Regarding restorative justice, Ms. Johnson emphasized the importance of building relationships and repairing harm through a tiered approach. Data on restorative justice interventions, including the number of conferences and student participation, was shared. A successful pilot program with Central Virginia Community Justice demonstrated the positive impact of restorative practices. Ms. Johnson concluded by acknowledging the increasing need for support and emphasizing the importance of ongoing dialogue and collaboration to ensure the effectiveness of these initiatives.

Information presented included:

- Family Engagement:
 - Meeting Basic Needs:

- Emergency Food Network: Provided 450 bags of food and \$3500 worth of hygiene products to secondary schools
 - Buford Eats: Monthly food distribution at Buford Middle School, serving families and the community.
 - 2023-2024: 33 families, 11,800 lbs of food distributed (7,151 lbs fresh produce)
 - 2024-2025 (so far): 22 families, 4,988 lbs of food distributed (3,231 lbs fresh produce)
 - Edzone Partnership: Essential needs closets in elementary schools
 - 2023-2024: 547 closet visits
 - 2024-2025: 493 closet visits
 - Support Drives:
 - 2023-2024: 524 backpacks/supplies, 242 coats
 - 2024-2025: 790 backpacks/supplies, 351 coats
- School Support/Community Outreach:
 - Visiting family engagement teams at schools
 - Providing resources and support through MTSS handbook
 - Coordinating community outreach events
- Restorative Justice in Education:
 - Overview: Aims to develop community and manage conflicts by repairing harm and restoring relationships
 - Data Review:
 - 2023-2024: 118 groundwork meetings, 12 full conferences, 5 Community Building Circles, 15 Community Concern Circles
 - 2024-2025: 31 groundwork meetings, 3 full conferences, 3 Community Building Circles, 4 Community Concern Check-ins
 - Partnership with Central Virginia Community Justice:
 - CHS Pilot (April-June 2024): Supported approximately 50 students and 15 staff
 - Continued support planned for early 2025
- Future Plans:
 - Re-imagining Engagement
 - Capacity Building/Implementation
 - Sustainability

Questions/Discussion:

- Ms. Dooley expressed her gratitude to Ms. Johnson and her team for their outstanding work in family engagement and restorative justice. She acknowledged the significant impact of their efforts, particularly in the community's successful "reset" following the pandemic. Ms. Dooley emphasized the importance of continued support and expansion of these critical programs, particularly as the budget season approaches. She expressed interest in exploring ways to further enhance these initiatives to better serve the needs of the school community.
- Mr. Meyer questioned the School Division's role in providing food assistance to students, acknowledging the importance of meeting basic needs but also emphasizing the Division's primary focus on education. Ms. Johnson explained that addressing food insecurity is crucial for student success, citing Maslow's hierarchy of needs. She highlighted the impact of programs like Buford Eats and the Emergency Food Network in ensuring that students can focus on learning without the distraction of hunger.
- Ms. Burns emphasized the importance of building strong community relationships and increasing staff involvement in family engagement efforts. She highlighted the need to leverage existing relationships between students, teachers, and school staff to enhance community outreach and provide more consistent support to families.

- Mr. Morse inquired about the specific steps involved in a "full conference" within the restorative justice framework. Ms. Johnson provided a detailed explanation of the process, including individual meetings with participants, group conferences, and the development of agreements for moving forward. She emphasized the voluntary nature of the process and the importance of creating a safe and supportive environment for all participants.
- Ms. Cooper and Ms. Richardson expressed their appreciation for the restorative justice initiatives and acknowledged the positive impact they have on students. Ms. Cooper highlighted the importance of addressing basic needs and creating a supportive environment for all students to thrive. Ms. Richardson expressed her gratitude for the dedication and hard work of Ms. Johnson and her team.
- Ms. Torres inquired about the potential for expanding restorative justice practices into the broader community and exploring partnerships with other organizations. Ms. Johnson discussed the existing partnership with Central Virginia Community Justice and the potential for future collaborations, emphasizing the need for careful planning and sustainable implementation. Ms. Torres also inquired about the specific processes for accessing support services at the elementary school level, and Ms. Johnson provided a detailed explanation of the Ed Zone program and the role of school champions in connecting families with necessary resources.

