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Albemarle County School Board Regular Meeting, Thursday, May 22, 2025

Date Thursday, May 22, 2025
Place Albemarle County Public Schools / School Board meeting, Virginia
Length 1h 4m (video)

- Official meeting video (YouTube): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C5k4UbVb5IQ>

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Speech-to-text: whisper.cpp, model large-v3-turbo. Produced 2026-10-14. Each paragraph starts with its time [HH:MM:SS] in the meeting video.

[00:00:00] the seat program and then we move to making sure that each school had a seat or a student equity team and then bringing those together and then where are we now i'll bring uh miss roberts up all right thank you um so where are we now uh i want to say this year's student senate continued to focus on empowering student leadership both at each school and across the division at the school level monthly meetings continued to bring together student leaders from different affinity groups, some of whom were founded by those same students in the

[00:00:38] Senate, such as Dana, which was our disability and neurodivergent association of allies. It's supported by their school sponsors of those affinity groups and their administrators to strengthen community and work on school based initiatives. One of the common factors between both the school and district level was that we provide food because food allowed for students to come together in community. At the district level we increased to three county-wide gatherings from the previous two in the fall, winter, and spring which focused on

[00:01:14] leadership development, collaboration, and community building. We included YPAR workshops which is youth participatory action research to help facilitate students become better at leading change through a proven method. We had included leadership panels with local community leaders and increased the time that students had to collaborate with their affinity groups, which was

something they had asked for in the year before. As we look ahead, we've been listening closely a lot. Oh, sorry, let me pause for this great picture of them working

[00:01:47] together. As we look ahead, we've been listening closely to what both students and sponsors have been telling us. They want more time together. One of the biggest barriers of that is transportation to ensure that the students can spend a whole day and not truncated by our activity schedule.

[00:02:09] They want more chances to connect with community leaders. They found those panels incredibly valuable, as I think we did as leaders as well. They want stronger supports at their school levels so that those meetings can continue the work that they kind of found at the larger meetings.

[00:02:25] And there is a clear need for faster access to funding for student-led projects. And they've also added, when we asked them, like, what other things they would like to learn, tools to help them grow the memberships of their affinity groups, support in event planning, and other more opportunities to learn from their peers.

[00:02:45] So as we kind of look forward, we want to continue to host those school-wide meetings, maybe thinking about opportunities where we can bring them to each other's school has been something that they've asked for a lot of and then continuing to incorporate building toolkits and leadership skill development we're also exploring how we can better use things like school links and partnering with the finance team to make the funding process more accessible and student-friendly and now I'll turn it over to Dr. Karla. Thank you, Miss Roberts, so giving students

[00:03:22] a voice makes a difference. It makes a difference for them and it makes a difference for their schools and for all of us in our community so we want to look a little bit of what the evidence is we have for impact both on our students and on the community at large and the schools that they're part of. What one metric we track is students' self-efficacy around organizing change. We want students to participate in Student Senate and feel confident that they know how to change things that they know how to go into the world and make it better and so we looked at a pre and post-survey and we can see some of the differences that came out. If you look

[00:04:00] at the middle three, I know how to connect with people from other student groups in my school. I know how to connect with people from student groups in other schools and I know how to identify problems that are important for my community to solve. These saw substantial gains for our students that participated in Student Senate and so that that is the first step. We're connecting students to each other, we're helping them build networks not just within their school but across schools and we're helping them to understand how

[00:04:27] to identify problems. They weren't sure of how to organize people to solve problems or how to get power to make changes in their community. So those are our next steps as we continue with Student Center. We've built this network.

[00:04:55] Students feel confident about connecting with each other and identifying problems. The next step is to give them the tools that they need to solve those problems in their communities. And this is connected back to our panorama survey data. This is not making a causal inference at all. We have a small Senate group and this is about 5,000 students' surveys but it is a focus on what we want to change in our schools. We really want our students to value school more and to feel as though they belong in school more and we do believe that the student Senate is an

[00:05:31] important part of that work and will contribute to it as we continue to see gains so I want to talk about one example so there's several examples we could go into. So students have worked on projects around communication with families, improving our parent portal system, the REMIND system. Western Albemarle High School, which this is a picture from, put together an amazing multicultural night two years in a row that came out of the Student Senate work.

[00:05:56] The Mental Health First Aid program came out of Student Senate. Student support for culturally responsive education professional learning has been something that the students have talked about and worked on. They've helped to revise student school board representation policy, as well as bystander awareness training in our schools.

[00:06:15] But of all of those, and there are more, I just want to focus on one so that you can get an idea of the kind of impact that the work that the students have done is making in our schools. So two years ago in Student Senate, the Latinx group decided to talk about the problems that they and their families were facing, and these are some quotations from students from three different schools.

[00:06:34] I'll just read one, and you can see how they're connected to each other. A student from Western Albemarle High School said, "One barrier for our families is the power school "and parent portal. "It's very hard for my family to understand how to use it, "how grades work in the U.S. education system, "and how the system works here in general."

