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Fairfax County School Board Meeting, Thursday, June 15, 2023

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- Official meeting video (YouTube): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7uh-RO-d0gE
- Official School Board page (FCPS): https://www.fcps.edu/about-fcps/leadership/school-board

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[00:00:01] oh say can you see by the dawn's early light what so proudly we hailed at the twilight's last gleaming whose broad stripes and bright stars through the perilous fight or the ramparts we watched Were so gallantly streaming And the rocket's red glare

[00:00:37] The bombs bursting in air Gave proof the night That our flag was still there Oh, say does that star-spangled banner yet wave

[00:00:59] for the land of the free and the home of the brave.

[00:01:25] That was wonderful. Thank you. Thank you. Agenda item 3.02, announcements. Ms. Keyes-Gamara has submitted written request to virtually attend this evening's meeting due to a personal conflict.

[00:01:42] All those in favor of Ms. Keyes-Gamara's request, please raise your hand. Ms. Pekarski, Ms. Cohen, Mr. Frisch, Dr. Anderson, Ms. McLaughlin, Ms. Dernack-Koufax, Ms. Corbett-Sanders, Ms. Toland, Ms. Omesh, Ms. Marin, and myself. That motion passes.

[00:01:58] Thank you very much. Ms. Keys-Gamara, are you on? Can we do a mic check, please? I don't see her on yet, so please let me know when she comes on, we can do a mic check. Thank you.

[00:02:15] If you'd like to review a copy of the agenda and any agenda item that is being discussed tonight, that information may be found at the back of the auditorium or on the website at

fcps.edu/schoolboard/boarddocs. Tonight's meeting is being broadcast on channel 99 and live streamed on the website at fcps.edu/tv/channel99.

[00:02:41] Agenda item 3.03, Juneteenth recognition. In accordance with our recent changes to our recognition and proclamation process, recognitions of national heritages and holidays will be presented by the superintendent. Additionally, in accordance with those updated changes, School Board members are not permitted to speak to recognitions right after they're read, but they may speak to any recognition during the three minutes allotted time of Board Matters.

[00:03:03] I call on Dr. Reed for the recognition. Thank you, Madam Chair. Each year on June 19th, our nation recognizes Juneteenth, the holiday that celebrates Emancipation Day. Juneteenth marks the day in 1865 when enslaved individuals in Texas learned they would be free.

[00:03:23] Unfortunately, two months after Robert E. Lee surrendered and ended the Civil War and two-and-a-half years after President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation. Fairfax County Public Schools recognizes the painful realities of our history and commits to creating and nurturing learning environments that promote understanding, empathy, and respect for each and every student, family, staff member, and community member.

[00:03:49] Standing in solidarity with our African-American students, educators, staff, and families, we value diversity and remain united in our opposition to racism and hate. Fairfax County Public Schools honors Juneteenth as a day to celebrate and emphasize a collective call to action against injustice of any kind.

[00:04:11] Thank you. Agenda Item 3.03, I call on Ms. Amesh for proclamation. Yes, thank you. Proclamation honoring Caribbean American Heritage Month, whereas June had been designated as National Caribbean American Heritage Month by President George Bush in 2006 to promote the rich culture and heritage of the Caribbean American people and their contribution to the history and culture of the United States, and whereas National Caribbean American Heritage Month, spearheaded and championed by Dr. Claire Nelson, the first Jamaican woman to earn a doctorate degree in an engineering discipline and a founding member of the Institute of Caribbean Studies,

[00:04:51] has been celebrated across the nation since 2000 and whereas Caribbean individuals are some of the most ethnically diverse in the world and are a fusion of indigenous African European and Asian descent and the Caribbean also called the West Indies is made up of more than 700 islands reefs and caves which are organized into 30 territories including 13 sovereign nations Antigua and Barbuda Bahamas, Barbados, Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Granada, Haiti, Jamaica, St. Lucia, St. Kitts and Navis, St. Vincent, and the Grenadines and Trinidad and Tobago.

[00:05:29] And whereas the Caribbean diaspora in the United States is comprised of over eight and a half million individuals, either born in the Caribbean or of Caribbean ancestry, with the majority of Caribbean immigrants in the United States migrating primarily from five countries, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Haiti, and Trinidad and Tobago, and whereas the Caribbean had been at the center of heinous crimes against humanity induced by the trans-Atlantic slave trade as approximately 40% of enslaved Africans were shipped to the Caribbean islands, which in the 17th century surpassed Brazil as the principal market for enslaved labor.

[00:06:06] And whereas Fairfax County Public Schools celebrates the rich diversity and honors the many contributions of immigrants of Caribbean heritage to our nation, from Founding Father Alexander Hamilton, hailing from St. Kitts and Navis, to John Baptiste Pointe de Sable from Haiti, who established what would become Chicago, to U.S. Secretary of State General Colin Powell from Jamaica, and the Honorable Shirley Chisholm of Guyanese and Bajan descent, the first black woman to run as candidate for president of the United States of America, among many others.

[00:06:35] Now, therefore, be it resolved that the Fairfax County School Board does hereby proclaim June 2023 as Caribbean Heritage Month. Is there a second? I will second. Ms. Marin, Ms. Amesh, would you like to speak to your proclamation? Yes, thank you. And we do have some important guests I want to make sure I recognize of Caribbean heritage, part of the rich tradition within our system.

[00:06:56] Lynette Henry, who is a manager of the College Success Program. Chris Thompson, assistant principal of the high schools in Region 3. Orlin Henry, Title I resource teacher. Edward Osborne, administrator at Marshall High School and MSAOC member.

[00:07:11] Shelley McKinney an advocate in our school system for young people. Happy Caribbean Heritage Month everyone. This is a historic moment for FCPS and the first time but certainly overdue to celebrate this recognition. And of course I want to make sure I start by celebrating our very own board member Dr.

[00:07:29] Anderson who is the first of Caribbean heritage in the history of this system. She's been a champion for our families. Let me also be sure to acknowledge that this recognition was initiated by Dr. Anderson and I'm happy to show allyship and championing Caribbean heritage because FCPS should not have to wait for representation on this board to force acknowledgement of the heritage of its families. So thank you Dr. Anderson. So when we think of the Caribbean what comes to our mind? Idyllic beaches, cruises, maybe Pirates of the Caribbean? But let us be sure that Caribbean Caribbean's are part and parcel of this nation's fabric

[00:08:08] and have enriched our collective experience. The DMV area is home to the third largest population of Caribbeans in the United States and you might recognize some famous names I mentioned some in the resolution but also Rihanna Al Roker Usain Bolt the fastest man in the world vice president Kamala Harris who's of Jamaican descent we mentioned Secretary of State Colin Powell we have our the Virginia first female lieutenant governor Winsome Sears and also Shirley Chisholm who I mentioned was not only the first black woman run for president but also the first black congresswoman these trailblazers stand on a long

[00:08:44] history of triumph and power, much like Caribbean history itself. European powers colonized Caribbean people and lands, brought over slaves and indentured laborers from Asia, primarily India and China, for the plantation economy. And the mixing and blending of cultures from the indigenous populations with slaves and indentured servants has given a unique cultural identity to the region, a multicultural heritage that's been the Caribbean of over 44 million people today, of diverse traditions, arts, culture, and cuisine. And over 70 languages being spoken six official languages: French, Spanish, English, Dutch, Creole, and Papi-Mento.