12.2 [Buford/Charlottesville Middle School Project Update](#): Kim Powell, Chief Operations Officer, provided an update on the construction progress at Buford Middle School (which will open as Charlottesville Middle School), emphasizing the project's vision for a modern and innovative learning environment. She highlighted the ongoing construction of the new gym, seventh, and sixth-grade wings, showcasing images of the construction site and interior spaces. Ms. Powell outlined the phasing plan for the project, detailing how the campus will function during the 2025-2026 school year, including temporary accommodations for students and staff. She described the logistics of student and staff drop-off and pick-up, parking arrangements, and temporary dining arrangements. Ms. Powell also shared renderings of the interior spaces, showcasing modern classrooms, collaborative learning areas, and innovative features like breakout spaces, story stairs, and a sensory room. She concluded by emphasizing the project's commitment to sustainability and highlighted the incorporation of recycled materials, such as the use of wood from the old Buford building in the design of the front desk.

Questions/Discussion:

- Ms. Richardson inquired about the location of mirrors in the new bathrooms. Ms. Powell responded that mirrors would be placed near the sinks in the general area, likely on the walls near the end spots where the sinks are located, though the specific placement had not yet been finalized.
- Ms. Cooper shared excitement about the progress of the construction project at Buford Middle School, having recently taken a tour of the site. She expressed enthusiasm for the open spaces, classrooms, and the abundant natural light that will characterize the new building, anticipating that students will be equally excited about their new learning environment.
- Ms. Dooley expressed her enthusiasm for the project, noting that even on an overcast day, the natural light in the building was impressive. She emphasized the importance of continued advocacy for investing in quality school facilities, stating that all schools should strive for learning environments as inspiring as the one being built at Buford Middle School. Ms. Dooley also highlighted the significance of dedicated spaces for meeting basic needs, such as the improved facilities for providing services and support to families at Buford, acknowledging the challenges of utilizing makeshift spaces in other schools. Finally, she expressed her gratitude to Mr. Jordan for his leadership in managing the complex transition process.
- Ms. Burns expressed her gratitude to Mr. Jordan for his leadership in the construction project and to Ms. Powell and her team for their hard work. She emphasized the significance of the project, highlighting that every student and staff member in Charlottesville deserves to learn in a safe, comfortable, and clean environment like the one being created at Buford Middle School.
- Mr. Meyer lightheartedly suggested that a reward for Ms. Powell and Mr. Jordan's hard work would be the enjoyment of the newly constructed school building. He then inquired about the live building camera that Ms. Powell used to capture images for her presentation. Ms. Powell explained that she has access to

the Nielsen system, which provides live updates from the construction site. She uses this system to obtain images for her presentations, but clarified that she doesn't monitor the camera constantly. Mr. Meyer playfully suggested that she could claim to be constantly monitoring the camera to ensure the project stays on track. Ms. Powell acknowledged that while she doesn't monitor the camera daily, she does enjoy checking in on the progress and that viewing the construction updates often brightens her day.

- Mr. Meyer confirmed that Ms. Powell had previously mentioned June 15th as the anticipated completion date for the new wings. Ms. Powell clarified that this date refers to "substantial completion," meaning the contractor must be prepared to surrender the completed portion of the project to the school division, marking the beginning of phase two of construction. She emphasized the importance of this milestone, as it will trigger the start of construction on the remaining phases. Ms. Powell highlighted the upcoming meetings with staff to prepare for the transition, including the relocation of furniture. She also noted that the project includes provisions for donating surplus furniture to schools in need in other countries, aligning with the furniture replacement timeline for Trailblazer Elementary School to maximize efficiency. Mr. Meyer inquired about the project's budget, and Ms. Powell acknowledged that while she can speak to the project's timeline, budget matters fall under the purview of the City. She acknowledged that the project has encountered challenges, such as the early rock excavation, but stated that the project is currently proceeding within the allocated budget.
- Mr. Meyer inquired about the possibility of a community event to showcase the new facilities in June or July. Ms. Powell explained that while the building may not be fully complete by June due to ongoing punch list items, there will likely be opportunities for the community to view the new spaces closer to the start of the school year, possibly in July. She indicated that plans would be made to accommodate various audiences, including parents, students, and other members of the community, who will have the opportunity to see this significant investment firsthand.
- Ms. Hudock expressed her enthusiasm for the new facilities at Buford Middle School, acknowledging that the modern design and amenities would create an exciting learning environment for students. She playfully remarked that she was slightly jealous of the current middle school students who would have the opportunity to experience the new building firsthand.

