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## Albemarle County School Board Regular Meeting, Thursday, October 8, 2026

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[00:00:16] like to welcome everyone back to our elmer county school board business meeting for october 8th 2026. we will do introductions in a minute but i do want to say that at 4 30 today the clerk of the court john zuge did the oath of our office for david storm our at-large school board representative so he will be joining us in the days and as many as you know we started in a closed meeting so do i have a um a closed meeting motion we do i move that the board

[00:00:52] certify 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 closed motion identified in the motion authorizing the closed meeting or heard discussed or considered in the closed meeting second moved by ms osborne second by miss lay all those in favor aye any opposed thank you very much do we have any motions coming out of this closed meeting we do chair berlin i move that the school board approve the superintendent's

[00:01:27] recommended termination of a staff member second move my dr acoff seconded by uh ms lay um i would like to do a roll call vote on this clerk thompson mr pierre yes miss mr storm yes miss lee yes Ms. Osborne? Yes. Dr. Acuff? Yes. Chair Berlin? Yes. So moved. That motion passes by a vote of six in favor and zero opposed. We will now begin our meeting with our traditional roll call and this

[00:02:05] is to allow you to put a name with a face. We do have a few new or two new faces and names and voices on the dias today but also for our colleagues joining us online so that they can make sure they

can hear everything we are saying um i asked mr black to start us out tonight good evening everyone i'm josiah black chief legal officer jason grant chief communications officer kate acop jack jewett representative david storm at large representative rebecca berlin whitehall district ellen osborne scottsville district judy lay ravana district welcome

[00:02:43] everybody. Bob Beard, Samuel Miller District. Madeline Brand, student representative for Weston-Roll Memorial High School. Christine Thompson, clerk of the board. And Dr. Chandra Hayes is here, and she'll be here shortly. Thank you so much. And thank you to our officers who are here to protect us and serve us in our community every day. Please stand for the Pledge of Allegiance.

[00:03:18] Before we begin today, I would like to make a statement on behalf of the entire school board.

[00:03:38] We want to start this meeting by acknowledging the very difficult time we are facing right now as a school community. These have been hard weeks. We are mourning the death of a teacher at Burley Middle School, and our hearts are with his family, his colleagues, and all of his students.

[00:03:59] The serious allegations at Hollymead remain part of our ongoing investigations and we know families are waiting for answers. At the same time, people whom students and staff rely on every day are not there right now.

[00:04:15] There is considerable pain and uncertainty in the community and we acknowledge that. We also acknowledge that this board has experienced change and disruption as well. We are starting this meeting with one new school board member, welcome Mr. Storm, and now have a second seat we will need to fill following our second resignation in the past two months. We know that steadiness within the division has to start here with us. On personnel matters, the law, basic fairness, and common decency that should be extended

[00:04:51] to every employee limit what we can share. We want to make clear that there are a number of reasons a person can be away from their job, including personal, medical, or family reasons. And yes, sometimes leave results from a complaint or a matter requiring review. In those cases, a leave of absence helps ensure an investigation is completed thoroughly and fairly for everyone involved. Our silence on individual cases is not indifference. However, we understand

[00:05:29] the disruption that comes when people you count on are out. Please know that Dr. Hayes and her team work diligently to ensure the staff, leadership, and support are available in each of those circumstances. Through all of this, the daily work of our schools continues. It continues because we have a strong community of teachers, bus drivers, counselors, custodians, nutrition staff, principals,

[00:06:01] administrators, nurses, staff, families, and volunteers who show up and do the work of caring for and educating our children every day. We know that this work goes on despite the difficult headlines and circumstances we are facing, and we have such gratitude for it. We and the board are keeping those goals, caring for and educating our children at the forefront as we navigate this difficult time. We also want to use this moment to look ahead. We need to come together as a board

[00:06:39] and as a community. We will not always agree. Disagreement is not failure. It is how good decisions get tested and how we learn and grow together. What matters is how we disagree and how we support each other even if we see things differently. Every member of this board, every member of our staff and our parents and neighbors who come to that podium shares the same purposes.

[00:07:08] We want our students to succeed and to reach their full potential. We serve this community because we believe in public service and in giving back to the students and families of Albemarle County. We must unite around the shared purpose. Everything stems from there. We have challenges that we must face. We are in the midst of a difficult season in Albemarle County, but by working together and leaning on one another, we are confident we will see our way through.

[00:07:41] We are here because we believe in educating and caring for our children. We must keep that at the center of every conversation, every disagreement, and every decision we make. I hope we can all come together around this shared purpose. Thank you so much. I will now move us into a moment of silence.

[00:08:07] I would like to take a moment to remember and reflect on the life of Paul Regan, who passed away earlier this week. Paul was a beloved teacher at Burley Middle School, respected by his colleagues and highly regarded by his students.

[00:08:28] Throughout his career, he touched the lives of many young people in our community, and his loss is deeply felt by all who knew him. Paul loved teaching. He loved his colleagues. And most importantly, he supported his students.

[00:08:48] We will never forget his dedication to his profession and the relationships that he built. On behalf of the school board, I extend our heartfelt condolences to Paul's family and friends, his colleagues, his students, both past and present.

[00:09:07] I ask that you please join us in a moment of silence as we remember Paul and honor his life

[00:09:14] and his service to our school community. Please pause for a moment of silence. I must now

[00:09:56] transition us into our meeting. The next item on our agenda is 4.0, approval of the agenda. Do I have a motion for the approval of tonight's agenda? Thank you, Chair Berlin. I move we approve tonight's agenda. Moved by Ms. Lay. Do I have a second? Second. Seconded by Dr. Acoff. All those favor of tonight's agenda? Aye. Any opposed? We will move on with tonight's agenda. I am so happy to welcome our spotlight on education today. It is Hispanic Heritage Month and Johnny Antigua,

[00:10:34] Family Engagement and Student Support Liaison at AHS and his entire team that he brought with him, students teachers family and support please all come forward we are so happy to have you today well would you yeah i would love if you could um introduce everyone and then however you would like to use the time we're we're just honored to have you here oh i'm sorry would you mind apologies i know it's more comfortable as a teacher to look at everyone but would you mind

[00:11:13] using them i know it's i know it's hard it's so hard to not look at the audience i know no problem No problem. Good evening, everyone. Superintendent Dr. Hayes is not here, but it's okay. Members of the board in our school community. As the multilingual learner administrator at Abamal High School, I'm Andrea Porter. And joining me is Mr. Johnny Antigua, our community liaison, and Miss Louisa Acevedo, our department chair. And we also have with us, we're accompanied by a couple of students from our Latinx club, and they will introduce themselves as they present. And we have one of our teachers, Mr. Barrio, who's here with us

[00:11:49] this will. Welcome, you're so excited for you to be here.

[00:12:22] leaders, Latinx, that are here with us. We also have Mr. Berrio, who is here with us. Thank you very much for joining us tonight. Good evening. My name is Jordi Serrato.

[00:12:38] What is national Spanish era? It's the annual celebration at United States from September 15th to October 15th. The celebration of this history was called to conservation of American citizens who come from Spain, Mexico, the Caribbean, and Central and South America.

[00:13:08] Hi, I'm Ariana. I'm a senior at Albemarle High School. Hispanic Heritage Month is not just a chapter in our lives. It's the air that we breathe, and it's the story that we keep creating as we go.

[00:13:24] Hispanic Heritage Month comes from our daily lives, comes from our history, comes from our passion of being Hispanic from each part that we are from, from South America, Central America, and Europe as well. It brings out our legacy and is defined by resilience, creativity, and the profound cultural impact that we have at our Alabama High School.

[00:13:45] Figures like Elena Ochoa is the first Hispanic woman in space, Sonia Sotomayor is the first Latina Supreme Court Justice, and Cesar Chavez, who is a labor rights champion. Here we are excited to be proud of Albemarle High School as well, and we're just grateful that we have this opportunity to be here as well.

[00:14:05] Hi, I'm Valeria, and I'm a senior at Albemarle High School, and why do we celebrate legacy and heritage? The legacy of Hispanic heritage is a testament to the generations who have crossed borders and come with nothing, but continue to bring a part of their culture to the United States.

[00:14:22] This section honors those who have passed away, those who were taken from their families and those who continue to push forward and when unexpected situations come their way. Hi, oh, excuse me. Hi, I'm Jocelyn Guevara. Some nations that we celebrate are September 15th, which marks the independence anniversaries of Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua.

[00:14:51] September 16th, where we celebrate its Independence Day, kicking off with the historic El Grito de Dolores. September 18th, where Chile commemorates its fight for independence during its vibrant Fiestas Patrias. October 12th, where we celebrate across several Latin American nations to recognize the cultural convergence and indigenous heritage of the region.

[00:15:13] Beyond those marking independence, we still honor all heritage, which includes the Caribbean, South America, Central America, and Europe. National Hispanic Heritage Month honors a rich history cultural diversity and unique contributions of individuals with roots across Spain in 19 countries and territories throughout Central America South America and the Caribbean good evening all I am Naomi and I'm honored to be here representing Latinx in our school community as we celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month but Hispanic Heritage Month should not only be about celebrating it should also be about

[00:15:51] education when we educate ourselves about cultures that may be different from our own we can build greater understanding and respect education helps us challenge stereotypes and misunderstandings and creates opportunities for people to connect with one another as a student we have the ability sorry we have the ability to make our school a place where everyone feels welcome and represented we can do that by listening to each other learning from one another celebrating our differences and finding the things that connects us. Oh, one important part of our culture is music and dance. Dance is

[00:16:27] more than a movement. It tells the stories, preserves traditions, and connect generations. Styles such as salsa, bachata, merengue, and cumbia, and flamenco reflect different cultural influences

and stories. When we share these traditions, we are sharing a piece of our histories with what with others, sorry.

[00:16:46] now members of the board thank you for providing us the space to educate share and celebrate our reach culture and heritage with you tonight our students and school community take immense pride in who we are and we are grateful for your for your ongoing support of Alvermore High School have a wonderful

[00:17:16] evening members of the Junta, thank you very much for giving us this space to para educar, compartir, y celebrar nuestra rica cultura y herencia con todos ustedes esta noche.

[00:17:34] Nuestros estudiantes y nuestra comunidad escolar se sienten inmensamente orgullosos de sus raíces y agradecemos profundamente su constante apoyo a Abamar High School. Que tengan una excelente noche. Gracias. Thank you so much for your attention, and I hope you, or, well, happy National Hispanic Heritage Month.

[00:17:57] Thank you. We may have a few questions. If you don't mind staying up, there may be a couple questions from the board. Okay, absolutely. If you guys don't mind. Any questions or comments for the board?

[00:18:17] How is National Hispanic Heritage Month celebrated within the schools or within your classes? So we've created, for example, this assembly. So we had our whole school come down, and then we shared something similar to this slide, but a little bit more fun-ish to do.

[00:18:35] We didn't get the fun one. Sorry. We also dance for our school, so we created a little, like, two to three-minute choreography, and we dance with our students, and then we dance with all of our teachers. And then we've also been doing, like, contests.

[00:18:51] For example, we had, like, a door contest that we shared around, and it was, like, very fun. Oh, I think you want me to say it. So we also created a spirit week for all of our AHS students for every day. We had, like, different things that they can do to, like, kind of, like, join in on the fun.