[00:09:20] I wish I could have learned about this richness during my time in FCPS, and our system ought to teach the rich history of the Caribbean so that perhaps its model will inspire students to imagine what

multiculturalism here could look like. The truth is that it hasn't always been easy for Caribbean Americans in this country and in our system.

[00:09:38] Our Caribbean families deserve to thrive free from racism and exclusion, and we owe them school system that makes them feel seen, understood, represented, and valued. I'll conclude with the words of my dear friend Shelly from Girl Scouting, who is a constituent and FCPS mom of Caribbean origin. When I first saw the announcement of the proclamation honoring Caribbean American Heritage Month, I was so excited. My parents are from the beautiful island of Barbados. Born in America, I remember speaking with a Bajan accent in the home, but once I walked outdoors, masking it to avoid being teased. As a convert to Islam advocating for Muslim students within FCPS,

[00:10:15] I draw from my own childhood experiences as a Caribbean to ensure students feel whole and who they are is respected and accepted. Thank you to all those who had a hand in this proclamation. Happy Caribbean American Heritage Month to everyone. Ms. Merrill, would you like to speak to your second? Yes, I am proud and pleased to support a proclamation that reinforces the commitment this school division has to recognizing all of our students and staff and tonight those individuals with a Caribbean heritage. I appreciate having my own understanding expanded through the the proclamation and through Ms. Omash's remarks and while we celebrate here

[00:10:53] tonight and we're enthusiastic and interested as a premier school division we must take it a step further and take that into the instruction that happens in our classrooms. We pride ourselves on inclusion and diversity and we must have through K-12 the content so that our students know history and know one another's culture. At the very base it could be the relationship with the United States which has a tragic history with the economy being built on slavery you know politically as well there's a history of political involvement between the United States and different Caribbean nations but in their own right people from Caribbean islands and nations and culture art

[00:11:31] music language culinary gifts to the world dance athletics literature to name a few so I really implore our superintendent to do more to bring into our curriculum and learning more about our own students and staff and families but really embracing what it means to have equity and inclusion by teaching our students about it in our content in our classrooms.

[00:11:53] Thank you. Thank you. Dr. Anderson. Thank you. I would be remiss if I didn't say at least a few words. First of all, thank you so much to my colleagues, Ms. Omesh and Ms. Marin, for bringing this forward.

[00:12:10] What I was happy to do the legwork on, I think it's really important, as Ms. Omesh said, that we have others who are able to celebrate us because it means that if we are not present, then we are missing. And I don't think that's the message we want to send. So it's really important to see outside of ourselves and to try to lift up and to recognize communities that may not be innately part of the communities we represent.

[00:12:33] So I'm very appreciative of your words and I'm very appreciative of your kindness for sharing this today. I also want to say that representation matters. I'm so grateful to all of you who came out this evening in order to help us celebrate this very first moment in FCPS.

[00:12:50] We do have students from the Caribbean here. We have a plethora of individuals on staff in our community who have contributed to this school system, to this country, and one of the individuals that I

wanted to also share is Corrine Jean-Pierre, who is the White House Press Secretary.

[00:13:07] She is from Haiti. And so it's important for us to realize that we live among you and we just want to be recognized and acknowledged for what we represent and what we bring into these United States. So I'm very grateful to be representing my island.

[00:13:24] So thank you all so much for being here. And I'm just very excited that we hopefully have started a new shift in our proclamations where we go outside of ourselves and represent folks that are not here to speak for themselves. Thank you.

[00:13:43] Thank you. With that, I will call for the vote. All those in favor, Ms. Marin, Ms. Omesh, Ms. Toland, Ms. Corbett Sanders, Ms. Darnett Koufax, Ms. McLaughlin, Dr. Anderson, Mr. Frisch, Ms. Cohen, Ms. Pokarski, myself, that motion passes. Congratulations.

[00:14:00] Yay. Agenda item 3.05, LGBTQIA+ Pride Month Proclamation. I call on Mr. Frisch for proclamation. - Thank you. June marks, whereas June marks the anniversary of the first LGBTQIA Pride Parade more than 50 years ago, which served as a call to collective action just one year after the Stonewall riots, where LGBTQIA people, led primarily by drag queens and transgender women of color, like Marsha P. Johnson and Sylvia Rivera, resisted pervasive police harassment and violence during an early morning bar raid in New York City,

[00:14:38] and whereas the decades since have been one of struggle and triumph for the LGBTQIA community, despite increased understanding and legal protections, LGBTQIA young people still face many challenges. Without the support and acceptance of their families and schools, these young people are far more likely to attempt suicide or experience homelessness.

[00:14:58] And whereas recent studies show most LGBTQIA middle and high school students in Virginia say they have been verbally harassed because of their sexual orientation and often hear negative remarks about transgender people in school. Additionally, middle and high school students in Virginia report experiencing physical assaults because of their LGBTQIA status. Students of color are disproportionately impacted by anti-LGBTQIA hostility, with large percentages of Latinx and black LGBTQIA middle and high school students experiencing bullying. And whereas now more than ever with lgbtqia people especially transgender and gender expansive youth under attack from

[00:15:37] political leaders in richmond and across the country who should know better than to bully children the fairfax county school board stands with and celebrates its lgbtqia students families and staff it recognizes the urgency of its charge to foster a responsive caring and inclusive culture where lgbtqia students are affirmed and see their identities reflected in curriculum and school library offerings it further commits to advancing policies that protect lgbtqia students and staff and enhance their experience in fairfax county public schools and whereas the fairfax county school board appreciates the many contributions made by its lgbtqia students

[00:16:15] families and staff to the vibrancy of the broader school community fairfax county has a richly diverse lgbtqia population that includes people from all walks of life who should be able to live without fear of prejudice, discrimination, harassment, or violence, physical or political.

