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Albemarle County School Board Regular Meeting, Thursday, March 28, 2024

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[00:00:02] all right i call this march 28 2024 meeting of the admiral county school board back to order do we have a motion we do i move that the board certified by recorded vote that to the best of each board member's knowledge only public business matters lawfully exempted from open meeting requirements of the virginia freedom of information act and identified in the motion authorizing the closed meeting were heard discussed or considered in the closed meeting second moved by dr acuff seconded by mr page could we have a roll call for that please christine

[00:00:36] mr charles pace yes dr acuff yes miss osborne yes mr graham page yes dr berlin yes miss spillman yes chair lee yes so moved thank you next we'll have a roll call starting with mr black good evening everyone i'm josiah black school division council matthew hawes superintendent

[00:01:07] Allison Spilman, at-large representative. Ellen Osborne, Scottsville representative. Rebecca Berlin, Whitehall representative. Judy Lee, Rivanna district. Kate Acuff, Jack Jewett district. Graham Page, Miller district. Chuck Pace, Ryo district. Daphne Kaiser, assistant superintendent. Pat McWalfland, assistant superintendent. Christine Thompson, clerk of the board. Chandra Hayes, assistant superintendent. Claire Kaiser, assistant superintendent. Claire Kaiser, assistant superintendent. Daryl Mickish, Admiral Pahey. Thank you very much. Next we'll rise for the Pledge of Allegiance.

[00:01:44] Next, we'll be observing a moment of silence, and I wanted to mention the names of two students who have passed. Adam Begley, a senior at Monticello, and Jaden Waddy, a ninth grader

[00:02:16] at AHS. Thank you. Next, we have the approval of the agenda. Do we have a motion? I move [00:03:01] that we approve the agenda. Second. Moved by Dr. Acuff, seconded by Ms. Spillman and Ms. Osborne. Do we have any discussion? All right. All those in favor say aye. Aye. Not opposed. All right. Agenda is approved. Next we have approval of consent agenda. Do we have a motion? I move to accept the consent agenda as stated in the agenda. Second. Moved by Dr. Berlin, seconded by Dr. Acuff.

[00:03:30] Is there any discussion? Nope. All those in favor say aye. Aye. All right. Consent agenda is approved next we have announcements from school board and superintendent business so i just had just a couple quick announcements a couple shout outs one is and uh of course mr bonham principal at albumalls here tonight albumall high school is celebrating winning a virginia music educators association blue ribbon award for this school year and it is the highest award given to schools

[00:04:05] music programs in the commonwealth of virginia it recognized it recognizes achieved excellence in band orchestra and choral performance all disciplines in a school must receive a rating of superior at assessment to qualify for this award so it's a really big deal and an alma high school has long been known for its outstanding arts programs and this is just another feather in the cap of the school i also want to give a shout out to broadest wood elementary school they

[00:04:38] achieved 100 staff attendance on tuesday this week and they joined journey middle school with ashby johnson's here tonight they had 100 attendance earlier in the year hollymead has had 100 attendance and recently brownsville had 100 staff attendance and again that's a really big deal because we want our employees to take off to take care of their needs and to take care of themselves so whenever a school has 100 staff there it's i wouldn't say it's luck it's just the conditions are right that

[00:05:14] everybody can be there and have us have an extra successful day and what we've started what we did when um journey perked up earlier in the year we we started bringing out bagels and coffee for the the staff the very next day and so I went when I went out to Broadus Wood on Wednesday it was fancy dress day and so the students were really showing up and all their different attire to be fancy that day so when you look at the check-in today you'll see Don Nicholson and a couple of students and he's he's dressed he's the teacher and he's dressed very fancy to be with the students

[00:05:54] so always a lot of good things going on and out in the schools but I just wanted to share those two items with the board wonderful thank you i move chair lee i move to accept the following resolution i know that i speak for all members of the school board of elmer county when i say that we are concerned about our students use of social media platforms such as instagram facebook tick tock snapchat and others we are concerned that these social media platforms are intentionally using deceptive practices to attract and addict our students and are gathering personal data about them that they often sell to third parties.

[00:06:31] Finally, we are concerned that habitual use of social media platforms day after day for many hours each day is having long-term detrimental effects on the mental health and well-being of our students. As a result, the school division is incurring substantial costs to assist and support our students who are suffering from social media-inflicted injuries to their mental health.

[00:06:52] Based on these concerns, I move that the School Board of Albemarle County, Virginia join in an effort by school divisions around the country to change and seek redress for these deceptive practices by social media platforms. I further move that the school board instructs school division counsel Josiah Black

to engage outside legal counsel to represent the division in this litigation and to act as the division's point person in the class action lawsuit. Second. Moved by Dr. Relin, seconded by Ms. Spillman. Is there any discussion? I'm really glad to be joining this.

[00:07:28] I I it feels to me like the beginning of the tobacco lawsuits um it's that type of horrible effect that it has on people so I'm really glad to be joining it thank you all right um could we have a roll call vote on that please Christine Mr. Graham Page yes Ms. Osborne yes Dr. Berlin yes Dr. Acuff yes Ms. Spillman yes Mr. Chuck Pace yes Chair Lee yes so moved then Christine did

[00:08:07] have an announcement you want to take oh yes ma'am um as you may recall during the onset of the coveted pandemic when we transitioned to virtual meetings we adapted our public comment sign up process to an online format however it's important to note that this adjustment was not officially reflected in our policy i'm pleased to inform you that starting from this evening's meeting we are reverting to in-person signups for public comments and here's what the public needs to know moving forward online signups the public still have the option to sign up for public comments

[00:08:46] online the link will be available starting at 9 a.m on the monday the week of the meeting and it will close the tuesday the day of the meeting alternatively individuals may also call my office to register to sign up for public comment and events for those who prefer to sign up in person you can do so on the day of the meeting starting at 6 p.m and the sign-up sheets will be available until the start of public comment we believe this change will better accommodate the diverse preferences of our community and encourage a broader participation

[00:09:22] in our public meetings thank you thank you very much christine all right no other um announcements from school board or superintendent next we will have our public comment miss osborne all right we invite and actively seek the public's input in matters relevant to school board governance and provide time in our business meetings to hear from our residents and community members during public comment we expect respectful and on-topic comments disruptive behavior from speakers or from members of the public in attendance will not be tolerated anyone who willfully disrupts this meeting in a

[00:10:00] manner that prevents or interferes with the orderly conduct of the meeting may be ejected by the chair. Each presenter will be allowed three minutes to speak. However, the chair with the consent of the board may reduce the time allocated for all individuals to speak to two minutes depending on the number of individuals who sign up. Public testimony guidelines are as follows.

[00:10:20] Speakers should adhere to the following protocol. State your name and address or your voting district. Address your comments to the school board as a whole. limit your comments to those matters that are relevant to school board governance or school division operations give written statements and other supporting material to the clerk if you're unable to complete the presentation in the time allotted a copy of supporting materials will be provided to school board members three minutes will be allowed for each speaker who has signed up to speak on the up on the FY 25 funding request public hearing

[00:10:57] this evening that would be from last meeting okay we're not doing that today the chair uh the two minute thing we went through that the color-coded light system is used to time presentations the yellow light means the speaker is two minutes or one minute if there are more than 10 speakers into the presentation and the red light means the speaker is at three minute limit of the presentation and must wrap up in order to maintain respect for all points of view the school board requests no clapping booing or

any other audible form of support or non-support be used if members of the public wish to show their support for a speaker they may stand or raise their hands

[00:11:37] when multiple comments on the same topic have been presented the chair may request additional comments on the topic be limited to those who have new information to present debate and dialogue with the school board are not allowed use of the projection system is reserved for the staff scheduled agenda presentation items only all right so um tonight it looks like we have six speakers um no one has signed up in the last i have this same thing i think anybody yes there's this one

[00:12:13] two three four five six yes we have six okay so we will go in this order uh it'd be chelsea sacno mr jb hurt elizabeth collier let's do those three first okay so chelsea such no and correct me if i misspell your name or mispronounce your name good evening my name is chelsea sacno i reside in the whitehall district and i work at albemarle high school as a literacy specialist i have heard that there is some consideration to narrowly define the role of the high school

[00:12:51] reading specialist by adopting a model more consistent with that of traditional elementary intervention. This is neither sustainable nor research-based at the high school level. This year I have partnered with 12 teachers individually across three departments and within PLCs to implement literacy instruction, supports, and classroom-based interventions for 834 students.

[00:13:15] If I were asked to pull out students and work with them, I could only attend to a fraction of these. That would require me to identify which students do and do not receive literacy support services, and there is no equitable way for me to do that. Please note that our DIBELS data identified 70% of our 9th grade students and 90% of our African-American students in the most at-risk bands for reading comprehension.

[00:13:40] Assuming that data is similar at each grade level, this represents 1,400 students in need of literacy support. We cannot attend to that with a traditional model of intervention. The strongest approach to serve the needs of all of our students is by partnering with teachers to embed literacy instruction and intervention in every single classroom.

[00:14:01] This is better supported by research too. In Virginia, elementary teachers are required to receive instruction in teaching foundational literacy skills during their preparatory programs. But secondary educators receive no such instruction in theirs. Furthermore, a traditional model of intervention is inherently segregatory and rooted in a historically racist, sorry, and rooted in a historically racist ideology around literacy and language. Several studies demonstrate that pullout intervention marginalizes our adolescent learners who have not yet mastered academic English proficiency. These are the learners who have been the most

[00:14:35] unsuccessful under this model. Instead research calls for a whole school and community-wide model for secondary literacy intervention in which literacy professionals partner with educators to support curriculum design that embeds supports, scaffolds, and classroom-based interventions to improve literacy and academic outcomes for all learners. This is better aligned with our strategic goals as a division and is called for by the bellwether report. Ultimately we cannot remediate our way out of a tier one instructional problem. We must establish culturally responsive ways of teaching literacy that honor and affirm

[00:15:13] all of our students linguistic backgrounds. We need to stop considering intervention from a deficit-based mindset, what the students lack, and start moving towards an asset-based framework. We must embed research-based instructional practices to support literacy development in and through content area classrooms. This will enable us to serve all of our students more equitably and effectively through our partnerships with teachers, administrators, and community stakeholders with the goal of literacy and justice for all. Thank you. Thank you. Would you like a letter with

[00:15:46] additional research. All right Mr. Hurt. Hi my name is JB Hurt. I reside in the Samuel Miller district and I'm here to speak on the Agnor Hurt school vote tonight. There are a lot of folks I could I've reached out to to be here as an advocate for my dad Ben Hurt but I didn't I didn't want this to become

[00:16:21] contentious. My dad would never have wanted that. Ben Hurt was principal at Mal High School for 30 years. More than 10,000 students graduated during his term there. He remembered and had an impact on every one of those students. He successfully guided AHS through the integration process peacefully, hired the first female high school athletic director and in the Commonwealth of Virginia and has been inducted into the Virginia High School League Hall of Fame.

[00:16:48] I was I plan to read you all a bunch of quotes from that book I sent out to you the from the Alamo Alumni Association but then you know I'm hoping you've read you've read those, but instead of putting you through those same quotes again, I wanted to tell you about something I was struck by at the last meeting. I stayed and heard Dr. McLaughlin's presentation and he read the mission statement for Albemarle County Public Schools and it really struck me, the last line really jumped out at me, "We will know every student by name." It was that common theme that you know that you'll hear me go back to here in just a moment about

[00:17:25] knowing every student by name my it was quite provident providential that I said that I heard that my dad did know every student by name over the years if you ask anyone the thing that was first and foremost about him was he did know every student by name he remembered them years later at class reunions knew their families knew what they were up to it was just a phenomenal thing there there has never been anyone in education at Albemarle County who more exemplified we will know every student than Ben Hurt. I have a little concern about the process. I know we're

[00:18:00] not doing the, you know, surveys and all of that with it anymore, or that you all aren't. Matt Haas, when we met a little over three weeks ago, and he informed me of their recommendation when I met with him and Ms. Waters and Ms. Kaiser, he said, I've never met anyone who knew your dad who didn't love him. I mean, that's a quote. I have a hard time reconciling that statement with this recommendation. There was some concern, it sounds like, about the environment at the school during those years. I'm curious how many students were spoken to, how many of those teachers.