[00:19:09] For example, we had Monday, which was like twin day, so they picked a friend or they also can pick a teacher to, you know, like, yeah, match with. And then we also did Rep Your Roots, so it was students go around like having their flags out and just overall like sharing their culture and stuff like that.

[00:19:32] Thank you. Mr. Bean? I'm curious you're all in high school right now as you if you look back if you were here for elementary school or middle school is there anything that you wish would have happened during those years to acknowledge and represent and

[00:20:07] celebrate your culture um well honestly i'm gonna be honest from my elementary school years we didn't really do much for national hispanic heritage month um we didn't feel well at least i didn't feel celebrated and i remember being i'm gonna be honest even being ashamed to like represent my culture because it wasn't being represented at all and i feel like what now is such a joy to be able to do is be part of such a community that's so large and especially in that Albemarle High School where we have a community that's basically like family, a family that

[00:20:44] we can connect to, a family that knows the things that we go through, that's going through things right now, and people that we can connect with even through these hard times, especially with everything that's going on in the government. I feel like being able to feel comfortable to rep your roots, to

show who you are, to represent your culture, your country, the food that you eat, the dances that you dance.

[00:21:08] That's what I really enjoy about high school, being able to be part of a community that speaks so loudly. And I think what we could do now is just being able to make the middle schools, elementary schools, feel more comfortable. And I feel like as older students, being able to speak that out loudly and having this opportunity here at the school board is such a great opportunity because I feel like I'm able to express to you guys how deeply that Hispanic Heritage Month, how important it is and how important now it is because especially with everything that's going on I feel like students are too afraid to show their roots and I just want every student to know like

[00:21:48] or everyone to know that showing your roots isn't something you should be ashamed of no matter how hard things can be being able to represent your roots no matter what because we're here to support the culture that we have and to represent our parents to represent our families and I feel Like high school, especially out tomorrow, we do such a great job and we will continue to do that every day until like, well, we can't no more, but that will not happen.

[00:22:17] So that's all I really want to say. I feel like elementary schools and middle schools should be able to feel comfortable sharing their roots. Yeah. Thank you so much. I'm really grateful for your voice and I hope that you all continue to speak loudly all the time.

[00:22:36] Thank you very much. Thank you so much. Thank you so much. We so appreciate it. Is there anything else you would like to share with us as a school board, knowing that we're listening, we're thinking, we want to make sure we support all students, all students have the funding they need, feel safe and secure?

[00:22:57] What would you like to say to us? I would just say trying to kind of, like you said, like Ariana was saying, I feel like spread more information on that.

[00:23:14] I feel like showing and representing our roots in elementary and middle school, specifically elementary, because I feel like a lot of Hispanic students going in, they come from a household where they only speak Spanish and going to an environment where it's a language where they can't understand it can be overwhelming and having or letting them know or giving that information of where they're coming from or stuff like that it like lets them know that you know they're still important and it kind of gives them like

[00:23:54] a safe space it feels like home to them because it's something that it's where from I'm not good at explaining this but perfect just kind of like letting or I don't know how to word this but kind of like being more open about it you know I think there should be represented acknowledge everywhere in every school I would love to see more schools high schools middle schools having stuff like

[00:24:26] this like assemblies like i feel like having an assembly in each school um at least um once is good like giving information about where we come from um stuff like that not really good at this but yeah you're very good thank you thank you i just want to say thank you to the students um for and the staff for being here tonight i ran across some of you in in the building and the excitement that was generating from you and your inclusivity of all students was important and it was it was

[00:25:04] nice to see and just kudos to the staff for being just as excited as the students um and supporting them through their work so thank you of course as much as you'd like to say now that you guys

are here i'm sorry of course um i feel like um i just want to be like thank mr antigua miss acevedo um and like people like mr berrio like that are in our building i feel like especially i feel like Without them being there, representing our culture, being able to talk to an adult who can talk to us and connect with us, I feel like, especially in elementary school, that is so important.

[00:25:42] Because like Yoseling said, there's kids who are coming at such a young age who don't know the language, they don't know the history, they don't know the Pledge of Allegiance, they don't know this, they don't know that. And I think what Albemarle High School does so well, and Mr. Antigua is like the translator, he does the Pledge of Allegiance in Spanish, where those students are able to learn the Pledge of Allegiance, and they can feel like they're included as well.

[00:26:05] Because like I said, we have such a large community at Albemarle High School, and I feel like something that we could do to implement such a big community, because it's not just Albemarle, it's in all the schools in the whole county. That is such a big community, like having a teacher there that can connect with the students, like EL teachers.

[00:26:21] I feel like having teachers who actually care, because I feel like I don't I don't know, like how to explain it. I remember my little brother, he went to Woodbrook. He like he felt no connection. I was there not like when I when I was there at Woodbrook, there was a teacher and I don't remember her name now.

[00:26:39] But I do remember that Miss Molinero, that's what it was. That was the principal. Miss Molinero was the principal. It was Ms. Cappuccino, something like that. But she was there, and she would help us. She actually made us feel safe, heard, and loved. And I feel like now when he just went into middle school, but he did not feel that love at all.

[00:26:58] And I saw that love not being there supported for him at all. He has lost his Spanish even then. So it's just I feel like having teachers who will continue to support, be able to talk to the kids, continue to be there, like Mr. Antigua, Ms. Acevedo, Mr. Berrio, Ms. Porter, too, like having teachers who support the community and continue to be engaged, continue to allow them to show their roots, teach them English, and continue to make them feel comfortable speaking Spanish.

[00:27:28] I think having that in every school is such a great opportunity, and I'm glad that we have it at Albemarle because I feel like explaining the connection isn't good at showing the connection. But yeah, that's all I need to say. That's my part. That was beautiful. One last thing, I want to thank every single one of y'all for all the hard work that you guys do.

[00:27:46] It means a lot to all of us. And yeah, just thank you for everything that you guys do in the whole school. Thank you very much. I just want to just quote you. Our students want to be safe, they want to be heard, and they want to be loved.

[00:28:03] That is so important. And thank you for sharing that with us today. Thank you so much. I so appreciate it. The next piece on our agenda is our school board, acting superintendent, and committee updates.

[00:28:22] I am going to give our student representative, Madeline Braun, the opportunity to make her first statement as a student representative. Welcome. We are so happy that you're here. Thank you, Dr. Berlin, and good evening, school board. My name is Madeline Braun, and I'm serving as this year's school board student representative for Western Albemarle High School.

[00:28:44] I'm a junior this year, and as I've become acquainted with my school community over the years, I've been privy to delightful opportunities and people. Western Albemarle is a school proud of its unity, but there are a few concerns that have been brought up that I'm going to address now.

[00:29:01] Recently, we have had issues of students utilizing connections features similar to the New York Times connections to make inappropriate comments about other students. Dr. Dimitri has taken action, which is significantly appreciated.

[00:29:17] But this issue does represent a concern regarding technological responsibility and abuse. Western students shouldn't have to worry about whether their name will appear in an uncomfortable setting. It is irresponsible and unlike Western Albemarle's unified community.

[00:29:34] Additionally, students have raised concerns over significant changes made at the start of the year. Schedule adjustments, the grading policy, and shifting to ParentSquare. Students have expressed concern about the alteration of class timing throughout the day and the shift of our war year period has been a disruptive factor that should have been implemented in the scheduled plans before school began.

[00:29:56] Furthermore, the grading system has gained a significant amount of attention and confusion regarding the retake cap being a 90. The shift to ParentSquare has also been a disruptive modification due to the requirements of learning how to use a new resource and knowing where the lines fall between using Gmail and using ParentSquare.

[00:30:15] In all, the start of our year has been an eventful one, and as time goes on, we'll adapt as we're a resilient community that believes in unity during the adversity of technology and the difficulty of change. Thank you. Thank you so much, Ms. Brown. Mr. Beard?

[00:30:33] Thank you, Madeline, for your wonderful comments. We will take them to heart, really. I just wanted to update everybody I went to a PTO meeting at a wonderful small school on Morgantown Road called Murray Elementary 266 students and tonight as we were speaking at Murray they're having a celebration in honor of the school that they're the the lady that they're named for Virginia L Murray a pioneering african-american educator in Albemarle County they have 30

[00:31:08] activities at Murray in all the classrooms, the entire school, all the the teachers and families and students are all getting together and it looks looks like a fabulous celebration.

[00:31:24] Did you know it also at Murray they have a student council made up of elementary school students. I'd also heard one thing from a parent that stuck out with me. said that 99.9% of the activities, the things that happen at Murray are overwhelmingly positive.

[00:31:43] And in that vein, I would like to read something. We are going through a hard time right now, as we all know. We face serious issues, and to be sure, people are hurting, and we're all grieving. Our responsibilities are substantial, and as we go through this hard time, now is the time to pull together and all be constructive. When our boat takes on some water, we all grab buckets and bail we're headed in a good direction at acps and with everyone working together we'll see this through and there are brighter days ahead for this awesome school district so let's show our strength and our positive spirit and as a community we'll get

[00:32:21] through this together thank you thank you so much mr beard other comments i have one event i would like to report on a couple weekends ago uh i ran into bob there the historical marker um

designating bf yancey elementary school and esmont high school has been placed outside the yancey community center to celebrate that long history of education in that community it was a very great very good event thank you so much um yesterday dr acuff and i were able to tour uh ace lambs lane um it was

[00:33:01] quite impressive um i think six or seven students took us around we're also joined by a former board of supervisors member diantha mckeel and one thing that they're working on is confidence and communication and i can tell you that they were very confident and communicative in showing us their various studio programs and i know that we get a lot of questions about studios and i can just say that when i was there the energy that each studio was generating and how excited the students were to be learning, the things that they were learning, was quite impressive. Dr.

[00:33:38] Acuff, do you have any other comments? I would just echo that. It's an extraordinary facility, and if you think that a physical learning environment has no impact on education, you should visit this place, because it's light, the rooms are flexible, the students are totally excited, and it was really impressive, given that it's one of two new school structures we've built the past quarter century. It was great to see it and I encourage whenever there is an open house, and I think there will be one planned once they're still working on some outside areas,

[00:34:16] I think there will be open houses and I would encourage anyone interested in public education to see what modern educational spaces look like. Mr. Strang? I'd like to start by thanking the members of the board for their warm welcome and Dr. Hayes, Mr. Gray, everyone who's been so welcoming to me. It's been a whirlwind two weeks for me since since the announcement and your vote and I am very appreciative of the community members and the staff members who have found

[00:34:52] me in the community whether I am walking my dog or I'm at the grocery store or I am watching my middle schooler play in his tennis match who want to come up and talk to me about the work that we have in front of us and i am grateful for the opportunity to listen and i look forward to hearing from many of you this evening and i look forward to serving you in the best way that i can over the next 15 months thank you so much dr hayes yes i just want to share an update regarding our accreditation and accountability the school performance and support frameworks

[00:35:31] were updated yesterday on the virginia department of education website all of our schools in albemore County are fully accredited with eight schools being identified as having a distinction of distinguished and each school and student gap group has grown over the course of the year and in most areas Albemarle County public schools are outpacing the state in growth across multiple subject areas and our chronic absenteeism is improving so that's good news for the division. A huge congratulations and a huge thank you to those to the school principals the assistant principals the teachers

[00:36:06] the nurses, and the PTOs and all the volunteers who support those schools in making this happen. I have a few updates that I will go through. One, the school board and the cabinet will be doing a retreat tomorrow. We will be focusing on looking deeper into the SOL scores, reviewing the Virginia Department of Education's new framework, as well as talking through budget priorities. As all of our meetings are open. That is an open meeting and you will see it on the schedule on the school

[00:36:41] board website. A number of people have asked me about the superintendent search. We have hired a firm called HYA. They are a national firm. I think if you look to see who does the most superintendent searches across the country, this is the firm that uses, that does the most searches. Mr.