[00:16:30] Now therefore, be it resolved, the Fairfax County School Board on behalf of the students, families, and staff of Fairfax County Public Schools proclaims June 2023 as LGBTQIA Pride Month. In the spirit of one Fairfax, the Fairfax County School Board urges all who to respect and honor our diverse

LGBTQIA community and to build a culture of inclusivity and equity not only during lgbtqia pride month but throughout the entire year as well is there a

[00:17:06] second second miss cohen mr frisch would you like to speak to your proclamation yes um first a little personal i want to congratulate my sister kate who texted me on my way to the board meeting tonight letting me know that she and her partner of many years lynette have eloped um so when we when we When we were growing up in the 80s and 90s, the idea that marriage equality would ever be something within reach was just a foreign concept. It wasn't even part of the calculus of the things we were

[00:17:42] allowed to dream about. I'm so grateful, not only that she found love, but that she found love in a time where it was legal and celebrated. So I can't wait to celebrate with her in person. Now on to tonight's proclamation. Over the past three and a half years, this school board has made tremendous progress. We established the strongest protections and supports for our transgender and gender expansive students in the Commonwealth and region.

[00:18:10] We told the governor that we will not abandon these protections or allow him to bully our students. We made it clear in our student rights and responsibilities that malicious dead naming, misgendering and outing is unacceptable. We made sure LGBTQIA families are identified in family life education so students can see themselves and their families represented in the curriculum just like everyone else. We rejected attempts to erase LGBTQIA student representation from our libraries and curriculum. We provided our LGBTQIA staff with the same family planning benefits that our other employees have enjoyed for years. We began recognizing Pride Month every year, adding to

[00:18:50] our long-standing observance of LGBTQIA History Month in October. We've done so much, but it is not enough. Talk to our LGBTQIA students, staff, and families, especially those who are transgender or gender expansive and they will tell you that they are angry, but more than anything they are scared. As long as politicians in Richmond and across the country put the lives of trans and gender expansive kids in danger, fight to outlaw drag queens and queer artists, try to erase LGBTQIA themes from our libraries and curriculum, silence students and staff from living authentically and

[00:19:29] openly, promote a climate of hate rather than pushing for a culture of love and acceptance. As long as this is the world in which our LGBTQIA young people exist, we have not done enough to protect them, period. For years, I have sat silently at this dais, as is our custom, as some in our community use the microphone to push our board to turn the clock back on our support for LGBTQIA students and staff.

[00:19:58] At times, the commentary has been hateful and bigoted. We owe it to these kids. We owe it to their families and our staff to continue standing up for what is right and to do even more to make sure our LGBTQIA students feel safe, included, and seen in every single school.

[00:20:19] This proclamation is a symbol of that sentiment, and I am proud to sponsor it again this year. Thank you. Ms. Cohen, would you like to speak to your second?

[00:20:34] Thanks. I've written and erased probably a hundred times what I wanted to say tonight, and I so appreciate your comments because we still live in a world where even when in my newsletter I highlighted this month that it was Pride Month, I got back several responses.

[00:20:57] One said, disgusting. One wrote back and said, the ultimate sin. Another said, And why are you pushing your agenda?

[00:21:12] And the answer is because, like Carl's sister, like Carl, I grew up thinking that I was defective because I was attracted to women. And that was not something, at least in Marietta, Georgia, in the '80s and '90s, was a thing.

[00:21:35] And so I decided, since I had never heard what that meant, that it must mean that something was wrong with me. We are now in the year 2023, and we sit in this incredible county that we have all created together, and still at the doors and emails, we still continue to get the same conversations in the halls.

[00:22:00] Our kids are still called the F word, and we're better than that. And so we will continue the work, not just because it matters to everyone up here on this board, not because several of us are queer or have queer kids or trans kids. We'll do it because we have an obligation, just like every person in this audience does, to make sure that every child knows that there is nothing wrong with them, that they ought to be able to love who they

[00:22:35] love, that they ought to be able to show up as authentically themselves in every scenario, in every room in conversation they ought to be in rooms where decisions are made and instead of being talked about they ought to be the ones talking so we have committed as a board and i'm so grateful to all of you who came today to stand with us to support our community and a community that i am very proud to be a part of and i will tell you if you're out there and you don't know

[00:23:10] the right words as somebody who didn't come out to their parents until I was in my 40s and it was the most awkward and lovely conversation I've ever had in my life where my mother said to me at the end I'm so grateful that you trust me enough to let me know you a little bit better and I want our kids and our students and staff to feel the same way that we I want you to trust us your teachers your parents your friends trust them enough to give them the opportunity to know you

[00:23:50] a little bit better and i think you might be surprised by the results um thank you so much and thank you for giving me the opportunity to second this today thank you thank you miss kohan miss mclaughlin thank you uh this is special to me as well because this will be my last time on the board where we will be recognizing June Pride Month.

[00:24:27] And for those who know me, they know that my youngest son came out to us when he was in high school, and I couldn't be more thankful as a parent that he was raised in a place like Fairfax County at a high school like Woodson that allowed him to feel accepted, loved, respected, and able to share that not only with his family, but his friends, and to find himself as a senior in high school being named Prom King, that is a far cry from my own childhood

[00:25:06] experience, even in Northern California in the middle of the 1980s. So when I think about what it means to be a member of this board, when I think about what it's meant to me as a Fairfax County parent what it means to me to be a Fairfax County resident. I just hope that tonight is just another reminder that there are so many people in this county who understand, embrace, and promote

[00:25:39] that love is love. And Carl, I couldn't be happier for your sister and her now wife. I am thankful to everyone who has blazed the trails for decades and decades and decades so that one day my son as well will find his love and be able to celebrate it. And so I just really want to remind our community that the world is complicated and it is complex and for some it's hard to understand something that it seems different to them.

[00:26:18] But I swear, if each and every one of us sitting in this room, watching out in the audience tonight, just really embraced what it means to love one another, accept one another, we will be a better world.

[00:26:35] So thank you for bringing this tonight. Thank you. Ms. Toland? Yes, thank you for bringing this proclamation. It's very important to me as well for a variety of reasons in my extended family.

[00:26:54] and I just think it's important that all of us need to hear and and feel the support of our community as our true selves you know be your true self you're not alone eat and like we've already said my colleagues have said very well each and every one of our students needs to feel safe in our schools and in anywhere in FCPS and as we help our students find their path and success in their future. They deserve our love, our support, and our respect to see them as they see themselves.

[00:27:32] This is the extension of kindness and respect that we all must be afforded. I'm looking forward to celebrating Pride Month with the Gay Men's Chorus of Washington at the McLean Central Park next weekend, so please join me there. Thank you. Mr. Annette Koufax? Yes, I want to thank my colleagues for sharing your very personal stories. Thank you so much. As we

[00:28:07] know, Pride is a time to remember history, celebrate how far we've come in advancing the rights of LGBTQIA+ people, but also to reinvigorate our efforts and to continue the fight for equality against discrimination and hatred in our schools and in our community. As an ally, I was proud to be the chair of the school board on May 7, 2015 when we added gender identity to our non-discrimination policy.

[00:28:37] I do want to thank all those advocates who helped in that, Mr. Rigby, FCPS Pride members, many of you are sitting in the audience today, for your outreach, your education, and your advocacy that helped make it happen back then.