12.3 2024-2025 Recruitment Plan: Dr. Adam Hastings, Administrator of Human Resources and Student Data, presented an update on recruitment and retention strategies for the 2024-2025 school year. He highlighted the current hiring challenges, including a significant number of open positions within the division and across the region. He emphasized the importance of retaining existing staff, citing factors such as lack of support, high workload, and ineffective leadership as key reasons for teacher turnover.

Dr. Hastings discussed the division's strategies for retaining staff, including initiatives such as employee wellness programs, mentorship programs, and increased tuition reimbursement. He also emphasized the importance of professional development opportunities for staff at all levels, including teachers, administrators, and instructional assistants.

Information presented included:

- Hiring Data for New Staff (as of 12/15/2024):
 - 132 total new staff hired
 - 4 Administrators
 - 74 Teachers
 - 56 Staff
- Openings by Location and Role (as of 12/15/2024):
 - 8.5 total positions division-wide
 - 1 Administrator
 - 7.5 Teachers (+2 PT Teachers)
 - 4 Instructional Assistants

- 5 Substitute Roles
 - (Custodian, Instructional Assistant, Nurse, Nutrition, Teacher)
- Openings by Location and Role (as of 12/16/2025):
 - Burnley-Moran Elementary School - 3 Openings
 - 1 Assistant Principal
 - 1 Teacher
 - 1 Instructional Assistant
 - Greenbrier Elementary School - Fully Staffed
 - Jackson-Via Elementary School - 1.5 Openings
 - .5 Reading Specialist
 - 2 Instructional Assistants (newly added)
 - Johnson Elementary School - 1 Opening
 - 1 Teacher (Part-Time) ESL (newly added)
 - Summit Elementary School - 1 Openings
 - 1 Teacher
 - Trailblazer Elementary School - 1 Opening
 - 1 Teacher (Part-Time)
 - Walker Upper Elementary School - Fully Staffed
 - Buford Middle School - 3 Openings
 - 2 Teachers (+1 Anticipated)
 - 1 Instructional Assistants
 - Charlottesville High School - 3 Openings
 - 3 Teachers
 - Lugo-McGinness Academy - Fully Staffed
 - CATEC - Fully Staffed
- Teacher Departures:
 - 2023-24: 85 total departures
 - Current year to date: 7 departures
- Retention Rates:
 - Showing moderate increases over two years
 - 2024-2025 rates: Division (82.11%), Teachers (82.81%), Administrators (86.21%)
- Retention Strategies for 2024-25:
 - HR Efforts: Staff wellness programs, meetings, tuition reimbursement, mentoring, licensure support
 - Professional Learning Efforts: Choice in PL, coaching, mentoring, leadership opportunities
- Recruitment Efforts for 2024-25:
 - In-person recruiting at various universities and institutions
 - Student Teachers: 88 CCS teachers volunteered, 40 placements arranged
 - "Growing Our Own" program for Associate Teachers
 - New Applicant Tracking System: PowerSchool SchoolSpring
- Upcoming Event:
 - CCS Spring Job Fair on March 1, 2025, at Charlottesville High School

Questions/Discussion:

- Mr. Meyer acknowledged Dr. Hastings' point, stating that while the Human Resources department plays a crucial role in recruitment and retention, other factors, such as the creation of new school buildings (like the one at Buford Middle School) and overall school improvements, also significantly impact staff morale and retention. Dr. Hastings agreed, emphasizing that all aspects of the school environment, including facilities, leadership, and support systems, contribute to a positive and supportive atmosphere that

fosters staff retention. He highlighted that every member of the school division, from administrators to teachers, has a responsibility to consider how their actions and decisions impact staff retention.

