

Proposal to Redistrict Students Out of Albemarle High School to Move it to AA Status for Athletics

No Longer Under Consideration

Parents, students, coaches and School Board members have long wanted Albemarle High School to be in the AA district to save money on travel costs and reduce travel time for AHS athletes to away games. Petitions to the Virginia High School League (VHSL) to accomplish this change have been repeatedly denied; moving ~300 students out of AHS would lower the total number of students at AHS to AA level and save ~\$35,000 annually in travel costs. The redistricting is one of the proposals that the board could consider to meet the ~\$15 million budget shortfall the School Division faces for 2010-11. The Board has not voted on the redistricting of AHS, and has asked staff to bring additional information on its feasibility to them at their 2/25 work session. Redistricting students is not a decision that is taken lightly. ***On 2/18/10, the School Board voted not to pursue redistricting at this time.***

Why is Albemarle High School in a different athletic district than other county high schools?

Albemarle High School athletes currently participate in the AAA Commonwealth District, playing teams at larger high schools that are in Fredericksburg and Stafford County, more than two hours away. Monticello and Western Albemarle High School participate in the AA Jefferson District, and play other local AA schools such as Louisa, Orange, Charlottesville and Greene. Albemarle is in the AAA district because of the total number of students who attend that school. AHS has 1,743 students this year, while Monticello and WAHS have about 1,100. The Virginia High School League determines which district each high school to place each high school in Virginia, based on size.

Why propose moving Albemarle High School to AA status?

Albemarle High School student athletes miss a lot more classroom instruction due to early dismissals so that they may travel the 2 to 2.5 hours to their away games. AHS athletes have more than twice as many early dismissals in a given year, and usually at 1:30 to 2:30 p.m., missing the entire last block of the school day. By contrast, Monticello and Western athletes dismissed at 3:30 p.m. only about 40 times. In addition, AHS athletes return from their away games at 11 p.m. or midnight, vs. about 9:30 to 10 p.m. for athletes at our other county high schools. Moving AHS to AA status would reduce travel time for athletes, reduce travel costs for transporting athletes (saving ~\$35,000), reduce the amount of class AHS athletes miss, increase gate receipts for AHS games as other local teams attend cross-town rivalries.

Why would the School Division need to Redistrict to Move AHS to AA status?

The Albemarle County School Board has petitioned the VHSL multiple times to move AHS into the AA district. Each time they have been turned down. VHSL has repeatedly said Albemarle High School is simply too large to be AA; they feel it would be unfair to ask smaller AA schools such as William Monroe High School, with only 720 students, to compete with a school like Albemarle with more than double the number of students. Since VHSL will not move Albemarle at its current number of students, one option is to

reduce the total number of students who attend AHS by about 300 students, to bring their total enrollment in line with other AA schools. The 300 students would be sent to Monticello High or Western Albemarle High. The VHSL could then add AHS to AA district as it reevaluates every two years.

What are the challenges of redistricting?

Asking families to send their students to a new school is very difficult. Redistricting disrupts families and friendships for students and cannot be taken lightly. Many of those same families have already experienced redistricting at the elementary and middle school level. Moving 300 students from AHS to Monticello and Western would put those two schools at their capacities. With future growth planned for the Crozet area and the Pantops area, both of these schools may be experiencing enrollment growth of their own in the near future, which must be planned for. In addition, if AHS remained one of the largest AA schools, in two years when the VHSL re-evaluates districts, AHS could be bumped back into AAA. The board would not want to redistrict 300 students and then have to do another redistricting in a few years due to enrollment growth or to prevent another change in status for AHS.

What areas are targeted for this redistricting?

There have been no areas targeted for redistricting at this time. ***The board has determined that they are not interested in pursuing redistricting of AHS at this time.*** If redistricting were to be pursued, approximately 300 students would be moved from AHS to either WAHS or Monticello High. The School Board, per policy, would allow “grandfathering” of students who currently attend AHS in their junior or senior years to continue at AHS until graduation if they chose.

What is the timeline for redistricting of AHS students?

There is currently no timeline to redistrict students as the board has determined they are ***not interested in pursuing redistricting*** at this time. Under VHSL guidelines, any changes of districts must be made biennially.

Does AHS need to be redistricted to AA status to implement the 4 x 4 schedule?

No. The two issues are completely separate from each other. The board has voted to implement a 4 x 4 schedule for all middle and high schools beginning in the 2010-11 school year and voted not to pursue redistricting at this time. However, with AHS in the AAA district, students have to dismiss early to attend away games. Thus, there will be special challenges for AHS athletes under this schedule, since some courses will meet every day for a semester and students may miss more of these same classes. Because of the compressed nature of the classes, meeting every day, more work may be missed when students are absent to travel to games. Moving AHS to AA would diminish these early dismissals for athletes.

Reducing the amount of class time that is missed by AHS athletes is one of the considerations informing 4 x 4 schedule design at AHS. The design team is considering placing a remediation period at the end of the day to assist athletes with this situation.