[00:28:59] I will continue to work with you to ensure that you and all LGBTQIA plus students and staff feel safe, supported in our schools and in our communities. Happy Pride. Ms. Omeish.

[00:29:21] Thank you. I'm happy to follow the heartfelt stories and moving tellings of my colleagues. In this fraught environment of today's culture wars, I've listened to vastly diverse experiences from students, teachers, admin, parents, struggling deeply to find a unifying path forward.

[00:29:39] Today's resolution calls on us to stand with LGBTQIA students against bullying and harassment. We agree this firm stance continues to be needed. We also know pride has a broader context that community members experience differently. So before we devolve into name-calling, let us engage in good-faith dialogue.

[00:29:58] It is undeniable that many LGBTQIA students do not feel included in schools, and the rhetoric of some has not been helpful. It weighed on all of us last October when LGBTQIA students rallied and some had trash thrown at them. Let me be clear and reiterate, as I always have said, there is no place for homophobia, transphobia, or bigotry in our schools.

[00:30:20] LGBTQIA students should feel cared for and seen. I've also heard fears of violence against those who chose not to partake in Pride Month activities. Just recently in Montgomery County, a student was assaulted by a group of peers after school for expressing that she's unable to partake in Pride activities.

[00:30:37] Fear is pervasive. Fear prevents LGBTQIA youth from seeking help and being their truest selves. Fear also makes genuine engagement with others impossible because people don't feel safe expressing their differences without the threat of harm, shame, or cancellation. When the environment is so polarizing, we ought to realize that the answer to explaining our differences is not just labeling others as hateful or crazy.

[00:31:01] We have to take the courageous step towards understanding and tolerance to coexist. Tolerance does not mean one group adopts another's beliefs or feels forced to hide its own. Tolerance means that we can accept people's right to be freely and believe openly, even as we see the world differently.

[00:31:20] The fight for tolerance is what we owe each other. That is why we recognize LGBTQIA History Month every October. It reinforces the LGBTQIA struggle and makes students feel seen and understood. I've joined in that effort and more every year.

[00:31:35] The truth is that Pride Month for the LGBTQIA community, the only group that gets two months out of the year is an equity and wedge issue, weaponized by people on all sides to cause harm. As a school system, we must elevate the discourse to protect schools from devolving into the culture wars. Otherwise, it shifts with the political tides. One day power is for you, another day it's against you. That is not sustainable and certainly is not a way to protect LGBTQIA students long term. I will be abstaining today because we are not charitably accounting for areas of sincere concern from parents, students, teachers, and

[00:32:13] administrators. Our kids need us to figure this out and de-escalate the politics, not fuel the fire and alienate further. To be clear, my abstention is not an endorsement to deadname, bully, harass, or intimidate any LGBTQIA person. It is not a vote against equal protection for this community. My vote tonight reflects what many in FCPS feel left out of the conversation.

[00:32:36] let us find a way together to build forward what ensures equal protection for LGBTQIA students, even if we clash on core fundamental beliefs. - Thank you, Miss Amish. - Through tolerance, there is room for all of us. - Thank you, Miss Amish. Your time is up.

[00:32:54] Ms. Keet, Ms. Corbett Sanders. - Thank you, Madam Chair. And thank you to each and every one of you who have come here tonight, and those at the dais who have shared their stories.

[00:33:10] Congratulations to your sister and her wife. It is very exciting. But I want to thank our educators who embrace and nurture and welcome our students who are celebrating Pride Month this month.

[00:33:29] And the reason I thank you is because who we are as a people is how we educate and how we treat others. And you're welcoming, you're loving, you're recognizing who our children are and meeting them where they are and recognizing their authentic selves.

[00:33:51] That is who we are as Fairfax County, and I am so appreciative of everything you do to ensure that our children feel safe, secure, welcome, and valued.

[00:34:09] They see themselves in our curriculum. They see themselves in the ability to go to a library and read books about themselves. And they see themselves in being able to have wonderful, lifelong friendships because of the environment and the culture that you have created in our schools.

[00:34:32] i look at robert rigby who i have known since my children were in middle school and all of how he has always welcomed our children and so thank you we appreciate you we celebrate pride and we welcome the continued growth in path that we are on to understand how to deepen our celebrations so thank you. Thank you. Ms. Kieskamara, can we do a mic check? I think I see your hand up.

[00:35:10] Yes, ma'am. All right, go ahead, Ms. Kieskamara. Yes, let me get this where people can see me. I'm sorry I have to leave the meeting. I just want to say thank you to my colleagues and to so many of the folks that are in the audience that have worked with me throughout the years to make sure that we honor the FCPS promise.

[00:35:33] There is no greater duty that we have than the right to create an environment that is free of harassment and fear, the right to learn in a respectful environment. And I'm so grateful to so many who have helped me to learn as I grow and we grow together to make sure that we are protecting our children.

[00:35:58] Children naturally learn to love in a loving environment. It is our responsibility as board members, as educators, as community members, to be that loving source. And so I'm grateful that we have been taking increasing steps toward that end.

[00:36:18] In Pride Month, we recognize and respect the duty to include and to love one another. Thank you for being on this journey with me. and it is a pleasure to learn how to love and include more each and every day with you and i want each of our children to know you are loved thank you dr anderson yes um thank you i i just

[00:36:54] want to quickly say i i appreciate all of the personal stories that have been told and this is your last time as it was kind of interesting to see you choke up so my seatmate here i've said said this before and I will continue to say it again. It is so crucial. It is so important for us to allow space for all of our kids to see themselves in their most authentic way. We owe them that dignity. And so it is important that we embrace each and every one of our students, no matter what differences they bring, whether it be gender, whether it be color, identity, etc. So I will be supporting this motion this evening because I think it's an important message to send to our

[00:37:33] students that FCPS is a safe place for them and we welcome them and we will open our arms and to ensure that they have the best opportunities just like everyone else. Ms. Pekarski? Yeah thank you.