Dillenbeck and I, along with Mr. Redding, interviewed them and went through the procurement process, and I have asked Ms. Lay to join me on, we have a search planning committee. We will be sharing

[00:37:19] more information. They will be joining us next week, I'm sorry, the 22nd, October 22nd, in our open meeting, and they will be talking for about an hour, sharing their process and the timeline. So that information will be coming out and we will also be summarizing that. We, as we spoke earlier, we have an open seat. I don't have a timeline right now with specific dates for the RIO seat. We are held by the

[00:37:52] Virginia Department of Ed 45 days from the time of the resignation. We just need sit down with calendars. So we will be doing, I assume, a press release and a note through ParentSquare probably next Monday or Tuesday, sharing the application, the application timeline, and the process and procedures. As you know from our last, there will also be an added meeting, which will be a public hearing about that. There have been some questions about anyone from the

[00:38:26] rio district who applied for the um the at-large seat we did have four people who applied we will be reaching out to them but because of the process that videoe requires we do have to do another search or another request for applications but we will be working with those people if they're interested to just move their applications over so again next monday or tuesday i apologize we just couldn't get a timeline to you that quickly And then the last thing, a huge thank you to Parent Council.

[00:39:00] We have been talking about the need, we, the board, have been talking about the need to do more town hall meetings or to do any town hall meetings. This is a huge request from Parent Council. And thank you to Parent Council.

[00:39:15] I asked a few questions of them about location, about timing, about day of the week, about how much notice. So we will be working, the board will be working with their schedules, with the schedules of the schools to come up with a slate of town halls, I would say, that would occur end of October to early November.

[00:39:42] So a huge thank you for the information that Parent Council pulled for us. And thank you for everyone who has reached out to us about doing town halls. Please reach out to us individually and we will work with you to make sure that those occur. And those are all the updates that I have.

[00:40:00] Any other updates before we move on? The next piece on our agenda is 6.0 public comment. I'm gonna begin reading the public comment rules and just ask, oh, here she is.

[00:40:21] Just give me one second.

[00:40:36] So we're gonna take a five minute pause, two minute, I'm sorry, we're just gonna take a two minute pause before public comment, just so that I can get everything set up to make sure we have everything taken care of.

[00:40:52] So just give me two minutes to make sure that I have everything I need regarding the number of people we have

[00:41:00] and what the time level will be.

[00:42:29] Wanted to do a final count to make sure I had everything right. So we are gonna reconvene. I will read the guidelines, but just the cliff notes are that we have 17 people so that everyone will have two minutes.

[00:42:45] Elmer County School Board welcomes public comment on matters related to school board governance and division operations. The members of the public may sign up to speak during public comment in the following ways. Online, sign up opens at 9:00 a.m. on the Monday of the meeting week and closes at 2:00 p.m. on the day of the meeting.

[00:43:03] By telephone, members of the public may call the school board clerk's office to sign up until 2:00 p.m. on the day of the meeting. In person, for meetings held in person, Sign up is available at the meeting, beginning at 6:00 PM, and will remain open until the chair begins the public comment portion of the meeting.

[00:43:19] Public comment is not provided at special meetings unless included in the meeting agenda. When there are 14 or more speakers, each speaker will have two minutes. As I noted, we have 17 speakers tonight. The public comment period will not exceed 40 minutes unless the school board votes to extend the time.

[00:43:37] When recognized, speakers should come forward and state their name. I only like you to do your name and magisterial district. I don't want you to share your address. Public comment should be addressed to the school board as a body and should relate to school board governance or division operations.

[00:43:53] Speakers may refer to individual school board members, division leaders, or staff when the comments confirm official actions, decisions, or matters within the authority of the school board or the operation of the school division. All comments should be made in a professional and respectful manner. Public comment is not a forum for debate or for questions directed to individual school board members or staff.

[00:44:13] Threats, profanity, obscenity, disclosure of confidential student information or private personal matters and conduct that disrupts the orderly operation of the meetings are not permitted. A timer will be used to track each speaker's time. When the time has expired, the speaker should conclude promptly.

[00:44:31] Written comments and supporting material may be provided to the clerk for the board's consideration. To help maintain order and allow each speaker to be heard, please do not clap, boo, or otherwise audibly express support or opposition during public comment. Those wishing to show support may raise a hand or stand or wave their hands.

[00:44:52] The board will not-- sorry, it's an odd sound. The board will not engage in discussion with speakers during public comment. Board members may address matters raised during public comment later in the meeting under other business as appropriate. Use of the projection system is reserved staff presentations associated with the scheduled agenda items and I as I always like to remind people we are an example to the students who are here and who are listening and who are in our care so please remember that in your comments and then as well we are some of us are tall and some of us are short like me make sure you just adjust the mic to make sure that everyone online and everyone

[00:45:31] in the audience can hear you so thank you for that the first three people we have are Madeline michael abigail hartman and christina raw buddy yeah i'm short okay um i'm here to speak on behalf of kimberly morgan thomas who's been a monticello special educator for many many years 22 i believe

[00:46:09] but i'm really speaking for all the people whose lives that she's touched i'm speaking for the ninth and tenth graders who read and write better because of kim i'm speaking on behalf of the teachers who were lucky enough to be supported by her excellent collaborative teaching for the students who needed rides and food and references and advice and love for the kids who were overlooked and placed in less challenging classes those kids that Kim advocated for to make sure that they were being challenged the cruelty of dismissing a teacher this talented in mid-September

[00:46:49] without any attempt to make a plan for her is shocking especially in light of the fact that she has the support of all of her students parents. Kim has been my colleague for the past 20 years before I retired and I always counted on her to know her content well, to believe in her students, to work cooperatively with everyone in the building. Every teacher wanted her for a collab partner. Please revise the unfair and disproportionate actions of the HR department, especially at a time when outstanding special ed teachers are in such demand. Thank you.

[00:47:28] Thank you very much. Abigail Hartman. Hello, I'm Abigail Hartman and I'm a freshman at Western Albemarle High School along with Link Studio at Ace Academy. I'm here because of me and my peers denial from marching band due to the involvement within Scholar Studios which violates school board policy, written school board policy IGAK the ACPS school board is required to ensure equal access to programs ACPS and laws have failed to ensure this equal access to band due to poor scheduling resulting in many ninth and tenth grade was band

[00:48:07] students being forced to drop the class continue with their studios students at both Albemarle High School and Monticello High School are able to take both scholars and band resulting in was creating an institutional barrier for for students wanting to take both so i ask what can be done to ensure equal access to students wanting to participate in band at western that cannot attend the class through the ab schedule and a whitehall district thank you very much christina ra good evening i'm speaking as a

[00:48:46] family council officer bringing forward concerns from families across albama county the recess keeps coming up and family questions student feedback and formal advocacy across grades schools, and years. In January 2024, Family Council documented recess arrangements at six middle schools. Access varied by school, lunch schedules, and teacher discretion. Students repeatedly called for recess in the middle school master plan feedback. Recently, we've heard concerns from at least four elementary schools about limited recess and its removal for individual students and entire classes, and that recurring pattern warrants a division-wide response. The research

[00:49:24] gives us clear reasons to act a 2022 system systematic review of 20 publications found that more research excuse me more recess benefited behavior and social emotional outcomes the american academy of pediatrics updated guidance explains that recess supports attention memory stress management and social skills all essential to learning cdc guidance recommends at least 20 minutes of elementary recess daily and explicitly says 20 minutes should not be the maximum recess should be additional to PE and classroom movement breaks. We're asking for a few things here. First, protect daily recess separately from lunch and

[00:50:02] elementary and middle schools. Treat 20 minutes as an elementary minimum and build in additional opportunities for breaks. Second, fund the support that teachers need to manage behavior while preserving children's access to recess. We need to address reasons why recess is being withheld. Teachers face challenging behavior when adequate support is missing lost recess can become the fallback

is which is what we're seeing simply telling teachers to stop leaves that problem unresolved they need practical coaching access to behavior specialists and timely administrative help so they have

[00:50:35] workable alternatives third we'd like a review by school of scheduled and actual recess our children need dependable time to move connect and reset our teachers need the support to make that possible thank you so much the next three speakers are rainbow willard kimberly morgan thomas and sarah spence rainbow willard please come forward i just want to pause to make sure if rainbow willard is

[00:51:13] in the room to leave space for them seeing rainbow willard is not in the room kimberly morgan thomas please come forward good evening my name is kimberly morgan thomas and i stand here tonight

[00:51:46] Not only as a lifelong learner, but as a tenured educator who has dedicated 22 consecutive years of service exclusively to the students, families and community of Monticello High School. For over two decades, my personnel file has reflected impeccable evaluations, master certifications and specialized literacy interventions and special education with an emphasis in behavioral management and an unblemished record of professional integrity as a reading specialist and a special educator.

[00:52:16] I am here tonight because my career, my livelihood, and my professional teaching license are being actively threatened by the central office over a single non-deceptive clerical formatting error, an enforcement action that is vastly disproportionate to the facts and completely reflective of the administrative outreach this community is currently questioning.

[00:52:38] Recently, under the pressure of urgent compliance deadline to clean up backlogged records, I conducted a document review with the student's parents regarding their child's March 2006 IEP. The family explicitly gave me verbal permission to sign their names so that their child services would not face any further administrative delay.

[00:53:01] The parents fully agreed to the terms, wanted the service to continue and completely support my actions. While I do take full accountability for this formatting error of writing the names directly that executing a standard proxy notation, there was absolutely zero intent to deceive, manipulate, or misrepresent the facts.

[00:53:22] Yet, rather than addressing this as a good-faith administrative oversight by a 22-year veteran, the Human Resource Department called me into a high-pressure adversarial meeting. As a classroom teacher, I had no training in legal due process, nor did I understand that HR's true role was to protect the institution rather than support the educator.

[00:53:42] Unsighted, isolated, and under extreme emotional distress, I nervously stated during the interrogation that I had signed two names. Thank you so much for your comments. I had signed one. Just three minutes. I'm sorry. According to the rules that I've stated, when there are more than 14 speakers, we have...

[00:54:04] Take a vote. Sir, this is enough for discussion. Sarah Spence. My name is Sarah Spence. I'm the English Department Chair at Monticello High School.

[00:54:20] We're here to speak on Kim Thomas' contributions to our school over the past 22 years. Kim Thomas co-teaches six sections of standard level English 9 and 10 students, many of whom have IEP or 504 documents with varying accommodations. She's built a beautiful teaching partnership with Julianne

Abruzzo, who's developed an English 9 curriculum that has proven effective in raising students' reading comprehension and fluency scores.