[00:18:36] I still just keep coming back to, more than anything else, my dad's life and service as an educator truly embodied that very mission statement of Albemarle County Public Schools. He modeled that mission statement for every student. He knew them all. I hope that you'll vote against this recommendation and allow his name to remain on agnor hurt elementary school thank you thank you all right miss elizabeth collier good evening i am not elizabeth collier

[00:19:15] but i have a statement on her behalf uh because she was not able to make it tonight so i will go ahead and read that good evening my name is elizabeth collier i have been a math educator in virginia for six years and was an educator in california for 13 years i want to speak about how impactful it has been for

me and my students to partner with a literacy specialist this year i've always considered mathematics as its own unique language however in previous years i have had students struggle with the math content on sol exams because of the struggle to read and comprehend the math questions and problems in the course of this school year the literacy specialists at

[00:19:52] albemarle high school have helped to educate and guide me in developing my students abilities to read comprehend and break down the words and symbols and the questions they will face on the sol i had not considered how words like evaluate identify or factors are used in other content areas and may complicate my students' understanding of those words in my class.

[00:20:11] I am more attentive to both the language of the words and the language of the symbols used in problems. I previously taught in a middle school for four years, and the literacy coaches would pull out students to help them, but it did not often translate to improved comprehension on learning in the classroom.

[00:20:27] As well, some of the middle school students would be absent on the days that they were to meet the literacy coaches in order to avoid being pulled from class to work with them. We have hundreds of students in our school that need literacy support, and these students have been benefiting from the guidance and education that our literacy coaches have provided to myself and other teachers so that we can reach more students.

[00:20:48] As an educator, my abilities to identify the language of my content and also support my students in decoding both directions and math problems have improved through my work with Chelsea, and my students are more engaged with both the content and the language. Our students' literacy and their SOL test-taking abilities are both improving.

[00:21:07] Our literacy coaches have been doing an amazing job, and we need our literacy specialists to continue to function as coaches for myself, other teachers, and for all of our students. Thank you. Thank you. All right, the next three up will be Collin Thomas, Jackie Marinucci, and John Glass.

[00:21:26] Hi, I'm Collin Thomas, Ravana District. I'm here tonight to ask that you all consider adding to the redistricting decision you made provision that allows all students with IEPs to stay at their schools a couple weeks ago I shared about my daughter Kira who has it was autistic has ADHD I won't go into all of her the great things but she has significant challenges

[00:22:03] as I shared with things like work refusal eloping meltdowns things like that and caring for her requires a large amount of trust and intuition on her on our teachers part and we've we realize that the iep will transfer to other schools that stony point has just as good a special education program as stone robinson but what they don't have is the built up two years of trust and intuition about kira we my wife and i are in a position to advocate

[00:22:40] for her to go through the process to get a special dispensation for her but we want to think about the other parents who may not have the same resources we have but whose kids need just as much care in the places where they've grown trust and just an example of the trust that has been grown in my daughter today she brought home a thing on a great woman at Stone Robinson Ms. Stratus is a great woman at SRE she is a good a base team leader she plays board games with me she also helps me get calm she's a great teacher at SRE she wouldn't have written

[00:23:18] anything like this at the beginning of this year at the any time last year and it's only because of the trust and i like to say that trust is not very fungible you can't just transfer it it will take a lot of time and i'm concerned for all the kids who are like her who i don't think they're that many of um but would be greatly impacted if you were to take on that kind of division thank you

[00:23:43] jackie marinucci i'm not jackie marinucci but i have a statement from her that she requested to be read to the school board so i will go ahead and do that good evening this statement comes from jackie marinucci of rivana district to share firsthand experience with secondary literacy coaches i teach algebra one and afta at albemarle high school and i've worked with chelsea satchnow a literacy coach at albemarle high school throughout the school year the option to

[00:24:21] Trying to play an instruction with a literacy coach has greatly improved the quality and breadth of my math instruction. I now know I cannot assume my students are prepared to identify, explain why, or predict. I take responsibility for my students' understanding and implementation of these essential academic skills.

[00:24:39] Additionally, my students have greatly benefited from push-in literacy support in the mathematics classroom. My students are receiving real-time support to unpack and understand both cross-curricular vocabulary as well as the mathematical vocabulary. The most obvious anecdotal evidence I have to support the continuance of pushing literacy support is that my students, even ninth graders in Algebra I, are now talking about mathematics in the classroom. The shift from doing the math to talking about the math has been such a strong indicator of student success. Thank you for

[00:25:18] bringing literacy coaches right into the secondary classroom. So all my students can benefit from this crucial level of support. Thank you. And Mr. Glass. All right. My name is John Glass. I live in the Rio District and I work at Alma High School as a Spanish teacher. So I have two things I would like to share with you all today. Two crucial points that significantly impact our educational

[00:25:57] environment. First, I want to give some gratitude to Chelsea Sackno as her exceptional work and support as our literacy specialist. Second, I also would like to highlight the necessity to rigorously enforce our - Could you speak into the microphone, please?

[00:26:13] Yeah. Thank you. You can move it if you need to. So second, I would like to talk about rigorously enforcing our existing cell phone policies across all our schools. So first, to our instructional coach, over the past five years I've been very fortunate to feel very resourced and supported on our department we have lots of collaboration we have very experienced teachers however it was consistently disheartening to feel that the academic fate of many of our students was determined day one that they walked in the classroom due to their enormous literacy gaps that are difficult to address in a Spanish

[00:26:51] classroom when they're learning a second language so prior to Ms. Sackno's work with me, I use dynamic, engaging, fun interventions and activities. However, it was very teacher-centered and overly reliant on the students' ability to form context through, form meaning through context clues, which hid lots of gaps in their literacy, and we were not able to address their deeper understanding. And I like how previously they mentioned that students are now talking about the language. Now, thanks to her and her dimensions, I'm using tiered vocabulary

[00:27:27] I'm using anticipation guides I am using student turn and talk to make meaning inside the language so I would echo that with math in Spanish the same I hear students talking about language and

learning about the language it's hard to teach them Spanish when they don't know when to punctuate or capitalize or quote in their own language so I have more shout outs for Ms. Sackno but all the love to you Chelsea so secondly the pressing issue of cell phones I would like to keep this short as time is against me. It is unreasonable to expect teachers to monitor

[00:28:07] and police cell phones in the classroom. The current policy is not enforced. It is not effective. It is known to our kids as a joke. It is extremely difficult to consistently enforce our cell phone policy. Our admin, our support staff are overworked. They're outworn. Many of our parents support and and engage in the same problems, encouraging students to use their phones.

[00:28:34] I know time's about to run out, but let me say this. It is odd that businesses profit on student attention all day during school. It is odd that, if I may just finish that thought, it is odd that businesses that are profiting on student organizations and school organizations are allowed to have their business hours run constantly without restraint.

[00:29:02] Thank you for your time. you that concludes public comment thanks very much to everyone who spoke tonight next we have our school division work session starting with the school naming review ms waters community education good evening i'm karen waters director of community education and project manager for the school name reviews at your last meeting as the superintendent's designee i shared that

[00:29:37] research into the namesakes of agner hurt elementary resulted in a recognition oh no i don't have a presentation i just have remarks thank you christine okay sorry it's not flashing i wore the yellow though just to give you guys a little excitement oh gosh okay uh at your last meeting as the superintendent's designee i shared that research into the namesakes of agner herd elementary resulted in a recommendation to retain the name agner elementary effective july 1st

[00:30:13] 2024, as Guy Agner Jr. has no association or oversight of public remarks or images on the record that are not reflective of ACPS values or policies. Since this recommendation is in alignment with provision 3B1 of policy FA, if accepted by the board as outlined in provision 3B2 of the policy, there is no need to move on to provision 3B3 and convene a renaming committee. As someone whose first name has literally become an adjective in recent years, I want to just wrap up my remarks

[00:30:49] by reminding the community that our process does not seek to assess a person's character, but rather whether the name and the record are reflective of our current values. And as a grandmother to two Greer geckos, I want to just take this opportunity to commend the board on your fidelity to our division's values throughout this process, which include family, community, wellness, excellence, and equity, as well as your courage to ensure that all means all, and I stand ready to carry out whatever the results of your vote are. Thank you. I'm open

[00:31:28] to a motion. I move we accept the recommendation. Second. Moved by Ms. Osborne and seconded by Ms.

[00:31:43] Spillman. Is there any discussion? No discussion. Okay. Ms. Waters, I wanted to thank you for all your work on this and also really underline what you said.

[00:32:04] We're not here to judge the character of any of the namesakes, but look to see if they match, if the record matches with what our forward-looking values are right now, who our students are today.

[00:32:22] So that is how, certainly, I will be voting. Christine, could we have a roll call vote on that, please? Ms. Spillman? Yes. Ms. Osborne? Yes. Dr. Berlin? Yes.

[00:32:38] Mr. Graham Page? Yes. Dr. Acuff? Yes. Mr. Chuck Pace? Yes. Chair Lee? Yes. So moved. Thank you. Next we have our FY25 budget updates. Ms. Kumazawa from Budget and Planning. Good evening. I'm Maya Kumazawa, Director of Budget and Planning. And this evening I just wanted to provide a moment to give you updates about our budget development process. This is a summary of the school board's funding request that was approved. On the left we have our anticipated revenues at 259.3%.

[00:33:40] 6 million dollars and our proposed expenditures at 272.9 million dollars that excuse me yeah we can't see oh sorry i apologize thank you that's important thank you feel very silly now um these are the anticipated revenues and expenditures that you all have approved which leaves a funding gap of about 3.3 million dollars we talked about how we might address the funding gap to prepare us to

[00:34:18] adopt a budget later in April to plan for higher revenues and a new one I added which is technical updates which I'll review this evening as well as making reductions in our operations. And as a reminder, the budget that is adopted in April is a plan and that can continue to be amended as needed.

[00:34:36] So the first piece is plan for higher revenues. Based on the information we have as of today, the general assembly budget adds about 4.8 million dollars in additional revenue on top of what was presented in the funding request in addition yesterday the board of supervisors proposed a budget that would add 2.9 million dollars to our local transfer they have approved the increase of two tax rates one is the transient occupancy tax rate as well as the personal property tax rate and the 2.9 million is our direct share of this increase in local revenues

[00:35:16] IN ADDITION, STAFF RECOMMEND A ONE-TIME TRANSFER FROM A SPECIAL REVENUE FUND CONTINGENCY OF ABOUT \$1 MILLION AND THEN AN ADDITIONAL USE OF FUND BALANCE OF \$1 MILLION THAT'S SET ASIDE FOR A RESERVE FOR THE NEXT FISCAL YEAR. THE SECOND PIECE IS TECHNICAL CHANGES AND UPDATES TO OUR EXPENDITURES.

[00:35:39] AND THIS IS A SUMMARY OF THOSE TECHNICAL UPDATES. THEY EQUAL ABOUT \$0.1 MILLION IN ADDITIONAL expenditures the reserve is what i mentioned previously of using a one-time fund balance that we might accumulate at the end of the at the end of this current year set in a reserve for next year to provide a flexibility to the school board to use in the way they might want to as well as provide flexibility with our revenue should they change the second item is to implement the 23 to 24 redistricting study by updating staffing allocations according to the approved staffing

[00:36:16] standards. This would provide a savings of about \$200,000. The third item is to update our staffing standards to set a minimum of a 0.5 FTE for music and a 0.5 FTE for art. This would benefit our smallest elementary schools. The next item is to update the compensation proposal to include a market-based increase. That's just as part of a phased approach to ensure that our academic leadership compensation program remains competitive. The next one is to update the cost of the social-emotional supports proposal that would provide savings of

[00:36:54] about one FTE. And the next item is to reduce the budgeted payment for the Piedmont Regional Education Program in the budget for next year. And then finally we have some updates with regards to switching vendors for our technology replacement program and other technical changes that would result in savings as well. The second part of the technical changes is to update our expenditures

based on the General Assembly's budget so in their budget they've approved a different staffing standard for EL staffing that would require us to enhance our staffing

[00:37:31] standard at a cost of about three hundred and sixty thousand dollars in the General Assembly budget also includes more funding for our VPI bright stars program by putting back in place the 0.5 LCI cap that they would so they would fund more for our program which in turn would allow us to decrease our expenditure which is the transfer into the Bright Star Special Revenue Fund and then finally the budget proposes a reduced group life insurance rate for our employees who receive that benefit for the next biennium right now that rate is at

[00:38:07] 1.34 percent of salaries and that would drop to 1.18 percent of annual salaries. So the final category is reducing our expenditures. I just wanted to point out that these were the this was our planned approach to closing the funding gap and we have been working with many iterations of this and being thoughtful about the approach of how we might reduce our expenditures and this is the order and the priority by which we went. We've been working on this since December and as you are aware, our assumptions have changed every month. So we've been updating our scenarios and looking at

[00:38:46] different iterations. So the proposed reduction expenditures tonight is the latest information with regards to how that would fit with our available revenues. So the first category is to defer our replacement cycles. If we defer the replacement of our K through two iPads for one year, that would provide savings of about \$700,000. In addition, we have a recurring transfer to the Vehicle Replacement Fund, which is a fund that replaces our non-bus fleet that the division

[00:39:22] operates, we could pause that transfer of \$200,000 in the next fiscal year. The second category is pause hiring of vacant positions, and these categories include central office and department-based positions, or about \$500,000, reducing vacant foreign language in elementary schools positions at a savings of \$250,000 and eliminating the assistant principal intern program for a savings of \$200,000.

