



Albemarle County Public Schools Family Council

Meeting Minutes

Date: May 15, 2024

Location: Center One

Time: Meeting called to order by Chair at 6:33 p.m.

Attendance: 28 Family Council members (school, at-large and officers). Quorum met (26 votes given co-reps).
Guests: 6 PTO leaders by invitation.
ACPS: Dr. Haas, Dr. Keiser, Dr. Irizarry plus 15 school principals (or assistant principals).

Topic: We will hear about Race Matters in School Communities, the community-organized yearlong discussion group. The goal of this group was to seed positive changes for racial awareness, sensitivity & responsibility in every school and all areas of the educational system. We will hear from participants including ACPS parents and staff and group facilitator, Gene Cash, LCSW, LISW-S and CEO of Counseling Alliance of Virginia about: the topics & themes that emerged, the impact the group had, how racial awareness, sensitivity and responsibility fit into the division's goals, and how your school community can get involved. We will spend time listening, discussing in small groups-PTO, Principal, Family Council Rep by school, with like-schools joining together.

QnA: [List of Qs Submitted to ACPS](#). No April FAQ received yet.

Prep Material: Attendees were asked to review [background material](#), a reminder of the Bellwether audit slides focusing on experiences of students of color and families, review [Minutes from April Meeting](#).

Minutes: The April minutes were approved as submitted.

Officer Business

Welcome and Thank You from Heidi

- Request for family reps to submit photos and small blurb about why they serve, what they like about family council, etc. to be used on Facebook
- Reminder of Meeting Norms

Nominating Committee (Lizzie Batman)

Slate:

- Lizzie Batman-Co-Chair (Greer)
- Heidi Gilman Bennett-Co-Chair (WAHS)
- Sam Peacoe-Secretary/Treasurer (Agnor-Hurt & Burley)
- Emily Mathon-Advocacy VP (Burley & AHS)

Gave notice of today's vote at the April meeting, as of May 1st the slate was final with no additional candidates. By-laws:

- Recommend representation of all levels (elem, mid, high) and all magisterial districts – met!
- Require 25% of voting members, Laura Handler confirmed quorum
- Lizzie Batman moved to approve slate of officers for 2024-2025. No objections and slate of officers approved as submitted.

SEAC Updates (Tanya Evans)

- Will be sending out second annual survey in Sept
- Driven by timing of the School Board's budget meeting
- Hoping for a higher response rate
- QR codes were recommended

Families Helping Families Updates (Latara Ragland)

- Thank you to all PTOs who donated directly to FHF. The funds go directly back to the community with housing needs being the top need.
- Thank you to Laketa Kelley for representing FHF at Family Council throughout the year!

ByLaws Update:

- Received recommendations from UVA law team
- Will prepare detailed summary for review and vote in next school year
- Goals:
 - Reflect diversity of families in ACPS
 - Clarify purpose
 - Clarify PTO relationships
- Dr. Haas has a PTO leadership meeting planned next year and the Family Council will attend the first meeting. Collecting feedback to support clarity between PTO and Family Council roles.
- Family Council grew out of PTO leaders, and had required PTO dues (which will be eliminated).
- ByLaws currently say PTO should appoint Family Council reps and this may not align with PTO mission / ByLaws across the county, esp re: advocacy.

- Communication-expect that PTOs will continue to communicate what Family Council is doing, similar to SEAC.
- Opportunity for questions-none raised.

Family Council mission is to connect and inform families and amplify our voices to promote a public education system in which each student thrives. Slides that are basis of explainer video that will be distributed publicly:






Our Mission

...to connect & inform families
and amplify our voices
to promote a public education system in which each student thrives.




Elementary Schools

 Middle

 High

Family Council brings together a representative from each school in ACPS...

... plus At-Large reps.