[00:54:43] We saw the fruits of this English 9 foundation of two years ago in our 11th grade SOL scores last year, the highest in many years, closing achievement gaps and meeting our administration's professional goals. This work was led and supported by Kim Thomas, an endorsed reading specialist and a veritable goldmine of expertise, experience, and patience.

[00:55:04] Kim has a full schedule of students who need her expertise and warm guidance, not to mention the students who are on her special education caseload. She continues to help these students academically and socially through all four years of their high school career. While her success in the classroom should speak for itself, her work toward building our Fellowship of Christian Athletes Club should not go unmentioned.

[00:55:24] Ms. Thomas has grown the club to 90 members, gathering together to pray, worship, and fellowship with one another. And it's unclear if that organization and the fire for the faith that Kim started will carry forward in her absence. When I started at Monticello in the fall of 2020, I found it really difficult to integrate into the culture there.

[00:55:41] She was the one bright spot in a world of dark screens. she comforted me and encouraged me that we were just in a season and personally she helped me through the loss of my second pregnancy. I sincerely hope that my words and the words of her colleagues tonight will demonstrate the amazing work she has done and still has left to do here at Monticello High School. Please consider the impact she's made and the hole she's left in our building when her case is presented before you and I humbly ask that you make the best decision for students and staff at Monticello High School. Thank

[00:56:11] you. Thank you so much. Daisy Rojas. The next three speakers are Daisy Rojas, Amy Barber, and Stephanie Corpolongo. Good evening, everyone. Daisy Rojas. I am from the Rio District. I did put in an application for the at-large, so I would like to have that considered for the Rio District as well. I stand before you today begging you to please talk to us. I know you're

[00:56:47] afraid. I know that because we know what that feels like. Fear as educators, fear as students, and fear as parents. We have lived through that fear for the past 10 years. And I've named some names that I know have caused that fear. I know one will be speaking later. And I know one was taken out in handcuffs yesterday. So I appreciate that some changes have taken place. More is needed.

[00:57:13] but especially we need you to talk to us. You promised us transparency. We have yet to see that and you know I think fear should not dictate your behavior or your decisions. Leadership has no room for fear. So you are our representatives. All but one of you were elected by your neighbors to be here to represent us. Us. Not the school. Not yourself. Us. We ask for that representation and we ask that you communicate to us directly.

[00:57:51] Not even the schools are who you represent. The schools are ours. They are public institutions. And we put those there with our tax dollars. And we put you there with our votes. And so on behalf of my neighbors and myself, I will spell it out in black and white.

[00:58:13] Black and white. We want the transparency that you promised. We want answers to our questions. What is happening with our teachers and administrators? What is happening at central office?

[00:58:28] What are each of you on the school board doing exactly as individuals? Why aren't school members offering any differing opinions? - Thank you so much.

[00:58:44] Amy Barber. - Hello, Amy, I'm from the Rio District and I'm wondering if I can... - Would you mind just coming a little bit closer?

[00:59:02] - If I can defer my minutes to the lady in red so she can finish what she was saying, is that allowed? - I do not believe so. - Can, no, really not? - I'm sorry, I mean, you have signed up as Amy Barber, so that's, I have to have you speak as Amy Barber.

[00:59:22] I'm sorry, I cannot have disturbances. I would take a pause if everyone needs a minute. She has signed up as Amy Barber. That's perfect, that's perfect, thank you. - Okay, where do I, oh my gosh. I ask that everyone in the audience, I want to be able to hear.

[00:59:39] Okay, yet rather than addressing this as good faith administrative oversight by a 22 year veteran, the human resources department called me to a high pressure adversarial meeting.

[00:59:58] As a classroom teacher, I had no training in legal due process, nor did I understand that HR's true role was to protect the institution rather than support the educator. Blindsided, isolated, and under extreme emotional distress, I nervously stated during the interrogation that I had signed two names when in reality I only had signed one.

[01:00:20] The administration weaponized my panic and the formatting error to threaten immediate termination and state-level license revocation. I was placed under extreme duress to force a separation only to have the division unilaterally breach the verbal assurances of license protection that were used to secure that very paperwork.

[01:00:50] This board and our central office are currently under intense public spotlight regarding operational transparency, a culture of intimidation, and the sudden unexplained removal of 15 high school employees from our buildings, including the leadership at my own school, Monticello High School.

[01:01:09] As a mother, I look at everything happening right now and know that if I still had my four children enrolled in Almar County Public Schools today, I wouldn't feel safe sending them into our buildings. I want to add I am a parent of a student at Elmira High School and it is exasperating to help her through each day of trying to get work done there.

[01:01:30] That's where I'm going to end. Thank you so much. Stephanie Corpolongo, did I say that right? Then our next three speakers are Stephanie Corpolongo, Ross Naranjo and Sky and Sky QRA. You said Stephanie Corbolongo, perfect.

[01:01:57] I'm Stephanie Corbolongo, I am a family council representative for Crozet Elementary and I have a second grader there also. I wanted to start by reiterating what my previous people have also said that our community is desperate for transparency communication. You wouldn't believe the mom group chats that are happening right now. There's a lot of gossip going on and I think it's y'all's responsibility to clarify what's going on, clarify what these administrative leaves are about. I understand there has to be privacy but could we function on their on admin leave, their on medical leave, their on

[01:02:34] family leave. Give us a timeline or an expectation of how long they're going to be gone. Is it related to the swiney case or not? Those are the type of things that are happening behind the scenes of concerned parents worried that if their children are safe. And I believe that's y'all's responsibility. There

needs to be a plan for continued communication. Can we have quarterly town halls? Can we have a newsletter that's sent out by you all of what you guys are doing and what your action plan is and what your steps that are taking?

[01:03:05] I think there also needs to be accountability for the previous superintendent. Why is he still being paid? Why is he not being charged with failing to report also? Why is there someone still on the board that knew an investigation was happening and did not report it to you guys? I think there needs to be consistency of what you guys are telling us. And we are a community that are desperate for you all to do your jobs and tell us what you're doing

[01:03:35] to keep us safe our children safe thank you so much russ naranjo russ naranjo jack jewett district i'm a 55 year old single guy with no kids i find myself before a school board meeting the reason is because i take a both abuse of minors and suicide very serious i'm also sharing for a friend of a parent unable to be here tonight like most parents their household has a lot of frustration and anger towards the system we want to know what you are doing and when you're going

[01:04:14] to tell the community what is going on and what is going to be done about these very serious matters that happen in the schools we pay for. Friends of mine who are school employees at three different schools have informed me that they can't speak, they fear harassment and retaliation that could cause them to lose their jobs. We want to know what is going on at Central Office. From what I understand, the toxicity and bullying of employees and families begins there. What has this board done? There is a sense among our community that all of you are are complicit and don't want to debate or opinions on any issue since school board members are elected

[01:04:50] from a district in a county with many opinions this bothers me the most it is making this board appear as a government body elected no as a club where members have face time and pick up a check are you representing representing the interests of your district and are you willing to tell us what is really going on or are we going to have to get our information from police reports or news outlets my grandfather was a party boss in new mexico he told all his candidates what their job was

[01:05:17] trabajar for la gente that's your job work for the people thank you very much sky quare either mic you want you just and you can even pull them both close to you whatever you're comfortable with

[01:05:50] dear alamara county school board my name is sky queer and i'm a senior at monticello high school and former student of miss morgan thomas when i was in freshman year miss thomas was one of of my English teachers. Usually when a classroom has multiple teachers it means that the students in the class might need extra help or might not understand the spoken language in the class. Ms. Thomas did just that except she went above and beyond. Ms. Thomas would treat kids with respect and kindness and would strike up conversations with even the quietest of kids. She always greeted me

[01:06:27] with a smile in the hallway even when she wasn't my teacher anymore. You could tell she was a teacher that wanted to work there and not just a teacher that at the school hired to fill a space. When I joined the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, I saw her face when I walked in and I immediately felt more relaxed.

[01:06:43] She beamed at every kid she talked to and everyone walked away from a conversation with her feeling a little more special than before. She treated kids like family and always meant the best by it. In

FCA, she would pray for us at the start of each meeting and had the most lovely things to say for us when she prayed for us.

[01:07:03] I think that anyone who has means to take her away from the kids at school is looking at her without truly knowing her. She has positively impacted kids immensely just from three to four years I've been at Monticello High School. Imagine the life-changing things she's been doing to help the kids her whole teaching career.

[01:07:21] These are the positive impacts that push children to do their best and feel confident to try hard and be good people. People who think that being outwardly kind and caring isn't going to help kids are wrong. It is these educators that students remember for the rest of their lives because they save these students.

[01:07:39] Ms. Morgan Thomas is one of these teachers that changes the direction of these kids' lives. Please don't remove someone that the kids need. Thank you for listening. - Thank you very much. Isabella Stewart. - I'm Isabella Stewart.

[01:08:00] I'm a senior at Western Albemarle High School and I live in the Whitehall District and I would like to thank the board for giving me this opportunity to speak. The lack of professionalism conducted by the board, school administration, and community leaders these past few months has been incredibly disappointing.

[01:08:17] I knew Mr. Regan. He was a good man and an encouraging teacher, and many of my classmates adored him. I hope that he is remembered for the positive impact he had on students rather than the humiliating, publicly announced struggles he dealt with in his personal life. And I thank the board for demanding that Mr. Dellenbeck step down after statements at the town hall meeting.

[01:08:36] Out of almost an innumerable number of examples, including the useless adoption of metal detectors, the most relevant failure committed by the board is the policy regarding student-teacher relationships. Currently, I'm not able to contact my teachers without my parents being notified and being able to see our correspondence.

[01:08:53] This unnecessary invasion of privacy actually does nothing to prevent inappropriate conduct and rather chips away at the student-teacher relationships that are necessary for effective teaching and makes communication overly complicated and impersonal. Policy that says that teachers can't give their personal phone numbers or emails to students does not prevent this behavior from occurring as teachers still give out personal contact information for various innocuous purposes and creates an unenforceable policy and makes innocent communication clandestine.

[01:09:24] I am standing here before you asking you to please fulfill the promises you made to your constituents and make real policy that is effective and will actually protect students. As members of public office, I ask you to please carry yourselves with professionalism. On a board with uncanny political uniformity, I ask that you please appoint someone who differs from you all ideologically in an attempt to check these failures by hearing an alternative opinion that is not held captive by political and ideological loyalty.

[01:09:51] Thank you. - Thank you very much. Our next three speakers are Joellen Pisarek, Julia Weed, and Kurt Burkhart. Ms. Pisarek. - Three speakers, three minutes, total of nine minutes.

[01:10:09] I'm happy to yield my time so that the rest of the speakers can have three minutes, if that would help. I'm sorry. Our policy is that if there are 14 or more, we move down to two minutes. We still have one scratch, but we are still above that because we have additional items that we need to consider.

[01:10:32] So we will have two minutes for the remaining speakers as we did for the first. Well, it's never wrong to do the right thing, and it's never too late to do the right thing. We often trust that reporting child abuse to a principal or central office administrator will be duly and properly reported by the top-level chain of command whose job it is to report as required by law.