[00:39:55] These savings total about \$1.9 million. The final category is to increase student-to-teacher budgeted ratios by 0.5 for school-based positions that would result in overall FTE reductions about 16.3.

[00:40:13] This is a scenario we've been working on for quite some time, and with the news about the increase in state revenues, as well as the news about an increased local transfer as of yesterday, we have been able to reduce the reduction by a significant amount by just adding 0.5 as part of the budgeted ratio.

[00:40:36] So if in this proposal, the proposed student to teacher ratio in terms of how we budget It would be one FTE per 20.05 K through three student, one FTE per 22.25 four to five student, and one FTE per 23.5 students in grades six through 12.

[00:40:59] The class size reduction ratios would remain unchanged at one FTE per 70 free and reduced lunch students. So if you were to combine those two bullet points, the first two bullet points, the projected average class sizes for next year would be 18.8 for elementary schools 20.8 for middle schools and 21.9 for high schools but let me clarify that's an average so it's not a projection for every class it would be the overall average planning for reductions are ongoing and various applications for these reductions would

[00:41:34] be considered school by school when we talked about this proposal to the teacher teachers of the year this week they asked about well what does that look like in terms of historical class sizes what is the budgeted class size and compare to the actual class size so this visual compares historically what the

elementary class sizes were actually which is the solid bluish line and then the dotted lines on top of that are the budgeted ratios so as you can see

[00:42:14] the actual class sizes on average tend to be lower than the budgeted ratio is because of that additional reduced class size ratio that we add. As you can see from the chart, there's a lot of variability between the minimum class size and the maximum class size. And this is mostly due to the the numbers of students that are in each grade level. So depending on the total number of students in a grade level, sometimes you have very low class sizes and sometimes you have high class sizes depending on how much staffing that school gets in addition there's variability based on

[00:42:50] total enrollment so as you can see during the pandemic years our class sizes were lower than what was budgeted mostly because we saw lower enrollment than what we then budgeted for so the projection for 24 to 25 is if we meet our exact overall enrollment then the average class size and the numbers of students are spread out in a way that you can accommodate these average class sizes that is the projection for next year this is a similar chart for middle school class size so the solid line in the blue

[00:43:28] is what we saw in actual class sizes on average and then the dotted line is the budgeted class size and the same chart for high schools so in summary and this This includes, at a high level, a summary of the detailed proposals.

[00:43:56] So planning for higher revenues, that's about a \$9.7 million revenue increase. Technical updates and further expenditure reductions. Further close our original \$13.3 million funding gap is presented as part of the school board's request.

[00:44:12] All the dollar amounts are preliminary estimates for discussion purposes, and they may be subject to change. So I just have three questions for you, if you have any comments on them, as what else would you like to know? What do you have any clarifying questions?

[00:44:30] Is there any more information we should bring back to the next meeting? Or is there anything you would like to see differently on April 11th? On the Board of Supervisors, are you saying that they agreed to an additional \$3 million to get it?

[00:44:49] Can you go back to that? Yep. I hadn't heard that. Yesterday, the Board of Supervisors approved the advertisement for their tax rates for the next fiscal year. And the advertisement is a maximum rate that they can adopt on May 1st.

[00:45:09] And so that rate is also part of their proposed budget, which is their next iteration of the budget. And my understanding is that unless there's different direction given, that would continue on into May 1st. but May 1st is when they technically approve any tax rates or the budget.

[00:45:29] So nothing is final until May 1st. - But that would mean an additional \$2.9 million? - Yes. - Two of us. - Okay. - Yes.

[00:45:46] - I just have a question about the one-time monies. Sorry, somebody's on my phone for some reason. Yeah, just in terms of what, don't we, aren't we restricted in how we spend that money?

[00:46:05] And what are your thoughts? Are you talking about the special revenue fund contingency or the fund balance for both? - Oh, I don't know what you're talking about. - But the special revenue fund contingency is a special revenue fund that we have.

[00:46:22] We set aside some monies in reserve several years ago for situations that may arise like this year. So we're proposing, and that is one-time money because it's not a recurring source of revenue. And then the additional use of fund balance, from the school fund we do not yet have a projection for how this year might end but we can go ahead and plan for that use and if we do have a savings we can manage to it we can we do have a savings that we want to use carry forward essentially into the next year and use it for a purpose that may come up later

[00:47:00] we can do that it's a contingency how much trouble would it be to for the high schools and maybe even for the middle schools to give us a breakdown of class size by discipline because looking at the average doesn't really tell the picture like in some classes it probably would be not much of a problem to have a larger class size but in some classes like Sciences for instance the class size could vary quite quite a bit so how much trouble would it be for you to give us broken down by discipline the average class size so we each fall we give a

[00:47:38] class size report to the board and dr mclaughlin i saw him nodding his head he's going to send that out so these are projections and we don't know until it all shakes out in terms of enrollment at the schools what the actual class sizes will be but in november that's when we provide the report once once everything is settled so he'll send that to you and it gives you five years worth of class sizes by subject area by level and it'll help you get an idea of what all the different class sizes are within that range so you'll have a better picture of it okay and board members i'm

[00:48:17] happy to send that now it's also on the october 12th uh esb site uh where we have the class size report if you want it sooner thank you pat did the teachers when you were talking to the teachers of of the year and they asked about the class sizes especially specifically for elementary school did they give any feedback on what that might look like or how they felt about that the one specific takeaway I had that they said was the average doesn't necessarily mean much for an individual teacher because

[00:48:55] as you saw there's a pretty big range and what they're actually seeing and what they're dealing with on an individual basis as a as a budgeting exercise there's not much more we can do beyond predicting an average based on our current staffing standards because we staff based on projected total numbers of students there may be other ways to do it but that is how our current staffing standard is that's the best way to say it and the other piece is that when the principals have their staffing allocations and I'm looking at several principals so what they do is they come in and they are required to

[00:49:34] make a staffing plan where they can show how they're going to use the staffing and then it they actually have it broken down by classes the numbers of students in each class and our staff works with them like Dr. Kaiser, Maya, Dr. Hayes will work with them to ensure that they can use their staffing to keep the class sizes at a minimum to the greatest extent. We do hold in reserve some staffing so that as the school year gets underway or based on early enrollments for

[00:50:10] like kindergarten or then as students return in the fall, we can add some staffing for areas where they're going to have trouble with higher class sizes. But yeah, when we report in October or November, we break it all out because we know that the average doesn't communicate what's actually going on in the schools. So we do everything we can to ensure that the plan is good. They've got a good plan going into the year for class sizes that are going to be helpful and beneficial for kids and teachers. And then we catch it on the other side to see what they actually panned out

[00:50:48] to look like. And with regard to one-time money, our effort is to get the one-time money out of expenditures to to your point dr. Acuff which is well taken that an example of that would be having used the the American recovery funds for the SEL coaches and spending down that money that's a big cost in the budget to move them from one time to recurring it's a great investment but that's what happens when you've been relying on the one-time money so as we've gone through

[00:51:27] these exercises to get to do our prioritization maya keeps reminding us that the cut when we're looking at personnel we've got to also think about the cuts right because cuts will sustain the reduction in expenditure from one year to the next whereas a reduction in one-time spending doesn't do that and we need to avoid the one-time money going into personnel so that's why you see things like pausing, replacement cycles, things like that. That's one time and it helps us avoid

[00:52:03] using one-time money. Well, I just want to thank you, Maya, because I know that this vote by the Board of Supervisors was last night and you made this presentation at 8.30 this morning and I'm very pleased that the additional \$3 million, \$2.9 million, has permitted us to only increase class sizes by a half instead of a whole one whole percentage one whole child student so thank you for your work on this the preliminary plans that all the schools have done were based on one class

[00:52:41] size one student increase and now they'll be as everything goes through and you know we have every reason to think that it will then we'll be able to return the staffing back to the schools so they'll have a little more to work with. And I just echo Dr. Acuff's thanks. Thank you, Maya.

[00:53:02] Budget season's almost over, Maya. Maya, this might not be a bright question, I don't know, but we have a number of open classrooms in the division, so I'm assuming that when I look at these, the high numbers that we're talking about per teacher, really, not per classroom, depending on how we've organized those classes, like we might a super classroom with two sections in there at the same time is that right i believe it is per

[00:53:35] teacher okay it's per teacher thank you mr case um just this is not um any difference in prioritization or anything like that but because we have had so many um proposals that we've been thinking through um if when we do come back to um to approve it if we could have just like this is what's left and then this is what we ended up cutting um because it's just hard to keep track i think

[00:54:12] for us and for um me i'll say maybe not us but uh and for the public possibly so we know everything that's still in and everything that was cut in terms of the proposals that have been presented to you as you okay just for tonight they are all uh they remain as they are um with the exception of technical changes that we've made anything else i would just like to acknowledge this the board of supervisors working to increase our funding i mean clearly they have some other

[00:54:49] issues that they want to address but they have helped us close this gap and i am very appreciative of it so on april 11th we will continue working on the scenarios and improve it as best we can we're hoping that you would in concept approve a scenario on april 11th so that we would be prepared to adopt a more detailed budget on april 25th and as i mentioned on may 1st the board of supervisors will finalize their tax rates and adopt and appropriate our budget which is part of

[00:55:24] the county's larger budget on july 1st the fiscal year begins and as i mentioned if we have other updates with the state or local or expenditures we will have opportunities to amend the budget and the appropriation. Thank you. Thank you very much, Maya. Next, we have a 10-minute break.

[00:55:45] I'm seeing 7:26 on my computer, so we'll be back at 8:27. All right, we are back to order. Next, [01:07:11] we have chronic absenteeism starting with Dr. Daphne Kaiser, community engagement. Good evening,

[01:08:21] Chair Lee and school board members. Thank you for the opportunity to engage with you during this work session focused on chronic absenteeism eab or the education advisory board supports over 2 500 organizations from k-12 to college to career eab works with leaders and practitioners to accelerate progress and drive results on the most important and challenging

[01:08:54] issues facing education. They partner with more than 450 of the world's best-known corporations through Saramount, a corporation focusing on diversity, equity, and inclusion. Together, EAB and Saramount provide a unique platform for collaboration among education and corporate leaders to address and ultimately close equity gaps. At EAB, their mission is to make education smarter and communities stronger.

[01:09:26] There are six core values that power the organization's work, including commitment to success, approach work with a spirit of generosity, believe in the power of insight, think big, act with speed and intention, and build on connectedness.