[00:06:50] That voice was echoed by other students across our three comprehensive high schools, and they decided they wanted to work on it. And so they engaged in working with the school district personnel who were involved in this work to identify exactly what were the problems their families were facing uh so here are some of the problems the first was language barriers to parent portal access and teacher communication as a result of that this the district worked on multimedia district-wide translation interpretation of parent portal in our five most common languages it also helped us make the decision to move to the remind system so that we have one common

[00:07:28] application for text-to-text communication between teachers and schools and families across the school district they also identified technological support for parent portal sign up as an issue for many of their families so we worked with our learning technology integrator partners across our schools to add additional support at our family engagement events around signing families up for these network services and then the other piece is a lot of them identified that their families did not regularly use communication such as email they didn't regularly use the kind of technology but that would allow them to access parent portal and so they identified a need for

[00:08:05] paper-based solutions and increased awareness of paper opt-in so we updated our caregiver registration form last year this year will be our first year that we've done it to include paper opt-in and communicated to school leaders about promoting that option for families who needed it so this year we saw 422 more caregivers signed up for parent portal account we also saw at our elementary schools 669 additional elementary families began receiving paper communication that was a 260% increase over the previous year and our secondary schools we had 226 additional secondary families receiving paper

[00:08:42] communication because they opted into that support and they became aware of it and then if we look at our most recent ACPS family survey that just went out and it was just closed what we did is we isolated families that identified needing translation and interpretation we looked at their responses because we wanted to see what was the difference for that group of families and we had over a hundred

responses in both years and we can see that from 2024 to 2025 more of those families said that they were satisfied or that the schools were communicating with them either quite well or extremely well in their native

[00:09:18] languages so this is just one example of students working together to let us know specifically what the issues are we need to work on and how we've made progress as a result of listening to our students who are the best ones to identify the problems often in our schools and now we'll listen to our students so miss Roberts will introduce them to us so we have four members of the Student Senate here tonight and what we are going to do is we are going to break into smaller groups so you can have more time to talk with them individually and they can answer questions and you can ask they can ask

[00:09:55] questions of you we have Margaret Lee and Isabella they will stay here in lane auditorium and meet with a group of you and then the other half and I think we were changing to 241 241 Isabelle and Maxwell will be in that room to meet with you so we're going to divide into two groups and then you guys will get to stay where you are and then we'll rotate so that you can hear from each of the

[00:10:19] four representatives. Okay we've got three leaving so four can stay. You can stay Leslie or go. Okay perfect. And we don't have a table is that okay if the students sit at the dais so you guys could have a conversation. And we just want to keep this informal and just have a chance for the school board to talk with

[00:11:15] our student reps about their experience with student senate what it looked like at the division level and what it looked like in the school level so we do have some question prompts as well but our students are ready to begin pull out so we can sort of see each other better so if you guys like to start just um if you want to share a little bit how did you get involved

[00:11:54] with student senate and actually if you pull your mic a little yeah yeah and that way it'll pick us up on the there you go hello kind of weird i know you're talking to us at the same time but okay hi so my name is isabella i am a 10th grader at albemarle and i'm a part of the student council i'm the sophomore class president and i was the freshman class president so that's how i got involved with student senate they needed a representative for my class so they nominated me How many people are in the student senate from each school, or how is that determined?

[00:12:33] The student affinity groups vary in size. What we try to do is meet with two to three of the representatives at the student senate meetings there at the individual schools. So it's anywhere from -- Albemarle obviously has more students. They just have more representation.

[00:12:49] So it's anywhere from 25 to 30 total. What about students that aren't involved in those groups? How do you pull other students that aren't represented in those groups? Yeah, I can-- go ahead.

[00:13:07] OK, I guess I'll just answer the previous question first. I have done a lot of advocacy work in general, especially at Western, kind of going off of my own experiences with experiencing racism and stuff like that. Students said it was kind of like the best way for me to get involved with the community and with students that also had similar experiences as I did.

[00:13:28] Specifically, I joined through YAPIC, which is the Young Asian American and Pacific Islanders chapter at my school. And I've kind of been involved with that club since eighth grade. So that was kind of how I got involved with Student Senate.

[00:13:43] Are you at Western or are you-- I'm at Western, yeah. And back to your-- Ms. Billman, the idea is that we send-- each affinity group sends two to three student leaders to the Student Senate. And then they go back to their affinity groups. And depending on-- and share the ideas share what's happening and the idea is that you know the students do have projects at the schools like Western's event brought everyone together so they are trying to share and really it's been open to a lot of different groups so if a group wants to join they just work with their student sponsors and they become part of the Student Senate at the school so do you want to share your experiences with Student Senate either at the school level or at the division

[00:14:22] level either one wants to go first okay so for me this is my first year being a part of the Student Senate so when I We first had a meeting at our school and that's when I got to really meet the other students in the different affinity groups at Albemarle, so that was nice.

[00:14:43] I got to meet with them and we had lunch and then we just spoke about different challenges and issues that we've seen at our school. So we first started out with just talking about Albemarle and then at the actual meetings where different schools like Western and Monticello all came together.

[00:15:03] We had all of the different, like, the schedule that you guys had planned out, we just went with that. But it was nice to get to speak with and meet with students from the other schools. So for us, like SCA, I worked with the members of SCA at Monticello.