[01:10:59] Yesterday, we learned otherwise. As I read the news reports, I was struck by the statement made by Albemarle County Deputy Chief of Police, Camille Stewart, that, quote, During the course of the months-long investigation, detectives learned that some teachers and school staff may have hesitated to report suspected child abuse because they feared that reporting may subject them to retaliation or other adverse disciplinary action. Appalling.

[01:11:36] Stewart went on to say that school employees who suspect abuse do not have to report it through their school chain of command. Quote, we want to express that it is a mandated reporting law that they are required to do, but it doesn't have to go up the chain.

[01:11:54] It can go directly to CPS or the hotline for child abuse or neglect. We need to hear from anyone who has information about current or past suspected child abuse. They should report concerns to Child Protective Services by calling 434-972-4010.

[01:12:14] That's 434-972-4010. Folks, it's never too late and it's never wrong to do the right thing or do the thing you meant to do in the first place. And that also applies to this board. Thank you very much.

[01:12:30] Thank you very much. Julia Weed. Hi, I'm here as a 25-year educator all at Burleigh Middle School.

[01:12:48] It's been an extremely hard week. The hard week did not start on Monday when we lost our colleague, when we heard that news. It started on Thursday with the betrayal of the school board being reported in the news. I appreciate the comments that you all made, that the school board statement made that also was reported in the news, that you know you need to rebuild trust.

[01:13:13] I would really like an action plan for how that is going to happen. I would really like there to be outside organizations to come in and help you. I think that that is the role of the division as well. We are also suffering greatly, not just from this event, but over the past four to seven years at Burley, more specifically the past four years.

[01:13:34] We've gone through a lot. The statement earlier from the school, I lost track of which one it was, about the very tight-knit school, which I also believe Burley to be, was when things are tough we all bail the water out of the boat together, and I believe we're really trying to do that at Burley. I feel like we're getting water tossed back in, maybe not directly, always by you as badly as it was this past week, but certainly by the choppy waves that you all send our way. It's sloshing in and it's becoming unbearable. We need an intervention. You need an intervention. We need to build

[01:14:13] back. This county is tenuous. Things feel very tenuous and I would like to think it is just at our school but everybody who has been reaching out to me from other schools has had their own things to say

about the own struggles that they're facing there. Thankfully none as difficult as the ones we've gone through this week and hopefully none will but it's been tough. I look forward to

[01:14:37] seeing your faces in our building. Thank you so much. Kurt Burkhardt and Phil Reese. Good evening Good evening, Chair Berlin, members of this board, Dr. Hayes, and the Albemarle community.

[01:15:02] My name is Kurt Burkhardt, and I'm a resident of the Rivanna District. Since news broke yesterday about Jim Dillebeck's resignation and three arrests, I'm left wondering, what is the next shoe to drop? As the six of you begin, whatever it takes to address what is left standing, you must face the reality that this division has fundamental structural flaws.

[01:15:26] How do you even begin to steady the ship and restore the stability our community desperately needs? We face an environment of policies gone awry, absent, and wholly deficient. The innocence of our students has been shattered by the adults they look up to most.

[01:15:47] Behind them is an entire universe of aggrieved families. Had this board been attentive, our teachers would not be left behind by the very system meant to support them. Meanwhile, support staff works in the shadows, unseen, but heavily impacted by your inaction.

[01:16:07] They have been forced to navigate a culture of fear, retribution, and absolute toxicity at the top. So much chaos, so much to do, and it forces a pointed question. Should the citizens of Albemarle County even allow this board to remain seated?

[01:16:29] One formal petition is already circulating to remove a member, and I believe that there is definitely enough energy in this community to kickstart four more. This chaos rests squarely on your shoulders, and it cannot be minimized by defensive explanations.

[01:16:48] True leadership requires accepting accountability, not deflecting it when the community demands answers. From my vantage point, I will end this now, and I thank you very much. Thank you so much. Phil Reese. - Good evening, my name's Phil Rees.

[01:17:10] I'm a Holly Meade parent. Dr. Berlin, I don't think you understand the gravity of this situation. To take away, you have three members of the staff who were arrested, and to just limit the speech of the people, you have the discretion.

[01:17:26] No other board in this county limits a speech like the school board, but I will continue. Yesterday's arrests of three senior ACPS officials are a grim reminder of how bad things have gotten in our school division.

[01:17:42] Police now say teachers and staff are hesitant to report child sexual abuse because they fear disciplinary action from leadership. That is a damning statement. The school board that oversaw this toxic culture cannot be the school board that fixes it.

[01:18:00] I wanna share just a few of the decisions, poor decisions you have made in recent months that cost you this community's trust. But of course, I'm limited by time. First, you let former Superintendent Matt Haas resign instead of firing him, even though he violated two board policies by telling none of you except Kate Acuff about the Sweeney investigation. You gave him a quarter million dollar severance package that agreed to a non-disparagement clause and because of this he is still able to control what you are allowed to say about him. You also allowed former principal Joe McCauley to resign instead of firing him

[01:18:39] and he has now been indicted and arrested. How much are taxpayers paying for his severance package? You won't tell us. And third, Kate Acuff, you were the one school board member who was told about Michael Sweeney and that police were involved.

[01:18:55] You never asked whether the alleged victims were getting the mental health support they needed. You are the executive director of a mental health nonprofit. You of all people should have been advocating for these child victims. You most of all should resign tonight.

[01:19:12] I'm calling on all of you, with the exception of David Storm, to resign. That's the only way we're gonna heal. Thank you so much for your time.

[01:19:22] We will now move into an immediate recess for 10 minutes.

[01:22:44] I'd like to call the board meeting back to order. Please take your seat as you are able.

[01:23:02] Our next agenda item is 9.0, school division business. We have our school health advisory board annual report. Oh, I am sorry. Thank you, Mr. Storm. Apologies.

[01:23:18] The next item is 7.0, approval of our consent agenda. Do I have a motion tonight for the approval of our consent agenda? So moved. Moved by Dr. Acove. Did I hear a second by Ms. Lay?

[01:23:34] All those in favor of tonight's consent agenda? - Yes. - Aye. - Tonight's consent agenda passes. Thank you, Mr. Storm. We have no items pulled from our consent agenda, so now we're moving on to 9.0, School Division Business.

[01:23:51] Mr. Kevin Kirst, apologies, Executive Director of Student Services and Eileen Gomez, Coordinator of Nursing and Health Services. - Thank you. Tonight, I'm going to relatively quickly review recommendations from the School Health Advisory Board, of which Eileen Gomez and I help facilitate that work.

[01:24:14] So the School Health Advisory Board assists with us developing health policy, but also recommendation of procedures that the public schools use to evaluate school health, health education school environment and our health services and it involves a variety of perspectives that includes parents although I think I'm not sure we have parent student representative at this current we did last year health professionals educators and other community members there's a link there just so you can see our website and who all the members are for the school of school health advisory board so annually we present a school health

[01:24:53] advisory board presents recommendations to the school board, and I just wanted to go through those. The first focused on environmental health and air quality, and the ask was, hey, let's double down on enforcement of fragrance diffusers that are already in policy, and really that focus is in a way to prevent any type of triggering ailment of someone that may have allergies or respiratory conditions the second is ventilation and periodic audits versus an event it's let's

[01:25:30] make it a process to check our school air quality that was the first the second was reduction of plastics this is interesting in that the school health advisory board was not looking at although it is also very important the environmental factor with using plastics they were looking at health concerns, namely endocrine-disrupting chemicals found in plastics and food packaging that is found to be able to interfere with children's hormones, growth, and development, leading to obesity, insulin resistance, and even

[01:26:08] neurodevelopmental issues. So they gave some recommendations for a phased-in process like using encouraging steel and using steel water bottles and tap water for students versus plastic water bottles alternative packaging working with I believe that was with Child Nutrition Services to see where could we remove plastics and look at alternatives more healthy alternatives phase out giveaways that use plastic water bottles great intentions but let's rethink and

[01:26:44] then let's up our education and awareness to this issue on top of the environmental concerns. The third recommendation had to do with our wellness policy and putting some enhancements into play like this food fundraiser timing. The recommendation is let's do any kind of food fundraising which typically is a little less nutritionally defensible I'd say we're just good for after lunch when we could ensure kids are having access to more nutritional food.

[01:27:24] Also eliminating foods with low nutritional value, specifically looking at using food stuff that's not really great for kids as rewards or reinforcement. And then as we're looking at the wellness policy including stakeholder representation namely members from the school health advisory board okay the fourth was uh focused on school health entrance requirements

[01:27:57] and the school health advisory board said hey let's it's time for a hard date for all school health entrance requirements which include physicals and all immunizations as per virginia code, just that there would be consistency across the schools. The fifth area was health services, medication management. Many of the physicians, although there was consensus on SHAB, our school health advisory board, were looking at can we redesign with accountability in mind to streamline

[01:28:34] physician signatures on forms. A lot of duplication in process and they just find it overwhelming and have named it's the schools so we're looking at that and then also looking at self-carry authorization for specific students where it's developmentally appropriate for them to self-carry specifically with regard to seizure rescue medications and prescription migraine medications that was their recommendation um and then for safety and emergency preparedness

[01:29:13] for leadership to bring forward a funding initiative, this budget cycle for AEDs, automated external defibrillators and stop the bleed kits that were based on a ratio at the school.

[01:29:30] And for us to do the research behind what that would look like. And then the seventh really sort of circles back to the recommendations for policy changes. I just put it into a table just that it was specific, not just to the concept, but it was actually for our consideration for these changes.

[01:29:50] All of these that Eileen and I were a part of for School Health Advisory Board, it was consensus. We're committed to working with the school board, superintendent, cabinet, and principals to help bring this to fruition.

[01:30:07] So I'm not presenting anything that we wouldn't endorse or work through. Questions or concerns? - What is the policy on number four with the standardized hard date? A, what date would you specify, but what is the policy right now?

[01:30:28] - So there's hard policy, it's more practice. So what's our practice? And policy, the regs are pretty clear, right? All students have to, with some exceptions, regulatory exceptions, have to have immunizations and school health requirements.

[01:30:47] We've just, we're exiting that transition phase from pandemic with the number of physicians that we could get kids into with all the incredible monumental heavy lift of clinics that have been available in our area for free to support this endeavor.

[01:31:07] So the practice has been like a good faith effort, wins your appointment, bringing kids in to school, not to kick them all out on the first day of school and work with families. But we are now at the threshold to say, we're ready for first day of school.

[01:31:22] School health requirements are met. We've done the clinics. We've got the physicians on board. There's ample space for that. And holding folks accountable. That's the recommendation. - So holding folks accountable would be, the school nurse would be at the front door saying you can't get off the bus.

[01:31:42] - All admin, we've done it in the past, but yes. And we know beforehand, 'cause We are tracking records, we use our student information. So you always just let parents know they can't come until they have the doctors. Correct. So basically following our own policy.