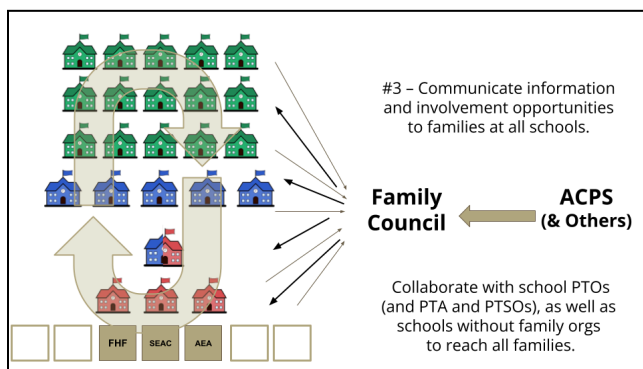
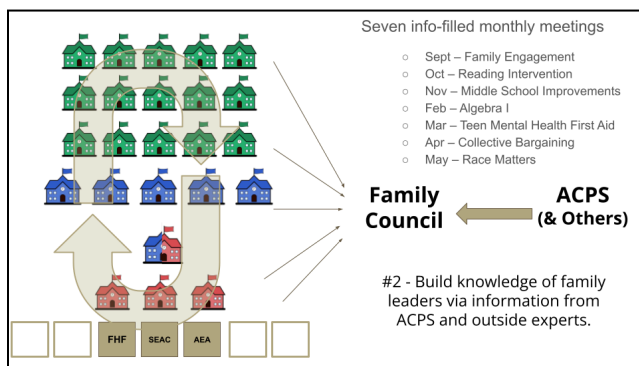
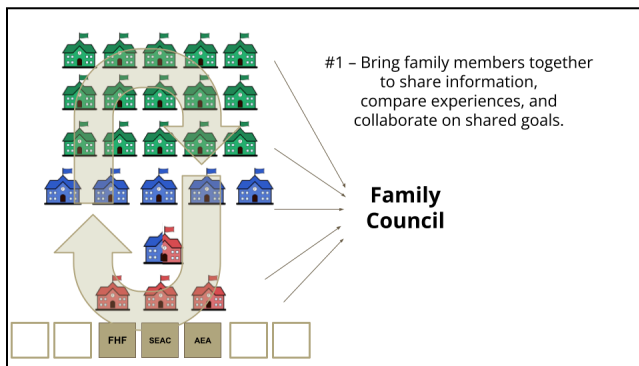
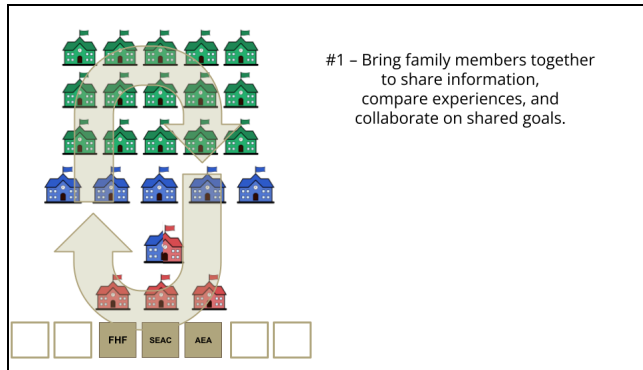
We are committed to representing the diversity of families in our county.

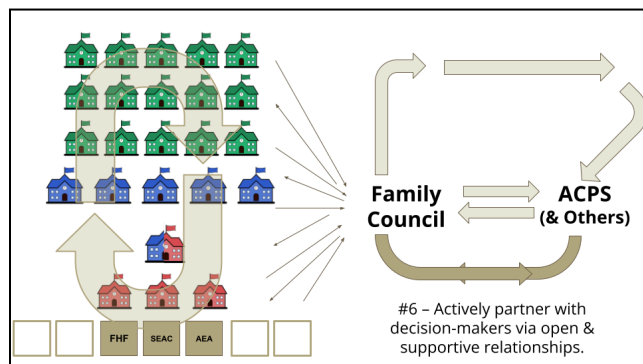
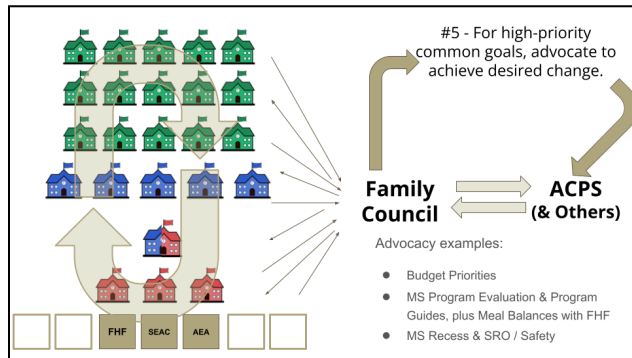
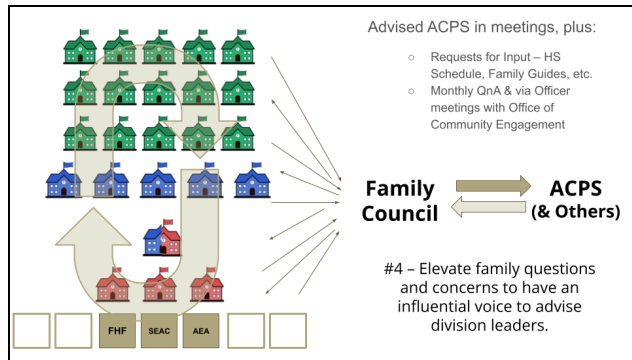
FHF