[00:15:21] There isn't one at Western, so I wasn't really able to speak with them and get to know them. But just meeting and talking about how we can start cooperating more and have more school competitions between each other and to lift student morale at our schools, that was all nice to do.

[00:15:40] I think from my experience, I think the cool thing about Student Senate is that you get to meet people from all the different high schools in Albemarle County that you wouldn't necessarily be able to communicate or meet with before. And I think the allotted time that we have just to like come to the office building for a day and talk with other people and again like build morale and build that community is really important and that was a big part of our experience and i can say with some of the larger student leadership summits i know one of the first ones we did at um uh the frayland art museum our black student union from

[00:16:17] uh western really felt uh because of the lack of diversity in in western abemora high school they really felt like you know they were kind of isolated a bit um and when they came together they were able to share some ideas and talk to the other bsu's at the two other schools to figure out what are you doing to battle or to confront some of the issues that they were seeing and just found you know and you know quickly with students they exchanged numbers and everything else and and they've become a lot tighter group across the school division so when things happen at schools now they're connected and they feel like they have kind of a lifeline out outside of

[00:16:49] the building do you want to talk about how your experience has changed student senate has changed you or maybe your approach or your um maybe your lens to uh to leadership or to your school or maybe it hasn't maybe it hasn't evidently not yeah all right you and feel free to ask questions please i think for me specifically it kind of helped me become more like aware with what the county was doing and like like helped me have more leadership in general and be able to like take autonomy over um like my role in the school as like a student who like as a student of color

[00:17:29] as a student who like I guess in the past have felt that I couldn't really make change I feel like coming to students and it has really changed that mindset for me yeah same with me I would say just learning more about what the county has to offer too and how like they're willing to listen to student voices I feel like when you're just at a school and you're just going to your classes and everything you don't realize that you do have the ability to kind of like make your voice heard and bring that up to the higher level people so student senate has made me realize that i like if

[00:18:07] i really want to do something or if i notice that there's something that needs to be fixed or improved at my school then i can i have like that network of people to to bring that up to how have you decided i know that different schools have had different projects how have you decided what project to sponsor for the year so when we at our first meeting one of the breakout rooms that we had were was to meet with different students at schools and just

[00:18:42] brain dump ideas that we had and just things that we thought we needed to bring up to the school board and kind of see change at our schools so once we started brain dumping things we came together into groups and then we started working it was like groups of three to four we just started working with each other and thinking about how we would kind of like keep working on the idea throughout the year so that was a way that decided what to do I think for us Western like the biggest

[00:19:20] thing like the biggest project for us has been the better together cultural celebrations and I think that like the student communities of color at Western I think we've kind of come to a consensus that like we really need to amp up like cultural appreciation cultural appreciation like cultural awareness in general because Western is such a majority led school I think that the best way that we could have done that was like a celebration where there There was food that everyone could eat, there's like games, and there's like trivia and stuff

[00:19:55] that we could do that helped like the entire community engage in kind of what we were trying to bring out. And when students had projects, what they were able to do was submit those to our team and we reviewed them, gave feedback, and they had the opportunity to either phone a friend, call in some folks.

[00:20:15] So I know two of our groups were interested in just how to make our exits more accessible to our students in wheelchairs so they were able to meet with uh katie compel and matt workman and they were able to talk about their concerns and and ask good questions uh i know the better together event um they just needed some some money to get some vendors out there and make that happen um so they get to really you know just request what they need and it may just be an answer to a question so we had uh 10 projects this year and some will continue into next year uh we have i think a a pronoun awareness uh group that will that will start to do some videos like some psas it's the

[00:20:53] the gsa psa is that they had a nice little ring to it uh and that'll happen next year as well that's the time structure i think i heard one of you say that you go for a day so how is that built into the academic calendar how does that work the leadership summits here or the ones at the school so at the schools at the schools it varies a bit um actually you can yeah at western i we did it it during lunch most of the time but sometimes if people like had to go to a club meeting or something then we would do it during warrior period which is like like a 30-minute block where we don't really do anything so we kind of

[00:21:31] came together in the library and talked with the principal and stuff like that same with us we when we had our first meeting our sponsor kind of just emailed us and was like with this we had it during

a class time so she asked us if this was possible. And then at that meeting, we started talking about the future date and what class would be best for all of us to make the meeting. So we had an actual class period. But it also tied into our lunch. So it wasn't like we were missing an entire class. And then we hold two to three leadership summits here where the representatives from each school, they come

[00:22:11] together. And that usually runs, I think Western, their bus can get here by about 930, 945, and it runs to about 1:30. - How many kids are involved at each school? When you have your monthly school meeting, how many people are involved in that?

[00:22:30] - At Albemarle, it depends on who's in the club and who can make it that meeting. So we have all of the affinity groups that were listed. So we had GSA, SCA, Black Student Union, all those groups.

[00:22:47] So I would say around like 15 to 20. At the first meeting, there was about like 20. And then it stayed around that number. Some students couldn't make it because they had like a class or something that they couldn't miss.

[00:23:04] But about 20 or more sometimes. OK, but it's representatives from all of those groups at the monthly meeting. Yes, yes, yeah. For SCA, it's just-- so we have a sophomore representative, a junior class representative, and a senior.