[00:37:51] I appreciate the comments today. I appreciate the resolution that was brought. I just wanted to share to me the reason this is so important is because we have to respect the humanity of every single one of our students and staff in ensuring that they feel respected loved and included in this in this school system it is extremely important I think

[00:38:27] that we model that especially at a time when this is a group of people who are being targeted nasty things are being said who are feeling as if they don't belong and that they are not worthy of love and acceptance and equality in this space so I appreciate what everyone has shared and I hope we model for our students that at the end of the day we are all human beings and that is there

[00:39:04] are many more things that bring us together in similarities than that set us apart so thank you thank you seeing no one else who wishes to speak I will take my turn first thank you to my colleagues for your personal stories and for sharing I am not a member of the community but I am a strong ally and so I'm really grateful to my colleagues for bringing this and for sharing from your heart

[00:39:36] about your families and i am um this is so important this is so important because we have to stop othering people we have to accept everybody for who they are who they love it does it i don't get it i don't get it lgbtq youth are four times more likely to attempt suicide one attempt suicide every 45 seconds more than half of the transgender and non-binary youth have seriously committed

[00:40:14] attempting suicide having accepting adults around them significantly reduces the risk of suicide and lgbtq this is a life or death issue i don't get it we are all human when i say adult acceptance reduces suicide it's not qualified acceptance it's just acceptance it's just acceptance people

[00:40:47] are dying because of other people's words because of their qualifications people who are just human who just want to live who just want to love who just want to be people are dying this matters acceptance matters love matters for everybody i don't get it people just want to live their life why can't we let them i don't get it i am not a member of the community and i won't pretend to know what it feels like to be discriminated against to fight face harassment and fear i won't pretend

[00:41:24] to understand that but i do know what it's like from my own experience of being a woman of color of being an immigrant who was told I was never good enough to be American. I understand what it's like from having a neurodiverse child, a neurodivergent child who faces it every day, that he is not allowed to be him because it's not normal.

[00:41:44] It's wrong. We are all normal. We are all human and we all deserve to live a life filled with love and acceptance, full stop. So thank you for bringing this forward.

[00:42:00] With that, I will call for the vote. All those in favor, please raise your hands. Ms. Bukarski, Ms. Cohen, Mr. Frisch, Dr. Anderson, Ms. McLaughlin, Ms. Darenak-Koufax, Ms. Corbett-Sanders, Ms. Tolan, Ms. Marin, and myself, all those opposed, all those abstaining, Ms. Amesh, that motion passes. Thank you very much.

[00:42:33] Excuse me, Madam Chair, I'm sorry. Oh, I'm sorry, Ms. Kees-Gamara, you did not have your hand up. Do you wish to vote? Yes, ma'am, please. Okay, and Ms. Kees-Gamara, in the affirmative, Ms. Kees-Gamara? Yes, thank you. Ms. Kees-Gamara, also for the affirmative. So that motion passes. Agenda Item 3.06, Gun Violence Awareness Wear Orange Day Proclamation.

[00:42:58] I call on Ms. Cohen for proclamation. Whereas June 2nd, 2023 was National Gun Violence Awareness Day, also known as Wear Orange Day, and June 2nd through 4th, 2023 was Wear Orange Weekend, and whereas students first organized National Gun Violence Awareness Day to memorialize the 2013 death of their friend and gun violence victim, 15-year-old Hadiyah Pendleton, And to commemorate her death, they asked us to stand up, speak out, and wear orange, the color hunters wear in the woods to protect themselves and others from guns.

[00:43:38] And whereas, firearms are the leading cause of death for children and teens in the United States. I'm sorry, I'm going to say that one more time. Whereas, firearms are the leading cause of death for children and teens in the United States. every year 18 000 children and teens are shot and killed or wounded and approximately 3 million are exposed to gun violence and exposure to gun violence has long lasting impacts on the safety and well-being of our youth and whereas in 2022 there were at least 177 incidents of gunfire on

[00:44:16] school grounds resulting in 57 deaths and 149 injuries nationally and every student and staff member deserves a safe educational environment and sadly the threat of gun violence for them has grown

across the country and whereas an estimated 4.6 million American children live in a home where at least one gun is kept loaded and unlocked and these improperly stored weapons have contributed to school shootings suicides and the death of family members and

[00:44:52] nearly half of all parents with a weapon in the home wrongly believe their children don't know where their gun is stored and Fairfax County Public School is committed to preventing gun violence by providing resources and reminding families of secure firearm storage practices now therefore be it resolved that the Fairfax County School Board joins the Burke Fairfax chapter of Moms Demand Action in recognizing June 2, 2023 as National Gun Violence Awareness Day to raise awareness of

[00:45:29] the issue and the importance of preventing and eliminating gun violence in our schools and communities. Thank you. Is there a second? Mr. Frisch, Ms. Cohen, would you like to speak to proclamation i would i first would like to take the opportunity to recognize all of the members of moms demand action who are in the audience and you'll notice that they have in fact i brought it

[00:45:56] with me when we talk about the intersection of guns and lgbtq lives talk about um i'm so grateful to heather folio kim perks teresa chaplin who are all in our leadership in the burke fairfax Chapter, a group I have been incredibly proud to be a member of for the last five years.

[00:46:29] You know, I think this year, more than ever, we've seen in Fairfax County this scourge come to our own schools, the number of times that our kids have been in lockdown, the number of times that we've seen threats appear right as our kids walked out the door for the buses.

[00:46:50] in our own home when we had a threat at my children's school when I texted to ask if they were okay my oldest said mom I think it's okay I'm just nervous because I'm on the second floor but don't worry there's a storage cabinet in the back of the room that I'm pretty sure that I could fit in when I texted my son he said mom it'll be okay I'm near the door no shock no real horror

[00:47:23] just acceptance that that has become part of our everyday lives that calling our kids texting our kids to say are you safe doesn't mean anymore are you not drinking at a party are you wearing your seat belts are you making good choices about who you drive home with it means I don't know if you are coming home from school today we have done that here it is not mental health every country

[00:47:56] on this planet has mental health issues. It is the guns, period. It is the guns. And if we cannot come together, we talk about keeping our kids safe. If we cannot come together as a county, as a community, as a commonwealth to implement sensible gun reforms, then we are getting exactly what we deserve. I am so proud of this school system under Dr. Reed's leadership of making sure

[00:48:35] that we are working to change lives by giving our kids emotional support, by making sure that they have trusted adults that they can identify in each building. As we know, that is the number one deterrent to any kind of gun violence and school violence. We are doing what we can to remind parents of their obligation to securely store their weapons. We will continue to do that every year. This is a partnership, and we need your help, and I'm very grateful to have had the

[00:49:11] opportunity to bring this resolution. Mr. Frisch, would you like to speak to your second? Yes, thank you. Let's talk about guns. A lot of people are uncomfortable talking about guns, and one of the things that FCPS does is provide resources to families so they can have those uncomfortable conversations more easily, so that parents feel comfortable talking to their kids' friends' parents for a play date and asking them, do you have guns? If you do, do you securely store them

[00:49:48] like the law requires. I grew up around guns. I attended probably more gun shows than every person in this room combined before I was 12 years old. And we're approaching a time where everybody will have a connection to gun violence. One of my sisters had to hide on a sky bridge at the airport in Fort Lauderdale with her husband and their newborn during a shooting at that airport years ago, when I was like four years old, my six-year-old sister took one of my father's rifles off the wall, and it accidentally went off, and she got a gunpowder burn. Thank God it was just a

[00:50:27] burn. Most school shooters get guns from the home or from the home of a family member, and that's why it's so important that people securely lock their firearms, truly securely lock them. Unfortunately, most people do not securely lock their firearms, and so as a school division, we take gun violence prevention very seriously uh in the last few years uh building on the previous board's work

[00:51:03] we've instituted policies that now lead to the annual notification sometimes more frequently to our families that they have a legal obligation to securely store their firearms and providing them resources to have those tough conversations believe it or not while guns have been banned in our schools for many many decades until 2021 it was legal to carry guns in places like gatehouse where the superintendent and school board work and there was nothing we could do about it. When the law changed, the school board took quick action to make it illegal to carry guns in all of our

[00:51:36] buildings regardless of whether it's a school or not. Additionally, we are in the process of having a review of our curriculum and our security and safety practices to make sure we're doing everything we possibly can to keep our kids in our schools safe from whatever might harm them including gun violence.

