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Albemarle County School Board Regular Meeting, Thursday, December 12, 2024

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[00:00:03] - Okay, I call this meeting back to order. Do we have a motion? - We do, Madam Chair. 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 the 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.

[00:00:28] - Second the motion. - Moved by Dr. Acuff, seconded by Mr. Page. Could we have a roll call vote, please? Ms. Spillman is absent, Dr. Berlin is absent, Mr. Pace, yes. Ms. Osborn, yes. Dr. Acuff, yes. Mr. Page, yes. And Chair Lee, yes. So moved. Thank you. And we have one motion coming out of closed session. We do, Madam Chair. I move that this board approve the contract, employment contract addendum as discussed in the meeting for employee A. Second.

[00:01:07] Moved by Dr. Acuff and seconded by Ms. Osborne. All of those in favor? Aye. Any opposed? Nope. Motion carries. Thank you very much. Next we will have our roll call starting with Josiah Black. Good evening everyone. I'm Josiah Black, School Division Counsel. Rosalind Schmidt, Chief Operating Officer. Daphne Kaiser, Assistant Superintendent. Isabel Wong, Albemarle High School. Ellen Osborne, Scottsville District. Judy Lee, Rybana District. Kate Acuff, Jack Jewett District. Graham Page, Miller District.

[00:01:40] Chuck Pace, Rado District. Matthew Hawes, Superintendent. Claire Kaiser, Assistant Superintendent. Pat McLaughlin, Assistant Superintendent. Christine Thompson, Clerk of the Board. Thank you. Next, we'll stand for the Pledge of Allegiance.

[00:01:59] I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all of all.

[00:02:12] Next we'll observe a moment of silence. Okay, next we have item 3.0, approval of the agenda.

[00:02:44] Do I have a motion to approve the agenda? I move we approve tonight's agenda. Second. Moved by Ms. Osborne, seconded by Mr. Page. All of those in favor say aye. Aye. Aye. None opposed? All right, agenda's approved. Next we have 4.0 announcements starting with 4.1, our spotlight on education.

[00:03:05] Good evening, Madam Chair, members of the board. I'm Helen Dunn, and I'm the Strategic Communications officer of the school division, and I'm actually going to introduce Jamie Gellner, who's currently the director of transportation, but who did kind of usher in the programs that have led to tonight's spotlight on education, which is our purple star honorees for the year.

[00:03:32] So she really worked with these schools last year to kind of help make sure this happened and has really been sort of the shepherd of this program for a long time, so I thought it was more appropriate for her to be the introducer, so come on up. Good evening.

[00:03:48] how are you all tonight? Good, thank you. Good evening members of the Albemarle County School Board. Tonight we are honored to celebrate two of our schools that have received the prestigious Virginia Purple Star designation for their exceptional commitment to supporting military connected students and families. Baker Butler Elementary and Lakeside Middle School. The Virginia Purple Star designation program recognizes schools across the Commonwealth that go above and beyond in creating welcoming environments and providing crucial resources for children from military families. These schools ensure that transitioning students receive consistent, high-quality educational experiences while addressing the unique

[00:04:26] challenges faced by military families. To achieve this designation, schools must meet rigorous criteria, including having a trained staff point of contact for military families, offering professional development for educators, and maintaining accessible resources for military families on their websites.

[00:04:43] Schools must also demonstrate peer-to-peer support programs and other activities designed to ease transitions for military-connected students. Baker Butler and Lakeside have excelled in meeting and exceeding these criteria. Through their dedicated efforts, they have established themselves as leaders in fostering inclusivity, understanding, and support for students and families tied to military service. This recognition is especially meaningful as it reflects not only the efforts of individual schools but also Albemarle County Public Schools ongoing commitment to creating a military-friendly culture across the division. These schools have set an outstanding example by integrating

[00:05:23] innovative practices and prior to prioritizing the needs of military connected families, ensuring their success both academically and socially. As of this year 490 schools statewide hold an active purple star designation with 228 earning the distinction multiple times. Baker Butler Elementary and Lakeside Middle School now join this distinguished group showcasing Albemarle County Public Schools as a model of excellence in this area. We are We are incredibly proud of the leadership, faculty, and staff at these schools for their dedication to the mission of the Purple Star program.

[00:05:59] Their efforts underscore the importance of ensuring every child feels supported and valued, no matter where their journey begins or where it may lead. Please join me in congratulating Baker Butler Elementary and Lakeside Middle for this remarkable achievement and thanking them for their commitment to serving our military-connected students and families.

[00:06:18] so i think there are a couple of remarks that a few of our fantastic uh purple star honorees tonight wanted to make so i'm going to just hand it over to them and ask that when you come up if you'll just introduce yourself and then uh and then you speak hi my name is crystal susie i'm

[00:06:55] a second grade teacher at baker butler elementary school i'm also a navy veteran um and my husband was also in the Navy. Our school is amazing. My own children went through this school. Two of them are over there that started there in kindergarten. I wish that this program was around when my older boys were in school. They both graduated from ACPS but there wasn't any support like this for them.

[00:07:25] these kids have made such a wonderful community we did a flag for veterans day and the kids put up 50 stars and my favorite part of that was the last star to go up one little boy said one fifth grader said let's all do it together and every one of them put their hands on that star and put it up together to me that just shows that's just part of the military culture we're doing it together

[00:07:58] and we're all together. Thank you. Good evening everybody. I'm Michael Craddick, the school principal at Lakeside Middle School. So our journey on our Purple Star designation started about this time last year and we were actually, I was visiting my wife's family in Alexandria and we drove by her hometown elementary school and there on the board it said their school was a Virginia Purple Star school.

[00:08:31] And that, you know, sent me on to the Google and sent me actually, which landed my email where miss gillner had previously sent out some information in the river of information that comes uh comes to us about uh support for uh working through this program and looking at the requirements that miss gillner was talking about you know a lot of those things as we were looking at yeah we do that we have ambassadors that partner with children uh we uh we have events that uh that support our military families and you know this was uh just a great fit and as i was just talking to Miss Society uh coming in she's like wow you all been doing that uh Veterans Day

[00:09:09] dinner for such a long time surprise this is the first time you've uh you've received your uh Purple Star um designation so um so I'm really proud of our school and proud of the work that we that we put in uh it was a learning process we learned we got an opportunity to kind of reflect on a lot of the things that we've been working on and uh got some good feedback from the state on how we can improve the processes and supports that we have for our military-connected families.

[00:09:37] One of the things that has been a staple at Lakeside Middle School has been our veteran state dinner, and pre-COVID was very heavily attended, and I believe it was last year, Mr. Creshone, who I'll have come up here in just a moment, came up to me and said, "Hey, we want to get this back up and running."

[00:09:55] So we did, it's, and I will, let me turn it over to him to tell you just a little bit about something that's been going on at Lakeside for a long time. Good evening. My name's Jeff Grishon.

[00:10:11] I'm a civics teacher at Lakeside Middle School. I think it's been, I don't know, eight years ago maybe, I had an idea to do a spaghetti dinner for the military families that were associated with our school. I came from talking to a couple of students and listening to them talk about how hard it is to go

from school to school to school and moving so often and I think one of the kids I was talking to had moved every year that they were in middle school and I thought that's pretty hard to do and so it started that thing in my mind thinking well maybe we can do something.

[00:10:44] Then later on as we had parent conferences I started talking to some of the parents and not only I guess I always thought about the sacrifice that the soldiers make but then I started thinking about the families as well, the wives, the children and all the moving all the stuff they have to do and so i started thinking well what could we do at lakeside to help them and then i saw this this meme online that said uh being an adult is deciding what to have for dinner every night until you die and i thought well maybe we could take that burden off the family for a day and so uh i decided hey we can do spaghetti that that's not hard i can do

[00:11:20] that um and so i think for the last about i'd say we we started pre pre-covid we were shut off for a couple years and then we wanted to get it back going we've been serving dinner to about 60 to 70 people they would just sign up they bring any relatives that were associated with the military either currently or in the past come and when mike had some uh pd this uh year i didn't think about this but they said charlottesville is unique in the fact that they don't have a military base where the parents and families can draw support from people in the same situation they're in so this also became a place where they can come and talk with other people who also are in the

[00:11:59] same situation that they're in and maybe form some friendships get some advice how are you handling this this is hard for me what are you doing and that kind of thing so this is something that i would love to continue doing as long as i'm teaching and this is i would say probably the one thing that i would like to live on after my usefulness here in elmar county is done so that's what we hope that's our hope uh but thank you very much for your time appreciate it i'd also like to introduce Ms. Gayle Rainey who was a big support in helping make this happen and supporting our children military connected families throughout

[00:12:36] the school. This is new since I last talked as a PTO president so hopefully you can hear me. My name is Gayle Rainey and I am a special education teacher at Lakeside. I've been there long enough that I've taught all three grade levels collaboratively in all subjects and I've had the luck to be with Mr. Creshone for

[00:12:58] 20-some years now in civics collaborative teaching with him. I just wanted to mention a few things very briefly about it, what we're doing with this dinner. One of the highlights of this annual recognition dinner for both Jeff and myself is that it gives our student volunteers from the AVID program the opportunity to participate in this outreach with our military families. I think it's really important anytime you can involve them in direct service is good, from helping set up balloons posters table decorations beforehand they also work to seat families take orders and serve the

[00:13:36] dinners and they work tirelessly to serve guests and to model what it really means to be a shark i don't have time to go into what our acronym is right now but i'm sure mr craddock will share that with you later our experience also that is truly unique here is witnessing the appreciation and pride that is evident from each family whether they're small in number or they have several generations in attendance at their table and these type of events help foster the home school connection and reinforces the sense of community partnership that we aspire to create at lakeside

[00:14:11] with our teachers students and parents and families thank you i'm sure we'd be happy to take any questions if you have any at this time do we have i'm sorry i'm sorry i just was going to ask what how many times a year do you do this uh so our we hold a dinner the day after veterans day so we know veterans say there's a lot of events and things going on that we want our veterans to

[00:14:47] take advantage of so historically this has always been the the day after we hold november is month of the military connected family so we have several events that especially during the school day we have a special lunch for for kids during that day we work on this year we had a bulletin board set up with a map of the world where students could go in and put dots on everywhere that they've lived we've set up and solicited pictures and uh and statements from military connected families that we put on a display in the main office as well so this is something where november is one of our highlights of the year but throughout the year we continue to

[00:15:27] check in on these families and one of the things that you know we we learned from this training but kind of reinforced some of our practices was around not only it's the um it's coming into our community but as they get their orders and are ready to move out of our community there's a lot of prep work that goes into that too and supporting our children from that standpoint as well so so it's a it's a it's a year-long continuous continuous support that we have in place thank you i guess i have two questions one um is the purple star designation is that like for five years i mean

[00:16:05] is there a life expectancy of that and the other question is i was struck by saying we have a high population of military families without a base do we know how many miss gilder i mean how big of a footprint do they have in our schools um so when we do registration you can check if you're military affiliated so it is self-identifying but we have about it ranges every year but around 420 something each year to maybe 440 something that are military affiliated and we're our region is a sub installation of Fort Belvoir so that's not close so all of

[00:16:44] the like exceptional family member folks or school liaisons they do have Albemarle County assigned as a point of contact but they're all up there and then I serve as the division point of contact and then these folks are the school point of contact for folks and one of the things that I think is really great about the program one of the key things you have to have is you have to have some kind of student ambassador program and it looks different at each school but it welcomes kids into kind of the school community and then creates kind of an instant friend group almost because you have some things in common

[00:17:21] and I know that in sixth grade ninth grade these are all things that are high school and middle school principals talk about doing as a best practice anyway but it just really works really well for kids that move so much, too. And it's the number one thing that parents ask me for when they move here is how can I connect with other military families, you know, and how can I get support?