SEAC

AEA

p.s. Get in touch
If you're with a community organization that serves families!





Survey – Will be distributing to all families in ACPS. To guide us in selecting topics to focus on for our meetings next year, and also provide family stories / quotes for discussion, advising and potential advocacy.

Dr. Haas expressed appreciation for the work Family Council has done this year.

Annual Report: Accomplishments

Annual Report: Accomplishments

New communications

- Facebook Page (public)
- Name, Logo and Revised Website

Administrative improvements

- Standing Rules & OCE Relationship including Childcare
- Communications Best Practices
- PTO Email List
- Advocacy Process / Consensus Votes
- On-Going Meeting Feedback
- Listening Homework & Survey (coming soon!)
- ByLaws Review by UVA Law Team

Programs – DonorsChoose, Teacher Appreciation, Race Matters



Selecting New Representatives

- Continuation Survey-For current reps via QR code on tables. Value multi-year reps. Will be approved by school-level principal and PTO leaders this year.
- Open Application Process-Google form will be posted allowing interest from any parent/family member with brief questions.
- Encourage Applicants-Will collect and share names/info with the PTO and Principal of the schools to get feedback and make a decision
- School Selection- OCE as backup if we don't hear from principal/PTO. Select single rep, with option for Co-reps.
- Invitations=Sent by end of June then continue recruiting as needed for schools without submitted candidates.

ByLaws re: PTOs

- ByLaws require dues from PTOs
 - Will propose to eliminate
- Goals include communication via PTOs
 - Propose to continue (e.g., SEAC)
- ByLaws say PTOs appoint School Reps
 - Propose to lighten up & shift → next slide
- Goals include "enhance strength of PTO system"
 - For further discussion – Sept 2024 (or sooner)

Advocacy may not be goal of PTO & may conflict with PTO mission.



Treasurer Report:

\$934.37 balance
- \$52.52 check
= \$881.85 end-year

Treasurer report (Dana)

Start of year: \$934.37 balance

-\$52.52 reimbursement for Teacher Appreciation

= \$881.85 end of year

DonorsChoose Update (Heidi)

Since November:

- Over \$52,000 in donations!
- 104 projects full funded
- Equitable reach to schools

- Increase of teachers & donors
- Opportunity=increase non-parent donors in the community
- Louise Wyatt will not be chairing DonorsChoose next year so please let Heidi know if interested in being a chair. In combo with being Rep or not.
- [DonorsChoose Report](#)

Teacher Appreciation Week: May 6-10



Family Council partnered with AFE to show appreciation to ACPS teachers who are not otherwise celebrated by families during the week:

Teacher Appreciation Week 2024

Family Council partnered with the Albemarle Foundation for Education to show appreciation to ACPS teachers who are not otherwise celebrated by families during the week, including:

- Newcomer Learning Community (5 teachers)
- Blue Ridge Juvenile Detention Center (7)
- Post High (5)
- Center for Learning and Growth (11)
- Ivy Creek School (43)

Together, we provided baskets of snacks & coffee/tea, flowers, and handmade posters... and enjoyed the celebratory deliveries!