[01:09:46] ACPS has partnered with EAB on several research projects, and this past summer, the ACPS Strategic planning department contacted EAB and asked for research strategies and support around the issue of chronic absenteeism. EAB partnered with ACPS and during the beginning of the school year consultants presented to the principals and executive leadership team during the opening leadership meeting. Throughout the year a few schools have continued work closely with EAB

[01:10:19] and their chronic absenteeism cohort. We are so glad to have Ms. Sade Young, EAB director and K-12 partner research engagement and success with us this evening to share with the board the broad global landscape and complexities that school divisions across the country are facing and working through with regards to the issue. Ms. Young will also share some research data and best practice strategies that have been found to be successful with their partner schools in dealing

[01:10:57] with the issue of chronic absenteeism. We welcome Ms. Young. Please join us. We're so glad to have you with us this evening to address the Albemarle County School Board during this work session on chronic absenteeism. Thank you for that lovely introduction. I feel like I don't have to even say much about eab now um i'll just reintroduce myself um like dr kaiser said my name is shada

[01:11:31] young and i serve as director of k-12 research and subject matter expert to lovely to give a lovely summary to what eab's core mission is when it comes to k-12 we pride ourselves on using research to tackle the sleepless nights caused by school related issues so whatever is a pressing issue for a school district nationwide we vow to research it and find some best practices and

[01:12:04] solutions to help you all navigate it today we're talking about chronic absenteeism eab uses the national definition of chronic absenteeism which is missing 10 or more can you hear me if i step over here or more of the academic year and that's for any reason and this becomes a common area of misconception the easiest way to put it is chronic absenteeism is counted by every day a student is

[01:12:38] not in seat whether that's excused unexcused sick suspended mental health vacation anything so just so we're clear particularly the research has grown since we first released it in 2018 because the

pandemic exacerbated the issue of absenteeism to be beyond the point of chronic today to guide our discussion and i want to start by saying this was a large study

[01:13:12] even the original deck was over 60 slides so i reduced it to about 45 minutes so if it feels like there's areas missing i provided the whole deck with links to the full research so you can take a look in additional webinars but this is a high level overview so to guide our discussion i want to pinpoint what's changed in chronic absenteeism and what's driving the problem today we'll discuss three essential conditions for addressing chronic absenteeism and again we'll support your district with next steps we already have a number of district members and school

[01:13:49] leaders in our parent communications cohort for chronic absenteeism and we have another one started in April, then I'm happy to say we'll have additional members in. So what is the cost of chronic absenteeism for both students in the district? Starting with the data highlighted on the left side of your screen, we see that chronic absenteeism significantly predicts future difficulties for students. They're less likely to read at grade level by third grade. They're four times more likely to drop out of high school than their peers. And this was the most surprising part

[01:14:27] of the research for me, that chronic absenteeism harms all students. I'll pause for that if you look on the right. The percentage of chronically absent classmates predicts low reading and math achievement for all students present or absent. Turning to the bottom of the slide, there are financial implications to chronic absenteeism. For instance, during the pandemic, districts in Texas, saw a loss of nearly \$2 million by just a 2% increase in absenteeism.

[01:15:03] This issue is even more critical in 28 states where school funding directly ties to attendance rate. We call that ADA, that ADA states are funded based on average daily attendance.

[01:15:20] That funding stream, if you follow me on the right, leads to funding for special education, meal replacement, textbooks, transportation, and even summer school programs. So in summary, there's an educational impact and a financial impact to absenteeism.

[01:15:40] The nationwide data paints a familiar but unsettling picture as well. As you can see, there are roughly twice as many students chronically absent compared to before the pandemic. And I know there's a bit of a dip there in 2020, but that's partially due to varying attendance policies during online learning.

[01:16:01] and there are are a couple things to note here there are some states missing from this analysis because they did not have their results in by time of this release but if you look at historical data they would trend down and not up but we just want to be clear and secondly why is promising to see that marginal improvement in the 22 to 23 school year chronic absenteeism rates are still almost twice as high as pre-pandemic and we still have a long way to go and as you see on the right 92 percent of district leaders report being very or moderately concerned about chronic absenteeism

[01:16:41] and they came to us to do something about it a lot of the existing research before we did our study will have you believe that chronic absenteeism is a problem specifically pertaining to students of color low-income special education students and we want to note that while disparities exist we're seeing significant increases in chronic absenteeism among all income quartiles ages among all locales every single demographic has had an increase in chronic absenteeism

[01:17:17] as a result districts are grappling with the challenge of responding to the increase in numbers of students absent from day to day despite claims of employing a multi-tiered system of strategies it

becomes evident that the existing policies are not effective upon closer examination tier 2 and tier 3 interventions are essentially one-to-one approaches targeting individuals and lacking a genuinely tiered or scalable system this deficiency leads to a metaphorical eruption as you

[01:17:53] you see on the screen. As the absence of scalable strategy exacerbates, on the right side of the slide, you see it's impossible to resolve this by simply increasing staffing levels. A significant 45% of districts report being understaffed this year alone. And although some have used ESSER funds to address the problems temporarily, and you all have talked about this, these funds are set to expire within a few months add into the complexity that while the number of students decrease the funding to address the issue also decreases if the support plans districts currently

[01:18:32] use aren't working we need to understand why and through research we identified three main root causes one parents are less likely to send their children to school since the pandemic two students reasons for absences go undressed unaddressed and teachers are underutilized in the fight against absenteeism the research not only highlighted challenges but it also unveiled three vital conditions essential for reducing absenteeism and that's one parents need to know why and when

[01:19:10] to bring their students to school students can and want to show up for school and teachers need to know how to embrace their role in impacting attendance so now let's spend a little time talking about the importance of engaging parents directly when it comes to attendance the fact is we've seen a combination of new and old factors create the perfect storm for increasing the likelihood that parents will just say it's okay you can stay home from school if you look at the column on the left these are our traditional reasons right illness housing mobility threats

[01:19:47] to safety mental health but if you look towards the middle these are three new reasons that we uncovered in under the research of why parents are more likely to say it's all right you can stay home from school and number one district messaging has wavered on when to keep your kid home over the last few years when they're not feeling well two parents increasingly doubt the value of in-person learning largely to the pandemic and online learning them working from home and finally

[01:20:23] parents have a historic pattern of being poor monitors and estimators of their children's absences we've seen research where parents underestimate their absence at students absence by at least two percent this is now a situation in which parents are not understanding the benefit of nc attendance and actively fighting against it while we all know that parents are a big part of the equation particularly for young students we know that they're they're their hope they are not the whole piece when we get to the middle school and high school level we know the decision around

[01:21:01] whether whether to come to school or not is often left up to the students if you look on the left these are what we uncover as district's most common strategies we have the carrot and the stick where you have your attendance recognition awards your donuts for 100 attendance and these are good for students who are already self-motivated then you have your punitive measures such as detention or suspension which only exacerbates the issue if the student doesn't want to be there anyway

[01:21:34] making it incapable for them to come is not helpful we also see districts addressing basic needs for students providing free breakfast laundry services even late but late bus pickup and that's helpful and we're not saying that you should stop that but we're saying it doesn't have the same impact and rewards as before so if you follow me to the right these are the new reasons why kids are skipping school two-thirds of kids aren't comfortable telling an adult if they're

[01:22:06] being bullied one out of two students are unsure about their academic level they actually question the we had direct quotes that students said they question even if that what they're learning in school connects to their future they question if they can even be successful at school if they do attend then we see one out of two kids saying they don't belong at school and you see um kids not

[01:22:40] i'm sorry that was background you see kids not connecting the classes to the future so it's a problem it's not just the parents are feeding into it but the students aren't even having the conversations with the parents to create that buy-in we're also seeing it with teachers parents feel disconnected from their teachers they want to hear from teachers about their students success right now we find that districts have front desk personnel admin calling and sending letters about their student attendance and they're frankly disengaged with that they feel that those

[01:23:17] people even leaders do not understand their child and they're not investing in the outcome of their student returning and so today we're going to focus on addressing those three groups thinking about building the conditions in schools where parents understand why and when to bring their kids to school where students can and want to be in school and where teachers understand and embrace their the role that they play in the equation before we dive into each category i invite you to pause for a minute and think to yourself what do these three conditions look like in our district

[01:23:53] today which one have the most for improvement and are we excelling in any area currently so here's Here's our roadmap. Like I said, this study is a large study with nine practices.

[01:24:10] For the sake of time, I'll go through and highlight one to two practice for each subgroup, parents, students, and teachers. Let's talk about parents again. Like I said, the parent misconception has grown.

[01:24:26] As you see, we have 63% of K through sixth grade teachers saying parent misconception is the main cause of absenteeism and 26 percent of 7th through 12th graders though there's a grade level split almost all agree that parents values around attendance have changed so let's look at the parent beliefs that i shared in the previous slide we see that parents are uncertain to send kids to school and we see that district messaging has not caught up we see that parents increasingly

[01:25:04] doubt the value and districts having corrected the pandemic era messaging promoting virtual learning as the same as in-person learning there has been no messaging on record to talk about to re-engage students and talk about how post-pandemic in-person learning is even more crucial and then like i said parents underestimate the frequency of their child's absence but parents also only hear messaging when their child is truant they feel that there's a gap between one two and three

[01:25:38] day messaging and it only comes as a punitive letter once it's too late before we talk about the solution let's look at the typical status quo timeline so if you follow along and this is let me back this is for most districts your district may be different but about at the fifth absent depending on the time of the year parents receive a mandated state warning letter the parent feels blamed it causes fear denial and then we see this gap where there's actually no change

[01:26:16] in behavior then the student enters tier three they have their state mandated one-on-one case management meeting and there's still either no change in behavior to we have reports of districts reporting their parents are pulling their student out and homeschooling them in the upper grade students

are dropping out this two messaging system is not working what we at eab propose is a reimagining of that timeline but first we begin with supportive outreach before the mandated

[01:26:54] truancy letter so this looks like absence triggered automated messaging such as text directly to parents offering parents support to get kids back in school next if absence continue to accumulate and daily attendance fall below 90 percent we're started early so if it falls below 90 this is where we move to targeted teacher-led outreach for example a teacher can send an empathetic email saying we miss your child they missed this work can't wait to see them back if If absences persist, we recommend sending a second form of communication, such as a phone

[01:27:34] call or a home visit, just another intense engagement to reengage that child. This may happen before or after that state-mandated letter. On this timeline, we're looking at it throughout the whole year, but depending on your district and regulations, it may happen before or after that letter.

[01:27:56] The good news is that if it happens after the letter, they would have had the text message already and it wouldn't come as a shock. If things continue to get worse, we enter the Tier 3 category. This is when the student falls below 80%.

[01:28:12] And again, this is for unexcused and excused absences. We don't want to wait until we're in truancy territory. At this point is where we recommend the one-to-one intervention, such as a home visit, mentor an attendance mentor, a parent resource survey, anything that can help alleviate those barriers and get the student back in school on a one-to-one level. So again, all of this is aligned in best practices. This timeline focuses on frequent supportive outreach, not punitive. And the more

[01:28:52] you focus on that movable middle, that tier two level, that's why you see multiple engagements at that point, then that frees up resources to move to the tier three level for our students that need higher needs and higher intervention. So here's an example of what the text messaging looks like.

[01:29:13] We pair the message with supportive resources. So as you see, like, hey, Avery was out. And then we have, and this can look different at any school, but it's a simple reply where they can request resources, request time with their teacher, or request mental help. This eliminates the feeling of shame that parents may have making that first phone call to ask for help. It automates the response, so each number goes to the actual party that can help address that need, and it's automated. So

[01:29:48] you always, at the time in that it goes out, we recommend two to three days of of absence excused or unexcused and they receive that as the first messaging and this will come well before a truancy letter the field of psychology teaches us that there are four key actions to motivating behavioral change one is showing understanding without placing blame empowering others to ask for help removing room for interpretation and clarifying the cost of the current mindset to motivate parents to change their behavior about allowing their kids to miss

[01:30:28] school eab researchers have incorporated behavior change concepts into our communication strategies this strategy such as the text messaging focuses on what to message utilizing evidence to counter misbelief we also explore when to message which is up to the school but early taking into account parent preference for messaging whether that's text or a phone call or email and lastly we talk about how to message by integrating the science of behavior change message tone

[01:31:03] and utilizing the most effective messenger for communications which we believe our teachers another tactic that we have to offer is that attendance nudge policy and this is a principle as you see

outlined in the turquoise that you can post around schools you can send the first day of class and this is a immediate quick checklist that parents can look out in the morning and go through to decide if they should send their kid to school so see you in class yes you have a runny

[01:31:35] nose but you don't have a temperature over 104. um no throwing up no diarrhea um ice crusty may want to stay home like you can go through quickly because we found that parents do not know where to find attendance uh measures for the district or their individual school especially in the timely manner they are usually not phone accessible or they have been sent in a net in a newsletter at the beginning of school and they're far removed from it to have never heard of those new changes again so this is a

[01:32:12] principle we've seen people put it on magnets for refrigerators and it's definitely posted around the school we also recommend graphics we have to keep in mind the different learning levels of our parents the different languages of our parents so anytime you can use graphics stoplights colors anything that can immediately signal what the parent is to do is always helpful we also as you see at the bottom of the turnout you always have to make a push of why this is important for the parent it's not just about not missing school it's about what NC attendance affords your child and that's time management skills

[01:32:51] problem-solving skills collaboration we are when we send any type of attendance material we want to highlight the positive as well as be honest about what the consequences may be we also want to provide resources at every turn whether that's the phone number to call for help or if it's the text message that links to the service so this is another template that we offer you can change it your school colors you can add your own messaging but we want to take out and i'll show you the screen we want to take out the guesswork out of all of our interventions it's not enough to just