[00:23:19] So SCA was just three, and us three made sure we were at each meeting. But like BSU is bigger. So they had about like five members come, but they had a little more leeway with who could come or not.

[00:23:37] - At Western, we have like around 10 to 12 people come like regularly every meeting. - I think someone mentioned transportation, so is that a major challenge? - Yes, so from our level, we have to wait for, obviously the bus is to drop off high school and that's pretty quick because they can drop off wait and come back but the buses have to make an elementary school run so they need to be back to their feeder patterns by that time so that's why they have to leave by 1:30 you know ideally down the road we'd like to keep them you know a full day or at least another hour or two so we can get some work done when they're here I mean time goes by very quickly it just seems

[00:24:17] like you know we'll have the panel and then they break into their groups they have lunch and it just seems like it moves a little too you know a little too quickly we'd like to slow that down and just give them a little more time here so I know Margaret you're graduating but Isabella are you planning to be on the Student Senate next year? I'm going to be the Albemarle County, not Albemarle County well Albemarle High School School Vice President but I'll be a junior so I will probably be like the junior representative but we may have there's a

[00:24:52] junior class president who might also be interested. One of you mentioned the sponsors at each school how does that work for us so my counselor is actually our sponsor but she i think she was last year too i don't know how she became the sponsor but she worked with another teacher and they coordinated all the meetings yeah so they'll do at each school they'll do club recruitment in september and october when students get there and then each uh each affinity group has a staff sponsor and they're kind of our key we do have

[00:25:31] school equity team liaisons for us as well that will help organize the larger group but it's great i know at monticello jennifer timms runs the latinx student union and we kind of crash in her room and that's kind of the meeting spot and lenica barnes lets us use her her classroom so she doesn't necessarily she's not a sponsor necessarily for the bsu this year but she is kind of our go-to person i'm one of the go-to

people for student senate as a whole at albemarle high school and miss padrone uh and um who is the other sponsor uh librarian oh miss curry yep miss curry

[00:26:09] uh those are our two contacts from western albemore high school and i think we're getting close to wrapping up but do you want to just share uh any of the impact that you've seen maybe in your affinity group your school or just in the district or maybe things that you've heard i think at our school there's been like i guess just from my experience um like in ninth grade ninth and tenth grade before i joined student senate there wasn't a lot of i guess like advocacy and there weren't many students who were um or there were a lot of students who were afraid of speaking out and like speaking about issues that pertain to equity and diversity

[00:26:48] but i think after student senate a lot of students including freshmen including sophomores are like much more likely to speak out about issues to advocate for diversity and to advocate for these issues that i think a lot of people have been thinking already but have been too scared to speak out about previously. Yeah and i think at Albemarle prior to at least with me so i this is my first year so i don't know how it was last year but i feel like the different affinity groups were kind of separated at our schools and there wasn't much there wasn't a lot of communication between each

[00:27:27] the groups so i feel like after having the student senate meetings and actually being able to talk more to each other and about things then that has created that has made it easier for us to communicate at our schools and to just know um who to go to if we ever want to like collaborate with latinx or something like that and is there anything ways we can support you i think um you You guys have been doing a great job already.

[00:28:00] So i think just keeping that up, i guess. i feel like it's all very structured. So it's easy for us to just come here and talk about things and bring up our ideas. So just keeping it the way that it has been.

[00:28:17] i think at each iteration of Student Senate, we have received feedback from the students. And i'd be interested from you what aspect of Student Senate do you feel was most beneficial for you and Moving forward, how would you like to see the structure of the Student Senate altered adjusted?

[00:28:45] So that it can become better Something i really liked about the Student Senate meetings were the panels that we had i feel like that was a great time for us to learn about community members people in our community who are making change and just getting inspiration from them so i would like to see more panels i feel like those are really helpful but as for structure i don't know what feedback i would give for that i feel like right now it's been good yeah i agree with the panels as well i think definitely maybe bringing in more speakers and having different

[00:29:25] perspectives um would be pretty powerful and i think the structure is good right now i've been talking to a lot of people and they say that they like how like it's not fast paced but it's like very like there's a lot of stuff going on that is super helpful for students to kind of understand what student senate is and like kind of get engaged in their community so i think it's pretty good right now projects for next year on the horizon you have anything to share with us

[00:30:01] Well, i don't know if we're still going to continue with this, but like the SCA members, we were talking about how we feel like having more, so cultural awareness is something that we feel like Albemarle lacks a little bit, even though we're such a diverse school. So we wanted to bring more of that, more

awareness at our school, but that's still like in the process we don't really know how we're going to implement that yet and the person who was kind

[00:30:39] of like leading that project is graduating so like i need to talk with him soon but um something that like so i know the calendar and this the school calendar has already been set i think for the next two years or so but something that we were talking about um was how it would be nice if students uh well if the teacher work days or just days off that we have from school could kind of align with different holidays not just like the holidays in America but also different holidays like Diwali or Eid and stuff like that that are very

[00:31:16] that are celebrated a lot but students typically have to take a day off from school or like a few days off in order to celebrate with their families and that can make it difficult for them to come back to school and like catch up with everything so that's just something we're talking about and hopefully in the teacher we can see that like implemented yeah we actually have a work session scheduled in September I think on calendar development and we've been talking amongst the school board of discussing that then so maybe we'll pull in some kids from the Student Senate at that time to give some more information