Albemarle Foundation for Education (Tessa Ashoff tashoff@k12albemarle.org)

[Slides](#)

Mission: Generating a community commitment to helping each student in ACPS thrive

- In year two of operations-philanthropic partner to ACPS, nonprofit with the purpose of engaging the community with ACPS and raising supplemental funds
- Part of ACPS Office of Community Engagement
- Governed by dedicated board of directors
- Three focus areas:
 - Outstanding Educators
 - Empowered Communities
 - Thriving Students
- Both short-term and long-term goals:
 - Educators-connect to funding opportunities (ex. DonorsChoose), Teacher Pipeline
 - Communities-School Champion initiative, Communities in Schools Model
 - Students-Basic Needs Provision, Enhanced Learning Opportunities, Healthcare access (example of dental needs)
- Empowered Communities
 - Education does not happen in a silo-need for families, businesses, to wrap around schools
 - Albemarle County is a unique ecosystem with resources to unleash
 - Equity in supplemental school funding matters
- School Champion Initiative

- Bringing together a diverse network of stakeholders to serve ACPS schools, students, and teachers
- Launched in late March, outreach to 250+ local businesses
- Workplace volunteering and community engagement is good for business
- Requesting Time, Talent, and Treasure
- Focus on recruiting school champions for specific schools: Angor, Burley, Greer, Journey, Mountain View, Red Hill, Walton, Woodbrook
- Ongoing engagement with Chamber of Commerce
- Questions
 - Is Tessa the Point of Contact for interested businesses?
 - Yes
 - How are you collaborating with PTOs?
 - Work in Progress-wanted to focus on getting businesses first to bring to PTOs

Office of Community Engagement Updates (Dr. Izzary)

Slides

- Madison House/ACPS Partnership
- Student Leadership Summit - shared video
- Senior Stay Day
- Community Information Session
 - School & Community Health
 - Focus on vaccinations and opioids with experts from UVA
- Magisterial Meetings

Race Matters in School Communities (Emily Mathon)



- Latasha from Counseling Alliance of Virginia and Latara Ragland shared timeline
 - Both attended Race Matters and kept talking from there, identifying the need for the entire community, particularly education.

- Idea came from connections through school and church and identifying the need based on racist experiences, verbal abuse, and traumatic events that were happening in the community.
- Encouraged attendance at Race Matters with Dr. Ken Hardy
- Race conversations need to happen in schools, community, and other spaces in order to change the experiences for the students together.
- Acknowledged Gene Cash and his role in bringing this to the community
- In fall of 2023 put out an invitation for anyone interested.
- Burley Middle School hosted the site for a few sessions then shifted over to Region Ten.
- PTOs sponsored dinners & acted as fiscal sponsor
- 35 people participated in beginning, ended up with 15 solid participants throughout the whole series
- Reviewed the timeline to show that initial conversations started in 2020 and the first session was in October 2023. Grateful for everyone who contributed and participated.
- Appreciate the backing of the Office of Community Engagement and thank you!

Race Matters in Schools: Racial awareness-sensitivity training (Gene Cash)

- Thank you. In 2020, Gene started dialing in on ACPS. CAVA started in 2011 and from 2011-2017 did business as usual. In 2017 Gene was watching the Unite the Right rally and the impact on our community and the world. Gene called Dr. Ken Hardy and started doing Race Matters conferences starting in 2018 with social services, other organizations, juvenile justice, healthcare to start looking at race, something we tend to ignore or oppress.
- Joined the Community Mental Health Wellness Coalition and the first time said “white supremacy,” there was a lot of discomfort but you need to see it, name it, and change it. Critical to talk about white supremacy ideology.
- Our path: Racial oblivion→Racial awareness→Racial sensitivity (how to be compassionate, see beyond yourself)→Racial Responsibility Competency (integrate all three of the previous and becomes second nature)
- Hope 50% walk away with new information tonight.
- Will be focusing on court systems as well.
- “Degemification”-the good exceptional, mainstream minority but at the sacrifice of who Gene was as a black man and recognizing his rage
- The more sensitive we become, the closer the relationships we create
- Working to help teachers and staff to become racially responsible. Can see the oblivion and the impact on black and brown families and how they are treated differently than the white families.
- The Essential Process:
 - Seeing (Racial Oblivion)
 - Being (Racial Awareness, Racial Sensitivity)
 - Doing!! (Racial Responsibility)
- Not a step by step process as it comes from self interrogation and integration. If you cannot look at yourself and your own ancestry, how can you shift?
- Looking at Bellweather report and there are some schools with no diversity.