[00:17:43] So I really, it's a great service. In terms of the designation of Purple Heart? It's three years. Thank you. Fantastic.

[00:17:58] Thank you so much for all of your work supporting our military families. Thank you. Next, we have item 4.2, school board and superintendent business.

[00:18:15] - Thank you, Ms. Lee. So I just have a few items just to be brief. That was a wonderful presentation and I wanna echo the congratulations to Baker Butler and Lakeside on their Purple Star

designation. I wanna just give a few quick shout outs of some activities that I was privileged to do over the last week or so.

[00:18:34] Last Wednesday, I was hosted to drive Susan Tapscott's bus, bus 122 in the morning down at um down in howardsville down at mr page's neck of the woods that part of the county and i had a great time driving with her and learned a lot so thank you susan and thank you scottsville and walton and i want to thank um murray elementary school for hosting me on monday for a great visit school's one of our six exemplar schools and helen dunn and the communication team are in the process

[00:19:09] of having many uh celebrations at each of those schools with bagels and everything that goes with it so we did that and i got to take a tour of lots of classrooms lots of great activities math and reading instruction just top-notch work i want to give a shout out to mr bonham who's here tonight and the safety and security team on monday night they hosted they co-hosted with monticello high school a drug awareness program that involved local officials support programs

[00:19:42] like region 10 and school staffed and uh it was highly informative and i really appreciate mr bomb working on that and tuesday night i was out at journey middle school they had one of their family nights and it was entirely in spanish for latino families and so um lots of good information about attendance and how to how to participate in all the school's extracurricular activities clubs and just good stuff for families to learn to help their students get the most out of

[00:20:16] attending school there so thank you to everyone for letting me be part of your programming and i look forward to the coming week on monday i'll be at hollymead elementary school to do a visit Thank you. Hi and I also have some things to add on for on behalf of the student representatives and Albemarle High School. First of all I think across all across the county at all four of our schools an increasingly pressing issue that we've discussed is kind of the issue of microaggressions that have been increasing in our schools. So these are like very subtle but also very harmful

[00:20:55] behaviors because it can really profoundly impact a student's sense of safety and belonging. Addressing them requires education and proactive support systems, yet the tools we rely on to report these incidents, such as the anonymous alert system, which used to be very widespread, at least in my school, is something that is currently offline and no longer accessible.

[00:21:15] Students who don't have trusted adults in their schools are now left with few safe avenues to report microaggressions or other sensitive issues like bullying or harassment. There's also a broader need to uplift marginalized communities to further disrupt all four forms of discrimination within our schools one critical area of improvement is diversifying our history and english curriculum to better reflect the voices and experiences of underrepresented groups for example recently there's been uh something an issue has arose that especially in u.s history there has really been a lack of indigenous history as students living on indigenous land it is essential that we learn

[00:21:55] about the histories cultures and contributions of indigenous peoples not just in the context of colonization but also through the lens of their resilience and their achievements we recognize that the board shares our commitment to fostering inclusivity and we look forward to collaborating on these efforts through channels such as the student senate and equity teams this provides an opportunity for continued dialogue and accountability as we work together to create a more equitable and representative curriculum. And as Superintendent Haas already touched on, on a positive note, Monticello High School was able to host a drug abuse and awareness program

[00:22:31] on Monday, and that was a great step towards educating our community about the dangers of substance abuse and providing resources for prevention and recovery. Additionally, at Albemarle High School, we made a lot of strides in our peer tutoring program, as we've recently integrated pocket talks, which are translation tools that allow for real-time translations so we have been able to work a lot better with our English language learner students and that's really helped enhance the inclusivity and effectiveness of our peer tutoring center making it a space where all students can thrive and we hope we can expand this initiative to other peer tutoring centers across the county thank you thanks so much for your

[00:23:11] comments I will say that so you're the second student rep who's brought up anonymous alerts which are now the help me app and I just think that the communication around help me has not been successful so yeah so I really think we need to make sure that students know about that I think also the general idea that people have about help me that it's a specifically like mental health app and I think that's why like if you encounter similar issues more related towards bullying or that's not really directly like I'm feeling this way it doesn't feel like it might be the same kind of source to report that so I don't think that's

[00:23:50] it's been kind of coming across as if you're struggling mentally or if you know someone who's struggling mentally this is a good source to report it through but i don't think the other aspect of it comes across as much okay that is really useful so thank you for that information um does anyone else have any school board okay maybe related to what margaret said um with the celebration of indigenous people month um i think we or i would like county to look into ways how we could make sure that we are celebrating that at each one of our schools because on election day a parent mentioned to me that that wasn't being celebrated and he

[00:24:30] had was vending in heritage and so um i hope that we can do something related to that in the county schools and also on uh tuesday i think it was um i was out at henley to celebrate the we the people celebration and all of the eighth graders um that i judged had done some research in certain aspects of the constitution and i think six teams at least from henley will be going to state competition and i think last year both albemarle and weston did very well at the state competition with we

[00:25:08] the people so that was a really enjoyable thing to be involved with yeah i believe this year that the we the people teams western was first place at regionals this year which was last weekend and then albemarle was second place right so okay thanks charlie i just wanted to mention that um i was interviewed by the um the broadcast folks students over at albemarle high school and i was just blown away by the questions they asked me and how professional they were putting it all together

[00:25:41] and they sent me the the video almost right away it was uh it was very well done very well organized questions were tough that's it all right thanks very much uh next we have item 5.0 public comment uh ellen osborne will be doing that i'll hand over the gavel yes and i'll need the list sent over this way too so we welcome public input at our school board meetings to sign up to speak

[00:26:16] during the public comment period you can do so in several ways you can do that online where sign up is available from 9 a.m on the monday of the meeting week until 2 p.m on the meeting day You can do it by phone by calling the school board clerk's office to sign up until 2 p.m.

[00:26:35] on the meeting day, or you can do it in person. Sign up at the meeting is available from 6 p.m. until the public comment period for in-person meetings only. Please note that public comment is not received at special board meetings unless specified on the agenda.

[00:26:53] Each speaker will have three minutes to speak, but the chair, with the board consent, may reduce this to two minutes should there be 14 or more speakers. The maximum number of people or groups that may speak at a meeting is 20.

[00:27:09] In the event that there are more than 20 people or groups who wish to speak at a particular meeting, each speaker will be assigned a number, and numbers will be drawn to determine which people or groups will have the opportunity to speak. Those who do not have the opportunity to speak at a particular meeting may sign up to speak at a subsequent meeting and/or may submit written comments for the school board's consideration.

[00:27:34] So speakers should state their name, address, or voting district, address comments to the school board, limit comments to school board governance or school division operations, provide written statements and supporting material to the clerk.

[00:27:51] The school board will use a timer to track each speaker's time. Speakers are asked to wrap up their comments by the end of the three-minute mark. To maintain respect, please refrain from clapping or other audible forms of support. You may raise your hand instead.

[00:28:07] Debate with the school board is not allowed, and the projection system is for staff presentations only. So tonight, we have four speakers. We will call them in the order of Libby Hewitt, Robert Hewitt, Christiane Urkel, and Christopher Seaman.

[00:28:28] All right. We're ready for Libby Hewitt. OK. Do I need to punch anything for the -- We do that.

[00:28:44] Okay. All right. Thanks. Thank you so much for receiving my email this week. Thank you, Chair Lee, for responding to that. I appreciate it. So I did, if you haven't had a chance to look at that email, there's some wonderful information in there from John Height's book about the anxious generation and reasons to have a bell-to-bell policy, which we're just going to address tonight.

[00:29:11] And I'm going to go over just a few of those slides. During the 2010 in particular, the social media just boomed and the smartphone was adapted faster than any communication technology prior to it.

[00:29:34] And the graphs show that students, children, really did not respond well. They were wondering what in the world is going on with this. So from 2010 to 2020, for instance, suicide rates in girls skyrocketed to 167% increase.

[00:29:59] And then boys were 91% in that period. room visits for self-harm increased rapidly depression was also a huge problem so um anyway in conclusion height um said there's really a loss of the face-to-face uh social time that kids really need to develop um and the attention fragmentation that happens um through social media and really a teacher cannot compete with that then there's the addiction there's a friend

[00:30:35] of ours his name is brad huddleston he's written a book called digital cocaine really good good read and a dive into this which is about the cell phone brain the addiction of a cell phone brain for it for really anybody looks like um the same as a cocaine addict and he really holds us up and says this is like do you really want to put cocaine in a child's pocket um and of course we don't we love kids we want the best for them so height going back to him come comes up with really a belt a bell a well enforced bell-to-bell policy where social

[00:31:15] interaction can be uninterrupted during the day six seven hours for kids and physically separating them from their cell phones he suggests phone lockers to do this. And then we have happier teachers. We have real learning environment and face-to-face social opportunities for students. So I'm hoping that that's going to be the future look of our students in the high schools in Emerald County and the middle schools. So thank you so much for

[00:31:46] your time. I appreciate you all. Thank you. Robert Hewitt. Very helpful. Keeps you from having to have my phone up here. My name is Rob Hewitt. I'm a former teacher in public schools and private schools and I've also been an administrator in the past I want to talk to you briefly about pedagogy today you know I think about the word leading children is often the way it's defined from its etymological origin but it's really a shepherding term that word in shepherding children what are we

[00:32:25] shepherding them in well we're hopefully because we have the hearts of teachers administrators we're shepherding them in their passions we're shepherding them and learning about who they are their identity so that when they finish this formal part of their education or at least the beginning of that formal part they're able to go out and know that they have something to do that's unique to them and I think because there's so much on the table during this time of formal education as much as we can we can't remove every distraction from from our students but as much as we can it would behoove us to to remove the distraction of a cell phone I think we have begun we have a good start in

[00:33:05] Albemarle County that is we've even we've enacted a classroom only ban on cell phones but it was I was interested I was really surprised actually to see a graph excuse me in Jonathan Heights book that survey it was a survey of 3,000 teachers of the National Education Association I think this is done maybe a three or four years ago perhaps nine out of ten teachers approved some kind of restriction on cell phones in the high school what was interesting is that almost to a one those who were in favor

[00:33:40] of that were also in favor of a complete bell-to-bell ban and that's that was surprising to me so 83 percent of those 3 000 was 3 000 teachers and i'm thinking teachers have a passion to teach they're in there to teach and they can't compete with the phone and it's really impossible when you think about it from a teaching standpoint, to try to maintain that order and that discipline of being distracted yourself from what your passion is, which is to teach and engage students.