[00:31:49] on that is it time to switch thank you very much thank you so much good news is you've already been through all the questions so yeah you're prepped you're

[00:32:23] ready to go wait for everyone to get all right so if you want to introduce yourselves to the to the board absolutely my name is Maxwell keys I'm a junior at my high school and I represent the Black Student Union at the Student Senate hi I'm Isabelle Wong I'm a graduated senior from Almora high school yeah let me make sure I walk next week for sure but and then I overall

[00:33:00] student Senate I represent Yapik the young Asian American and Pacific Islanders of Charlottesville so it's about we'll start with you do you just want to you know you're one of our founders to do you want to just talk about how you got involved in student Senate yeah sure so I was part of that first initial year when mr. Bonham first formed the student Senate in order to address a certain conflict that happened within our school and then after organizing this group between Latinx and the black student Union he decided to add the other affinity groups within our school which included my own young Asian American and Pacific Islanders of Charlottesville it's a

[00:33:37] mouthful I know but yeah I was a sophomore and I would happen to be an officer in that year so I got into it and I've been here ever since so three years max and for me um my 10th grade year the leadership of the bsu was in the student senate and then this year i was elected treasurer and i i joined as well all right and so what what do you do what do you value about your experience with student senate and you can either talk about your experiences in your buildings or you know here at the district level at the student leadership

[00:34:15] summits however you want to frame that i think first and foremost it's all the new people that I get to personally interact with. I think within our own school student senate I get to meet many different representatives from other organizations, students who I typically wouldn't interact with at my school and that really helps broaden my perspective, helps me learn more things and pressing issues within our school community that maybe I wouldn't have even known about otherwise.

[00:34:43] And I think the other great value that comes from the student senate is the grant programs, is the ability to know that you can make change because there is the physical resource of funding and money

at your hands. So that's something that I think is always a big propeller for people to be really into the project or work that they're trying to accomplish because they know there is kind of something at the end of the rainbow for them. There's something that will come of their hard work. Absolutely. And for me, it was definitely the unification of all the affinity groups and

[00:35:18] the coming togetherness as well as Isabella said sorry Isabella said that you understand perspectives from different affinity groups that you might not hear from without the Student Senate as well as I appreciate the empowerment of student voice and then that's a good segue Max just you know how has it changed you in this year you know you've been a leader inside your you know in your affinity group in your building and now you know you're here on

[00:35:47] Absolutely. One example I'll give is the last Student Senate meeting we had here, we had a panel of, a career panelist, Mr. Price, and I went up to him afterwards and he spoke very fluently, very, you know, poised, and I asked him, I was like, I asked him for his advice, I asked him, well, how did you start speaking like that?

[00:36:13] And he gave me some great advice about just being yourself. So definitely from the Student Senate meeting, I learned how to speak, speak, be myself, speak out, speak with confidence. You're doing a great job. I appreciate it, thank you.

[00:36:28] And he's referring to Price Thomas. He's the executive director for City of Promise here in Charlottesville. He's one of our panelists. Yeah, I think just speaking on what we kind of echoed before, this is really a great coalition of diverse minds representatives from across our county so i think that really helps broaden one's perspective i think personally even my uh student voice grant proposal the project that i worked under was an issue that wasn't extremely pressing to my own community but one that i found was very pressing to my school community due to all the people i interacted with thanks to student senate and

[00:37:05] additionally just as a personal aspect i think i've gotten much better at public speaking um i I don't, if you guys knew me two years ago, I would definitely have a very shaky voice up here at the mic. So I think, especially then also being like a student rep on student board hearing my voice on the big speaker.

[00:37:23] So I think overall it's really helped me grow as a person in that way too. - And Isabelle, that's a great segue 'cause I have not asked, I did not ask Margaret. You know, you had a unique, well, all of our students, but all of our student school board reps were student senate And you all selected them without really knowing that necessarily.

[00:38:00] So how did that interplay between student school board rep and your student senate seat? Did that have any interplay? Were you able to-- I mean, was that powerful? Was it helpful? So I think we also touched on this, because I believe now it's that student representatives will be a member of the student senate, no matter whether they were part of it initially or not.

[00:38:24] And I think that is really important, because when you're selected to represent, your entire school, you really need to know the other people who are within that school, right? Especially the people that you wouldn't know otherwise, and it's really just a very easy way, since everyone's kind of all together in the Student Senate, it's a really easy way to gain that new perspective really fast, and it's very accessible, so I think that always helps.