- White supremacy ideology undertow
- When George Floyd was lynched, had 28 people in groups and now down to 9.
- Classical Defense Mechanism
 - Cognitive Dissonance-conflict between one's mind and one's personal beliefs, suspending reality
 - Projection-blaming Africans, not taking into accountability own own ancestry impacted
 - Denial-dismissing the reality of the horrific system
 - Repression-let's forget about it, it happened a long time ago
- Goal is to get past this and stay in connection
- Need to be able to sit in your discomfort, it is essential to change
- Race Matters Participants Reflections (D. Smith-MHS, Jen-MHS, Lauren-MVES & Community Lab, Kelsey-Scottsville Elem, Margot Diaz-Henley & Crozet)
 - What did you gain personally and professionally?
 - Gained new depth of perspective, empathy, understanding and humility for the onslaught people of color experience every day.
 - More understanding for lack of trust for students of color
 - Shift of perspective of taking it personally to deep, multigenerational wound
 - Be curious
 - Listen
 - Sit with discomfort and pain
 - Rocked to core, will never see the world the same again
 - Feel empowered to be anti-racist and walk side by side with other people of color
 - Need to share the knowledge and be patient with the process
 - Safe spaces are essential to move this work forward and we owe it to our kids to start now
 - This is our next evolutionary step to become better for ourselves and our children
 - Validation of feelings and not the "angry black woman" for sticking up for own child and other children
 - Deeper, more personalized understanding of race not just in general but here, in Charlottesville, in our community
 - More lasting and stronger impact
 - Safe space so can see and name it, gaining confidence and finding more voice
 - Intentionality of will and skill, diversity of the group and able to share micro-aggression, advocate for how they feel in a genuine way and will and skill to name what you see and being transparent
 - Made me want to advocate
 - Really see how white supremacy is in the systems we live and work in
 - What surprised or challenged you?

- How many accomplices we have that are not just other people of color, can be isolating as the only person of color in a space and knowing there are others who feel same way is helpful
 - Very personal conversations and in relationship with others
 - How important to have honest, transparent conversations
- What concept or strategy have you or will you employ?
 - Can sometimes avoid conflict or engage in ways that are not helpful. Learned VCR, Validate-Challenge-Request which gave different way and all in relationship building. Validate and have a conversation first, not try to correct it which takes away student voice.
 - Being strategic in how teach-by asking questions, encouraging to dig deeper
 - Saying-why is that my responsibility comes from a place of anger/feeling attacked and to validate, challenge and stay curious will keep in place of VCR and not place of anger or trying to prove worthiness
 - Stay curious-when you stay curious you can stay in relationship, staying in conversations is possible when stay curious
- Will offer opportunity if there is an individual school or a cluster of schools, and will bring this conversation to your school community. What would you say about why they should participate? What is the benefit?
 - It is great for teachers
 - Gene helps people find their voice and articulate, is trained and confident and competent in this to lead (not school leadership) because could miss foundational blocks.
 - Deep listening piece is needed for staff and for students as well. Would love to see students engaging in an opportunity like this. Valuable learning lesson to get deep in these conversations.
 - Learning about race-we tend to take what we learn home to our kids and the things we speak at home influences our kids so it is important to teach it at a foundational level.
 - Learned not to apologize for feeling something needed to change and being okay with making people uncomfortable. Need to teach kids to call things out that are wrong.
 - Get and in-depth look at what the other person experiences and find meaningful connections. It was very moving and eye opening.
 - Communities and schools need to talk about race in cross racial groups and having cross racial conversations is a good thing.
 - Opportunities for families to gather and talk and learn they have a lot more in common with each other.
- Key and Meaningful Reflections & Takeaways
 - Skepticism and doubt moved away
 - Courage-will and skill to be in relationships
 - POTT'S-Person of the therapist-paying attention to own history
 - Need and desire for connection-being in relationship

- Undertow of white supremacy ideology-framing and push against it
- Breaking oblivion
- Validation
- Desire for more and to do no harm in effort to help

Group Discussions with school groups

Meeting Adjourned at 8:30 officially, but many conversations continued in school groups til past 9pm.

Meeting Minutes compiled by Laura Handler, Co-Secretary
DRAFT until approved at Sept 2024 meeting.
No comments submitted on sticky notes.