[01:31:59] Following it to a T with no, that's right, without exception. Except the Virginia Department of Health has given parents some wiggle room by the conditional enrollment clause, which is they have to have one of each of the required vaccines with the schedule on file for the completion of the series within 90 days for most of the vaccines but we have a couple now that are six months with minimal spacing interval so that makes our trying to chase everything down so much harder it's rather than all the first day of school we have these you know well you have 90 days and right so we do so we're holding them to that

[01:32:38] so to go with a hard date what additional action would you need by this board i think the recommendation is to the school division to implement. That's what I was saying is we would work with the superintendent, cabinet, communication, everyone to go here's what we're going to do.

[01:33:00] It's more awareness and us forwarding the plan. And what we would propose is once we get to those appointments to complete their requirements, they're excluded beyond that until they give us the proper documentation. What I think the board would ask of you is if you can make a recommended communication timeline plan, you know best the schedule of doctors and schedule of free clinics for these so that we can, you know, again, it's on the, I haven't looked, is it the 12th of August next year? You know, if that is the date, what is that schedule of clinics? What is the schedule

[01:33:36] of communication to families and doctors that we need to have to, again, I'm going to quote my friend over here to make sure we just enforce our own policy. So if you can, like a follow-up would be from the board would just be if you can make that recommendation and communications dr. grant could care we can make sure that care is carried out who is using the the fragrance dispense diffusers and how is that a big problem well it's I think as new employees come on they may not be aware of that so we

[01:34:11] do encounter that in classrooms and in offices and in bathrooms okay we cannot use these fragrance diffusers but i think unless it's enforced we kind of backslide on that um also note that the reduction of plastics is something that aces has asked us to consider and um i mean i'm i feel ready to direct staff to really examine that so i don't know if that requires um a motion and a vote from the board and i don't know if people are ready to consider that

[01:34:47] but i'm happy to take that whenever it's useful i mean i it was my impression that during the last school year we were having a a pilot program using metal flatware instead of plastic flatware and the

problem has always been that students throw away the metal flatware and it also causes pollution by washing more dishes so i i never i have not heard and perhaps the aces aces has

[01:35:19] heard what the results of that trial was, that pilot? Do you know, Ms. Lay? So we need to check with... So I think that we have a greater concern for the kinds of plastics that are involved in heating rather than necessarily the plastic silverware. And then the water bottles.

[01:35:42] I have a question about, you know, right now all of our ears are listening around budget items, And so you've spoken number six is the safety and emergency preparedness. And you said AED stop lead kits and something about the number per ratio.

[01:36:03] Could you speak a little bit more about that? And then I think the ask would be as we are preparing for budget to make sure we have for Dr. Hayes kind of what that request would be because that is absolutely something we need to make sure we're having in all of our schools at the right ratio so we purchased aeds one for each school probably in the 2000s they became required by law several years later so we're already compliant with that we got one for each school regardless of the size

[01:36:39] except for the three comprehensive high schools we added a second one for the athletic departments over the years the athletic departments added more so they could have them for their various fields and and outbuildings we are now proposing that we add additional aeds and based on not the ratio of people in the building but on the spacing the size square footage absolutely so we're hoping to have to do some safety audits with some people who are professional at this and they can advise how many aeds we need for the space for the buildings we have perfect and

[01:37:16] And then I think just coordination with Dr. Hayes and the budget team to, you know, when will we need that information so that we can make sure that's included as a budget ask. Would those additional AEDs require additional training for staff?

[01:37:33] Do we have a plan in place already for that? Well, I forget what the law is called, but they passed legislation recently that every school has to have a cardiac emergency response team and they have to run drills. So we're doing our CPR training for our response teams.

[01:37:53] So we're really increasing that this year. We've already had a couple of different sessions. So we probably will not need more people trained in CPR based on the number of AEDs we have. But we're trying to have these teams to have a full complement of people able to use them.

[01:38:11] And when we talk about these teams, we're talking about staff members, whether they're in the athletic department, whether they're teachers. Yes. We're asking somebody to do something that's not directly toward educating, but it is keeping them, as our speaker said earlier, keeping them safe.

[01:38:31] So it's part of our crisis planning. And so, yeah, that'll be another page in our crisis plan. OK, thank you. I'd just like to ask, what do you mean by restrict food fundraisers to post lunch periods? Could you explain that a little bit more, please?

[01:38:46] Yeah, so we had a wellness policy that we were not going to allow these fundraisers, but I think legislation and maybe the Virginia State Board Association allowed for up to 30 fundraisers per year that involve food.

[01:39:08] And so when we talked about that, I mean, involve food that does not meet the USDA standards for what are they called? Smart snacks. The Health Advisory Board wanted those fundraisers to take place

after lunch hours rather than before or during so that students won't eat what they purchased for the fundraiser instead of their nutritional lunch. Does that make sense? Yeah, can I just follow up if that's all right? Yeah, sure. What times would you propose? Because we do

[01:39:40] have classes after lunch. Right, so we were proposing after the last lunch period. So do You, Madeline, or any of your peers would like to be on the School Health Advisory Board? Think about that, and we can talk offline, because we really do appreciate students' input on that.

[01:40:02] Like that, you might be able to speak to that and how practical that would be or not. Any other questions on this report or on any other items?

[01:40:24] I'm unfamiliar with what our periodic audits of air quality are on who does, is that building services? Yeah, so when we were talking about the fragrances, it came up that teachers sometimes feel like they need fragrances because there's some natural fragrances that are not that pleasant.

[01:40:48] So we were thinking that if we had adequate ventilation and circulation, we might need less of that. And we have an industrial hygienist on our board who is an OSHA specialist, and she recommended that we do the audits to make sure that our venting, ventilation, and circulation meets certain standards.

[01:41:08] But we don't, yeah, this would have to be a new policy, or as needed. Or a recommendation, or a protocol, yes. I was just going to ask, what's on your agenda, what's on CHAB's agenda for this upcoming year?

[01:41:35] Follow up on these yeah, we will follow up on that and then of course things will arise as they as the year unfolds and we'll Have those on the agenda and if we can get some students to tell us what they would like to see us discuss We'd be happy to do that. Well if Madeleine won't serve she might be able to identify some possible candidates I imagine you're pretty busy, but if you didn't if you have any peers that might be interested So we have us the student Senate And they are meeting on next Friday from 9 until 12.

[01:42:11] I'm just looking over at Dr. Hayes because I think Amber has, Amber Robbins has left. Actually, I'm looking at Daphne Kaiser. Maybe we should just think about, you know, if this is an ask, maybe, you know, just quick note in writing, you know, like this is what the committee is.

[01:42:32] This is what the requirements is. This is when the meetings would be. um and we can figure out if that's something where we could ask or how we could best communicate that so good idea i like that okay thank you thank you so much we appreciate it the next item on our agenda is our special education comprehensive review update and as a reminder we had or you'll probably be saying this that we um i went through a special education audit um and one of the things

[01:43:11] that the board asked for is both for the organization which they are can to continue to support um uh the special education department and dr hayes and to give us quarterly updates so this is one of our updates second good evening oh can you hear me school board members and executive staff i am ashley strusick director of special education and i am joined by assistant Director Leslie Glover. Good evening. Thank you for giving us the time tonight to share an update with

[01:43:49] you. But before we share our presentation, we wanted to take a moment to thank the team members who have been involved in this work, which include our Special Education Advisory Leadership and Committee, also known as CEAC, our teachers, our teaching assistants, principals, assistant

principals, special education staff, and administrative team, Dr. Wood and Dr. Hayes, the executive cabinet members, and of course, the school board, for supporting this work.

[01:44:20] Taking a look at tonight's agenda, the following topics will be covered. So we'll review of the Berkeley Group Comprehensive Review from last year, the timeline for development and implementation, actions to date, and we'll talk about some next steps, and then we'll have some time for questions.

[01:44:38] So you will see here on our strategic plan that our work is explicitly tied to our mission. We will end the predictive value of special capacities for our children's success through high quality teaching and learning for all. Leslie will now give an overview of the Berkeley Group's comprehensive review that was shared previously in July. So as you can see there are five major themes or takeaways from the Berkeley Group: consistency of practice, capacity in

[01:45:14] staffing, time and professional learning, communication and family partnership, services and instruction focus, leadership, vision, and organizational readiness. So from those five themes we want to already build on what's already established because ACPs has a lot of strengths currently in place. From that there are 12 recommendations and they're categorized in short, mid, and long term

[01:45:50] and what we have defined as an approximate time duration. Now Ashley is going to explain the timeline for development and implementation. So here is our 50,000 foot view.

[01:46:13] I want to remind everyone that we are just starting off on this journey. However, we have outlined a three-year plan including timelines and intentional checkpoints along the way. Coupled with the three-year plan, we have quarterly updates where we will be reporting on these items.

[01:46:30] That is our accountability to ourselves and our families. Notice that the lines do, I don't know if you can really see it, but they do extend beyond to indicate that it's an ongoing process to review and develop over time. This next slide kind of breaks it down for you into a clearer picture. So the plan do study act cycle is indicated next to the recommendations where we can identify the part of the cycle we are in. You can see we have already started the work. So when looking in the short term you can see next to establish a clear communicative vision

[01:47:09] and Change Management Framework, the D indicates that we are in the due part of the plan. Looking at conducting an internal review of SPED identification access in transition, is you see the P next to it indicating that we are in the plan cycle of the Plan Due Study Act.

[01:47:27] When looking into the midterm, you can see we have a few already in the plan stage, and then there's the long term. One highlight we'd like to point out is that one of the 12 recommendations we received has already been accomplished. This would be the related services pay scale. Last year we worked with Human Resources in a review of all of our related services staff. It was implemented because of a high vacancy rate we had at the time and as such job descriptions and pay skills were adjusted for school psychologists, speech and language pathologists,

[01:48:05] physical therapists, and occupational therapists. While it appears as a As a midterm goal, we are marking this as an action because of the work we have done. I want you to recognize that this is a competitive market and we are still thinking about next year and actively recruiting for the future.

[01:48:25] We will continue to update this chart and where we are within the Plan Do Study Act during our updates with you all. So now we're going to look at some actions to date of where we are.

[01:48:40] So to begin, our vision allows us to align our work and will guide our practices. it serves as our North Star. Recognize that we have a wide range of stakeholders that are touched by this. We have been very intentional on ensuring we are hearing from all of our stakeholders, stakeholder groups. The theory of action will develop from the feedback and will guide our commitments and expectations for each stakeholder group. So one of the things we want to reiterate is that the Berkeley group identified that our special education

[01:49:16] department has a lot of strengths and these actions we are taking now will allow us to adjust our practices and strengthen our work to benefit our students. When you look at recommendation two, it ties into our systems and structures and we are using this as an opportunity to reevaluate how we share information both internally with our staff and the broader external audience.