- Mr. Meyer expressed several observations and questions regarding the recruitment and retention strategies presented by Dr. Hastings. He acknowledged the importance of staff turnover, stating that while some turnover is inevitable, it can also present opportunities to attract highly qualified candidates. He emphasized the importance of creating a culture where former CCS employees who have gained experience elsewhere are encouraged to return to the division for leadership positions.
- Mr. Meyer also stressed the importance of competitive compensation and strong leadership within the schools. While acknowledging the division's efforts in providing competitive salaries, he emphasized the need to ensure that all administrators effectively implement strong leadership styles that foster a supportive and positive environment for staff. He questioned whether sufficient training is provided to equip administrators with the necessary leadership skills and emphasized the importance of creating a culture where staff feel valued and supported.
- Finally, Mr. Meyer expressed his ultimate goal for recruitment and retention: to reach a point where the division has zero staff vacancies and receives a high volume of qualified applicants for every open position. He believes that achieving this goal would demonstrate the division's attractiveness as an employer and its ability to attract and retain top talent.
- Ms. Dooley suggested that it would be beneficial for the Board to receive a copy of the evaluation document used for administrators. She believes that reviewing the evaluation categories would provide valuable insights into the criteria used to assess administrative performance and support a deeper understanding of the leadership development initiatives mentioned by Dr. Hastings.
- Ms. Burns expressed concerns about the impact of increasing state-level mandates and regulations on teacher retention. She highlighted the Virginia Literacy Act and changing accreditation benchmarks as examples of policies that are placing significant burdens on teachers, contributing to increased stress and potentially driving educators out of the profession. She emphasized that these concerns are being addressed by the Virginia School Boards Association (VSBA) in their legislative advocacy efforts.
- Ms. Burns also raised concerns about the recruitment and retention of diverse teaching staff. She noted that the list of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) visited by the division for recruitment purposes appeared limited and questioned whether the perception of Charlottesville as a welcoming and inclusive community for people of color might be deterring potential candidates. She emphasized the importance of addressing systemic issues within the city, such as housing, transportation, and cultural opportunities, to create a more welcoming and inclusive environment for diverse populations, including prospective teachers. Ms. Burns acknowledged the division's efforts to recruit diverse staff but emphasized that the success of these efforts is dependent on the broader social and cultural climate of the city.
- Dr. Gurley acknowledged Ms. Burns' concerns regarding the recruitment of diverse teaching staff, particularly the limited success in attracting African-American teachers from Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). He confirmed that despite efforts to recruit at institutions like Norfolk State and Virginia State University, the division has not successfully hired any African-American teachers from these institutions in recent years.
- Dr. Gurley attributed this challenge to several factors, including the perception of Charlottesville as a less welcoming and inclusive community for Black professionals. He emphasized the importance of addressing systemic issues within the city, such as housing, transportation, and cultural opportunities, to create a more attractive environment for diverse populations, including prospective teachers.
- He also acknowledged the role of social networks and word-of-mouth referrals in recruitment efforts, noting that individuals are more likely to be drawn to workplaces where they feel a sense of belonging and connection to their community. Dr. Gurley observed that many young professionals, regardless of race, seek out communities with vibrant social and cultural scenes, and that Charlottesville may not currently offer the same level of attraction as larger metropolitan areas like Richmond and Washington D.C. for many young professionals.
- Ms. Richardson inquired about the increase in the tuition reimbursement program, noting that the previous reimbursement amount was \$500.