[00:38:48] - Have you guys seen any impact with Student Senate, maybe with the projects, any initiatives you had in your own affinity groups in your school? - I mean, for one, the BSU and the Latinx definitely gotten closer we had an international night the other night and I emceed with a member of the Latinx Club and it went well I think definitely you know starting to understand the other perspectives of different affinity groups helped for sure and made an impact yeah I think a lot of the impact does come from as I said our student voice projects that come from these

[00:39:23] grants I think personally I think ours is this is kind of the roadblock we run into when it comes to like finance once we finally do our research and send our projects through it kind of gets stuck there sometimes it's oh it's been sent to finance but we don't really know what stage it's in we're not really clear maybe there isn't funding for this maybe there is we understand so i think that's probably the main struggle but i think it's always great like to do all the research and get that sent through and i think once a lot of like the long-term projects

[00:39:58] that i think there were like the sensory rooms that cam was really passionate about personally i sent in a proposal about implementing a specific translation device across county and these are both like something that i hope will have great impact after i think from the board perspective we've said that our student representatives this year were so engaged and really had important and thought out questions and perspectives on things and it seems like like it's in large part or in part due to student senate because they are getting that perspective

[00:40:34] and are hearing about other issues going on that may not be directly affecting them. But when something like that comes up here, they have heard about it from their peers. And that was really important for us to get that perspective this year. Do you feel a lot of support at the school level um i think i love the people who run our students uh kind of equity team at our school level the one thing i will say is that i think we struggle in consistency of meeting especially as it gets like the later half of the year i think we always start out real strong and say we're going

[00:41:13] to have a great year but it's it's the follow through is a little tricky sometimes but i think it's just the really consistent setup of meeting i think there's always a struggle of students who can't miss this class so they can never make it to meetings when we have them consistently on these dates and it's just a lot of issues with time and everyone's schedules that i understand is kind of needed in this situation it will happen but i think overall like at least the admin that run our student equity team are very approachable they're all very easy to talk to to bring up our issues with but i think something just structurally i think frequency and accessibility

[00:41:51] of meetings would probably be something that would need to be improved absolutely and i agree fully with that i think the support here at the county office building is phenomenal and i think it i think it's absolutely you know helps us accomplish our goals uh i think yeah no no you're we're good we're good she's comfortable up here can you tell i know she's like this is great i see a few i see

[00:42:30] your future thanks to student equity team i guess sponsored let me plug that right there but yeah it's a really great part of that i think my sophomore year i also stood in front of a mic did not go this smoothly but anyway um i think uh overarching thing that i think a lot of groups agree on is just overall this is just not exactly on the school bird side of it but student involvement in the things we run and the things we try to organize since we always we always have a ton of great ideas many initiatives that we want to have held but it's always the point of how are

[00:43:05] we going to get people to come to this so i think a lot of the time if we place like a larger emphasis on it i think we can get our entire school to show up to a pep rally so why can't we get our whole school to show up to like some cultural event so i think it becomes like a very different kind of conversation there but it's always i think that's always big struggle across all groups is just overall getting people involved you're gonna see that with the the huge audience we have at our school board meeting this evening yeah it will carry on definitely for the bsu it was representation

[00:43:42] we were adamant about representation we believe that you know the lack of teachers and staff members that are african-american and how much representation plays a big role in how we achieve what we want to. We threw that as an idea in our school senate and we chose another project, but absolutely the BSU was stuck on how can we have more black teachers in our schools, Especially in mathematics.

[00:44:18] Start with peer tutoring. Yeah, yeah. We're all talking about peer tutoring now, but we're mostly just white students. And that was kind of the challenge, too. It's like, how do we get more representation, even peer-wise at Alabama?

[00:44:33] That kind of sprung that into talking to teachers and leaders. No, no, I was just going to, as you know, the school, the board has reaffirmed its anti-racism policy, trans-gender policy, we have put money into equity specialists and diversity.

[00:44:55] What feedback can you give us about those policies, how they're working, how they're not working, and how aware of them are you, even? Well, I do think specifically, of course, I know of the existence, that's something I will tell you, I know that it exists, and I kind of know the sentiments that our anti-racism policy echoes but of course it's when we come to the conversation of like hi group of high schoolers how would you revise this policy it sometimes comes into like a very difficult area of i'm sure

[00:45:30] it can be better but it's sometimes not really something we can speak on at least in that moment very eloquently so i think it's something that i think most students at least we know it exists most people know that somewhere there's this overarching theme of racism is wrong but i definitely think the specifics of it the details is not that one that's fair i mean once again once again i fully just repeat echoing i mean i definitely you know know that there there's

[00:46:03] an anti-racism policy um and kind of you know what what it stands for but in terms of you know understanding word-for-word what it says as a student body I'm not sure much of us could you know well I guess from my perspective it feels like the fact that you have so many different groups and that's supported by the school division I'm hopeful that that's part of the reason why that we're I don't know how we compare with other school divisions I mean I don't have any idea I'm - I'm sure we're the best ones.

[00:46:42] - Well, that's our message that we try to get out, but there's not many people that seem to listen to them. - Isabel, you're a real diplomat. - Like I said, she's got a future up here. - I think one of you mentioned conflicts at your school, and you thought that student senate had helped to alleviate those conflicts, is that true?

[00:47:07] - I think it's because the initial formation of at least the student equity team at Albemarle High School was due to a conflict between a student that was part of the BSU and a student that was part of Latinx. And there was a very divisive conflict there that almost seemed very affinity-based.

[00:47:25] And I think the whole point of bringing these organizations together was to, in part, just to get closer in the beginning, to understand each other instead of finding this deep conflict within each other.