[00:34:08] The third thing I'd just like to point out is something beautiful. I just came across this recently, and it was through a newsletter by a gentleman named Chris McKenna, who has an organization called Protect Young Eyes, which is a really fine website but Chris highlighted a program that was in the UK this past spring in Yorkshire and it's on the BBC I just encourage you to look at kids were so surprised to find out how much they would benefit by putting their cell phone down this wasn't just during the academic day but we're reducing their screen time and by half they were engaged they wanted to engage more with

[00:34:46] their friends with their family they it was just like a light went on that they didn't realize and one psychologist said they want to put it down but they just don't know how and I think we just don't understand the pressures as adults on what kids are facing we would have loved them in the best way we can I think this is one way to do it thank you thank you next we have Chris and the Urkel I'm Chris Raquel as a parent of two high schoolers it's my opinion that a way for

[00:35:24] the day could you get closer to the mic please oh sorry as a parent of two high schoolers it is my opinion that a way for the day is a necessary approach in our high schools every day I work towards building character in happy children I need to know you are working with me in this and you have my

back regarding phone usage we now know the facts depression anxiety and even suicide the stats are alarming and this is indeed dangerous we know that in the beginning the developers of smartphone technologies intentionally utilize the addictive impulses of the brain. For that very reason they said we don't give it

[00:36:02] to our own children. So what we are dealing with here is in fact a quietly developing addiction issue. We know this to whatever degree we see it in the eyes of our children when they come home and their ability to focus and communicate with us. So I believe we need to respond as such for the sake of those that are most severely affected and for those that are compromised and for the school administrators and teachers that are expected to police this experts say the parts of the brain that control addiction addictive impulses and dopamine release control of cravings and emotions particularly the front

[00:36:38] prefrontal cortex is highly active but underdeveloped until the mid-20s so in this very vulnerable time it is imperative to protect the developing brains of our high schoolers we must act now to limit the damage done to our children's hearts and minds it will impact their ability to be creative make good decisions and be active and conceive of goals for their entire lives unhindered by these detrimental distractions the solution out of sight out of mind and out of reach it is the first line of defense when

[00:37:13] dealing with any addictive temptation therefore we need to make any necessary financial investments my hope is for strong and bold decisions that draw clear safety boundaries we as a community should not see this as a partisan issue but a necessarily impractical defense as right now our educational goals are in jeopardy because of addiction to creativity destroying technology we need technology to be an ally not an enemy we need to know the difference and draw strong boundaries going forward

[00:37:47] we need a good new year where educators are not frustrated and wasted time and focus with wasted time and focus but engaging the children effectively confident that the boundaries set up are for the benefit of all just like seat belts and speed limits on the road for driving teens compliance should not be determined by their preference so based on what we know we must act fast january is possible because we saw you swing into action on march 13 2020 in the last pandemic with far

[00:38:22] reaching and creative management solutions this is a new mental health epidemic thank you ms urkel next we have christopher seaman good evening my name is chris seaman and i'm a resident of the whitehall district and a parent of two children in acps i'm offering this public comment on behalf of Ford Albemarle, which is an organization of parents, students, and community members that I'm a part of that works to support strong and inclusive public schools in Albemarle County.

[00:38:55] As an organization and as parents of students who attend multiple schools across the division, we have been made aware of a disturbing increase in hate speech and inflammatory language among ACPS students recently. We have heard from teachers and bus drivers who are reporting an alarming increase in racist and homophobic slurs, and we have heard from parents who report that their children are overhearing classmates repeating statements made by online extremists that are deeply xenophobic and misogynistic these words and statements are graphic and harmful and they create an environment that is not safe or conducive

[00:39:31] for learning our kids and our teachers deserve better members of our organization recently participated in a bystander intervention online training program provided by right to be a non-profit organization that has trained over a hundred thousand people since 2005.

[00:39:47] Bystander intervention programs empower individuals to recognize potentially harmful interactions and equip them to step in to defuse an escalating situation. Bystander intervention reduces harm, creates safe environments, builds cohesive communities and is simply the right thing to do.

[00:40:06] 67% of Right to Be's bystander intervention program participants report applying these skills they learned after witnessing a situation of harassment. We believe that bystander intervention training should be made available to all ACPS employees and to middle and high school students.

[00:40:24] Our teachers and staff should know that they can and should intervene when they hear inflammatory or bigoted language among students or coworkers and that they have the tools and support that they need to intervene effectively. Our students should know that their voices matter too.

[00:40:39] They can help shut down violent and hateful language among their peers. intervention programs can empower our kids to help create the safe schools and communities that they deserve. Thank you for your consideration and for your efforts towards making ACPS a place where all students can grow, learn, and thrive. Thank you. That concludes public comment time. Thanks very much for all who came to speak tonight. Next we have, thank you very much, item 6.0, approval of

[00:41:14] consent agenda. You may note that we have moved the consent agenda to after public comment so that can hear your comments before we make those decisions uh do i have a motion to approve consent i move we approve the consent agenda i second that moved by ms osborne seconded by dr acuff do we have discussion all right all those in favor say aye aye any opposed nope consent agenda is moved thank you next we have our school division business uh 8.1 admiral county seac

[00:41:52] annual report good evening i'm ashley strusick the assistant director of special education the special education advisory committee also known as seac is a group of dedicated individuals composed primarily of parents of children with disabilities who represent the schools in our division their primary responsibility is to inform the superintendent and school board on the needs of children and disabilities educated and served by albemarle county public schools

[00:42:29] seac is also highly valued by myself and the special education administrative team as they partner with us throughout the year. By sharing ideas and experiences, we get helpful feedback and direction from SEAC that guide us to improve our division's special education services.

[00:42:44] Christopher Seaman, the current SEAC Chair, and Jessica Allen, Vice Chair, are here tonight to review with you the SEAC annual report. Chris and Jessica, I'll turn it over to you. Good evening again. Again, my name is Chris Seaman. I'm the Chair of Albemarle's Special Education Parent Advisory Committee, commonly known as SEAC, this year. As I mentioned, I'm the parent of two kids in ACPS one of whom has a 504 plan thank you so much for the opportunity to present uh present CX annual report to you tonight I'm just going to go ahead and pull up the slide deck

[00:43:18] here for it CX mission is established by state law among other things CAC is charged with advising the local school division about needs for the children education of children with disabilities participating in the development of priorities and strategies for meeting the needs of children with with disabilities, reviewing and providing input on policies and procedures regarding special education and related services, and submitting periodic reports and recommendations like our annual report to the school board.

[00:43:53] I am glad to be joined tonight by a number of members of SEAC in the audience, so thank you all so much for coming. A number of other folks had commitments at school and elsewhere tonight and couldn't make it, but I am so grateful to be part of this dedicated team that shares a commitment to providing high-quality education to all children, including children with disabilities.

[00:44:15] We collectively represent almost every school in the division, as well as five at-large community members. And I'm deeply grateful for each and every member of SEAC who has volunteered their time and talents to help serve this mission. For this year's report, we took a data-driven approach so we can have a clear-eyed focus on what is working well in our school division with students for disabilities and what areas require improvement.

[00:44:41] We use a number of data sources which are laid out in the report, which I'll briefly summarize in my presentation tonight. I want to first talk about CEAC's family survey and some of the most important results from that survey. This is the second year that CEAC has conducted a survey of families who receive special education services in ACPS, both students who have IEPs and 504 plans.

[00:45:08] We designed and approved the survey instrument last spring, and with the assistance of the Office of Community Engagement, the Office of Communications, and the Office of Strategic Planning. This survey was distributed in October by email and text messages to families of students with disabilities. SEAC members also worked hard to increase outreach within our own school communities, including through flyers that contained a QR code, social media, and through outreach to school administrators and special education personnel in their school communities. I am pleased to report that based on these extensive efforts, our survey response

[00:45:41] rate this year increased by 33% and represents a 20% overall response rate for families that have a child who receives special education services. I know one of the questions about the school board was about representativeness of the survey respondents.

[00:45:57] I do have some data on that with respect to race. We don't have an exact apples-to-apples comparison to overall race of the population of students with disabilities, in part because we gave survey respondents the opportunity to check multiple categories that corresponded with their student's identity, meaning that the total percentage is greater than 100%, and that the option to select other or to decline to answer was also included.

[00:46:24] But with these caveats, we believe the survey is generally representative and reflective of the overall population of students with disabilities. 6% of respondents identified their child as Asian, 12% Black, 1% American Indian or Native American, 6% other, 9% prefer not to say, and a category that white, which includes Hispanic students who identify as white, was 75%. One area where we do know that the survey is unrepresentative is the level of education of the responding parents. 75% had at least an undergraduate degree, and almost half had a graduate or professional degree. This compares

[00:47:01] to about 60% of all adults in Navarro County that have a college degree or higher, according the Census Bureau. So the survey respondents were on average better educated and thus more likely to have greater resources and to be in a better position to advocate for their children. Okay, now to the survey results. We asked multiple questions about how well this special and general education programs are meeting the needs of students with disabilities. For children with an IEP, we asked whether the special education program was helping their child meet the academic goals in their IEP for both literacy and math. For literacy, the results were 58% somewhat or

[00:47:40] strongly positive, 10% neutral, 12% somewhat or strongly negative, 20% not sure, not applicable, for a net positive of 46%. For math, the lower chart, the results were 52%, either somewhat or strongly positive, 10% neutral, 13% somewhat or strongly negative, 20% not sure, not applicable, For a net positive of 39 percent.

[00:48:04] We also asked the entire population of students with disabilities, including those who had a 504 plan, about how well the general education program was helping their child meet their academic goals. For literacy, the results were 63 percent positive, somewhat or strongly, 13 percent neutral, and 16 percent somewhat or strongly negative, 7 percent not sure, not applicable.

[00:48:26] For a net rating of 47 percent. For math, the results for 60% somewhat or strongly positive, 14% neutral, 17% negative, somewhat or strongly, and 9% not sure, not applicable for a net positive of 43%.

[00:48:42] The survey also asked family members how well their child's behavioral and social and emotional needs are being met at school. I know this has been an area of focus for the school board since the pandemic, and I think the survey results reflect progress that has been made in this area. For behavioral needs, the results were 66% somewhat or strongly positive, 7% neutral, 13% somewhat or strongly negative, 14% not sure not applicable for a net positive of 53%.

[00:49:09] For social and emotional needs, it was getting quite similar 68% were somewhat or strongly positive, 9% neutral, 15% somewhat or strongly negative, 9% not sure not applicable for a net positive of 53%. Another set of data points that we considered in writing our report was the standard of learning results in reading, writing, and math.

[00:49:30] The state provides aggregate data for the school division on the performance of all tested ACPS students on these subjects, as well as for various subgroups, including students with disabilities. The next set of slides compares overall ACPS students' performance on these exams with students with disabilities for the past three academic years.

[00:49:48] And all of them show a large and persistent achievement gap between the two groups. For reading, the overall ACPS student population achieved a pass rate of 74 or 75 percent for all three years. with disabilities, however, had pass rates between 45 or 44 or 45 percent. The achievement gap, therefore, held relatively constant at between 29 and 31 percent all three years.

[00:50:11] For writing, the overall ACPS student population had an increasing pass rate during this time period from 67 percent in 2021 through 2022 to 73 percent in 2023 and 78 percent in 2023-24.

[00:50:27] Passing rates for students with disabilities for ACPS also increased, but they were also much lower to start with, going from 19% in 21-22 to 35% in 23-24. The achievement gap closed modestly during this time period from 48% to 43%. For math, we see a similar but less dramatic pattern compared to writing. The overall ACPS pass rate increased from 66% to 72% during this time period. The pass rate for students with disabilities also increased from 37% to 45%. But there is still an achievement gap that only modestly decreased from 29%

[00:51:04] I know some members of the Board were interested in how these figures compared to statewide averages, both for all students and students with disabilities. SEAC prepared a handout that I asked the Board Clerk to distribute earlier tonight.