[01:33:31] say what you need to do but we actually walk districts through it and as we mentioned earlier we have a parent communication collaborative in play right now we just completed session three um this is just an outline of the deeper dive we're doing on parent messaging so that was a high level overview but we're actually working on individual plans for districts we have a number of people like i said in the session and they go through these workshops with the step-by-step process to tailor interventions for parents for your district so let's talk about students quickly

[01:34:09] our question here was what conditions were needed for to make kids feel personally motivated to come the school so eab has extensive research library on positive school behavior but when we that was completed in 2018 when the pandemic added the element of student disinterest to absenteeism we went back and re-evaluated how those motivations would lead to this study and this is what we came up with to motivate students to attend school they need to feel confident that success is possible

[01:34:49] they need to have a connection to peers and adults they need to be engaged in school community activities they need to know that their school is there for them and that help is available when needed as you see at the bottom after three years of limited progress districts are worse in multiple areas 71 of 13 and 19 year olds now say that school work makes them feel anxious and depressed four in ten students feel less connected to peers or adults in their school and only 39 percent of

[01:35:21] students have taken classes or participated in programs to explore careers our research though extensive we um for the sake of this i wanted to focus on the two that was most accessible and we saw over a hundred school districts say that they wanted to build relationship connections for schools so we have a practice that combines a positive relationship mapping and student interest conversation so i want to show you why that's important and then show you the tool so i don't

[01:35:57] have to tell you that relationships are important we know that it's the cornerstone of improving student achievement we know that when students have strong relationships with adults in the building they are more likely to be interested in their classes they are less likely to be bullies and they're less likely to feel sad or depressed so for the purpose of this conversation we also know that students with a strong connection to adults are more likely to attend school so one particular school in warshaw county they developed an extension of what we call relationship mapping

[01:36:34] they called this the relationship mapping exercise tool and it was actually a spreadsheet and if you follow me they put every student in the school name on the left and then they had teachers go through for each student and they have to put a check mark if they recognize the student's name or face they had to put a check mark if they knew the student's academic standing if they had regular regular positive feedback for the student if they had non-academic facts they knew about the student and if they knew the student's story if they knew the student they

[01:37:10] would put their initials in that trusted adult category they did this six weeks i'll go through the process they did this the first six weeks of school they gave time for teachers to naturally meet the students speak to them in the halls by the six weeks when they filled out the spreadsheet they found that i'll go back students that were trending about tier two all the way to tier three chronically absent had the least amount of connections with teachers, if you see the second

[01:37:46] row and the third row and the last row. They also made correlations to the grades of these students, and they found that the students with the least connection also had lower grades. I'll go back to what they did next. So after they reviewed the gaps, they made a plan to fill in the gaps with additional staff. They came up with a practice called a two by two. So they would have to make two connections, if you follow me at the bottom, they would have to make two connections with two

[01:38:24] students twice a day. They cannot talk about, they cannot be in the class and they cannot talk about academic stuff. They did that for a semester and they saw an 18% growth in the graduation rate as they studied it from 2012 to 2017.

[01:38:43] So this is a practice that we offer the actual mapping tool and the instructions can be adapted. We've seen schools adapted by adding student pictures to it. We've seen them adapted to cover, like I said, not just attendance, but behavior and grades and any area where they believe adult intervention could help improve the student.

[01:39:10] so i just want to share this quickly this is another resource we can provide and lastly teachers our final section is short but nonetheless very crucial like i said parents want to hear from teachers about their student progress and i know you may think when i say teachers add another thing to their plate they wear so many hats how will they have the time how will they know what to do and we have two practices to share with you one is a basic

[01:39:45] checklist or a log and this is where you define one to two actions that a teacher must do every day every week and then you can go every quarter and these are clear whether it's log attendance have a personal welcome for students who are out and then weekly they're calling parents we've seen teachers send postcards but some type of second touch for absent students and then every quarter what does that escalate to in the positive in the affirmative whether that's a party or whatever the

[01:40:21] the student activities um the student type activities that they would like to see or if that's an escalation of joining a home visit to further engage but this was helpful for teachers because it was short it was simple they were able to post it in their class it didn't take a lot of prep or think time as they took the role they could go through at the end of the day and say check off each one we know that elementary looks different than middle school and high school so this is also a checklist that can be given to counselors or homeroom teachers but whoever has

[01:40:58] the most engagement with that student we want to make the process easy and simple we did that we have resources we saw success with that but they came back and they said okay the checklist is helpful but when teachers reach out to parents they don't know what to say so we came up with a script this script is not just a read a long script but it offers a scenario and then a potential answer so if a parent says this this is how you can answer we found success with this because again teachers don't have time to think of every

[01:41:37] scenario they want to focus on a positive relationship with the parents so they felt uncomfortable having hard conversations about attendance and re-engagement without knowing the proper words to say in a supportive manner so that's where the checklist i mean the script came in so you see that on the left how did this work we found success when districts gave this during faculty meetings or plcs at the beginning of the year before teachers needed it so teachers didn't feel singled out they started the year informed

[01:42:13] and this paired with the checklist they knew when to make these calls conversations or emails and they have the guide to guide them through. And this is, again, another editable resource that we can provide. All of this is to lay the framework, but we want districts to color it with their own information and what they know their teachers need to support them. So as we close today, I want you to leave knowing that you can ensure that parents know why and when to bring their

[01:42:48] kids to school. You can take the guesswork out of student connections and have them wanting to come the school and you can empower teachers in the fight against absenteeism so thank you for your

[01:42:59] time and attention agenda for this portion of the work session includes a review of our our agenda

[01:44:37] for this portion of the work session includes a review of our ACPS vision mission definition and discussion of chronic absenteeism dr. Rusty Carlock equity education data scientists will present data on the current state of chronic absenteeism and ACPS. Dr. Jessie Turner, director of student and family support, will discuss the division plan for supporting schools. School leaders will share specific strategies that they

[01:45:12] have implemented and found success this year. And lastly, at the conclusion of the presentation, the team will field any questions from the board. All of our work and everything we do in ACPS is centered around our strategic plan learning for all. Our vision, learners are engaged in authentic, challenging, and relevant learning experiences, becoming lifelong contributors and leaders in our dynamic and diverse society. Our mission, working together as a team, we will end the

[01:45:49] predictive value of race, gender, and special capacities for our children's success through high-quality teaching and learning for all. We seek to build relationships with families and communities to ensure that every student succeeds and we will know every student. Our values include equity, excellence,

family and community, and wellness. And our goals thrive in students, affirming and empowering communities and equitable and transformative resources.

[01:46:21] And although our session tonight touches on all goals, the primary focus will be around goal one and goal two, thriving students and affirming and empowering communities.

[01:46:36] Our Every Day Matters, Every Moment Counts attendance campaign this year focuses on enhancing and making our school communities dynamic, positive, highly active environments so that all students feel positive connections to their schools, where there are strong relationships between students, teachers, staff, families, and community.

[01:47:00] We want students to be eager and excited about coming to school, engaging in everyday learning. Whether an avid field trip, school-wide morning meeting, listening session, after-school club activities, STEAM activities, et cetera, providing diverse activities that connects students to their interests and passions will support our efforts to reduce chronic absenteeism.

[01:47:34] In recent years, school divisions across the nation have been working to reduce chronic absenteeism. The pandemic has exacerbated the issue, as Ms. Young has stated and presented in her presentation. And now school divisions are seeing chronic absentee rates that are double what they have experienced prior to the pandemic.

[01:47:57] In our school division, the highest rates of chronic absenteeism had been around 10%. However, since the pandemic, we have been seeing rates of 20% to 25%. Prior rates that were once the highest are now the lowest.

[01:48:14] Chronic absenteeism is missing more than 10% of school during an academic year, including excused and unexcused absences and suspensions. Considering the academic year, this equates to about 18 days per year, roughly two to three days per month.

[01:48:36] Chronic absenteeism is compounded as students miss school during the elementary years. Students miss that foundational knowledge, which results in anxiety around catching up and the lack of content knowledge.

[01:48:52] Students continue to miss school, and this cycle is just continuous. So there are a number of barriers to regular school attendance. And this chart gives you a wide range from trauma, poor transportation, housing and food insecurity, to anxiety, parents having negative experiences in school, to lack of challenging

[01:49:30] culturally responsive instruction, lack of academic and behavioral supports, and then their misconceptions about absences are only the problem if they're unexcused and missing two days per month doesn't really affect learning. So these are just a wide array of barriers. The prevalence of chronic absence signals

[01:50:03] underline systemic challenges that impede academic and personal well-being, reflecting the struggles and stresses faced by students and families in their daily lives. Schools must therefore play a pivotal role in addressing these barriers, providing the necessary programmatic and policy interventions to support families in overcoming these challenges.

[01:50:28] By doing so, schools can mitigate the adverse effects on student achievement, engagement, mental well-being, ensuring a supportive and conducive learning environment for all students. Schools,

families, and communities can improve attendance when they work together. Families and communities need hope for a better future. The confidence in schools that they can help their students to succeed and the resources, skills, and knowledge needed to actively support students to

[01:51:02] engage in school. And then schools need everybody to have all hands on deck. They need trauma-informed and restorative strategies to meet the needs of students and families. And they need the district to provide effective policies and systems that support school staff in taking and promoting positive problem-solving practices. So there are a number of reasons why it's important for us to focus on school attendance.

[01:51:41] And some of this you heard in the previous presentation. Students living in poverty are two to three times more likely to be chronically absent. The most marginalized groups, Pacific Islander, Native American, African American, Hispanics, students with disabilities, and high school students are impacted disproportionately.

[01:52:08] student anxiety leads to decisions to skip school students just example students in lower grades who are chronically absent they result in the lack of foundational knowledge as these concepts get harder throughout the grades the lack of understanding compounds and anxiety sets in leading to students in the cycle of skipping school. And then, you know, chronic absenteeism

[01:52:42] can be addressed by stating expectations to families, developing and implementing plans and monitoring to address student barriers to attendance, and increasing positive student engagement and providing training for school administrators and staff. So at this time, I would like to turn it over to Dr. Carlock, the equity education data scientist who will discuss

[01:53:11] the state of chronic absenteeism in ACPS. Thank you, Dr. Kaiser. Thank you, Ms. Young. Thanks to everyone. It's a pleasure to be here with everyone tonight to talk about this important issue.

[01:53:30] This first chart shows Albemarle County Public Schools' chronic absentee rate back to 2012 and how that rate compares to the state. You can see the large increase in chronic absenteeism that occurred during the pandemic the spike in the data represents a 96 percent increase in those years of 2020 to 2023 comparing to the red line that's the state average during that time period we can see that prior to the pandemic many of those years we were well below the state average however that began to change around 2016 and continued during and after the pandemic so that we were then above

[01:54:05] the the state rate in our most recent data through the middle of march we've seen a 25 percent decline in our chronic absentee rate from the previous year this improvement is meaningful as it represents around 800 fewer chronically absent students this year compared to last year and again that's pulling data from march 14th this is looking at the flip side so what does our positive attendance rate look like and how does that compare to our chronic absentee rate so these charts are comparing q1 and q2 from this school year to last school year and we can see again that there's an increase in attendance in our school district this year relative to last

[01:54:44] year and again that difference is meaningful so just in those first two quarters those changes which seem somewhat small here represent 14 300 additional days of attendance for students throughout the division so in the next few slides we're going to look at variation in chronic absenteeism within our school division and we'll start by looking at variation across our school levels these charts show that high

school students are slightly more likely to be chronically absent than middle and elementary school students when we get a little more granular with the data and we

[01:55:21] start looking across grade levels what we see is that on the early side of elementary school so kindergarten first grade chronic absenteeism is higher and on the later side of high school so 11th and 12th graders it's also higher it's in the middle of students schooling trajectory through our k-12 system where we have the lowest levels of chronic absenteeism for our students this slide shows variation in chronic absenteeism across all of our schools in albermouth county as we begin to look at variation across schools and groups i want to reiterate the importance of looking at these

[01:55:57] data from a systems asset-based perspective this is to help us identify how and where we can do a better job of supporting schools, students, and families is to help us to see how we can facilitate collaboration among schools, families, and the community to remove the barriers that can lead to chronic absenteeism. We can see that there is a significant variation across schools in terms of their chronic absentee rates. Systemic factors such as economic hardship, transportation, access to health care, and others lead to some of our schools supporting three times as many students facing chronic absenteeism as other schools.