[00:51:57] Ms. Marin led an effort to build out our security vestibules at the schools that don't have them. And that money is now being used to build those out. And in a few years, the project will be complete. But we can only do so much as a school board.

[00:52:14] And that's why we need our partners in Richmond and Washington to finish the job. We're doing our part. We need them to do their part, too. So I appreciate having our friends and allies for Moms Demand Action here with us tonight and for all the stories they have shared about their own experience with gun violence and the steps we can all take to make our communities safer.

[00:52:38] And I'm proud to wear this orange tie tonight, even if it is hideous. I think your tie looks fine. Thank you. Sorry, Ms. Bukarski?

[00:52:56] Okay, thank you. Thank you for bringing this. I don't know that there's a lot left to say besides the fact that, like you said, Mr. Frisch, We are nearing a time where everybody in some way will be touched by gun violence or has children who have grown up with the trauma of not knowing where and when they will be safe.

[00:53:26] Just recently, you know, speaking to a personal story, my son came home and started asking lots of questions of, you know, should he do this, that? If there was somebody, you know, God forbid, who came in to hurt him at school, and I just turned around and said, where is this coming from?

[00:53:46] And consequently, he had been in a drill that day, and he was in the bathroom, and he did not know that it was just a drill. he thought it was real he panicked he ran out luckily there was a staff member there to let him know you know that this was this was not anything to be worried about but it really

highlighted the trauma that our kids are living with every day the trauma that our parents are living with because there is not a single community meeting I go to where safety and security gun violence

[00:54:20] prevention doesn't come up um and i i hope it is a it is an issue that actually brings people together believe it or not people want their children safe um they want to get guns out of our society um and we really need our elected officials um at these higher levels to take that seriously and and get the job done because we have traumatized an entire generation of children Thank you.

[00:54:51] Thank you. Ms. Corbett-Sanders? Schools, sporting events, places of worship, shopping malls, all are places where our children worry, our families worry about the threat of gun violence.

[00:55:13] It's unacceptable. As my colleagues have said, we need to do something to get these guns off the street. But what we can do today and tomorrow before we get change at the state and federal level is tomorrow is the last day of school.

[00:55:35] Our kids are going to be going on playdates. Our kids will be going on overnight excursions. Our kids will be using their phones. We as adults, we as parents, have to find out, have to take an active role in knowing.

[00:55:54] Don't be afraid of asking if there are guns in a house, if they are stored. Don't be afraid of taking a look at what your children are doing using their cell phones. Because if they are experiencing trauma, if they are experiencing a period of despair, there are resources available to help them to avoid having this feeling of fear, but also of taking actions into their own hands.

[00:56:29] So please, as parents, as adults, as we look at this summer experience, that we want all of our children to have a wonderful summer. Please be engaged, ask the tough questions, and know what's happening because we have a role and a responsibility to do so.

[00:56:48] Thank you. - Thank you. Ms. McLaughlin? I too want to celebrate and elevate this incredibly important proclamation, and I want to first thank every single volunteer of Mons Demand Action for everything you have done from every single day to help elevate something that absolutely impacts everyone here in our society.

[00:57:18] When I think about what my colleague Mr. Frisch said, growing up and being familiar with guns, I was the opposite. I grew up in Northern California, my family did not have guns, nobody I knew had guns, and when I became a parent here in Fairfax County, Virginia, it never occurred to me that my three sons could go to anyone's home at any given time and there might not be secured firearms, and that it could be at that point the loss of any person's life, including my own boys.

[00:57:52] So when I think about now as my role here on the board, how committed we've been for the three terms that I've served on how do we better educate kids. If we can't change the laws down in Richmond in the General Assembly, we in the Fairfax County School Board absolutely can do our part to create things like we've done, to help families be more aware, help families be empowered to understand the questions to ask, the things to realize and think about that I alone as a parent didn't know. And if we can save children's lives that way, well then that's exactly what we

[00:58:27] are entrusted to do and I'm proud to be doing that work and so I just want to again use this evening to say thank you to our community advocates you make us a better board you make us a better school system you make us a better community and I hope that I can continue to honor the work that

you've done and to my colleagues I want to thank you as well that we and our job is to educate the whole child, to partner with our families. And that is what we do with gun safety

[00:59:01] awareness. So thank you. Thank you. Ms. Marin. As I've said before, the mission of the school division is to educate students. It is not the mission of the public schools to end gun violence in America. That is the responsibility of the federal and state governments. However, in light of the epic failure of the federal and state governments to legislate any semblance of common sense restrictions, training fines, or criminal charges regarding access to weapons of war by seemingly about anyone with a pulse and a handful of years living on this earth, here's where I'm at.

[00:59:36] Allowing guns to remain accessible, as they are, is part of the agenda to harden our schools and to harden our community by heeding the claim that more guns will keep us safe from more guns. But it is very difficult to sit here on the board and to sit at home as a parent and not inch toward hardening schools because we have to do something, right? Because no one else is helping us. It's already happening in our region, metal detectors at school doors. We have to consider all the options. I never thought I'd be here, but this is where we are. I think our staff are doing everything that they can to protect children and themselves from gun violence, and I think our

[01:00:12] schools have done the bulk of work when it comes to preventing gun violence. The problem will be solved by the community, by you, by parents, who will talk with one another and ask if they have guns if they're locked up, and seek accountability from one another. An example, this past year, and a few times a bb gun was made accessible to a student student brought it to school friends constituents texted me and asked what you know what should i do should i send my kid to school or not and i said what how is that solving the problem to not send your kid to school how do we get to the root of this do you know who brought it and of course the kids all knew who

[01:00:49] the student was and they knew and no conversations that i know of were happening and i'm thinking can we do restorative justice? Can we do something so that parents, the adults, are talking to each other? Because this is not a child problem. It is an adult problem. So I'd like you to do this.