[00:51:20] That handout has a table comparing overall student pass rates statewide compared to ACPS on the left-hand side, with a comparison of state pass rates for students with disabilities on the right-hand side. As you can see, for all students, ACPS is at or above the statewide average for reading, and writing for all three of the last years.

[00:51:39] But when it comes to students with disabilities, ACPS is at or below the statewide average for six of the nine assessments. I am now pleased to turn this over to Jessica Allen, our vice chair for SEAC, who will discuss the recommendations that were informed by this data.

[00:52:04] Thank you, Chris. Can everybody hear me? Wonderful. Dr. Haas, Chair Lee, school board members, and central office leadership, thank you for the time this evening. The work of our advisory committee is evidence-based and data-driven, as you've heard from Chris than you've seen in the report. In addition to the quantitative data we've shown you, it's also deeply rooted in the qualitative data. We hear from our dedicated representatives, our community, and our personal experience as parents and caregivers and educators. With that in mind, I'm not going to read you these slides tonight. Both the comprehensive annual report and this PowerPoint are already posted on the website for those who are interested. What I am going to do

[00:52:43] with my remaining time is attempt to frame our recommendations to you this year in the big picture of where we hope our academic community is going. So the vast majority of feedback we receive in SEAC can be sorted into three buckets. Bucket number one is ensuring academic success and that our students with disabilities reach their potential. Our students in special education need an additional learning specialist. There is currently one position serving the entire district and it's not enough. This position would help provide staff whether they're a general education or special education support inappropriate

[00:53:21] accommodations. We have so many teachers who are excited about working with our students with disabilities but we continuously hear they don't feel like this they have the support they need to do that. We have this cycle it appears where staff don't feel supported, student doesn't get the accommodations they need, student stops engaging, less desirable behaviors begin. We've recommended a learning specialist to help provide support at the beginning of that cycle. And we're also recommending a position for a behavior specialist to help stop that cycle and keep our students with disabilities engaged and

[00:53:57] learning within the classroom. One endpoint for behavior that is quantified as out-of-school suspensions. You can see in the far right column here in the bottom row that 40% of all incidents of out-of-school suspension involve students with disabilities. The only group higher is economically disadvantaged students at 69%. This next graph is demonstrating the percent of students with out-of-school suspensions. You can see there's over a threefold increase on the left at 7.2% for students with disabilities compared to those students

[00:54:33] on the right, 2.2% of students without disabilities. Presumably it's hard to meet your academic potential if you're not in school. We really strongly recommend funding an additional behavioral specialist this year. I'm not going to skip over TAs, but I'm going to jump around a bit because we are still here in bucket number one, which is ensuring academic success and that our students with disabilities reach their potential. In the survey this year and in feedback shared during SEAC meetings, we've also heard concerns about the lack of special education staffing at Center One and the needs of our post high

[00:55:11] students. We've also heard continued discussion about the achievement gap and struggles of our students specifically in math, as well as concerns over being able to just simply physically navigate our schools, and the lack of accessibility.

[00:55:27] All of these are included in greater depth in our report. Bucket number two encompasses the pain of watching your child not be included, understood, or valued for who they are.

[00:55:46] This exists in a lot of different forms for our students with disabilities, whether that be in the classroom because they're segregated in a corner and given a different activity, or because peers at recess don't know how to engage with them, or because support doesn't exist for them to be included in after-school activities.

[00:56:01] In my experience as a parent of a child with Down syndrome, there is an enormous amount of time that we spend teaching our children with disabilities to fit into what society defines as normal, and very little time teaching their neurotypical peers about them.

[00:56:20] But the data is clear. Inclusive learning communities are beneficial for both neurodivergent and neurotypical students we are immensely grateful for our special education teachers and the work you have done on the school board and with the central office to staff those positions over previous years but tonight we want to focus on special education as they are important drivers of the academic success of our students which is included in their job description but they are also some of the only staff in our schools who are organically positioned to be drivers of an inclusive school climate

[00:56:58] which is not included in their job description. In addition to carrying out the instructional plans in the classroom, they are the only staff naturally embedded with students in every part of their day. In specials, at recess, at lunch, in the hallways, they have the ability to set the bar for how peers interact with our students with disabilities. If we want together to break down the walls and change the preconceived notions about individuals with disabilities, we need boots on the ground every day in our schools doing that work special education as are an absolutely

[00:57:37] critical part of that team I can tell you that when as are brought up in our monthly meetings we get a ton of engagement from our members everyone has a story about the TA that impacted them or the one who left and how things were never the same for their student our as need to be included in PLC time professional learning community time and have additional paid professional days We're also paying them less than a living wage in Elmar County, and that's if they're single with no children, which you can see here at the bottom. Those are statistics from the MIT living wage

[00:58:14] calculator. When we look at their retention rate, I think some would say, "It's not so bad." Right here is the special education TAs who have left ACPS. Yellow are the SPED TAs who have left that position to move to something else within ACPS. What we think matters here is that from November 2023 to last month 69 special education as or 27 left their position I imagine that makes things very difficult for our students with disabilities and as your advisory committee we are really hoping that this is the year we can make some marked improvement for special education as

[00:58:54] bucket number three is the willingness and drive to want to change the outcome for other families no matter how frustrated or hurt the people we hear from are their feedback more often than not ends with some version of, I don't want other families to go through what we went through.

[00:59:13] What can I do to help? You have a very passionate, dedicated, and knowledgeable advisory committee, many of whom are standing behind me tonight. We have a strong disability community here in Elbemore County, and we will continue to stand together as we work with you on forward momentum. Now, we're all cognizant of the budget deficit and various directions you're pulled in as school board members but respectfully we recommended the addition of a learning specialist a behavioral specialist an additional pain support for special education TAS last year and they weren't funded our students with

[00:59:50] disabilities cannot afford to wait another year thank you Kristen I would be happy to take any questions if time allows thank you again so much for your time and attention this evening we really appreciate it thank you next up

[01:00:26] we have our human resources annual report. Dan Redding. All right. Good evening, school board

[01:01:01] members, Dr. Hawes, and members of the cabinet, and the Albemarle community. My name is Dan Redding, and I'm with human resources. We're here to present to you our annual report. Our agenda covers three areas this evening, major areas of impact over the 23-24 school year, areas we'll be working on in the future. And then any questions you might have about the report. We sent it to you about a week ago. Hopefully you've had a lot of time to digest the content. We always start with

[01:01:39] the school division's vision, mission, and values because they drive our work. All of our work in HR should be in support of the achievement of our strategic plan. We most clearly support goal three, equitable and transformative resources but over the course of the past year we've also been really trying to support goal to affirming and empowering communities through our work with recruiting and retaining a diverse and representative workforce. When HR separated from the local government to

[01:02:14] be the school's HR we developed our own mission vision and values that is aligned with the school division strategic plan and this is really our North Star as we go about all of our work. So let's look at some of those major areas of impact. And I tried to put helpful page numbers if you want to go back later and look in the report. But some of the highlights are right here. The one that we're really truly proud of is our collaboration with the Transportation Department for most of calendar year 24 around filling

[01:02:52] vacant bus driver positions. Initiatives included targeted social media advertising, referral and recruiting bonuses. And we really saturated local media with messaging around our ongoing need for bus drivers. This resulted in the school division having a driver for every bus route on the first day of school. This work is not done. We still need more drivers and we continue to tweak these strategies in an ongoing basis to just keep that momentum going. We've also seen a return to

[01:03:30] to pre-pandemic teacher retention levels as we strive to continue to improve that. We had a small dip over this year, but the overall trend has been in the right direction. Our substitute teacher fill rates also continue to climb.

[01:03:47] In the 22-23 school year, 65% of substitute jobs entered in our frontline system were filled by a regular daily sub. In 23-24, that percentage climbed to 74%.

[01:04:02] Our focus has been on very competitive compensation for subs along with a tiered bonus program, so when subs work a certain number of days, they're awarded a bonus that escalates based on that number.

[01:04:18] We made major modernizations and improvements to our leave policy, matching our competitive market by improving the accrual for personal leave to three days from two, and allowing more days to be carried over year to year.

[01:04:34] We also changed our family medical leave policy so that we now allow married couples who both work for the school division to each take 12 weeks of leave for the birth or adoption of a child. Previously, they had to split that leave.

[01:04:49] One parent could take eight weeks, the other could take four. That's a huge improvement for our employees and something they've been asking for. Another major area of improvement was the academic leadership compensation program, a that provides stipends to licensed educators who take on extra duties related to leadership or sponsoring student activities. After conducting a market survey, we found that our pay was much lower than other school divisions. So we took a good look at that. The school board allocated

[01:05:28] some additional funding, and we have now tied those pay rates to step zero of the bachelor's scale of teachers pay scale moving forward those rates of pay are going to adjust every time that pay scale adjusts we do a two percent increase for teachers that rate will go up two percent in collaboration with our county government we spend a lot of time in preparation and planning for our employee care clinics give me a second um for our employee quick care clinics with our first one

[01:06:07] scheduled to open in February next year. These clinics are an innovative way for employers to offer a benefit that can also mitigate the rising costs of providing healthcare. We're really excited and look forward to seeing the employee response to this benefit. Finally, we revised our employee performance evaluations. Finally, separating our classified employee evaluation from the local governments and now the evaluation ties better to our strategic plan for the 24-25 year school year

[01:06:45] we've again revised that evaluation based on feedback we've received and we've also provided automation thanks to our department of technology friends that automatically adds new hires into the system and sets their evaluation up so we're leveraging these more modern systems we have to automate tasks, remove manual processes, make things faster and less prone to human error.

[01:07:13] I realized after submitting the report that there's a couple highlights that are very important to us that we're proud of that we actually didn't even write about, and two of them are on this slide. Our first day of school teacher vacancy rate was actually under one percent, and we haven't seen that in a long time. That puts us in the top third of school divisions in Virginia the average vacancy rate for this year according to the Virginia Department of

[01:07:46] Ed was 3.4 percent on the first day of school so this is our continued reduction two years ago we were at two percent last year we were a little under one and a half percent we're still aiming for zero the other major improvement this year is a reduced onboarding and start time for new hires under past systems it was a minimum 10-day turnaround from when a new hire came in did all their paperwork submitted it it was at least 10 days before they could start the paperwork had

[01:08:22] to pass from hand to hand and eventually through probably about 12 different people leveraging our new systems we're under five days as long as someone's background checks clear so this is a huge win for schools and departments that need these new hires to start. The work never ends, though. So some areas for future work. We're really excited about this first bullet. We've

[01:08:54] been doing a lot of work over the 23-24 school year with employees who identify as African-American, Latinx, or LGBTQ to look at how ACPS can be a more welcoming and supportive place for our employees.

[01:09:11] This group became more or less a steering team during 23-24 and laid plans so that starting in August, we launched affinity groups for each of these identities. This is a place where employees who identify as one or more of these demographics can meet, network, find others that share that identity. Frequently, employees who identify in one of these groups may be the only one in their school community or in their department. We want people to find community here. That leads

[01:09:50] to retention. That leads to better performance. Our hope is, as time goes on, this opens further dialogue so that we are well aware of what employees' needs are, what they're experiencing, and what barriers they might be facing in their day-to-day work. We've also spent time working on a project that I think is pretty important to a lot of our educators, and we've We've nicknamed it the teacher titles project, but it's really anyone who has a license and is paid on the teacher step scale is listed as a classroom teacher in our systems.