[01:56:35] As you can imagine, this means the resources needed to confront these issues also varies across our schools. This chart shows chronic absentee rates by membership groups of race and ethnicity, and we can see that all membership groups experienced stark increases during the pandemic, and that all groups have seen an improvement since then. We can also see disparities in chronic absenteeism, with Latino and Black students more likely to face the challenges that lead to chronic absenteeism at rates two to two and a half times that of others.

[01:57:12] Similarly, if we look at our English learners compared to our non-English learners, we see that there's been a rising rate of absenteeism since 2017. But this is also true for all of our students.

[01:57:31] It has been increasingly true for our English learners, though for them as well we have also seen an improvement this school year thus far. This chart shows the same variation in chronic absent rates between students with special needs and their peers.

[01:57:47] The disparities between students with IEPs and those without them has persisted all the way back through 2012 and showed similar patterns of increase during the pandemic and improvement since. While all of these variables, school, race, ethnicity, English learner status, and special needs are important in identifying where we can better support students facing challenges that lead to chronic absenteeism, the variable that was most important in identifying the challenges of chronic absenteeism at the school level was economic hardship.

[01:58:18] This plot shows our elementary schools combined into geographic region, their percentage of students receiving free and reduced lunch on the horizontal axis, and the chronic absentee rate for students within that region on the vertical axis. We can see that as the rate of economic hardship experienced by a school community increases, so too does its chronic absentee rate with a very strong correlation.

[01:58:40] This shows the importance of building relationships with families, as our previous presenters have discussed, partnering with our communities to confront economic hardship while also mitigating its impact on students' school attendance.

[01:58:55] If we use these same variables of free and reduced lunch enrollment and chronic absenteeism but instead plot our individual schools, we see the same relationship. As the rates of poverty and economic hardship increase in the community, so does chronic absenteeism. However, we can also see there is more variation.

[01:59:13] There are some schools below this trend line that have lower rates of chronic absenteeism when accounting for the economic hardship that students face. This provides us opportunity to identify schools that are leaders in addressing some of these issues, and also to find where some of our divisions work to improve these trends is taking root.

[01:59:31] I'm excited now to pass it over to Dr. Kaiser and Dr. Turner, as well as our principals, who will discuss the division-level supports and school-level supports to address these issues. Thank you.

[02:00:08] The ACPS district attendance team establishes a system of aligned district level policies, practices, and supports to facilitate and sustain improved attendance, engagement, and academic achievement.

[02:00:25] We strive to do this by a number of things. Capacity building, building the capacity of our school leaders, staff, and school teams to implement a multi-tiered approach to support a culture of high attendance and we use actionable research to provide accurate and timely actionable attendance and absenteeism data to our district leaders and our school leaders we have a notice from dr mclaughlin every week to check our power bi

[02:01:04] information, so the schools have access to data to monitor their attendance. Positive engagement equips schools with the evidence-based strategies to positively engage students and families, and the schools have implemented the EAB strategies this year and have found them helpful.

[02:01:34] partnerships we've mobilized our community partners to help us address the barriers to attendance and we had a business partner breakfast today to talk about our school champions and and so we want our partners to be engaged and involved in our work as well adequate equitable transformative resources to ensure that resources are sufficient and equitably allotted to schools with

[02:02:11] the greatest needs. In shared accountability, established systems to hold both the district and the school level staff accountable for doing their part to reduce chronic absenteeism. And so each of the district as well as the schools have attendance teams. We also provide compliance support. There are checklists and templates that are in PowerSchool that the schools have access to. There's compliance training and PowerSchool training for office

[02:02:51] associates. And then the Director of Student and Family Support, Dr. Turner, he works with the school level teams. Each school level team has set goals and developed their attendance plan and put them in action. They've convened their attendance team, they've progress monitored, they've initiated their tiered response and reported and documented their progress in their strategic school

[02:03:27] improvement plan and consistently updated information in PowerSchool. We've We've adopted and implemented the EAB best practices. We state attendance expectations and guidelines for families, build school incentives so that students will want to come to school, ensure that teachers and staff know their responsibilities regarding attendance.

[02:03:55] And we've used the scripts and a lot of the supplemental resources that EAB provides to help engage with our families we've initiated our division level attendance communication the nudges and we've had videos that have gone out to our families we also provide our bright arrow bright chat text message support to send family frequent messaging regarding attendance and we've implemented the division level

[02:04:33] incentives and recognition for improved attendance and and have these recognitions each quarter for our schools at each level and then we've also provided division level resources and support the division level attendance team meets monthly to hear the challenges across the division to problem-solve, provide supports to schools. We also work across departments to get the resources

[02:05:09] and supports out to the schools and address the challenges. And then we've developed and we've given incentives to the schools and we've gotten their feedback around the incentives for both teachers and students for their attendance. And now at this time, I would like to turn it over to Dr. Jesse Turner, Director of Student and Family Support, who will discuss the school level

[02:05:41] attendance teams and communication and family engagement. Good evening. I'd like to talk a little bit about what we are doing at the school level. And you've heard about the crisis that's going on with chronic absenteeism, truancy, one of the things that we wanted to do this year was we really wanted to take another look at how we could really beef up what we're doing at the school

[02:06:18] level to help with attendance. At the end of the day, the biggest way for us to get children to come to school is for people in the schools to know the children. It's those relationships that that that make children want to come to school and the things that go on at school so but in order to do that you you got to have a system of of knowing and and being in tune with student attendance so we wanted to really work on our school-based attendance teams started in July

[02:06:58] with conversations that I had with principals either in leadership meetings or uh doing an individual conversation so we wanted to make sure that each school had an attendance team that would be made up of uh of a school administrator a counselor an oa because oftentimes an oa uh is the person who is uh working with sending out the letters or some form of communication

[02:07:36] school nurse when possible sometimes children are missing school because of an illness and the only one who might really know about that situation could be the nurse so the nurse can help provide information to the team in our schools that have the SEL coaches some some coaches are part of those teams also I would say that safety coaches in some schools also

[02:08:10] will participate and teachers depending on the time of day that the meeting takes place but but the goal around making sure that our attendance teams were were were filled with people who had a pulse and would know what was going on with the students so the conversations could be rich and robust and based on how to improve student attendance. Okay. Dr. Kazza said a little bit

[02:08:46] about what they do, but the teams do monitor student attendance. Student attendance sort of comes in two phases, okay, when you're monitoring a child's attendance. One, you're looking at chronic absenteeism and two, truancy, okay? And they're two different things. And sometimes that can be somewhat confusing, but there is a difference, okay? And one of the things that we

[02:09:23] have tried to really focus on is chronic absenteeism, because here in the state of Virginia, truancy is really guided by state code. It's very, very descriptive in what you're supposed to do, But we don't

want to focus on just truancy.

[02:09:41] And if we find that children have multiple unexcused absences, which starts that kind of race towards being truant, we're trying to work on just getting them in school, not on getting them in court.

[02:10:02] Okay. But that's, I wanted to say that because there is a difference between kind of monitoring chronic absenteeism and monitoring truancy all right but the teams at the schools that's what they do i have the connection with the intake office if we have to go that route i'm the one that deals with the intake office and works with the school if if that has to happen but other than that i'm working with the schools on chronic absenteeism and the different strategies that they are employing to try to get children to come to school so um the schools have engaged in calls

[02:10:42] home they the the teachers are calling counselors are calling admins calling um uh it doesn't matter if if someone has a connection with the child we're trying to have them call the principals are doing that so um we do send letters home we obviously know that that's not that can be somewhat impersonal we don't that's that's not the first thing we want to do but but we do if we run into a into a situation where a child has five

[02:11:22] unexcused absences then we move right into calling in the parent and the child and having them helped us help us craft an attendance plan so we can get it on paper we can have have children agree and parents agree and try to help them work through that. Schools have conferences with parents, whether it's at the school or at the parents' home. Our principals have been open to doing whatever they possibly can to meet parents

[02:11:58] where they are in terms of helping their students or children. And obviously, sometimes we do interact with the courts, but it's more so the intake office, not actually court, unless there's a student who has some other history with the court. But to date, I don't think we've had a student in that situation. But when the teams meet, the main goal is really to brainstorm

[02:12:37] ways to make school a place that children want to be and a place where parents feel comfortable sending their child that's that's the that's the real focus of the teams not not to be punitive we want we want children to want to be in school and we want parents to feel comfortable in sending their children to us every day why are we seeing some of these issues with student

[02:13:15] attendance. Some of our families are facing some major challenges, transportation, work schedules, student illness. Ms. Dahl, she has left now, but we have been working probably for a week to meet with the parent. The parent works from like 7:00 at night to 7:00 in the morning. We actually had a meeting scheduled for today. The parent texts me at 6:45 and said, my boss is going to be late i'm not going to get out of here till nine o'clock she had already been

[02:13:55] there since seven the night before you know so i mean we have situations like that that uh our families are uh having a tough time um and and and it trickles down to the children as well as um obviously the school um student illness is another um we've also seen a rise in homelessness And in some situations, a one-bedroom apartment is costing parents \$1,800 a month, \$1,500 a month.

[02:14:29] People are moving constantly because they can't pay the rent or they're being evicted. Our attendance teams are running across all of that on a daily basis, and it almost doesn't matter which school. So there are a lot of challenges that families are having now.

[02:14:49] see teens report that strong relationships have formed with parents as a result of communication around attendance. Yes. For many of our schools, attendance has been, or attendance issues and having those conversations have been the jump-off point for schools to connect with families. And I've had principals, assistant principals report to me that they have actually been able to improve their relationships with families, especially families that maybe they were kind of

[02:15:26] disconnected with prior. Because they have constant conversations about attendance and they're working with the family to try to improve the child's attendance, the families are starting to have trust in them. So although the conversation about attendance or bad attendance might not be what you want to talk about, we have seen some good come out of those conversations and parents

[02:15:57] feeling a little bit more connected to schools. And you heard earlier about the cohorts. We have Greer and Red Hill, and I also attend those sessions. It's cohort one that's facilitated by EAB that where we're able to work with schools and administrators and teachers from around around the country and we're talking about attendance we're

[02:16:32] talking about the the the incentives and interventions and what we have found is that it's just it's been really positive to be able to brainstorm with people around the country who are having some similar issues and we are excited about starting cohort two in April again that cohort will include Woodbrook and dr.

[02:17:02] Haas and dr. Kaiser allowed me to to hire a an hourly person to help with to help with attendance so that that young lady will be a part of that cohort as well but she is working right now working with schools so and then the buyback program is something that the state has just rolled out and we jumped on it our students have an opportunity to buy back up to 15 days K through 12

[02:17:41] and our elementary students would need to have I think it's two hours it's the two hours of instruction outside of normal school hours for every two hours they will earn back a day and for our secondary students it's three it's three hours and they will earn back a day so what's what's exciting about that is that we're able to get students back in front of instruction and instruction

[02:18:18] that they've missed the goal is to hit this really hard right after the break because we just got the information I don't know maybe two weeks ago so we've been working with schools to try to craft that program and start up after spring break and dr. Kazer mentioned this so I don't know if it's much on here that you haven't already heard but in terms of communicating with the

[02:18:51] community yes bright arrow messages we send out attendance nudges in some of our communications and those are just thoughts and ideas about and statements about the importance of school and attending school on a daily basis we've had positive video messages like a PSA made by people in the community that we believe many of our students know and those have been popular we are we are

[02:19:29] continuing with those as well we do have a website where parents can go to I think one of the things that I want to do though with the website because I think sometimes with some of our parents if they have to click a lot they might not get to to what to what we want them to get to so for next year I want to try to make sure that that on the first page of of the web page that that there's some type of link right to the attendance page um because i think i think that's important

[02:20:06] and that and and hopefully we can make that happen but um uh we do have a website and i think it's informative but i think if the parents have to click more than two or three times it it we might

create a situation where people are not seeing it who we want to see it so um and there was a community session hosted for families and we we just were able to to purchase posters flyers and magnets the posters have been sent out to the schools the

[02:20:44] flyers are going to be used for back for backpack mail and they said they're going to be sent to the elementary schools and the magnets will be sent to all of the schools for them to use at programs to give out to their families uh they can put them on the front desk when families come in they can take one but but uh each one of those uh has a message about about the importance of attendance we're just trying to

[02:21:13] kind of make attendance and our efforts go viral that's that's the goal so and i think now we have um three of our principals uh first principal who will come up is well yes so now we get to the best part of the presentation and that's hearing what's going on in the schools to positively impact this issue we are happy to spotlight three of our schools and school leaders here with us this evening to share the great work

[02:21:51] they have been engaging in this year around attendance and chronic absenteeism and first we have mr. Steve Saunders principal of Greer elementary school and And then after Steve, we have Ms. Ashby Johnson, principal of Journey Middle School.