So I think, in a sense, that's hopefully helped a lot. In that case, I think, I mean, Maxwell's touched on it that he's felt that he's become a lot closer with the Latinx.

[00:47:46] No, for sure. I mean, I definitely think, you know, just the idea of coming together as different affinity groups couldn't, you know, go negative. I think, like, understanding, you know, different perspectives, being empathetic, you know, that changes a lot.

[00:48:02] And I think it was definitely, you know, a step in the right direction and conflict resolution. There were some candidates that weren't involved, or, you know, that was their group.

[00:48:26] But really quickly, Mr. Bonham did a great job just sitting down, just listening, and letting each side talk through their perceptions of what happened. And it took probably maybe one meeting, maybe two, or all of a sudden, they were like, hey, let's do a podcast together.

[00:48:43] Let's do, like, a cooking initiative together. And then they decided to come together, and then they did a dance or something. There was something, but it was very quickly. And when I asked this, what happened is that they had more in common than they had different, you know, differences.

[00:48:59] And it's continuing, it seems like, especially those two groups. Absolutely. At a school as big and as large, and as, you know, the Democrats have shifted very quickly. Now, the population is a percent, 26 percent this year.

[00:49:15] So it's been great to have those groups. Anything you would want to change since in the Senate? Because we're starting to probably walk in the incident. So, like, either at your school level or even at the division level, what can we do better to help support this initiative?

[00:49:31] - You first. - For sure, so I don't echo, no. I think for Student Senate, something that I always picked up on was we would plan, plan, plan, and always get to the point where we're about to achieve something, or plan our event, or go through with the event, we would just stop.

[00:49:52] I mean, we wouldn't plan, we would just stop. So I think finding a solution to keep the consistency of coming together and actually accomplishing things. - What do you think led to the stoppage?

[00:50:08] Why did it stop? - I definitely think it was a lack of communication because when we would come together, we would come together three times a year and no one really took the initiative to email across schools or set up a big email chain to email out to all the affinity groups.

[00:50:28] So I definitely think it was a lack of communication. And I touched on this in the other room, but I think, yeah, it's definitely-- I'm going to echo that this time. But yeah, it's a lot of talking and less of the action part.

[00:50:44] I think the action part does come in more with the student voice grant when people always kind of have a goal in mind thanks to that. I think that's always a great part of it is the people who I see taking action are very purposeful. they know they want X amount of money to serve their goal.

[00:50:59] And I think that's always a good motivator for people. But other groups I do feel get very lost along the way. I think, I talked to Ms. Roberts about this, but I'll say it again. Basically, I think at our first student senate, we always have a lot of returning members, which is great, but we also have a lot of new people every year.

[00:51:17] So it always becomes a point of, we have many returning projects, people who want to continue working on those projects. And then we also have a bunch of new people are a little bit confused by should i have a project like what is going on like do i have to join a group now should i form my own idea so i think the organization of that i always see a couple people wandering around a little lost so i think definitely the first meeting if we could either get like a list a very strict list set out of these are the ongoing projects that are continue going this is what they're about who's running it how you can get in contact with them and then maybe putting all the new people in a room together so they can kind of come up with their own.

[00:51:56] So I think that's definitely part of the first meeting. And I also think once we get into these projects, sometimes it trails off a little bit. So it's the planning and the research is always the easier part. The action part is a little harder. So I think it's also just really putting a strict schedule in place from the very start.

[00:52:17] I think by December, you should have your proposal done and it should be a very strong draft. By January, you should have submitted it for the grant. You should be talking to some administrations, some adults who are very researchers in your field.

[00:52:34] You should be figuring out how you're going to get this done. Something a lot more strict. I think we do have the great part of loose communication. Sometimes there's long spaces where we get to all talk to each other, and that's a really great work period. But I think we also struggle to the point where it's like, we have to send something in now.

[00:52:51] So I think that's the part that needs to be more emphasized. It's, oh, during this student senate meeting, you should get your grant application in. So I think just a stricter schedule on that part.

[00:53:22] Maximilian answer all your emails. Thank you so much for fully engaging in tonight's conversation. As we come back together, I'd like to invite us into a brief reflection to help us make meaning of what we've heard.

[00:53:45] Board members, what insights or surprises stood out to you from your discussions with students? Were there themes that resonated or perspectives that challenged your thinking?

[00:54:06] I'm really-- I'm very grateful for the fact that this exists for all of our students. student voice is incredibly important to us, but I think it took some difficulty with students to create this group where people can openly share and meet across affinity groups and I think that's really important. In our room we heard a lot about how empowering it is to connect with people who may have similar experiences with you, who may not be in your affinity group. It just, I think this

[00:54:41] is incredibly empowering for our students and I'm grateful for the work that I know Amber and Eric have done I think the thing that really jumped out at me is it was more about listening that that was what they really took away from it is like hearing other people's perspectives as much as sharing their own it was about gaining the perspective of other students in their school and then being able to share that and I just think that's such an important lesson for anybody to learn is you know the power in listening um and the fact that these students are learning that