[01:10:28] And when you look them up in the email directory, they're a classroom teacher. So a counselor, a speech therapist, a school psychologist, all these people don't identify as classroom teachers. This is actually, it sounds like it should be pretty easy, but it was actually an awful, awful lot of work to weed through this. But actually, right now, today and tomorrow, all that data is being uploaded in the system, which is pretty exciting. Likewise, I think

[01:11:02] it was 2021 that the board passed a \$15 an hour minimum wage. When that happened, any employee in pay grade five through 12, the distance between those pay grades got compressed.

[01:11:17] So if I was in a role that's a pay grade six and I got promoted to a pay grade eight, that movement resulted in a less than 2% raise. That's crazy. Why would I take on a higher level position for 2%?

[01:11:35] So we did a lot of work looking at this. And as a result of that, we've adjusted those pay grades so that there's now a 4.5% difference between each of those. That employee going from six to eight would now see a 9% raise.

[01:11:51] a lot more sense. I mentioned ALCP as a point of pride. We're not done with that work. We raised those values to be better. We're not as competitive as we want to be.

[01:12:06] While doing that, we also want to tighten up a lot of the procedures around it and ensure that there's consistency from school to school so that the duties for, let's say, student council are well-defined and that there's accountability so that no matter what school a student goes to, they're going to have the same experience in student council. The student council sponsor will be doing the same things no matter which school they're in. We continue to develop pathways that bring employees to us. We've been very focused on teachers and we continue to pursue alternate

[01:12:46] funding sources that will support our apprenticeship program. We also are starting to explore other pipelines that can feed positions in maintenance, transportation, and other areas. Finally, in 2025, we expect to enter negotiations with the Albemarle Education Association related to compensation, benefits, and working conditions that our employees have prioritized. This will be an additional way that we will hear from employees about the things that are most important to them as they do their part in

[01:13:21] achieving the strategic plan. I do want to share, especially for our employees watching on livestream at home, that the annual report is live on the ACPS website now. And you can find it also on our employee resources website. We do hope folks will take a moment to review it and learn about the work that we're very, very proud of.

[01:13:46] I'm remiss if I don't thank our incredible HR team. There's a few of them in the audience. Dr. Sears is one of them, but thank them for their work putting this report together. It is a labor of love, but also for what they do every day to support our employees as they do the work of making student learning happen.

[01:14:10] And with that, I open up for questions from the board. Thank you, Mr. Redding. I have a couple of questions. When we did our market study of salaries a couple of years ago, I'm sort of piggybacking on to Mr. Seaman's remarks about special ed TAs or TAs generally, did we look at those salaries also in that market study?

[01:14:45] Yeah. We looked at that, I believe it was 2021, and at that time we looked at TAs as a whole. didn't parse them out. And at that time, we were found to be right at market. I can say we do go out every summer for general wage comparison, and then we choose different positions based on how hard they are to fill, turnover, other things, and get data from our market. And we do see that we are below market for special education TAs. That is something that we are talking about now, too.

[01:15:22] Okay, and a similar type of questions is, do all school divisions lump together, all licensed folks as teachers? I mean, there's school psychologists and whatever. How are those salaries? Are they aligned correctly, let's just say?

[01:15:39] I think we're doing the right thing to separate those position titles. I think most divisions are just everyone's doing it differently. We did it that way, as I understand it, based on the systems we used at that time. It's what the system needed in order to function.

[01:15:57] We have a much more robust system for our HR data now that can handle things better. Is that answering your question? Yeah. I mean, it is, and as far as it goes, it is. I mean, I'm just wondering, I mean, I do remember in the study a while ago, there was a difference, say, in our LPNs versus RNs, were they paid correctly?

[01:16:22] But I'm just wondering if school psychologists should be on that same pay scale as teachers? I don't know that they shouldn't be, but I did not realize they were in one big pot. It does vary division by division.

[01:16:38] Some do put them on the teacher salary scale. Some put them on a classified scale. It is something that we will eventually revisit as we go back out to market to gather data. Okay. Complicated work.

[01:16:56] I was curious. think it's great to hear that you have these teacher affinity groups but I was curious to ask if there's like an Asian American Pacific Islander one or if for some reason if there's not why that is it's a great question and thank you for it we have not started one yet but we are very open as employees approach us to ask about different groups we we want to see that it's important to note that all three of these groups are employee led HR is not leading these groups. We facilitated that kind of steering team that has founded this. Individual employees

[01:17:34] have taken on the leadership, the scheduling, the agenda for each of these groups, but we're definitely open to, as employees come forward, any identity based affinity group.

[01:17:52] We've made a lot of progress in recruiting our minority teachers and working with the affinity groups. But in the data that was shown, not on your report tonight, but that you sent to us, there are still four schools that either have no minority representatives or one at that school.

[01:18:13] And that would still be showing that we still have quite a bit of work to be done, even though we've made improvements. And we would wholeheartedly agree. one thing that happened over the summer that we're extremely pleased with shea carter shiflett who's our program manager for retention and diversity equity and inclusion conducted a book study group for leaders in the division on supporting and retaining educators of color and that was actually a pretty powerful open discussion for the principals and the department

[01:18:48] heads who were in that group to talk about what experiences their employees are having and consider what steps they need to take as leaders but it's a point well taken we're not where we want to be but we are making progress just to add on to that very similar point because this is largely from student opinion from my school at least we do have educators in like we do have a pretty diverse set of educators at Almaro High School especially which we're very grateful for but we've really noticed from our black student union

[01:19:27] they've really noted that there's really not a black educators in higher level classes so once they start taking all these APs and they walk into a room where they don't really see anyone who looks like them that becomes a really discouraging aspect and then for our Asian population we really see very few educators at all of our affiliation that is an excellent point I don't know what our data looks like, but I think that would be something interesting to pull from our student course registration system to see who's teaching our AP classes, who's teaching

[01:20:03] our dual enrollment classes, and how do we then create opportunities so that our educators of color are getting whatever credentials, training, or whatever else is needed so that they're eligible to teach those courses too. It does matter to the students.

[01:20:18] Dan, I really wanted to thank you and your team for this report. In the past, especially when you were still one with the county, we definitely were not getting this level of data, and I think it's very commendable, and it's presented really well.

[01:20:44] One thing I was curious about was while our overall substitute fill rates have gone up, That's great. I was surprised to see how widely variable they are from school to school and especially much lower rates for schools with marginalized students, higher proportions.

[01:21:03] So what can we do about that? Great question. Some of what we've already done is allocate additional school-based subs to those schools. So they have those individuals who report every single day to that school to take on any vacancy that's not filled through the regular daily sub process.

[01:21:23] One of the ones that horrified me when I looked at the data was the intensive support center has a 0% fill rate. And so I called Katie Koppel and Ashley Struzik to ask what's the experience? What are you seeing? We've actually made some arrangements and we had a vacant position, I think two years AGO, WE CREATED POSITIONS FOR FEEDER PATTERN SCHOOL-BASED SUBS TO ADDRESS UNFILLED BASE CLASSROOM VACANCIES.

[01:21:52] ONE OF THOSE HAS BEEN VACANT FOR A WHILE, AND TALKED TO THE PRINCIPAL WHERE THIS POSITION WAS HOUSED AND WE AGREED WE'VE ACTUALLY REASSIGNED THAT POSITION NOW TO THE INTENSIVE SUPPORT CENTER TO BE AVAILABLE FOR EITHER ISC OR POST HIGH IF THEY HAVE AN UNFILLED VACANCY.

[01:22:11] Because that's just not acceptable that those positions go unfilled. So that was an easy, fast solution to that one. Some of them, I know some of our more rural schools, Red Hill has had difficulty.

[01:22:27] They received an additional school-based sub-allocation for this school year. So we're working within that program as our primary means to provide continuity and coverage for those classes. Well, that, I mean, there are a few, like Woodbrook is at 52, Red Hill 58, it seems like there are quite a few.

[01:22:48] Is there, I don't know, I mean, I know we're in this tight budget cycle, but I just wonder if there's anything else that can be done. So, Dan, just to check my understanding, the fill rates don't include classes and teacher substitution by the permanent sub.

[01:23:05] So, the permanent subs are filling the ones, so it's not really, they're just not getting filled. it's 52 percent are filled by the person that comes in outside the school yeah everything else is filled by the permanent subs at the school and we differentiated we differentiated the staffing for those schools going into this year to add permanent subs to them based on their low fill rates the year before so the these numbers don't reflect the person who's there every day and fills the classes so then is the practical flow rate than 100 it should be 100 i mean because there's

[01:23:43] also other people fill as well everything gets filled they're just um looking at the fill rate for the substitutes that are coming in that are getting called in because those those that is a lot of strategic work to try to figure out what's going to bring them in because they just the phone rings or they look on the computer they can just turn it down now what we are doing is analyzing expenditures because remember one of the other changes we made was to centralize the substitute budget so we could actually see what's happening at our level and so we can see we can see particular

[01:24:19] schools that are still um using a lot of substitutes coming in and to the extent where almost it would be make better sense just to have a permanent sub at the school so that that'll be another strategy we'll be looking at we'll be spending the same amount of money but you get better coverage and it's more consistent and the person knows the kids and everything so those numbers really just reflect the substitutes coming in off the off getting called in well so then i wonder if for future reports i mean i don't know how useful than this information is i i don't i mean now that we have a permanent sub program i don't know if there's a different

[01:24:57] metric that we should be looking at um or if this is useful yeah it may be that's a good point thank Thank you. So do you feel like we're avoiding pulling teachers away from the planning period and putting them into classrooms because that disrupts PLCs and all kinds of stuff that we don't want to mess up?

[01:25:24] Pulling people in from their planning periods and asking people to cover classes is still something that does happen occasionally. It is definitely not happening at the same level it was during and just post-pandemic.

[01:25:40] But where you see the positions that are not filled, somebody has to fill those positions, and oftentimes that is when somebody is asked to do it. It may be a classroom teacher, it may be a classified

support employee, it may be... We've had administrators that fill in those classes as well.

[01:25:57] And that's why it's so important for us to keep focusing on that sub rate, because the goal is to have 100%. I will say the numbers that we have right now are better than we've ever seen even prior to the pandemic. So I think there's a lot of work that has gone into encouraging people to be in our schools and the work that we're doing to train and develop our substitutes.

[01:26:22] We had subs that were invited to come and participate in making connections, allow for some professional development there. And so I think it's the, I think this is one of those situations where I think about this slide that says, you know, the work that we still have to do. I do think it is something to celebrate, but I do think there is work to do there.

[01:26:39] I do think the school-based permanent subs have been a tremendous asset to having us be able to fill positions in the school without taking people out of the classroom from other things. Yeah, to Ms. Lee's point, though, I mean, I was thinking about it.

[01:26:56] The whole reason we were looking at that metric to begin with was because we were really not being very successful filling it but we helped we held on to the same metric yeah so it might be time to move on from that well we'll play with it and we'll take a look at it yeah although I think to both your points chuck and Claire um maybe it's something where it was able to be filled without a classroom teacher another classroom teacher being taken from planning or you know because we're thinking about it I guess from the student perspective of do I have a teacher um but also you know we think about it from the whole school perspective of are we

[01:27:33] pulling people out of their other job so that might be part of that metric in the future this isn't really on point but when we know when we have employees who have a planned medical leave or very long you know they're out for three months for whatever do we tend to use the the permanent hires or do we go outside for that so we can keep the flexibility in the building the ask is is that they log the absence in frontline and let a daily sub pick up that absence so that the school-based sub is available for an unexpected emergency absence.