- She then expressed her enthusiasm for the new initiative that pairs novice teachers with experienced educators through a mentorship program. Ms. Richardson emphasized the importance of this "buddy system" in supporting new teachers and providing them with valuable guidance and support as they begin their careers.
- Ms. Torres inquired about the application process for the Virginia Department of Education's Alternative Route to Licensure program. Dr. Hastings explained that the division has submitted its application and is awaiting approval from the state. He noted that the application process requires each school division to submit a detailed plan outlining how they will support and mentor associate teachers, including specific timelines for classroom instruction, observation, and professional development.
- Ms. Torres expressed her appreciation for the opportunity to participate in this program while also acknowledging the challenges of developing and implementing such a plan independently. She questioned whether the state provided a template or specific guidelines for the application process. Ms. Lewis clarified that they received a template and guidance from Dr. Mo Gaffney at iTeach, who has been instrumental in supporting the division's application.
- Ms. Torres concluded by expressing her appreciation for the opportunity to participate in this program and her confidence in the division's ability to successfully implement it, despite the inherent challenges of developing and implementing such a unique and innovative approach to teacher recruitment and licensure.

Board Response to Written Reports

13.1 [School Board Member Committee Assignments \(2025\)](#): The School Board Chair presented the updated 2025 School Board Member Committee Assignments for discussion. Ms. Dooley announced that the Board member committee assignments for the upcoming year would be included on the consent agenda for the following month. She indicated that the assignments would remain the same as the previous year, unless any changes or reassignments were requested by Board members between the current meeting and the next.

13.2 [School Board Member Committee Reports](#): Board members shared updates on recent activities in this written report.

13.2 [Outcome of Student Disciplinary Matters - December 19, 2024](#): On Thursday, December 19, 2024, at 4:00 pm, the Charlottesville City School Board met in closed session, as authorized by Section 2.2-3711(A) (2) of the Code of Virginia, for the purpose of discussing student disciplinary matters. The outcome of the meeting was shared as a written report.

14.1 [Comments from Members of the Community](#):

- Chuck Moran, Charlottesville Community Member, began by acknowledging the successful completion of the school renaming process, expressing his appreciation for the formation of individual naming committees and the selection of Sunrise Elementary as the new name. He commended Dr. Johnson for effectively chairing the Burnley Moran renaming committee and thanked Beth Chuck for her proactive communication throughout the process. Mr. Moran also expressed his continued disappointment with the process, citing concerns about the accuracy and necessity of the historical research conducted by Mr. Phil Varner. He reiterated his belief that the renaming process could have been conducted more efficiently and respectfully, without the need for extensive and potentially harmful historical investigations. Mr. Moran concluded his remarks by requesting the return of the portrait of Miss Burnley Moran to his family and requesting that the school division remove the historical research documents from public access to prevent further dissemination of potentially inaccurate or harmful information. He emphasized the personal significance of the renaming process, having attended the dedication ceremony for Burnley Moran Elementary School as a child.
- Derek Hartline inquired about the future of the name "Haswell Hunter Walker" following the closure of Walker Upper Elementary School. He expressed curiosity about the division's plans for the name, given

that the building will be repurposed as a preschool center. Dr. Gurley clarified that the name "Haswell Hunter Walker" will be retired when the school closes at the end of the current school year.