[01:49:43] As such, one of the first things we're doing is assessing how information is given out on the website, how our parents receive and how you receive and our employees receive information. So right now our specialists have started to spearhead some of the work around this anticipation of a new internal SharePoint and external means of communication through our website. So we have more work to do. If you look at recommendation number three, it's focused

[01:50:21] around co-planning now there are a lot of different ways that you can look at co-planning it can be between teachers and staff and school and co-planning can also be a broader can be broader at the division level so our starting point from moving this forward was to re-establish the divisions PLCs for our special education teachers so this has allowed us to bring the group back together. We have had our first DPLC in September and we have our second one next

[01:50:55] week. This is our starting point and we will continue to work with principals to develop plans for the intentional co-planning within a school. In continuing our work we have outlined additional recommendations that are in front of you. Start with recommendation for IDEA/VDOE compliance. So we are in our five-year cycle and we will be utilizing the Berkeley group review to crosswalk these areas that address compliance and looking at the next two

[01:51:33] recommendations six and seven our focus will be on current desired states for co-teaching and co-planning and providing resources and tools and looking at our professional learning systems and the last column you'll see outlines of other activities we are continuing to engage in. So looking ahead at next steps we have outlined the upcoming work that we will that will take place. We are close

[01:52:10] to completing the shared vision for special education. As noted, next week we will be meeting with the teaching assistants, related service providers, and SEAC members. And then in the upcoming teacher, DPLC, special education staff will engage in protocols to take a deeper dive into our base programs. So that would be with our A base, B base, C base, ECSE, our generalists, all of our special education teachers. And you'll also notice that we have time built out

[01:52:42] for general education teachers feedback as well. Further details about some of the different kind of breaking it down into the different topics that we will be offering to during these professional learning opportunities. You can see some of the topics that we are have ready for making connections both on the 12th the next week for teaching assistants classified staff and then also in November for teachers are this is just a sample of topics so responding to student behavior supporting HMH for special education teaching assistant

[01:53:21] data collection behavior basics supporting kid on AAC and more some of our monthly Thursday virtual sessions this allows for a common planning time within cohorts so collaboration and sharing strategies these are all led by our spouse our specialists and some of that has been around collaboration with cohorts specially designed instruction goal work progress monitoring and like Leslie had said the video we audit it is our lucky year so it happens every five

[01:54:01] years we have started the collection working in collaboration with video II and it is ongoing and we anticipate an on-site visit from video II in March so in summary this is just a snapshot of the work we are digging into multi stakeholder protocol around beliefs values and desired state professional learning opportunities, collaboration with administrators and SEAC, we're reviewing and revisiting the base programs, and we're reestablishing

[01:54:39] community partnerships. What to expect next is our special education shared vision, baseline information from our base protocol, professional learning updates, we will continue to update you on the CSEA, that's the VDOE audit, and then our website with our communication access. And I added pictures in there because in the spring when I present my annual plan I usually have pictures and I went to go find pictures to include in here. We have none. We've been so busy at work that we have not stopped to take pictures. So I'm going to take pictures between now and the next time we give you an update to show you the real work that is happening in our schools and with special

[01:55:17] education. So we appreciate your time tonight. We look forward to coming back. Right now the plan I think is to provide quarterly updates so there will be much more to add. And so the one final question is kind of why are we doing this? For continuity, accountability, buy-in, partnerships, and at the end of the day we believe in students and we want to see them be successful. Thank you. Questions from the board. Remind me, we're

[01:55:54] about what 13% students in special ed which is what 17-1800 kids? A little over 2,000. A little over 2,000. Thank you for correcting my math. It's just because of the plan. It's in my head. And how many teachers, how many special ed staff do we have? That would be, I wouldn't have that exact number for you, but I can get that for you. That would be great. Thank you. Broken down or just overall? Whatever you think is the way I can understand it the best.

[01:56:27] yes sure i know we've added a few in the past year yes yep we are excited about our two additional positions too and our specialists so thank you other questions yes so the the consultants of the berkeley group were really impressed with the base program they said they'd never seen anything like that in the united states and you're going to review it and revisit it and what does that mean and how successful is the base program? I think that's why we're doing this, right? So

[01:57:02] it was established probably about 15 years ago and so a lot of the teachers and the staff that were here when it was established have either moved on or retired. So with our staff now and our specialists we do want to dig into it and we just want to review like we do think there are some really strong aspects it's great for we have a lot of great feedback from it and so we just need to with with everything education revisit it and review it and revamp it if we need to um and make it stronger because i i do believe that it is a strong um you know way to to serve students i think uh at this time we're just looking to get more information to see if we need

[01:57:41] to and how we can strengthen it um but yeah we have um dr marphy here with us from the berkeley group and he shared that at the sea act meaning that i know you were at so thank you mr weird

other questions okay no so then there's okay um can you go back to the recommendation two i think you i just wanted you to spend a little bit more time on that one um then forward to the where it's this one detailed yes this one so i'd love for you to talk a little bit more about this

[01:58:19] one because i know when the audit was done when we've heard comments from seac when we've heard comments from the public. One of the concerns was definitely about, you know, as a special ed teacher, there are dates, right, like that we need to do for screening, evaluation, IEP. Can you just talk a little bit more about what are we doing, both to make sure everyone is aware of those dates, as then and then is there an audit procedure? Like, how are we then like training, implementing, and then ensuring yeah so every year we do the indicator work which does kind of help check our

[01:58:58] compliance and so that is every summer updated and um sent into the state and then we get you know that information back but i think more for for this and for us and from the feedback that we have been getting both from the berkeley review but also from um staff admin seac community is that we need to be more consistent with our communication and more transparent on what the process is.

[01:59:25] Because yes, you can go to VDOE, you can Google and you can get the timelines, but I think what does it look like for a parent who's trying to reach out and see who do I reach out to or what is the process, what are the guidelines. And so that's where looking at kind of the accessibility on the website is I think one of the quick ways that we can get that access into families hands and so they they know what it looks like from a from the very beginning of a referral all the way through the process if it does go through the special education

[02:00:00] identification I would say like internally within the special education we are very we have a very high you know compliance rate when it comes to timelines. I don't have the, but the state looks for 100% and we more than often are at 100% for the compliance piece and sticking with debt within the deadlines. So it's really looking further into that on making sure that the processes that are in place and we're training people. So the training piece to me is it starts with LEAs, it starts with at the schools, which

[02:00:36] We've already done some LEA training for administrators. And we'll be continuing to do that during the monthly principal and assistant principal meetings. We're kind of finding that balance of instruction in special education and compliance.

[02:00:54] And so while their instruction is very important, we also know compliance is too. So we're kind of navigating that this year of how to balance that. So this month was kind of focused on compliance. then next month we'll be focusing on. So starting with our principals and our assistant principals, we also have reestablished LEAD special education monthly meetings.

[02:01:16] So not only we're gonna have the administrators with that information, we're also sharing it with our LEAD special education teachers that then bring it back to their schools. So again, the more consistent we can be and collaborative we can be across the division, I think that's what really ties into that recommendation, too.

[02:01:38] And I just wanted to add to your point, with the five-year cycle of we're going through the audit, we're going to pull some of that low-hanging fruit and train what we learned from the compliance and train our staff in a robust manner from that information.

[02:01:53] I want to take that information. I think the board would love to see some of that data coming out of the five-year audit. other piece i would challenge you about is as you think about this plan what are

the metrics right like and i think about metrics at a high level for the board and then for you as this leadership and teachers like are there metrics that you can look at report on and then review to see progress that you're making i mean sometimes things are you know training yes or no but if there are things that we could put some metrics around i think it would be helpful okay um the other thing i did was was not able to attend the meeting where you, where actually the Berkeley group presented

[02:02:33] this to the SEAC committee. I'm curious if there were pieces that, you know, that were up, you know, you from the Berkeley group or you, like that came out based on feedback from this, from SEAC. Not in the immediate meeting. I think with it being the first meeting and you know how the agendas are kind of jam-packed.

[02:03:00] So with the overview that Dr. Baker and Dr. Murphy gave at SEAC was very similar to the one that they gave here in July. And so I think with it being their first meeting, there was a lot of new members on the SEAC committee, so I think they were just kind of taking it all in.

[02:03:18] We did leave like a parking lot for them to ask questions and digest, and there was a few that did that will be following up. I think one of their biggest questions was just the continuation of the updates and the work that we're going to be doing and sharing.

[02:03:36] And so that's why on Tuesday night, they will be working through the protocol with us as well for establishing that shared vision in special education. So I would imagine as they get more into it, I think that they will probably have more questions.

[02:03:52] - Thank you so much. And then my last question, sorry, you make a move, is around budget. So, you know, when the Berkeley group presented this initially, you know, that question came up is, as we think about this, and you don't have to answer it, but it's a homework, what are the things that to do this in year two that are needed?

[02:04:17] One of the things I always think about is, we know that teaching assistants provide so much one-on-one so much of the reading instruction math instruction and are there things like additional training days and pre-service and in-service so what are those things that we need so that we can effectively implement this plan yes that's definitely on the next we talked about that this uh on our way down here from upstairs as we need

[02:04:54] to talk about that as soon as we get perfect and then you know and dr hayes and the budget committee will be like so that you guys have you know what that date by which you'll need to be providing information yes and seac has already asked us for that as well yeah perfect i saw you move mr storm it's totally fine no i didn't mean to jump in front of you so apologies you were finishing uh under under your first recommendation you're talking about the data beginning to reveal cross-group themes what are some of those themes that are that are coming out and what do you do

[02:05:27] as they arise and how do you approach them and what steps can you take quickly to address them good question that's what we're going to figure out um but some of the themes that i think uh have arrived and even just leading and facilitating the different groups between elementary, special ed, teachers, secondary, even elementary, secondary principals, APs.

[02:05:54] There are some common themes that are starting to arise and it's a lot about, because it's all about the desired state of special education. We want children to be wanting to come to school. We want them to feel safe. We want them to feel like they can go to any teacher for support.

[02:06:13] were some of the common themes from teachers, along with planning, and co-planning, and time, and the need for resources, you know, instructional resources we heard as well. So it'll be interesting to see once we start to, once we gather the rest of the information, and then we'll kind of look to see what next steps we need to take in analyzing that data.

[02:06:40] Thank you. Any other questions or comments? you very much thank you the next item on our agenda is norms and protocols for the school board and superintendent and i'm trying to think about the best way to do this um so i'm just going to talk for a minute um uh i'm not gonna be able to tell you the date but um at the beginning of

[02:07:15] acting superintendent dr hayes's tenure we did a retreat uh the board the board composed at that time and Dr. Hayes did a retreat with the Virginia School Board Association. In that meeting we had a discussion that while we had some generally accepted norms and protocols, they were not written down in a way and shared in a way that there was some permanency. So we began a process

[02:07:49] by which we worked from a template that VSBA gave us to begin to form our own school board and superintendent norms and protocols. These can be things from Rosen's responsibilities, responding to media inquiries, communications, communications about visiting schools.

[02:08:19] So what each of the board members has now, what has been posted online, is a draft where it was. We had held having another discussion on this until Mr. Storm joined us. And what I want to kind of talk about a little bit today is, as we look at these norms, What are areas that we need to add that were not considered in that one, in that first meeting?

[02:08:55] Because I think it's important for us to think about both what should some of these norms and protocols be based on what other school divisions are doing. Some of us have had the opportunity to begin looking at what other school divisions do for this.

[02:09:15] as well as one of the pieces that we've had a number of public comment around, we've had a number of emails around, is about the code of conduct for school board members.

[02:09:30] There have been questions about, is it thorough enough? Is it enforceable? What happens when there is a violation? And so Vice Chair Osborne and I have began have a discussion about that and began to pull with help from some of you, what are examples such as Richmond, such as Prince William, that are out there that have been used by other boards.