[01:28:09] - Thank you. - But I will add to that that for the absences that are longer, anything over 10 days is considered a long-term absence. And so we do advertise and hire long-term substitutes for that position.

[01:28:24] Our goal is always to have the most qualified person to come in and fill for those long-term positions. So we are typically seeking, as much as possible, somebody who is a licensed teacher, preferably licensed in that area, but a licensed teacher or somebody who has some experience and expertise in whatever it is that they're coming into to substitute for that longer-term absence.

[01:28:49] - Thank you. - I do just want to reiterate my first point in that the report is awesome. And also all the work that you've done. I mean, you low-keyed all of the great work and areas of impact, and they're really important and very, very good.

[01:29:10] So thank you very much for your work. Especially the appendices. I really loved having all that data in one place. Yeah, that was awesome. Thank you. Thank you very much. Thank you, Dan. Thank you.

[01:29:25] All right, next, we are right on time. It's 8 o'clock, and we have a 10-minute break, so we'll be back here at 8.10.

[01:32:57] All right, we're back.

[01:40:57] We have 8.4, High School Center's Name Recommendation, Karen Waters.

[01:41:20] - Good evening, Karen. - Good evening. Why don't I see anything on this? Oh, there you are, Christine. We do this every time, don't we? It's the Karen and Christine show.

[01:41:35] - It is, it really is. - Thank you. Good evening. Thank you for your time this evening. I'm Karen Waters, the Director of Community Education and Project Manager for School Names from the Office of Community Engagement.

[01:41:52] I was tasked with providing the board with a recommendation for a name for the buildings which will house our scholars program, formerly known as Career Learning Communities.

[01:42:07] Of course, this work was done with an eye to our strategic plan and our vision, mission, and values. We center this with all of the work that we do. And we are particularly concerned with thriving students and affirming and empowering communities.

[01:42:27] Currently Albemarle County Public Schools has one high school center, which is located at 1180 Seminole Trail, and another one that is soon to be constructed on the Lambs Lane campus near Albemarle High School.

[01:42:45] These buildings house various studios of our scholars program, in addition to ACPS offices such as building services, EDEP, and technology. This work was undertaken with the understanding that additional buildings may be established for the same purpose and the possibility exists that the occupancy of a given building is subject to change in terms of switching around studios and things of that nature, depending on student demand.

[01:43:16] Consequently, in identifying names, it's important that they convey not only the purpose of the building, but not be limiting in terms of the specificity. So policy FA, the general provisions state that sole control over the naming of any school rests with the school board.

[01:43:39] And it is your intention to involve students, teachers, and interested citizens that are diverse in the process of naming schools and that they may not be named for an individual, but rather a geographic area or an entity quality or an ideal that you all feel worthy of work of recognition to this end i convened an advisory committee and i would like to thank them this committee was volunteered lots of their time uh in support of this work and uh it was comprised

[01:44:15] of acps staff jeff prilliman the director of the current center one chef malik poindexter jackie abundio gomez from albemarle high school a recent graduate of albemarle county schools our student support program manager pearl early and rosara gonzalez muniz who it is now our federal and state specialist we also included one community member dr ben allen who's the director of the

[01:44:52] equity center at the university of virginia and we i tried to make the have the committee have a very robust representation of students we included chloe nab who's a center one link studio student dylan herrera i think it is and he is a culinary arts student i mean i'm sorry a k-tech student studying auto shop, Othniel Nakuka, an English language learner, Caden Wright, a PVCC

[01:45:23] dual enrollment student, and also a scholar student, and then one of our Thrive Studio students, Susan Gass, who's going to be a future teacher, as well as a Center One parent, Megan Knapp.

[01:45:39] want to thank them for their efforts the process involved me meeting with our branding consultants from cure as well as our curriculum coordinators who are working on the scholars program

attended focus group meetings with students at ahs mesa and center one and then developed a preliminary survey using keywords that uh i had heard again and again from the students during the focus groups and asked them to eliminate the ones they didn't like and tell us which ones resonated with them.

[01:46:15] Then I sent out a preliminary survey to 56 students in June and additionally received some historical data from Mr. Preliman on naming when Center 1 was first opened and did an additional survey just deployed to Center 1 students. You see an example of the survey there. Some of the Some of the preliminary picks are shown here.

[01:46:39] The top selections were Albemarle Tech or A-Tech, Albemarle Career Exploration Studios, which could also be known as ACEs, or Albemarle Career Exploration Academy, which could also be known as ACE Academy.

[01:46:56] And you see some of the others there, but those were the ones that rose to the top. Some of the guidance that we received from the folks at CURE were to make sure we had names that were accessible, clear and compelling.

[01:47:12] Main thing being, is it something that a teenager would think is cool? And then there's no silver bullet to naming. And also a name is what you make of it. We may decide to name something and people may come up with a different handle for it just as a shortcut.

[01:47:31] never know what they're going to do one of the examples they gave us in discussing this was the idea of uber would anyone know what an uber was 10 years ago if i said car service would you relate that to uber no but it is not only a noun but it's a verb right we uber everywhere so uh names can be really interesting they we had a series of meetings august 2nd september 9th and september

[01:48:06] 30th which were made known to the public we also deployed a community survey we didn't have any takers on the offer of a public forum but we did receive 816 responses to our community survey and you see the results in the order that they were voted on by the that they were selected by the community here with albemarle career exploration academy as number one and albemarle studios of

[01:48:40] exploration being the last one with that said the committee was asked to vote on a final choice that they would like to recommend to all of you and their final recommendation is to name center one albemarle career exploration academy at seminole trail otherwise known as ace academy seminole and ace academy lambs lane and that subsequent centers would be named ace academy with a descriptor with respect to their location to differentiate them this would allow that the

[01:49:18] building title to remain consistent to be able to identify them by location and if for example there are buildings such as our seminal trail location that is leased that we decided we didn't need any more but we needed to create a different academy somewhere else you would have this name available. And similar to the lower and upper elementary that we are creating in our southern

[01:49:52] feeder pattern, there does not appear to be any difficulty in staff being able to differentiate between the names in terms of our systems. And with that said, I will open it up for some questions and discussion i will mention that in henrico they also have ace as an acronym for some of their career centers but they actually don't stand for the same words that ours do well miss

[01:50:31] waters we've talked about this you know offline but um i i heard a lot about how much we're spending on renaming. And in this particular effort, did you pay your committee?

[01:50:48] No, it doesn't cost a cent. And because this is a newly constructed building, building services actually wanted to see this work expedited so that they could provide a name for signage for the new building. For the current center one, the cost to change the signage i think will not be very significant will it there's not there's very limited signage right now yeah um so we're not spending millions and millions of dollars on renaming schools never

[01:51:24] have never will thank you unless there's a big raise in it for me somewhere i don't know i wanted that in the record thank you mr pace about signage could we when we do rename center one can we perhaps improve the signage absolutely we're in the process of renegotiating that lease and one of the things we're going to talk to about is improved wayfinding in that building great together again i just wanted to thank all of those who participated on the committee and

[01:52:01] particularly the students who were very vocal thank you thank you thank you thank you so we'll see this on consent in our january meeting all right next we have our first quarter financial report jackson zimmerman presenting for the board's consideration the first quarter financial report it is a relatively brief report i do want to point out a couple of quick highlights in that report

[01:52:36] the first highlight is this year is very similar at least in behavior as to last fiscal year's first quarter just from experience last fiscal year we did spend very close to our total appropriation amount associated with that you will see that in your fourth quarter report that we're planning on presenting next next board meeting so we are carefully monitoring our expenditures in the current year and we'll continue to carefully monitor them for all of this and treating we're going to stay within budget and we're going to be doing the kinds of

[01:53:11] things that are necessary to do that the one small revenue component that's out here that i do want to point out is that the general assembly's budget we that we are receiving revenues from are slightly speaking of michael i'm sorry thank you the general assembly's budget was passed after you adopted your budget and therefore it results in a slightly lower than anticipated state revenue figure from what was originally adopted this was anticipated during this process we do hope that there will be some distribution of additional state monies with the governor's

[01:53:51] caboose bill budget which we anticipate coming forward or being presented to the public on uh wednesday of next week so uh those are the two main items that i wanted to point out to you and i'm happy to field any questions that you may have at this time otherwise the floor is open for a motion to accept this report i move we accept this financial report from mr zimmerman second moved by ellen osborne seconded by um gram page any questions or debate all those in favor Aye.

[01:54:30] None opposed? All right. Thanks very much, Jackson. Thank you very much. Thank you, Jackson.

[01:54:46] Sorry, my agenda's not working, but I know that lastly, we have an update from Maya Kumazawa. Good evening.

[01:55:13] My name is Maya Kumazawa, Director of Budget and Planning. And this evening, I'd like to provide an update on our FY26 budget development process. And this evening, Mr. Brody Downs, Human Resources Director, will also assist me in parts of the presentation. We will be covering our anticipated revenue drivers, so we'll provide a forecast of where we think revenues will be for next year, and then

highlight some of our expenditure drivers, so what we know thus far in the process that we might anticipate to build into our budget.

[01:55:46] Then we'll have a presentation about compensation and benefits, which is our main expenditure driver for next year, and then there'll be some time at the end for questions and discussion. As always, we look to the strategic plan as a guide for building our budget.

[01:56:02] We primarily focus around goal number three, equitable and transformative resources. A guide that we use that's a little bit more focused on the budget, so a little bit more detailed is our budget development goals that you all have adopted several years ago.

[01:56:22] These remain the same every year, and these are the goals by which we'll provide some of the updates this evening and then what we must ensure as we're building the budget that we're addressing. So the first one is alignment with the strategic plan. We want to build a budget that provides the resources necessary to support our stated mission, which is working together as a team. We will end the predictive value of race, class, 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. We will know every student. The second budget goal is to engage

[01:57:00] community members. We've been focusing a lot on this in the last several weeks. Some notable input groups we've received feedback from are the Employee Budget Advisory, the Budget Advisory Committee, all of our various ACPS advisory committees that exist and represent different areas of our programming, and the superintendent has many groups that he engages with that we are having budget discussions with. Number three is to provide a salary and benefits plan that keeps us in a competitive place in the

[01:57:34] market. So this will be discussed during the compensation benefits section in more detail. The fourth budget development goal is to develop and maintain a responsive and systematic approach to our operations. We will touch on this also during this presentation. Number five is to build new budget proposals that are in alignment with the strategic plan and your priorities so we'll have a little bit more detail on that and then lastly schools departments and strategic proposals will incorporate the use of logic models and we've also had a lot of focus on this during our budget development process so

[01:58:14] I'll go into a little bit more detail about how we're using the logic model process to make some decisions for the upcoming budget so I'll begin first with revenue drivers. As you're aware, the transfer from local government is our primary source of funding in our operating budget. So this is where I'll start. You can see that since the pandemic, those revenues have grown pretty steadily. This is mainly driven by real estate assessments

[01:58:50] and economic growth in our local economy. As part of the county's five-year financial planning work session they have projected a transfer to acps that would grow by about 3.7 percent or would equal to 202 million dollars they've also been worked with a consultant to look at national and state economic trends and they're labeling the next few years is partly sunny partly

[01:59:23] cloudy which means that there will be some growth even if it's not as significant of growth as we we've been seeing. Of course this number is will not subject to but will change with the assessments that will be completed in January and so we'll have a predicted revenue number that will be different from

this when we are presenting the draft funding request. The second source of revenue for ACPS is the state revenues and as you are aware this is largely driven by the local

[01:59:59] Composite Index, LCI, or Ability to Pay. This is measured or provided on a biennial basis and remains at that high point of 0.6904 as we are in the second year of the biennium.