[00:55:18] and sharing that with other classmates is really great i was just amazed by the kind of the wide scope of projects you guys are taking on i mean it is it's so impressive and i just want to figure out how do we continue to lift up some of those because i think we hear about them but um i mean you're you're

solving so many problems that you know you're facing in high school but that like the sensory rooms like that we should be thinking about for other like it's like a list of a test case that we could then be like okay could we scale this and is there a need at the middle schools or the elementary schools so yeah and i wonder like how come we didn't think of that you

[00:55:58] know right sort of in line with that um i was thinking about it because i think isabella mentioned um like the problem with the continuation of projects from one year to another so i guess we'd need some type of good system to sort of make sure that some of the projects there are some overlapping of what's going on from one year to the next isabel might be able to come back as an ambassador for whatever program i think folks have already said some of what i was thinking i mean i think fundamentally that the unit of organization being affinity groups i think that's very powerful

[00:56:36] I think the focus on building leadership in and better communications across within and across the schools and building leadership within those groups and then having an outward focus or objective outcome in terms of projects.

[00:56:57] I mean, I think the student senate does a lot of different things and I think it's designed to do that quite beautifully actually. And if the students that we've had here tonight are an example, we are really -- the student senate is really fostering some extraordinary young people.

[00:57:15] And I think I'll piggyback on what Judy talked about in empowered, and you could just sense and see it amongst all of you. And I think Maxwell talked about empathy as well. And so, you know, commend you all.

[00:57:30] Great, great work, great jobs. And you even challenged some others about representation not being present all the time. And, you know, that takes courage, too, but you know what you need to move forward. And so we're here to help you if you need anything. But great job. Thank you. And you've touched on some of this, but as we look ahead, both as our OCE team, as well as our students, what questions do you still have on your mind?

[00:58:02] What would help us to deepen and strengthen this work? And what do you envision the Student Senate becoming for the 25-26 school year? We're being tested, definitely.

[00:58:19] I mean, I'm sure it came up out here, too, but in there, we talked a lot about funding and how unclear it is. Transparency around, you know, I don't know what the situation is.

[00:58:36] There may be some bureaucratic reason that funding has not been as easy to gain for student projects. I know it's very important to Matt to have that student voice money, but it just takes a miracle to get to the students.

[00:58:55] So I think really looking at that and seeing how we can actually get the money out would be useful. How is this, I mean, how is the student senate marketed to your, you know, your fellow students?

[00:59:10] I mean, how do they know whether they should even think about joining? I mean, that would be a question I would have. And also, I'm just curious, you know, we have student groups represented, but I guess my question earlier was what about those students that aren't involved in clubs that aren't -- I mean, there's a large population of kids that have very big opinions, like my kids who are not -- haven't quite found their place in a club or something like that, that this

[00:59:47] may be the thing that they would be interested in and giving a voice. I'm wondering how we get to those kids without the requirement of being in another club or group first. I mean, for us, I think about what are the things that we're going to tackle as a school division, as a school board in 25, 26, that we want to make sure we are getting student voice from.

[01:00:16] It's not a situation where you can say every decision we make, but I think we need to almost, I think about pausing, right, like as we're looking at an issue to say, you know, is this something we need student voice or you saying hey you guys like you're saying you're talking about this you know SROs like we want to make sure that we have a voice to that and so kind of thinking about those things that we are going to be looking at and how do we make sure that we get the adequate adequate representation and it's me and it's meaningful you don't feel like it's a

[01:00:52] check but it's like tell us what we're missing here any other comments from the board no I just I think it I think it looks like it's working quite well I mean and the fact that students have said perhaps they could have more expert panels come in and and talk with them we get if we could figure out how to lengthen the day-long you know school-wide events those are just

[01:01:26] things I will ask that you guys figure it out we will figure it out yes yeah I Yeah, I truly appreciated the slide on the metrics in reference to going from the technological piece and making, going to paper, because I think that's critical because so many individuals in various populations do not have the exposure to some of the updated technology, technological pieces.

[01:01:53] And so I thought that was critical and I appreciate that. Okay, before I close this out, I wanted to give our students an opportunity if they had

[01:02:04] any last words? Anything else that you wanted to? Thank you. Thank you. And OCE team, anything else that you wanted to? Oh, of course. Yes. It will be a thing. I didn't hear what she said. Is it going to be a thing next year? Will we have student Senate next year? I said, of course. Yeah. Absolutely. All right. OCE.

[01:02:49] that's it. No, I'll just say to our seniors, good luck. And it's been, you know, I think this work we've done with Student Senate being out of the building, you know, we're in buildings a lot, but I think this group that we bring together a few times a week or even go, when we go see them at the school level is, you know, just kind of fills your cup a little bit, kind of reminds you why we're in, why we're doing it. Thank you. All right, so this conversation is more than a presentation. It's part of an ongoing feedback loop that strengthens our schools.

[01:03:28] It models what shared leadership can look like when adults and students work together towards equity, excellence, and transformation. We thank you for your time and your attention and your partnership in this work. So thank you. Thank you. Well, thank you. This has been the first time we've had such a group of students with us, and it's been a terrific night. Thank you. And if I throw up if you ever need panelists you know seven of us up here thank you um with that is there any other business that a school member school board

[01:04:07] or staff would like to raise well with that i adjourn at whatever time it is 10 minutes till thank you were you that articulate when you were i don't know too much i know amazing



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