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Dear Colleagues:

This week the country honors the contribution of both school nurses and teachers. Together, professionals in these two careers support the needs of young people so that they will thrive as learners.

A story in the *New York Times* over the weekend focused on an interesting study of how low-income children from depressed neighborhoods fare as adult wage-earners compared to their low-income peers who grow up in less depressed areas. In what was termed a detailed portrait of upward mobility, the study found geography plays a large role in determining which children rise from poverty. Growing up in a low-income family did not necessarily place a ceiling on income later in life. Growing up in a depressed neighborhood did.

This is not exactly a revolutionary finding. Environment matters. It always has. And that is especially noteworthy this week, when our nation celebrates our teachers and our school nurses.

If economics does not solely account for success in life and geography is important, it suggests a closer look is in order at why this is so. It may have something to do with the resources available in a particular location; specifically, the quality of local schools and the extent to which those schools are at the center of a community.

Here's an impressive number—160,000—the number of annual visits to our nurses by children in our schools. During those visits, nurses administer first aid, manage chronic diseases and severe allergies, identify illness early in its onset, manage communicable outbreaks, conduct screenings, and provide care for school staff.

By each of these activities, our school nurses are removing barriers to education by maintaining a safe and healthy environment for students and staff. Through their promotion of healthy practices and their prevention of disease and accidents, nurses are making it possible for students and staff to be in school more often, to be more fully concentrated on learning, and to effectively work together as a team.



With the help of support staff, teachers complete the circle of learning. I am proud our school division's goal is not narrowly focused on multiple choice tests but is necessarily more ambitious. I am grateful that it commits each of us to provide every student with the lifelong skills to succeed as 21st century learners, workers and citizens.

Teachers do this through their own determined research and their eager willingness to explore new paths to discovery, by taking intelligent risks that promote student-centered learning and with an unselfish dedication to the ideal that every child is capable of great achievement.

To paraphrase John F. Kennedy, who audaciously set the moon landing as a national goal, "We do these things not because they are easy, but because they are hard." So it can be said of our strategic goal, which promises to change the lives of all children in Albemarle County.

During this annual recognition week, please join me in celebrating our school nurses and teachers, who every day make fit our learning environment to extraordinary purpose. Thank you for making our county more welcoming, more safe, more uplifting, and more rewarding for those we serve.

Thank you,

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