[02:00:16] This number is driven up based on primarily driven by adjusted gross income that was benchmarked back in 2021 and is then applied to the upcoming budget. So this indicates that the locality has a greater ability to pay, meaning that the state's share of payments to the school division are lowered because of the increase in the locality's ability to support school operations.

[02:00:45] So a little bit more on that and how that fits into state funding. There are three primary drivers of the funding formula from the state. The first one is student enrollment. state distributions are based on the actual enrollment of March 31st of that school year.

[02:01:04] We do make enrollment projections for the next school year to guess at the student population so that we can develop a state revenue projection. We are currently budgeting an enrollment increase of 178 additional K-12 students. So that's when you look at what we projected or budgeted for the current year, FY25, and then look at the change for what we're projecting or budgeting for FY26, and that's 178 K-12 students. So that is one driver that would increase state revenues.

[02:01:42] The next one is the per pupil amount. These are various funding sources that the state determines, the most significant one being basic aid. Typically that PPA amount goes up from year to year due to re-benchmarking and increased costs of providing services. And then, as I mentioned, the last piece of the formula is the local composite index. This includes indices for real property values in the county, adjusted gross income, and taxable retail sales. So in general, there are a lot of

[02:02:16] nuances and variations depending on the funding source, but overall the formula is the per-people amount so how much funding we get per student times the number of students we're projecting times one minus the lci so as you can see as the lci goes up our funding goes down so this is our forecast based on what we know today you can see a historical increasing trend and then a drop in fy25 of a decrease of 4.6 as mr zimmerman mentioned this is actually higher the adopted

[02:02:55] amount is a bit higher than what we're actually anticipating to receive in the current year and then the forecast for FY26 has been updated with the latest General Assembly's adopted budget that was passed after we adopted the budget but using the assumptions on the latest available budget we anticipate state revenues next year of about 69 million dollars which is a 0.9 percent increase or fairly flat so there are some things that are driving that number up like enrollment but something's driving that number down.

[02:03:30] For instance, the amendments made in June after we passed the budget is driving that number down, largely due to sales tax. And it also includes a 3% compensation supplement. So I'm assuming that that is included as part of the revenue in terms of this increase.

[02:03:52] So as I mentioned, the local transfer and state revenues do make up a bulk of our funding. There are some smaller amounts of funding we have budgeted in the current year from other sources. These first three, the revenue contingency reserve and both recurring and one-time use of fund balance are one-time funding sources.

[02:04:12] They are tapping into reserves that we have or savings from past years that we're using as a Band-Aid to be able to fund the expenditures for this year. These were one-time measures that we took to balance the budget for this year.

[02:04:30] And as they are one time in nature, you cannot rely on them year after year. So as of this point, we are forecasting not using those funds in FY26. And then the last item here, federal revenues, this is a recurring amount based on historical trends and reimbursements we've received from the federal government.

[02:04:50] We're decreasing that estimate from 618,000 to 460,000. So what does that look like in total? is again just a forecast but the increase in the local government transfer will result as will result in about 7.2 million dollars in new revenue the state forecast would provide 0.6 million dollars in new revenue and then we would see a decrease in other revenues of about 3 million dollars so the forecasted total revenue change as of today is about 4.8 million dollars in new

[02:05:26] revenues. I'll turn next to expenditure drivers. This is a reminder of how we spend our money, and this pie chart represents this current year, but it typically does not change from year to year.

[02:05:41] What this is showing is that when you combine salary costs, benefits costs, and other wages costs, the compensation we provide for our employees make up over 85% of the operating budget. So this is an area we'll focus a lot in during the budget process and this evening.

[02:05:59] So, going back to goal number four, which is maintaining our operations, this is a list of some of the expenditures that we know we will need to budget in just to maintain and provide the same level of services that we're currently providing.

[02:06:22] The main one is healthcare costs. We anticipate a correction to our current year FY25 baseline rates that will require new funding in FY26. We are also anticipating a 26% employer premium increase in plan year 2025.

[02:06:41] So that begins next month. And then currently in the works is planning for an increase, a significant increase also for plan year 2026, but that rate is still to be determined. We're also looking at inflation and non-discretionary increases that we'll need to build in.

[02:07:00] As I mentioned, while enrollment growth does provide us with additional state revenues, It also comes at a cost to maintain our class sizes and our services. We would add additional FTEs to our budget, and that's for our regular class sizes.

[02:07:17] In addition, we anticipate growing our English learner and special education population, which have more rigorous ratios, and those populations do tend to grow faster than our regular population. And then we'll talk about in more detail later is a market-based compensation increase.

[02:07:36] So what we know, as we continue to work on building costs for these, we do know that the combination will far exceed the available anticipated revenues that I just covered. In addition to that, to adhere to budget goal number five, we're also considering strategic priorities.

[02:07:57] So what is a priority for the school board? How can we continue to move the strategic plan forward? These are just examples of proposals that we're working on, among others, and details will be forthcoming as part of the draft funding request in February.

[02:08:14] And then I'm going back to budget goal number six. So this was the goal about making sure we use logic models to ensure that we're measuring the success of our new budget proposals. So we are meeting regularly to check in on all of our new budget proposals that have been proposed in the last five years, checking in on the metrics for all of those proposals.

[02:08:39] Are we implementing those budget proposals the way they were intended to? And are we meeting the outputs and outcomes that have been defined? And these are some of the questions that we're asking in each of the thorough reviews.

[02:08:55] If outputs and outcomes aren't being met, what can we do differently to support that program? Or is that program still meeting and moving forward our strategic plan? If not, what are the considerations that can be made as part of the FY26 budget?

[02:09:15] So that covers the revenue and expenditure drivers. I'll introduce Mr. Brody Downs, Director of Human Resources to go over the next section.

[02:09:31] Good evening. I'm Brody Downs, Director of Employee Services in the Human Resources Department, and I'm here to discuss compensation of benefits information collected through our annual competitive market survey process which is conducted or which was conducted earlier this year we'll discuss general wage increase information as well as trends that we're observing within our competitive market as well as what we've also observed and what's been published in the bureau or by the bureau of labor

[02:10:03] statistics we're going to start with benefits we have a self-funded health plan so in the traditional insurance model an employer would purchase coverage for their employees from an insurance company and that company would offer access to a provider network create the plan design which also includes copays deductibles and out-of-pocket maxes and so on and then they set the rates that the group would pay for the coverage they also of course take on the risk of insuring that group of organizations and their employees the self-funded model works quite a bit differently

[02:10:43] And this slide illustrates how that works. Instead of paying an insurance company to take on the risk of insuring our group, we insure each other and we pay the insurance company. Currently, that's Anthem for us. And we pay them to administer the benefits and process pay and pay the claims.

[02:11:02] As you see, employees pay premiums just like in the traditional model. But instead of these going to an insurance company, they go into a healthcare fund. We then use the fund to pay claims, administrative fees, stop loss coverage premiums and wellness activities like vaccine clinics and our employee assistance program.

[02:11:23] If we take in more contributions than we actually spend, then the excess contributions go into a strategic reserve. And if we spend more than we actually take in, then we use the reserve funds to cover the excess cost. being self-funded gives us the most flexibility in terms of determining rates plan design and administrative processes and allow us to take advantage of years in which revenues exceed expenses to support a healthy reserve the school division has been and continues to

[02:12:00] make multiple efforts in support of our health insurance program so these range from maintaining a competitive plan design like we just talked about a second ago as well as premium structure and employer contribution structure to auditing plan participants to ensure that those who are on the plan actually qualify to participate in the plan these efforts also include wellness strategies as well as the

opening of the employee health clinic which happens in early 2025 in partnership with local government this previous year also included an infusion of one-time money to support

[02:12:38] the reserves balance. All right, so this slide shows the past five years data for employee and employer health insurance increases. What the employee contributes, we refer to as their premium.

[02:12:53] What the employer contributes, we call that the contribution. The school board supported, as you'll see, three consecutive years of not passing on increases to staff and the employer has absorbed increases at a greater rate than what employees experienced in all five years.

[02:13:11] that trend continues in plan year 2025 which is the sixth year the slide shows changes to employee premiums from plan year 2021 to 25. i would focus on the two columns on the right that are in bold those differences are in those two columns year over year in comparison to plan year 24 an employee on the select plan will pay 219 more over the course of the year for the employee only plan and an employee will pay 835 dollars more over the course of the year

[02:13:49] for a family plan and that's on our ppo it's our select plan an employee plan will cost 48 more over the course of the year for the choice plan and employees who carry their family will pay 453 dollars more in 2025 on that plan as well the choice plan is our high deductible health plan so this slide shows how almar county public schools compares to its market with regard to employee and employer premiums for the employee plan only so this doesn't

[02:14:25] this does not regard family plans as we evaluated benefits information from our competitive market we were really wanting to analyze the cost of our benefits plans in comparison to what we see in the market and so what you see on the left represents plan year 2024 and on the right side that represents 2025 so what's most important to take away it's a lot of numbers it's a lot of information what's important to take away from the slide is that the planned increases that we put in place that have been approved to go into effect in a few weeks here in january put employee and employer premiums and contributions into a

[02:15:04] place that we see is more in line with what we see in the market and do not result in employees paying more than the market in a way that's statistically significant the slide shows similar information with the only difference being that it shows information relative to the employee plus family plans so again what is important to take away from the slot is that the plan increases put employee and employer premiums and contributions into a place that we see is more in line with

[02:15:37] the market and that what you'll see in on the right and well in both is that the family plan premiums remain highly competitive in comparison to the market so you'll see that on the right side that 456 compared to 769 is quite a bit lower what's also important to take away from this the past two slides really is that what you're seeing in 2025 is in 2024 the information from

[02:16:13] the market is relative to what we were seeing in the summer of 24. so some school divisions their plan year is their fiscal year and some school divisions most their plan year is the calendar year so what we what we expect is that the market information when we go through this process again and you know may and june we expect to see that number on the right um the market target we expect to see that move up a bit while you'll see all the the almar county number will

[02:16:45] stay stagnant essentially at that point because our our plan year is the calendar year all right transitioning to compensation you know it's always helpful to start by discussing why it's important to maintain a purposeful and robust compensation program and providing an overview of what aspects of a

compensation program are most critical sound compensation program addresses two basic components one is market competitiveness and then the other is internal equity with how we manage the programs within the organization an organization should be monitoring its competitive market we do

[02:17:24] and compensating for roles at a competitive rate and an organization should maintain systems to ensure that roles and people are compensated equitably. The school division has an adopted market. It's 15 school divisions that we strategically selected in 2022 based on a number of different factors and this of course allows us to benchmark our compensation levels against a consistent set of school divisions. So the school board's a little bit of a recap. The school board adopted its competitive market in 22. The school

[02:18:03] The word also identified at that time the 60th percentile as its strategic target. Being at market from a compensation perspective is the 50th percentile. And so identifying the 60th percentile as the strategic target beats the market by 10%.

[02:18:21] The school division also aligned in that time licensed and classified strategies, whereas prior general wage increase and benchmarking efforts differed. slide you're seeing is a historical information regarding general wage increase amounts you'll see in those top three bars two different numbers and that's getting back to the the different strategy for folks on the classified scale versus folks that were on our t-scale or teacher step scale I should say so it shows historical information regarding the GWI and over these six

[02:18:58] fiscal years employees have received a 26.3 percent increase in their wages and so compounded that equates to nearly 30 percent so you'll see on the right there's a bit of an example of an employee who is at fifty thousand dollars a year in FY20 would now be at 64,691.