15.1 Board Member Comments:

- Ms. Dooley expressed excitement about the return of students to school following the extended winter break. She acknowledged the significant impact of school closures on families, including disruptions to instruction, access to food and basic needs, and access to mental health support. Ms. Dooley also highlighted the recent car fire at Jackson-Via Elementary School, which was attributed to accumulated leaves, as an example of the broader safety implications of delayed snow removal. She requested that the division prepare a written report delineating the responsibilities of school personnel and city personnel in snow removal and cleanup operations, aiming to clarify roles and responsibilities for all parties involved. Ms. Dooley concluded by expressing her appreciation for the efforts of Dr. Gurley and his team in working with the city to ensure the safe reopening of schools following the recent storm.
- Mr. Meyer began by expressing his frustration with the City's response to his request for sidewalk snow removal. He highlighted the importance of safe pedestrian access to schools and criticized the City's delayed response and apparent lack of accountability for ensuring sidewalk safety. He emphasized the need for improved communication and collaboration between the school division and the City to ensure the effective delivery of essential services.
- Mr. Meyer then shifted his focus to the broader challenges facing the division, including the impact of community violence on the school environment. He expressed a desire to engage with the city police department to explore proactive strategies for addressing youth violence and creating safer communities for students.
- Finally, Mr. Meyer addressed the challenges posed by state-level legislation, particularly regarding the assessment of English Language Learner students. He expressed concern about the potential negative impacts of these policies on student performance and staff morale, emphasizing the need to advocate for policies that reflect the diverse needs of all students. He concluded by expressing his commitment to working with colleagues to address these challenges and ensure the success of all students within the Charlottesville City Schools.
- Ms. Burns shared her own experience with sidewalk snow removal challenges in her Fifeville neighborhood, observing that many residents had not cleared their sidewalks, forcing children to walk in the street. She emphasized the importance of community cooperation in ensuring safe pedestrian access to schools and highlighted the need for greater community awareness and enforcement of sidewalk snow removal regulations.
- Ms. Burns also reiterated the concerns raised by the VSBA regarding the impact of changing state-level standards and assessments on teacher workload and student well-being. She specifically mentioned the challenges faced by English Language Learners and the need for more nuanced and equitable approaches to assessing student proficiency in multiple languages. Ms. Burns expressed her appreciation for Dr. Gurley's leadership in navigating the challenges posed by the recent winter storm and ensuring the safe reopening of schools.
- Ms. Cooper echoed the sentiments expressed by her colleagues, thanking both Ms. Dooley and Mr. Meyer for their dedication and leadership within the School Board. She specifically acknowledged their mentorship and guidance, recognizing the significant impact they have had on other Board members.
- Ms. Richardson extended a Happy New Year greeting to all in attendance and expressed her eagerness for the continuation of the school year.
- Ms. Torres shared her personal experiences navigating the recent snowstorm, highlighting the challenges she faced with impassable sidewalks and limited road access due to heavy snowfall and inadequate snow removal. She emphasized the safety concerns arising from these conditions, including difficulties accessing patient homes and navigating city streets. Ms. Torres expressed concerns about the city's response to the snowstorm, including the slow pace of snow removal and the impact on essential services.

- She acknowledged the difficulty of making decisions regarding school closures, recognizing the challenges faced by families and the importance of prioritizing student and staff safety. Ms. Torres concluded by expressing her appreciation for the collaborative efforts of the School Board and her colleagues, particularly Mr. Morse, and expressed her anticipation for the upcoming school year.

16.1 Superintendent's Comments:

- Dr. Gurley expressed his gratitude to the Board members for their understanding and support regarding the recent school closures due to inclement weather. He acknowledged the challenges of making these decisions, emphasizing the priority of ensuring student and staff safety while also considering the needs of families. Dr. Gurley thanked the school transportation staff for their diligence in assessing road conditions and ensuring the safe transport of students. He also expressed his appreciation for the community members who assisted students in getting to school during the challenging weather conditions.
- Dr. Gurley acknowledged the concerns raised by several students regarding unsafe sidewalk conditions around the schools. He commended the students for their proactive engagement and assured them that their concerns would be addressed by school administrators. He emphasized the importance of student voice and encouraged continued communication between students and school officials.
- Finally, Dr. Gurley reminded students to prioritize their safety during their travels and announced a two-hour delay for the following school day. He encouraged all students and staff to exercise caution and use their best judgment when navigating the winter weather conditions.

17.1 Work Session Wrap-Up: There were two requests from the board:

- Provide the Board with a copy of the Administrator Evaluation Document Template
- Provide a Written Report delineating responsibilities ccs/city snow removal and general grounds maintenance.

18.1 Upcoming Meetings: Ms. Dooley read the upcoming meetings.

19.1 Adjourn: The meeting adjourned at 7:15 p.m.

A video of the January 9, 2025 meeting can be located at:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/19eDYoMJQicV1hJ-2HTYg-pvxfg3b3Jjo/view?usp=drive_link



Emily Dooley, School Board Chair



Leslie Thacker, School Board Clerk