[01:01:05] If, heaven forbid, although the likelihood is unfortunately high, if your school community is tainted by gun violence, whether that's a student having access to a gun at home who makes the bad choice to bring it to school, or if gun violence happens outside of the school but in your community, ask yourself what you personally will do to confront that violence. What is the plan?

[01:01:25] Is it to keep keeping children at home for those that are privileged enough to have that option? Because it's going to take the community to help us fix this. And I know that so many of you are with us, but we've got to make this bigger than just our schools. Our schools are doing everything they can.

[01:01:47] Thank you. Ms. Keyes-Gamara? Yes, thank you. As I'm sitting here listening to this proclamation, and I'm very grateful that we're having this conversation, I am reminded of the opportunities I've had in the past few months.

[01:02:08] to speak to staff members and students. And one teacher in particular just touched my heart when she began to describe to me the burden she felt having to explain to students what they need to do in the event of an active shooter. And as I stood in front of her and she explained to me how she had to explain, she just broke down in front of me. And I am really hoping that these

[01:02:40] conversations lead to a change of culture. It's not just about, you know, whatever somebody's opinion of the Second Amendment is, but we have literally shifted the burden of this idea of gun ownership to everyone else, particularly people in our schools and staff members. And they're hurting. She said to me, she's afraid to go to the mall. Her students are afraid. And when I hear the response is, well, let's solve mental health and we won't have these problems, we also need to

[01:03:19] realize that placing these burdens on our schools, on our teachers, on our students, has created mental health problems. And so while I'm grateful that our system has been very responsive and is providing mental health supports and doing everything we can, what I'm truly hoping for is a change in our conversation, a change in the culture, where we realize that the cost of the burden of this is just far too great. So I'm grateful for what is brought today, and I'm hopeful that we can do more to really realize the impact of the way that our society is structured with

[01:03:58] respect to guns right now. So thank you for being responsible school board members. I'm glad to be a part of this group, but I'm really hoping for much more. Thank you. Thank you, Ms. Amish.

[01:04:15] Thank you. I want to start by thanking Ms. Cohen and Mr. Frisch for bringing this important resolution, as well as Moms Demand Action activists and anyone else present today for their continued fight for a safer future. The bottom line is that we can't educate our students, our future leaders, if our students, teachers, and staff feel unsafe to show up for class, attend games and events, to walk to school.

[01:04:38] Our board has secured proactive measures to enhance school safety, like robust safety protocols, increased security personnel, and controlled access points like security vestibules. And it's the least we can do towards the safety and well-being of students, staff, teachers, and the broader school community. All of these initiatives are important. And with that said, still, the fact remains that the most immediate enabling factor, guns, are not within our hands here to change at the school system level. As my colleagues have shared, we must advocate on the state and federal level for better protections and controls to ensure families and communities are not devastated by someone's mistake nor terrorized by the fear. We've become

[01:05:16] numb to the loss of life in this country, and that is a deep problem. Just a few days ago in Annapolis, a shooting killed three and injured three others over street parking. A graduation party to celebrate the accomplishments of loved ones resulted in death and destruction for no good reason, leaving neighborhoods and communities forever changed.

[01:05:36] The overall suffering cannot be quantified, and the overwhelm leads us to cope through withdrawal that makes us lose a bit of our humanity. The possibility of what might happen contributes to debilitating anxiety that is at an all-time high in our community. Let us be sure not to lose the battle to fear, and let us do what we can today.

[01:05:56] It cannot be overstated, as Ms. Cohen said, that the leading cause of teen deaths are guns. In 2021, 54%, more than half, of gun deaths were actually to suicide, the leading cause of death among teens today. In Fairfax County, 15% of our teens have contemplated suicide, and 6% have attempted it.

[01:06:18] In addition to safety advocacy, deep care and attention to our mental wellness for our youngsters is more important now than ever, and it is often those we least expect. We must engage in constructive conversations, go above the partisan divide, address root causes, and advocate for effective policies prioritizing safety and security.

[01:06:39] Today is an opportunity for us to reflect and reinvigorate agency around this critical issue in our communities. We know our children are worth it. And I hope this Gun Violence Awareness Day today will reinvigorate in us a sense to take seriously what was never supposed to become normal.

[01:06:59] Thank you. Ms. Tolan? Thank you. Thank you to my colleagues for bringing the resolution. And again, thank you to Moms Demand Action for all that you've done over the years. I've enjoyed working with you and getting your information and education. Thank you.

[01:07:18] You know, every time there's a shooting in the United States, I get emails from parents wondering what the school district is doing, how can we keep our kids safe. And it's just so sad to just have that palpable fear of parents, staff, students around this issue and just to have it happen over and over and over.

[01:07:45] The one thing I do want to tell everyone, maybe to reassure everyone, my colleagues have said it a little bit already, is when these things happen, FCPS reacts. And we do things to protect everyone that perhaps are unseen by the general public for very good reason.

[01:08:03] It's just a good example just recently when there was these shooting around a graduation in Richmond right at the beginning of our graduation season. FCPS reacted very quickly and we had additional safeguards at every one of our graduations.

[01:08:25] We had additional lighting. We did a lot to protect our community. And I hate to even say this, maybe it's just because we just came off budget season. But when I heard about that, one of the things I thought about was, you know, of course, our community, every life is priceless.

[01:08:45] But how much money did that cost for us to turn on a dime and add the additional hardening, as, you know, Ms. Marin put it? And we were one school district in the state of Virginia. I can only imagine that every other school district did the same thing.

[01:09:01] And the sad part is, I really wish that money was going toward academics, mental health resources, so many other things that are near and dear to us as a school district. So I just throw that out there, and I can't even imagine if we started to tally this on a national level, what we're talking about and what we're losing, just as another point of information.

[01:09:29] Thank you very much again for raising the issue. It's something that we all need to pay very close attention to, and we need to vote. Everyone needs to vote. Thank you. Thank you.

[01:09:47] Ms. Donat-Koufax? In May of 2016, I was asked by my constituent, a Moms Demand Action advocate and a friend, Karen Vaught, to bring forward FCPS's first Wear Orange National Gun Recognition Day, A tragedy of random gun violence had recently occurred within our own community.

[01:10:19] In November of 2015, Edison High School graduate Joe Bowes was a victim of senseless and random gun violence in Norfolk, Virginia. He was a junior attending Hampton University. He was a star basketball player.

[01:10:37] He was my son's teammate. He was his dear friend. His murder remains unsolved. When Vice President Kamala Harris spoke at John R. Lewis High School on June 2nd, this was 13 days ago, she emphasized that President Biden's administration's commitment to gun violence and safety, and she presented sobering statistics that are worse than when I was first asked to bring this recognition forward.

[01:11:08] She shared that gun violence is now the leading cause of death for children in the U.S., and that one in five Americans has been touched by gun violence. Look around. You don't know who that is. One in five of us.

