

Superintendent's Weekly Check-in, February 15

Dear Colleagues:

Your mission and my mission every day is to establish a community of learners and learning, through relationships, relevance and rigor, one student at a time.

A thought for next week:

Don't ask what the world needs. Ask what makes you come alive, and go do it. Because what the world needs is people who have come alive.
— Howard Thurman

Happy Friday!

Hey, it's supposed to be like 60 degrees and sunny today, yes!

Here I am having a cup of coffee and reading the newspaper, which I enjoy doing when I have time. The newspaper in this case happens to be the first edition of *Highlights from the Hallways* of Stone-Robinson Elementary School. It is a completely student-initiated, led, written, and managed newspaper, and it is a hit with all the students and staff at school. How can you go wrong with stories like, "Wise Ways to Use Computers" and "An Interview with Mrs. Williams" with tough questions like, "Is your job easy or hard?" I am so proud of this beautiful work!



I doubt you'll be surprised to learn that when I am evaluated by the School Board, I set goals just like everyone else. Here are my three goals for this year:

1. Transition into my new job as superintendent with a listening tour and 100-day report to the School Board and Community.
2. Refresh the use of the Professional Learning Community Model across ACPS by focusing on our fifth-grade students' performance in math and reading on the Virginia SOL assessments for 2019.
3. Increase the diversity of our teacher workforce in ACPS to 15% minority teachers within two hiring seasons (by the fall of 2020). We are currently at 11%.

Each of these goals has reasons and research behind it and metrics tied to it. Sometimes people ask me why educator diversity is important: Why have it as a goal? When answering this question, I often refer to an explanation that I fully embrace from the [African American Teaching Fellows \(AATF\) website](#):

The absence of diverse teaching staffs affects every one of our children. They rarely witness cross-cultural collaboration, hardly benefit from diverse mentorship. A generation is growing up without an appreciation of cultural differences, without understanding that despite our varied experience, our similarities unite us.



I had a great time at the 14th annual Division Spelling Bee on Monday night! All the school champs were present and highly competitive. Congratulations to Layla Bouber from Henley, who defended her title and will move on, with seven other school champions, to The Daily Progress Regional Spelling Bee. Good luck to all!

I enjoyed walking and talking with Darah Bonham out at WAHS on Monday morning! The school has a positive

atmosphere, and I really appreciated the self-direction of students as they worked on projects and had conversations with teachers. I had fun checking in with Mark Posovsky, Taylor Holder, Malinda Smith (and her student teacher Walter), and Yohanis Kassa—all Science teachers! They were teaching and planning in the new science spaces with their students spread out in groups as well as working independently on labs. The students were busy and invested, and I appreciated the way the teachers circulated to chat, answer questions, and advise students with ideas and challenges—again, a very business-oriented, open, and positive atmosphere!



Here's a question: What do you do in the middle of the night on January 31, when a sprinkler head fails at Sutherland Middle School and floods a large area of the school? You call an awesome team of ACPS Building Services staff, including Austin Kisling, Wade Roach, Travis Breeden, Fred Bailey, David Via, Jamie Allen, Jimmy Martyn, Jannie Fincham, Ben Agyakwa, John King, Jason Shifflett, and Tenzin Youdon, and

they will work through the night to fix the problem and clean up the watery mess like it never happened! I am so proud of you all; you make such a difference for our students, staff and families!

A Final Note: March 14 is Pi (π) Day! I have noticed on this day in the past that many of our staff get out math-related T-shirts and wear them to work. If you decide to wear a T-shirt that promotes math on π day, please send Christine Thompson (cthompson@k12albemarle.org) a photo of you wearing the shirt by noon on the 15th. **The wearers of the three best T-shirts will win a free pair of athletic shoes** from either of our local running shops, [Crozet Running](#) or [Ragged Mountain Running](#). Now, I want to emphasize that this is open to all employees, just like this Weekly Check-in!

Have a great weekend!

Just checking in,

Matt

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