[02:09:59] So in a way, there's multiple documents, right? There is a code of conduct, we have a code of conduct, it is on our website. What I would say is that it is not as thorough, it needs better enforcement and we need to know it needs to be kind of stated what happens when one of us violates it so I've asked Ms. Osborne to begin looking into that to pull some together as a draft to share that with our legal counsel counsel counsel legal counsel so that we can have a better code of conduct the other piece of that which I

[02:10:37] think that's an important document to update I could even tell you how old the one we have are. So I want kind of a new update enforceable. But the second part of this is the norms and protocols. What this is often is, is how does the board work with the superintendent to make sure we have thorough communication? What I have also heard through public comment today, other days in emails, is some other pieces. And now I'm in my head wondering, is there, do we begin to put that into this document or is there another action plan? One of the things,

[02:11:17] I'm not going to be able to quote everyone who spoke, so I apologize that I can't think on my feet of your names, but, you know, one of the questions, one of the statements was, you know, can the school board commit to quarterly town halls? We've also heard of, had questions about, you know, is there a commitment, a written commitment towards meetings at schools. So I think the other piece is for us to think about tonight is we can we have this initial draft we have to continue to fill it in but what are the items around norms and

[02:11:50] protocols that we we think we should be adding in that might be missing from kind of you know again I always take a piece of information right so this was something that we did probably in June there have been different things that have happened since June what additional pieces should we be putting in here um and then making a decision on and committing to and then i don't think you know i think this board believes this is not enough so then what is that code of conduct that we need to um that we need to um develop and sign so ms osborne do you want to talk a little

[02:12:28] bit about i was just going to say that yeah i was just going to say that um so the code of conduct is aspirational that's what we strive to be and when we fall short there is no teeth or mechanism to call us on the carpet for that other than public pressure some divisions have policies and i've looked at the richmond one and the prince william one and these norms would be referenced in a policy so that we would decide a policy and then as superintendents change we can

[02:13:08] change norms without changing our policy um some superintendents may prefer to um accompany school board members on school some school visits or not or whatever but we don't want to put things in writing that tie somebody's hands with the exception of our behavior can be in the teeth behind the code of conduct so the code of conduct is aspirational the policy would point to the they would point to each other like this is what we're going to do and if we don't here's a

[02:13:43] policy you violated blah blah blah and this is what happens although there are still limits on what can happen really it's like um i don't see anything in there about just following the law i guess yeah it seems like that would be a policy that would be impossible i yeah i mean we are all employees of the school division and i maybe there is something that holds us to that i don't

[02:14:18] know josh you can maybe speak to that but maybe we can reference that here i mean it's important i feel like that would be in the policy and the norms would be in the working the norms would be in the working relationship with the superintendent and the staff right so that as those things change and preferences can those can be adjusted more quickly um but things in policy would be pretty set for through a cycle review until we had to change okay well two things i mean when we take our oath of office we we we we pledge to follow the law in a broad way i would love to see in

[02:14:56] this code of conduct i'd like it to reflect the questions we ask everyone who applied for the the seat about making sure we understood what the work of a school board member is versus the work of the of the superintendent and the division i mean i thought we had some great responses from everybody who interviewed and it was very clear that they understood the difference and it's not always been the case so i heard and i mean i think one of the things we've been i've heard people

[02:15:35] talking about and i think we have in reflection is you know is there a policy is it written down does everyone know it and so i think to your point we we do a an oath of office saying that however You know, I think, in a way, the more things that are written that are written down and enforceable, I think it's just important.

[02:16:01] Other comments, questions, I think, on the the code of conduct piece. My question would be, what is our path forward in our timeline for this? I did a mash up of the Prince William and the Richmond one and a couple other things.

[02:16:24] popped it in your inbox today when you get a chance to look at it and reference whatever these drafts, norms, and protocols turn out to be. So there's a little bit of a start, it has not gone to legal yet, but I'm just wondering what your preference for operating on this might be.

[02:16:44] We had originally talked about doing it in the January organizational meeting. I really would like to get it done sooner rather than later. I mean, I have to, you know, look at our legal counsel to, I don't want to put him on a spot about a timeline, but I mean, I think of all the things that everything we do is very important.

[02:17:01] I think I have heard loud and clear from the public about this. So I would love to do it, you know, by our December 10th so that we could discuss it in our December 10th meeting. Because there are a lot of empty blanks on this norms and protocols, but even if we don't fill out all the blanks by then there's still no reason we can't go with what we have and adapt it as things come up and as we address other issues um because i haven't done my adding about 45 days

[02:17:34] but 45 days is probably somewhere in mid-december well and as i said we'll have we'll have the november so if we can have like i would love to have this so when the new board members seated we all you know you know have a discussion about it kind of sign it together share it share it publicly um so um you know that is what uh i'm gonna put forward we can see if that's possible um uh and maybe we can also i always ask rusty uh right you know to you know i think do we need to

[02:18:13] go to the policy committee do we want to look at any other policies um and then i so i think so i think that's there um i will review it i will send it to to legal we will share it with everyone and then i think on the norm side i think the question kind of just for tonight is are there things that in addition to what is there already just on the what it is not how we will do it um but that we uh need to um add to that to those norms any any categories i guess is that's what

[02:18:47] I would say let's say apologies apologies dr. Hayes I would say well it's it's pretty clear when the board when and how the board is supposed to evaluate superintendent because that is kind of in the DOE standards so some of these can probably be knocked out without too much complexity dr. Hayes apologies no that's okay that's what I was going to mention some language around superintendent evaluation like you said miss Osborne is in policy but I think maybe just some language around that

[02:19:19] That training piece, I think that component that we attended a week or two ago was very helpful, so that no matter who's on the board, they know that there are opportunities to learn about evaluating the superintendent, the categories and what that looks like, and then it could be a consistent process.

[02:19:36] That is a good update, and I should have shared that at Superintendent and Board of Business. Dr. Hayes, Ms. Osborne, and I attended two weeks ago, I can't even remember, very recently, the VSBA Superintendent Evaluation Process Training, and we'll be updating.

[02:19:56] There is a rule that is policy, but the kind of the, I'm about to say standards of learning, the SOP, the standard process around that, and we'll be sharing that as well. Other categories that the board is interested in adding to this.

[02:20:20] I think one of the pieces I'm going to sleep on, and I've been sleeping on this for a while, is this, you know, what is the commitment to town halls, the commitment to listening, commitment to visiting schools um and hearing from other staff and constituents and and the question is is that something that should come into this document um or is that something in some kind i i appreciate what someone um said and apologies that i'm not i'm not able to quote

[02:20:56] um the the idea of an action plan for regaining trust um i i that is a um that was something meaningful that um was said many things tonight um but i'd like also like the idea of that so i'm trying to see like what are we putting into norms going forward right the idea is that this is something that each board every year comes back to looks at works with this the current superintendent to see what needs to change based on the context of the people um but then there is also this

[02:21:34] short-term need that I hear I am hearing from the public and so that is something that I'm gonna be spending a little bit of time thinking about and is there some kind of action plan that is our short-term action plan for regaining trust it may not be much different from if we say school visits and town halls in this document going forward but something that is time limited to say you know what it looked like i i i think a lot about this idea of like if someone is looking at us right what does it look like what does it feel like what does it sound like did i do all

[02:22:11] the senses if we are so that how we are working how we are changing is visible to you and so that's something that as chair i'm going to reflect on and think about if there is a plan and work with the board to say is there a short-term plan that we develop and agree to um to make those things visible because i think sometimes there's a lot of things that we are doing on a day-to-day basis that you just can't see right um but there are also things that are important that are within

[02:22:44] the community um that i think it's also important to us to come back to and say um and for people to see and to be able to see the change and the commitment so separate again separate from the norms and protocols and the code of conduct but just a reflection on what um i have been hearing so um so next steps on this um ms osborne i think it sounds like has sent me something and i will take a look at it um we will share it with our legal counsel share it with the board

[02:23:25] share it with the policy committee um if you can just help me through that process and then we will bring it back it would be something that would have to come on the consent agenda yes thinking um so that the public would see it on the consent agenda and then there would be a kind of a separate document or an attached document that would be the the draft um or the actually not draft norms and protocols that we will um that we will all um and work with dr hayes about anything else on that looking to my right not specifically on that but i would we only have

[02:24:03] three regularly scheduled meetings between now and the end of the year so as soon as we can get the schedule for the special meetings yes yes yes yeah yeah there will be um there will be a special meeting for um the public hearing um we have occasionally had two meetings scheduled an extra meeting in december yeah needed but yeah as soon as we can get those on the calendar that would be great absolutely and then next week we um sorry i keep saying that the 22nd um when we discuss

[02:24:39] the search we will also be talking about that timeline there will be extra meetings in the um in the early winter um in the 27 calendar that we'll have to add as well plus joint meetings with the bos so um we are now to 10.0 other business is there any other business by the board members and the superintendent i did want to bring up the band quite like i think this would just be

[02:25:15] directing staff to look at this um i know scheduling and schedules are like one of the most difficult things that happen but i you know as we said like when all meets all and if there's an opportunity that the western students aren't having around band because who are in ace academy so if you could if that's possible for staff to just look at that and to see if there's if there's anything that we can do short term or at least long term in the future but i know band is such an important um uh extracurricular for so many students and if

[02:25:50] they don't have that um if they don't have both that social contact and that um that musical output it's hard so the other piece I do want to look at but I know we have a lot on our plates is the recess question I know we have had a number of emails about it I know Dr. Hayes and I have have talked about it back and forth I think the short-term piece that I want to ask for and this you know I think by the end of the year is just this is the audit like now that we have

[02:26:26] made these you know i think it's there's the process of like what we're recommending um and what they're uh based on instructional time but in practice and i'm trying to think about how one does this right because it depends very day to day of like what um students actually see right are they are they seeing a minimum of 20 minutes or is it even less than that and are there places that it's more um because the other piece i think about is this this question of um uh is there you you know, as I think about the contract with teachers and assistance, is there anything

[02:27:02] that that would have an implication of? And then I don't know if this shows in our data. It probably doesn't. I was meant to ask Mr. Curse, but this question of, I know our, again, our policy is that you may not take away recess for a behavioral issue, but is that, what does that look like in practice? So I've been talking with the families about that already, And from what I was told, it used to be in policy, but then it got removed.

[02:27:36] So that is something we're working on to realign the policy with best practice. Okay, thank you very much. Anything else?

[02:27:54] Well, thank you, Ms. Braun. I appreciate you being here. Welcome. I did have one thing I wanted to say publicly. I was very appreciative of Ms. Bronze bringing forward the information about what was going on at Western Albemarle because not everyone on the dais, I believe, knew about it.

[02:28:19] And as we are trying to get to a place where people feel, and I want to make sure we use this language because it was so poignant, safe, heard, and loved in our schools, these are the things we need to know about so we can talk to the administration and find out what they need in terms of support to address these types of things, what we can do to reach the students impacted by these things. So thank you very much for bringing that to us. I'm very appreciative of

[02:28:56] that. Thank you so much. Seeing no other business, I adjourn us for the evening. Thank you so much.



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