[02:22:11] And then lastly, we have Mr. Darabonum, principal of Albemarle High School.

[02:22:28] Good evening. I'm Steve Saunders, and I'm proud to be the principal here at Greer. And I'm happy to talk to you about chronic absenteeism and the things that we've been doing to reduce it. And I think we're already off the rails here, Dr. Kaiser. Is this the slide that you want us to be sharing? Go on to our slide.

[02:22:44] Great. and we've seen a great reduction here so we we know that uh reducing absenteeism and increasing the students attendance at school is something that everybody at our school has a pull has a role in and so we've been doing a lot of things at the whole school level and so we've been working with our colleagues in the in the central office as well as with eab and developing things on our own to come up with strategies and things at the whole school level so some of the things we've been doing as you as they referenced earlier um even little simple flyers of that we've created

[02:23:23] in english and spanish and when to come to school we've created magnets to our families with our phone numbers on it the times of day that we're in school we send out every sunday a highlight of the week when days we do have school what events are going on we send out events to families kind of highlighting things that are coming up we send those out as digital copies to families on Sunday as well one of the other things we did this year was we created a letter and for all 530 students in our building we calculated their current attendance rate and we sent that to families and just said

[02:24:01] here's where you are right now and talked about the supports that we had in place that we could provide to them we also do have an attendance team that meets weekly it's about eight of us we go line by line for students and looking at patterns and things that we need to do to support them one of the things that the division did two years ago that we continue to benefit in this area for chronic absenteeism is the use of the school vans and so I feel like daily we're driving two to three shuttle services out to go pick up kids who have either missed buses or parents don't have transportation or some other life event has happened that they didn't ride the bus and so we go and get kids and

[02:24:37] them to school and also take them home and so we do that we talk about that in the attendance team meetings about which kids we need to be supporting that way one of the things that we're particularly proud of is that we've seen decreases in our chronic absenteeism rate overall and we see that that's going to get better through the state's flexible buyback instruction program so what we did was we identified about 80 students out of our 530 that are sitting in one of two categories one they are already over the threshold for chronic absenteeism for the school year so they've already

[02:25:13] hit 18 days or more but they statistically are sitting in an area where we can buy back the time so for me i cut that off at 30 days because we can buy back 15 so we can get them to 17 so under 18. so they're sitting in that group or they're sitting in a they're sitting at 13 absences 14 absences they're sitting in a group they were trying to proactively bank time for them in case something happens they get really sick and they tip over in April or May and it's too late to catch them up we've already banked the time so that's about 80 students for us that we're trying to either catch to buy back the time for or proactively bank time towards we're doing that through an incentive program

[02:25:52] we're starting right after spring break free clubs for enrichment and activities after school for kids where we're going to be providing them for this group we started the attendance for this group here to try and get them to do one of things one come back and certainly buy back school but more importantly we're trying to give them yet another incentive to come to school will they find a hook will they be excited about coming to doing ceramics with the art teacher after school will they be excited about doing a math club would they be doing some of these things that get them a hook to come to school and want to come even more than they've been doing and so we're really excited about that as we go into into the spring break and into the rest of the school

[02:26:30] year so we're we're seeing some good movement with our school we're not all where we want to be certainly but we've seen some really good improvement we're already capturing some kids that we know that were chronically absent last year that we've already caught back that they aren't and we know that the real reason behind this is that we have to give them the opportunity to learn and we have to get them in the building so that we can have those relationships with them and also have them get get to learn and we know that that only at the elementary level it's critical to sound them and set them up for success and then also it compounds over time and we also are trying to do our best to set up our

[02:27:08] students as they transition into middle school so with that I'm going to turn it over to Ashby Johnson all right good evening my name is Ashby Johnson I'm the principal at journey middle school and just like Steve I'm going to just share a few highlights of things that we've been doing we really started off strong in July with our attendance team viewing the EAB presentation much of what you just saw today and then we actually developed from that we developed 20-day

[02:27:42] cycle plans that we've been using and so literally when we got to pre-service week we had laid out week one of what we're doing we were going to present we presented to the whole staff around chronic absenteeism and provided updates and ways that we were going to tie into the relationship mapping work that you all heard about earlier so we're in year two of doing that with our homeroom students this year our growl teacher which is homeroom is making the first contact or was making the first contact with all of their students and so they called home the first week of school just welcoming students back to school

[02:28:19] and talked about how excited they were to see them we the again the after school tutoring and saturday school for buyback is in the works we actually started our first saturday school this past saturday

our attendance team is fabulous they have been a huge part of the the presentations that we've done the development of our 20-day plan cycles our weekly data reviews calls home and home visits we're doing a lot of celebrations that are quarterly and weekly with pizza lunches and certificates we're incentivizing we're interviewing kids or we

[02:28:57] at the beginning of the year we interviewed a lot of kids who were chronically absent last year and they're not this year so we're talking about what's different this year so we can learn from them and expand that one of the best things that we're doing this year is we implemented fun friday lunches which any of you are welcome to come to the teachers don't have any lunch duty on fridays so the administrators and the counselors do all the lunch duties on fridays and we have music playing, we have a treat for the week.

[02:29:25] It could be a student has no tardies for the week or they have had perfect attendance for the week or for the month. They actually come up on the stage, myself and two of our counselors are sitting there and we check their record in power school, give them some kind of Jaguar swag or Oreos or free pass to the dance and they really, really love it.

[02:29:46] They love the recognition. They love that we're celebrating their growth but also just how they're doing with attendance. So we're adding tardies in there as well as the daily attendance and the weekly attendance and monthly attendance.

[02:30:02] So that has been something that has been a pretty big hit for us this year that we're super excited about. So those are just some things that we're doing. Again, the 20-day cycles, we are just every 20 days, we're reevaluating our data. We're celebrating the things that we have been really successful with.

[02:30:20] we're making adjustments to our plans based on that data so it's really kind of progressing throughout the year we are seeing we are making really good progress we actually have some of our students who are chronically absent last year that have perfect attendance this year which is amazing so we're just celebrating them and lifting them up and and we're really excited about the work that we've done so thank you and Dara's gonna talk about the high school thank Thank you, Ashby.

[02:30:54] Good evening, everybody. I'm Darabona, principal at Elmore High School. I think one of the critical parts that's been mentioned a lot this evening is obviously the teamwork that's required from the teacher's side. I want to talk a little bit about the kind of the practical sense from how we operate at the high school level.

[02:31:12] With over 2,000 students, obviously, it's a lot of students to navigate through and figure out the support that they need. We do run the weekly -- we call them student success meetings. They happen every week, typically Mondays, and that will be a team of similar what Dr.

[02:31:28] Turner had mentioned with counselors, administrators, SEL, social workers. We also have home community school intervention coordinators that both work, some specifically on the EL side, but also some that work with all of our students, and those are critical people as well.

[02:31:46] I think an important part of those meetings, because we do it by grade level, so we'll have 9th grade one week 10th grade 11th 12th etc is that the old notion that you can't change what you can't measure and i think that's looking at data every single time to ensure what that looks like and those folks are really critical because they really dive into a lot of what the data looks like but data is only one piece to it the one position mentioned our home community school coordinators they will go and do home visits we've done

hundreds of home visits throughout the course of the year, and I like to use the word partnership versus outreach.

[02:32:26] Outreach fills kind of a one-way type of direction where partnership really looks at trying to meet both ways in terms of where we're looking at student attendance. And so what we've tried to do as well is what you'll see in the one column to the left is identify through all these meetings what are some commonalities that exist.

[02:32:45] When we go through truancy, there's a barriers worksheet that we all go through, and that barriers worksheet has a lot of questions that we ask and it really tries to dig into the why because i think that's end of the day that's really the the most important question is the why why are students in my case at the high school level not connecting to school right why are they not coming to school and some of that really isn't always about all-day absences sometimes it's about period absences sometimes it's about morning absences sometimes it's afternoon and so there are a lot of competing factors especially and we've noticed that coming off of covid there's a lot of maslow's

[02:33:22] that gets into what needs families and kids have and so some of the things on the left that we identified through a lot of just of this work is there's a lot of mental health components that we've seen that require quite a bit of support in terms of what that looks like for students to feel comfortable back in school on a regular basis a lot of medical diagnosis for different reasons getting to school and that could be transportation it could be walking to school it could be just how perhaps they have other obligations at home they're not getting up in time they're missing buses things of that nature and and getting to school is a pretty important part

[02:34:01] obviously of the school day and some of that's getting there later than they need to be so some of that's maybe period attendance related i think a critical part in the high school level especially is the poor academic performance because i think these we look at these through the symptomatic piece they're all symptoms right attendance is a symptom um or something's a symptom of attendance and poor attendance and the academic side i think is critical because if you think about it if you missed three weeks of your trigonometry or your algebra one class it's not something you can just roll back in and then feel comfortable so while we do all the work to get a student back in

[02:34:39] i think that's just the start then the next part is what do we do to get them to be academically successful again and feel success within the classroom which is just critical other factors looking at things like teen parenting has increased and teen parenting looks at two things one is i'm watching the sibling and others is we've had more young people that are having their own children and that's been an increase in the last couple years as well and those are a lot of factors that we have to navigate through the family work obligations uh poor connection to school you know the surveys we do through panorama talk about sense of belonging that's a piece we always try to connect with and why do some students feel like they're not as

[02:35:17] connected and sometimes that's an academic connection sometimes that's an athletic connection or sometimes that's a band connection whatever it happens to be I look at some of the things that we did with our intramural program we started for the first time at Albemarle last year where we used to cut on soccer and we ended up taking close to 50 students that normally would have gotten cut many of those were students that were in our English language program and they ended up becoming part of a

program and become a part of school, and they were becoming part of the community, and they had incentive to be back in school. So what are other ways to make

[02:35:51] connection to school, certainly academically and beyond? The piece that I'll leave with is the buyback, which is part of what the state has put in recently to say that if you meet these criteria, you can earn back your chronic absentee days, so to speak. We've done buyback at all three high schools since the last couple years.

[02:36:12] And buyback is related at the high school level because the principal, and this is all in policy, has the discretion to deny credit if you've missed more than 10 school days, or 10 periods, I should say, within a class period. And while that's kind of been in the policy for quite some time, it's just recently become enforced because we realize the correlation between attendance and coming and academic performance.

[02:36:35] And within that, students realize that when they're missing 10, 12, 15, 20 class periods. That has an impact on their grades. So we started buyback sessions again last year. We've increased them this year. We hold them Thursday afternoons, four to six, and we hold them Saturday mornings, nine to noon. We've held about 16 or so, so far.

[02:36:56] And the key to that is not just you're coming in earning time. You know, I've missed a bunch of days, so I'm going to earn time. We want that to be purposeful. So there is a pretty strong correlation for the students who were coming and what their academics look like as well because many of them are behind and could need some support. So we've paired them with tutors. We've paired them with UVA tutors. Ms. Early, I think, who was here earlier, she has her Nesby tutors that work with us. We have peer tutoring programs with teenagers working with their peers. We've had over 200 students have already attended. Many of those repeat students that will come in and then

[02:37:33] they recover absences right that allow them to get under the radar of the requirement of the ten but they also along the way get academic support and get I call it resuscitation right like you get to a point you've missed three weeks of algebra one we have to get you back in the algebra one so when you go back into class you're feeling successful and then feeling the accomplishment which gets back to one of the reasons why students aren't coming so I think it's an overall process there's a lot of people in the mix and doing that but I think having some of these opportunities beyond the classroom as well supports getting students back and I think we've seen that to help

[02:38:10] decrease some of the chronic absenteeism that we had the school thank you all right and thanks to Steve and Ashby and Dara for your presentation and all the great work that you do with your students your staff and your families each and every day so thank you we appreciate you um the office for community engagement our strategic initiatives aim to enhance school administration effectiveness foster equity and

[02:38:46] expand community engagement we will bolster school administrators by providing additional support and facilitating teacher communications i'm addressing chronic absenteeism with families Collaboratively, we will engage with the Equity Center and other key health partners to determine ways in which we as a community can better meet the health needs of our students and families.

[02:39:13] And then we intend to implement and go after community and schools programming, addressing social issues and enhancing educational and enrichment opportunities for our students and

families. And then furthermore, we plan to apply for 21st Century Community Learning Center grants, aiming to broaden access to after school and enrichment programmings.