[02:19:22] All right lots of numbers focus on the right two columns okay and full transparency honestly we wanted to put the entire competitive market out there for review but really again what's most important here are the the two columns on the right and what this does is it provides an overview of the school divisions adopted markets general wage increase information over the past few fiscal years most important again are the two columns on the right you'll see the top row shows the increase in school divisions in our adopted market provided

[02:19:58] effective July 1 of 23. if you recall about a year ago i think we were talking in the room across the hall about the mid-year increase that we were seeing and that impact and what we were also observing in the market. So that second row shows who and who did not participate in that mid-year increase. And then that third row is the combination of the top two. So again, if you focus on that right column, that 8.2% is really what folks did in the prior fiscal year.

[02:20:27] And then what you see in that bottom row is what we observed occurring as increases July 1 of 24. all right so this slide is a really a helpful visual reflecting how the school division compares to its adopted market as well as our contiguous market charlottesville city schools with regard to its teachers on the master's degree scale this graph shows five-year increments and reflects the

[02:21:01] July 2024 general wage increase i want to point out that the school division is exceeding its target market for a majority of the life cycle of a teacher's career and it's really not until you get to step 25 that the market catches up and then exceeds ever so slightly at that 30-year point and we'll look at that a little bit more closely in a moment this slide similarly shows the same comparison as the master scale but it regards the bachelor's degree scale and again this graph shows

[02:21:38] five-year increments and it also reflects the July 1 2024 wage a general wage increase you'll see the ACPS is competitive until about midway through the life cycle and at that point the market catches up and then does exceed especially the contiguous market in Charlottesville city.

[02:21:57] You'll see on the bottom left there because a common question is well how many of our teachers are on the bachelor's lane? It's roughly about a third so 31 percent. Okay so this is just numerically. So if you go back to that master's degree graph, what you'll see is that where the market catches up is ever so slight. So when we look at 0.28%, while that is technically in the

[02:22:28] red or in the pink on the slide, that is a pretty insignificant percentage point. This number was larger last year so we've we've made ground a little bit on the market this is the master's degree information and this is the bachelor's obviously more more red or pink right and so you'll see that the difference at the top end of the scale and certainly as you move from 15 years and onward you'll see that there's a little bit of ground to make up in our step scales

[02:23:04] All right so as we look at FY26 we certainly will take into consideration a few data points as we do each year. The first being the market's movement as to what we saw on FY25 in comparison to Albemarle's general wage increase we see or we saw we see that move being 4.2% sorry in July. We also consider the state's recommendation which is currently 3% I believe

[02:23:41] that may change and as a broader metric we do look and rely on the bureau of labor statistics and they're showing the most recent quarter at a 4.3 percent increase that number should be updated here in the next several weeks so we'll continue to partner with fiscal services as we monitor the state and the bureau of labor statistics information will also plan to survey our market to collect any information we can regarding other localities projections for July of '25 to prepare for FY26. Other localities and others in our market are certainly having the

[02:24:19] same conversations that we're having tonight. And so what we saw even last year is that sometimes what they do put forward changes. I know one locality we had at 3% is what they were proposing and that you saw that drop to 1.5. And there's a few localities that you do see relatively lower compared to others if you want to go back. And we know that part of that was in response to the LCI

[02:24:51] shift as well. So, fast forward back to the questions and discussion slide. And I'll toss it back over to Ms. Kumisawa too. So, at this point, we'll open it up for questions with regards to what we're looking for in terms of guidance. There's three questions listed here to help with that discussion. So number one, knowing that revenues may be limited, what are

[02:25:28] your top one or two expenditure priorities? Number two, what areas would you like staff to review for financial efficiencies? And then number three, what else would you like more information about? I actually had a question on one of these for Brody. For our insurance market target, are those also self-insured divisions? One more time, please. For our insurance market target,

[02:26:03] are those also self-insured divisions usually yes this past year we did a much deeper dive in our our market survey than we have historically with the the ability to sort of branch off from and having you know kind of an autonomous HR department we've had the ability to do that more more readily and so what we did observe is that most do self-insure there are a few that do

[02:26:31] not thank you so it's we're self-insured is it still the entire county or are we did we separate off uh when we separated off our own hr yeah so it's in conjunction with local government and then also the

service authority as well is actually a component of that too okay you showed um especially at growth i think in one area and when listening to um that committee's report they had talked about

[02:27:09] I'm increasingly learning and behavioral specialist and increasing the teacher assistance so I think we should um for question number two that would be one thing I'd want to know whether or not the amount that we are saying would be fair growth could accommodate those things I agree I think that should move up on the priority list especially since the um they're not doing as well academically and we're trying to close that achievement gap if that's something we can do maybe something we could

[02:27:43] put toward the logic model i'm not sure how that would work any new budget proposal is will be accompanied by a logic model so we would be showing what we would be gaining by um with new investments miss kumazawa could you go to the slide that looked at the some of the priority

[02:28:08] you know new spending ideas that the department the division is looking at it's hard to disagree with this list I understand that the health insurance costs are necessarily going to go up and we have subsidized that heavily over the past multiple

[02:28:46] years what does how healthy is the reserve fund on that is some I know that that was an issue a few years ago of really putting more money into the reserve funds or is that healthy enough that we're just talking about premiums for the next year the reserve fund is actually below our targeted levels and so part of the work that is happening now is to determine the steps with regards to that it is necessary to build that reserve back up so it's not just the increasing costs of medical care it is building the reserve back up to our established levels the established levels is what a percentage of what our

[02:29:26] overall expenditures is like 14 I believe it's covering two months of the plan here of claims yeah it's below two months i mean that has to be a priority my background's in health health financing so um but in terms of the intensive support center on the on the drivers is that's beyond these are operating costs this is not the capital that we're okay i was just going

[02:30:04] to say that a lot lots of times we're looking at the health reserve and we start to look at it as a like a just dollars and i know with the board you know and i i try not to do this but i think about that reserve and i think about the fact that we really it's how we take care of our employees so i'm just reaffirming what you're saying that it's really not a choice that we have um i also know that having experience working in school systems other school systems where we don't we bought insurance you know as a as an administrator for example in smith county uh we didn't have a

[02:30:41] health care reserve we just they just purchased insurance and this was back in 2001 and my insurance was more than 10 of my take-home pay so that was before that was after taxes so i do think having the reserve and being self-funded is highly beneficial for our employees And it really is important because that's how we take care of our people in addition to the compensation.

[02:31:09] So again, I'm just echoing what you were saying. I think that's a key thing that undergirds one of the key benefits for employees. So if you could just get back to see how far below what we should be having in the reserves.

[02:31:29] And I know this isn't-- well, it's sort of on point. The new health center, among the different strategies for limiting health care expenditures one is opening up these health clinics which are yet to prove fruitful and another one over the years has been discussed is having a prescription drug plan a standalone plan I don't think we've gone that route have we and maybe that's for future

[02:32:00] discussions not this budget year but I think we need to we need to look into that at some point i think overall the presentation tonight was the clearest i've seen so it's it was an excellent the news hasn't been all good but but the presentation of the news was quite good i think one thing i would add is that uh you know really appreciating maya's work on this that um another advantage that we have this year is we we still at this point didn't know what the local composite

[02:32:37] index was going to be so we really were caught by surprise by that later in the budget process which caused us to do a lot of those one-time band-aids that this year we can go into it much more thoughtfully um and uh look reviewing logic models in particular uh will help us find some savings can with the bellwether implementation um if you could maybe bring us some examples of what we'd be involved in that you know what things from the bell weather report would be included

[02:33:13] in the budget increases that sort of makes sense yeah the the details of these proposals will be included as part of the funding request that's when we'll have everything fleshed out so as scholars funded centrally or do we fund that out of high school budgets i think the discussion around the scholar studios is to provide funding so that the teacher leaders that are responsible and engaged with that work and very passionate about it they've been doing that in addition to

[02:33:52] their full teaching load so i think the funding we were looking at for that is to help them have more planning time in that leadership role that they have and the other and the other piece of it connecting it back to the seac recommendation is increased support for el's and sped students in this program thank you i agree with kate i think that list made sense um and this is not

[02:34:28] maybe this is sort of related but um the employee health clinic will that um lower health costs for our employees or what's what's to come in that place yeah yeah so the idea with the clinic is that it um instead of paying for a provider who has essentially a markup for going to uh you know primary care physician strep test right um what we do is we pay for the vendor um to perform the services uh so you're you're cutting you're cutting out the middle man so to speak in terms

[02:35:08] of what the cost is so yes it will reduce costs for services but what about to the employee i'd have to go back and look at the rates i know that they're um i'd want to go back and look at what the rates are um it is uh less expensive for me for example and i'm on uh the ppo plan here um so it's less expensive for me to take my child to get the strep test that we got two weeks ago uh to the clinic than it is for me to go to uh the pediatrician and to pay for the copay okay so i'd want to get the rates before i go on the record but it is it's meant to be a savings and

[02:35:47] an incentive that it's the savings is an incentive for employees to go to the clinic and we do have access to online doctors is that right i want to go back and look at the contract first i know that was something conceptually that we did speak about in the rfp process that there would be virtual opportunities okay and is that for all county employees or just our school division all county employees and their dependents and their dependents that are on the health plan yeah that are on the health plans and other staff being kept abreast of the idea of the increase in

[02:36:25] their premiums yeah yes we've had communications that have gone out we had open enrollment in November there were a number of communications as kudos to Helen and her team for partnering with Claudine Cloutier and our benefits team on getting information out and in November so they've been they've been well-informed I mean on number two I feel like Matt I know your team has been doing a lot of weekly work looking at financial deficiencies and it looks like you're gonna have

[02:37:01] to continue to do that but I know that some good work has been done there I mean I guess I would we had five substantive areas in last year's budget that we a new programs that we implemented I would just like some feedback on those I mean I'm assuming that we're going to keep you know the scl coaches and and those things but just some feedback on what programs we we advocated and got

[02:37:34] last time um before we start going into new territory that's questions and of course of course ms kumzhan does have an email address budget at cps that you can email her with your questions budget or us and that's also open to the public to access and provide

[02:38:09] feedback thanks very much Maya Brody thank you Maya thank you I think that just brings us to the end if there's any other business from anyone I just have one request of dr. Haas and his team I know that and it's wrong raised the issue of the help me versus the anonymous tip line and I would just like

[02:38:40] to unpack that a little bit more absolutely yes um i think the main issue right now is i mean until this meeting that i personally had not even known that help me was app where i could report issues unrelated to mental health because i think it's also partially part of the name not that i propose we rename it but the fact that it's like help me feels more of a cry for help when it's like Surrounding mental health issues and I think that in that sense, it's also I haven't heard any direct

[02:39:17] Advertisements that it's like oh if you're being bullied or like facing kind of some sort of harassment at school This is a resource in which you can report it. So I think it's just lack of knowledge about it. Well, whether it's more Information we need to be getting out or whether we need to have the anonymous tip line as well This is why it's important to have a student representative on the board. Thank you. Absolutely. Well, this is our last meeting of 2024.

[02:39:46] So I just want to wish everyone a peaceful and joyous season. And we'll see you back in 2025. All right, meeting adjourned.



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