[02:39:38] And then additionally, the Office for Community Engagement will continue to collaborate with the Albemarle Foundation for Education, the AFE, to identify and engage business and community partners willing to contribute their talent time and treasure or resources as school champions the school champion initiative will not only provide in valuable support to our schools but also strengthen the bond between our educational institutions and the community and that is our presentation

[02:40:15] and we are open to questions that was a lot of material thank you all I guess for the principals I mean Ashby you said you talked to the students about why they've come back I mean we've pretty clearly diagnosed all the range of reasons why kids don't want to come or can't come but why have what have you

[02:40:52] done what do they say when you ask them why they've come back and I guess when we reach do the reach out and this is for everybody to reach out to the students do we put together i mean if they're not coming because of academic failures and or challenges that i think dara talked to this or emotional you know bullying or emotional issues do you put together a package yeah i guess your team works on that i'm not even sure what i'm asking but i think you probably know what i'm asking even if i don't articulate it well yeah i think i think i know

[02:41:30] - So the students have shared a variety of things in terms of why their attendance has improved. So some has just been that they feel more connected to the school. Some has been that they did have mental health issues that have been resolved. Or not resolved, but supported through counseling or through trusted relationships with adults at the school.

[02:41:52] Some of them feel like they have connected to an activity at school that they can be involved in. just kind of depended on the on the student but we did kind of divide out based on our data we did divide out the kids that had uh shown a lot of growth in their attendance and just interviewed them one-on-one so we could see if we could get some trends or find some things that were really working and what we learned was that it just really varied depending on the kid which we thought going into that but we weren't you know we weren't 100 sure but um it those are some of the things that

[02:42:26] they came up with in terms of your second question i think really creating a very individual and specific plan for a student based on where they are kind of meeting them where they are and thinking about growth and progress and where where they need to go and so those plans look different it could be a check-in check-out with the student it could be that they need a break halfway through Through third period, it could be that they need a weekly goal-setting meeting with a counselor, you know, just depends.

[02:43:00] So those are really individualized, and I think that's when we can get pretty creative. And again, it's different for each student based on what they need, but it really helps us get to know the student, find out what they need. The students are able to share with us, too, what they feel like they need to be successful.

[02:43:20] So they really have a voice in that plan, too. getting the families involved with that with the planning does that help very much so thank you yep um thank you this was a lot of information um and definitely really insightful i do have um a few notes and questions um one is kind of centered around uh the messaging and i know that um the first presentation talked about you know guilt and blame and things like that and i and we

[02:43:51] We do get a lot of emails, especially when those nudges go out, the texts that oftentimes they seem to correlate, I don't even know if it's planned, but when there's a teacher workday or something like that.

[02:44:08] And so we'll send out an email saying how important attendance is and then schools close the next day. And so then it seems contradictory, even though that's not our intention. And so I know we've gotten a couple of emails from people who have been frustrated by that because they feel like it's opposite messaging so I'm just throwing that out there that if we're trying to really communicate how important attendance is maybe the timing of some of those but also I do think that some of the letters that have gone home I have two kids in full transparency that are chronically absent and so the letters that come home have felt very blamey for lack of a

[02:44:45] better word which can be frustrating when we're trying to get our kids to school so um i it might be helpful to um maybe talk to some parents too about how that messaging is coming across and how it might encourage them to send their you know what would be more helpful in in the wording of that message um but speaking of my two chronically absent kids one um is my senior um at western and so his freshman year was um coveted year so he never had the buy-in and that's what we were talking about it was never there he was you know doing

[02:45:21] virtual learning and so that has had implications for the last four years so I do think that that is really important and that's something that I've talked a lot about and it leads me to think that you know really catching the freshmen especially when they're starting high school and maybe the sixth graders too and really focusing on those kids at the very beginning of starting those schools and getting that buy-in right away because i think um jackson's teachers tried for the last couple of years but once you got through that freshman year and they were you know it was really hard to catch them on the back end of high school and so i tell you from personal experience as much

[02:46:01] as my husband and i fought to have jackson you know involved in school or whatever um not having that initial buy-in from his freshman year made it really difficult to have buy-in for those all four years. So my other kid who was chronically absent this year was kind of a fluke thing. He had a concussion from football and then he had strep and so he missed two weeks of five days each and then we had a family vacation planned post-election to kind of reset as a family and we knew that he was going to miss five days. So that was 15 days in the first semester already. So he's been doing buyback at Henley which has been great and he signs up that he's able to do it during Sting

[02:46:40] because he's in algebra and Spanish, and so he's buying back those classes. But what's frustrating about it is we just this week got a letter home saying that he has his absences and he has no buyback. He hasn't done any buyback days, but he said that he's even banked days, and he's done more than the 10.

[02:46:57] And so there's some inconsistency in that communication. So if we weren't so on top of things as parents and knowing that he had bought those back, I would get this letter and think, oh, my gosh, you know, he's got all these days to make up. hasn't done it but in reality he's actually banked days so i say that too that you know it can um if if we're wanting this to work effectively we need to make sure that that how we're tracking that buyback um how we're tracking these absences is consistent um and so that that messaging really resonates with the parents because um that could be incredibly frustrating for a parent um if it's

[02:47:35] not accurate and and it was very frustrating for him because he's like mom i've done it i've done it I've gone to all my stings and you know he's a straight-A student and so those are just two things that I wanted to bring up on the communication side I didn't know if you wanted to and I had one other comment after I appreciate the feedback and we'll definitely take your suggestions this was the first year of our implementation of the nudges and the widespread communication so we'll work with the communications team and we will look at these issues and make some

[02:48:12] adjustments. Awesome. Again thank you. Yeah no I think all of this is really important and I think that you know where it's all steps in the right direction and I do see a lot of positive change. My last question had to do with the van that they brought up about Greer and then I think Journey and maybe Albemarle so they had one too. I'm curious if that is something that's available to all of our schools and how we're using that with absenteeism. Because in all honesty, I'd never realized that that was an option for getting kids to school, especially

[02:48:46] in light of chronic absenteeism and how we're using that and how we communicate. I'm just curious about it because that seems like it could be super helpful. And also how we're communicating with families that maybe don't speak english or aren't easily accessible i'm thinking a lot of our like english second language learners and things like that that how we can get those kids to school yeah well um yes each school has a band um and i'm probably one of the

[02:49:20] administrators that works very closely with the schools in terms of the attendance and for some of our schools um kind of the the the number of times that the van will go out really depends on who they might have available to leave work to drive so some schools that have more staff they may have a few more people free at certain times to make those runs but but the van is there

[02:49:58] um and it is available and are families of aware of this because i mean i did i you know not that my kids would necessarily need to use that resource but as a whole acps parents are and and what is the process for a parent or somebody to say hey i can't get my kid to school can you come pick them up or they miss the bus like do we have an operating procedure in place for each of those schools and how are we making sure that we're catching is it an equitable resource to all of our families the principals have made those connections with the school community but in terms

[02:50:37] of how frequent there's no standard operating procedure around it because the principals don't want to promise something that they can't deliver and we have some children for instance i used to to be the principal at Monticello family lives at the base of Afton it's pretty difficult for for the principal to have someone leave school for our or hour and a half so they just don't want to tell families something that they

[02:51:09] can't follow through with so but as much as the schools can as when they have someone free they're trying to do it it's a little easier for the schools in the in the urban ring but it's not something that's been promised because they don't want to say something that that they can't deliver just just a quick follow-up but the vans were purchased from pandemic relief funds that was one of the one-time purchases that we made for all the elementary and

[02:51:45] middle schools and their initial request was around being able to have students stay after school for extra time and support and it perked up from elementary schools and as dr. Turner pointed out the principals have it as a resource in the past they might have gone out in their own car or had a staff member go out in a car to pick up students that had missed the bus or maybe they were chronically absent

and it's just not coming in and we've had a lot of positive feedback from the schools around the vans as a tool to build relationships

[02:52:26] and also a stronger connection with the families i'm sure steve has mentioned he's been out driving the van you know all of them get out there and use it so right yeah um in terms of uh we we do we work with um uh with the esau department in terms of getting the letters um translated and i mean everything that we come out with we try we try to get over to them as fast as we can so that's that's that's that's what we're doing really you know the the interesting thing too

[02:53:06] with the eab one of the things i i went to the round table that they do uh last spring and this was the topic but the the one of the things the eab talked about was it wasn't even necessarily a phone call from uh the teacher that if the teacher could text them they actually prefer texting and so um one of the things they've provided is they provide like a little script that you can use with your text messaging and parents you know it's just um we miss uh john today uh it'd be really great you know please reach out let us know what's going on and just

[02:53:43] trying to get in the there's the official letters they're going to happen because a lot of them are required by code but it's what you do proactively before that letter before the first negative as you know you mentioned it's very formal it doesn't feel great to get these attendance letters but if we can have teachers use the technology uh tools that'll that'll translate you know like our the bright hour messages and some of the other technology that they use to get in the at that interim the gap between the attendance issue and those first official notifications come out there's a great return on investment with that and so that requires

[02:54:23] extra effort but texting is that as much as texting can be um i guess irritating uh parents actually do prefer in lieu of phone calls and teachers find it easier to do too because it's making cold phone calls to families that you don't haven't talked to before is difficult and uh so i'm glad we're able to do that they've got and all our teachers have access to the technology to do that they can they text from their computers okay so yeah that's what they do that's they when they're

[02:54:58] sending out bright hour they they would use their computer to text so i i just want to thank um okay sure can you come to the mic and while you're coming up i just really want to thank our eab partners this was this is like how it should work that we go we learn about uh the research we they they really do national landscape research find out what the best practices are and this is how it should work you go to the sessions you learn about it they run these these cohorts that you've

[02:55:37] talked about which i think were are great because we're all learning as we go and then it hits the schools they're practicing it and then you saw in every slide that dr carlock showed the dip how it's starting to come back down again and i just think this is an example of why we want to use best practices and find out what's working in other places the quick note i wanted to make about the text messaging we're finding that parents can copy the text into their translator because it's kind of impossible to translate for every language our parents are speaking

[02:56:13] so that's a good way for through the they're doing it with the emails and the text messaging and then schools are automating the text message so you have that preset it will fill the student's naming we have a set you can have a set for two days again in four days so that cuts down on the time and the language barrier plus um adding graphics so that the green light red light thumbs up thumbs down all of

that is helping with the language barriers as well i just want to add that i had a quick question around special education data i may might have missed it

[02:56:53] did we do we had did we have include special education data on absenteeism in the presentation we did okay yeah apologies I also really wanted to thank all of you for your work and also for all this information I'm the one who asked for the absenteeism work session and so I really appreciated all this information a couple of takeaways that I have are you know you're talking a lot about teamwork and it seems like it's not siloed is a lot of parts of the school working

[02:57:28] together a lot of departments working together and you know that is great I feel like we have been siloed for a long time. And this is really great working together to really put supports around the children. So I really appreciate that and seeing the progress that it's made.

[02:57:44] Part of that progress, or I don't know if our huge spike, we had a little bigger spike than the state did last year. And that also was a time when we had a lot of transportation issues. So So I don't know if that correlates or if that's causal or whatever, but it just reminds us that all of the parts of our division are really important to educating the kids.

[02:58:10] So transportation, all the work that you're doing, too. And that's also a plug for bus drivers. We were at the community breakfast this morning, and Dr. Haas made a plug for anyone who wanted to apply to become a bus driver. really good way to you know do a good thing in your community so plug for that I also wanted to note that I think for me my takeaway is I've always sort of thought of excuse and unexcused absences differently but they both affect learning so that's something that you know Derry you said well you know we're

[02:58:47] coming to realize that it seems obvious but we're coming to realize the effects and I think that's something that's important for parents to hear too and important for our community here and certainly myself as a parent I was learning that here in this presentation so I really appreciate that so I just thank you very much for all of your work on this and all this information and for staying so late and for staying so late thank you okay that wraps us up for a school division work session we do have one bit of other business we were lax

[02:59:27] in coming out of closed session we had a motion to make so Dr. Acuff yes I move that the board accept the RIF I'm sorry reduction in force protocol as presented to the board in closed session a second moved by Dr. Acuff and seconded by Mr. Page can we have a roll call vote on that please Ms. Spillman yes Yes.

[03:00:02] Dr. Berlin? Yes. Mr. Graham Page? Yes. Dr. Acuff? Yes. Mr. Chuck Pace? Yes. Ms. Allen Osborne?

[03:00:18] Yes. Ms. Chair Lee? Yes. So moved. Okay. And with that, with no other business, we are out. Thank you very much.



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