[01:11:27] Vice President Harris talked about the need for reform. I, along with all my colleagues you can hear, support her call to action. We need to have the courage. We need to call on our federal legislators to enact bipartisan legislation where we can support the Second Amendment, but still have common sense gun laws.

[01:11:51] I have support, but I am saddened that this proclamation is needed now more than ever. But I am saddened for even more for victims such as the Bose family who still do not have closure on the loss of their loved one because of random gun violence.

[01:12:11] Thank you, and I echo the sentiments and words of my colleagues, and I thank the Burke Fairfax Moms Chapter and all the other supporters of common sense gun regulations and people who are looking to end gun violence who are here today.

[01:12:32] I thank you for your time. I thank you for your advocacy. I thank you for your passion. Don't mess with a mom. I will not repeat the words of my colleagues. I think my colleagues have spoken very well about the significant issue. I'll echo what I said before.

[01:12:47] People are dying. And more importantly, children are dying. I don't know how we got to this place where we allowed the leading cause of death for children to be gun violence. I don't understand it. And I don't know how to get people who have the power to make a change to act.

[01:13:07] I know many want to, but not enough people do. We have done as much as we could. We're continuing to do what we can. But I find it so interesting that so many people who lament about the pandemic of our children's mental health issues are the same ones who are fighting against any common-sense gun regulation.

[01:13:29] I don't understand that either. The same ones who argue for hardening our schools, and I understand how people have gotten there because we're desperate to keep our children safe, so I understand it, I do, are the same ones who are fighting common-sense gun regulations and don't understand how the money caught that will take to harden our schools will take away from educating our children and helping their mental health.

[01:13:49] I don't understand how that's the place we're at. It's very sad. It's tragic, and people are dying. So thank you to those who continue to lift up this issue. My heart goes out to you, to the one in five who've been touched by gun violence in your personal lives, in your families.

[01:14:11] Like Ms. McLaughlin, I grew up in Northern California, and I didn't know anybody who had a gun, didn't know anyone who talked about it. I'm sure there were people, but it just didn't seem to be part of my lexicon. And it's very sad to go from there to where we are in our society today.

[01:14:28] So thank you to my colleagues for bringing this forward, for lifting up this issue. Thank you, my colleagues have been lifting it up for many years, and with that, I will call for the vote. All those in favor, please raise your hands. Ms. Bukarski, Ms. Cohen, Mr. Frisch, Ms. Keith-Gamara, Dr. Anderson, Ms. McLaughlin, Ms. Starnak-Koufax, Ms. Corbett-Sanders, Ms. Tolan, Ms. Omesh, Ms. Maron, and myself.

[01:14:52] That motion passes. Thank you very much. To everybody who came here today, thank you for bringing this forward. I would like to invite staff and community members who are here this evening in support of gun violence awareness, Wear Orange Day proclamation to please join the board for a photo at the front for the dais.

[01:15:12] And I ask my colleagues remain at the dais for the next three group photos who our clerk will call up in turn. So please, all those in support of our gun violence awareness Wear Orange Day proclamation, come on up.

[01:15:22] I would like to invite all those here in support of the Juneteenth recognition to please join the board for a photo.

[01:17:54] I would like to invite all those here in support of the Juneteenth recognition to please join the board for a photo.

[01:18:26] I would like to invite all those here in support of the Caribbean American Heritage Month proclamation to please join the board for a photo.

[01:19:05] I would like to invite those here in support of the LGBTQIA plus proclamation to please join the board for a photo at the front of the dais.

[01:24:35] Agenda item 4.01, community participation. The next order of business is community participation. Speakers must limit their remarks to no more than two minutes in length. At the conclusion of two minutes, the microphone or video will be turned off. School board members will be listening but not responding to individual speakers.

[01:24:54] The school board will not hear statements involving issues that have been scheduled for public hearings, such as the capital improvement program, budget, and boundaries. Comments targeting, criticizing, or attacking individual students are not permitted during public meetings. Complaints regarding school-based employees should be directed to the appropriate school principal or other school officials.

[01:25:16] Speakers should refrain from using personally identifiable information in connection with an individual student or school-based employee. Additionally, speakers should be respectful and observe proper decorum in their statements, avoiding profanity, inappropriate gestures, shouting, and comments that run counter to the spirit and letter of the school division's non-discrimination policy.

[01:25:38] The school board welcomes community members to provide comments at its regular business meetings and public hearings on school board deliberations, school-related issues, or particular topics. All statements should be directed to the school board and speakers should remain at the podium until concluding their remarks. As a reminder, speaker substitutions are not permitted.

[01:25:58] A speaker may not yield their time to another individual before or during their remarks. Shouting and outbursts from the audience will not be tolerated. We are grateful for those who have come to speak to us today and thank you for your cooperation. Madam Speaker, please, Madam Speaker, Madam Clerk, I just elevated you. Madam Clerk, please call the first speaker. Willow Wokey.

[01:26:20] Does this work? Okay, I can hold it. Dr. Reed, school board members, my name is Willa Walkie, she, her. I'm married to a wonderful woman, a grandparent, and the proud parent of four former FCPS students. The last one just graduated. I'm a trans woman and president of the Transgender

[01:26:57] Education Association and on the board of FCPS Pride. I'm here to talk about pride in our schools. I am proud of my kids. I'm proud of their FCPS education. FCPS has prepared at least my kids to move on to their next steps and beyond. I am proud, but also afraid. When I was in school in the 70s, I knew I was different and often bullied for being effeminate. Today, we teach about those differences, and that helps reduce the bullying. Today, the bullies we face most often are parents and politicians. They make a lot of noise that goes against what professionals like teachers,

[01:27:35] doctors, therapists have learned about LGBTQIA plus students. Banning inclusive books, forcing a trustworthy adult to out a kid to their parents, banning using chosen names, and banning appropriate health care. These are adults bullying kids. My sense is that these people are afraid. Afraid of what they don't understand. They haven't learned the same lessons about differences that their kids have. Thank you for the Pride Proclamation. It helps. It would have helped me as a kid. But the trans community, whether visible, living their lives quietly, or in the closet afraid of

[01:28:12] being themselves, all know someone who is fleeing their home, seeking refuge away from those that fear us. We are afraid. Those of us who are in the LGBTQIA+ community, those of us with LGBTQIA+ family members, see this wonderful proclamation and we see your actions and we see when your actions hide from that fear. Our community can't hide from that fear and we need our allies to stand with us and to make it obvious to everyone

[01:28:41] that they stand against that fear as well. Paulette Altmaier. My topic is equity. I've read the

[01:29:18] FCPS training slides where equity was defined as equal outcomes for every student without exception. That is, of course, a stunningly silly goal. Students' interests and abilities are different. The same slides, though, claimed equality means giving every student the same resources independent of need and therefore claimed a different approach was needed.

[01:29:44] That is also nonsense. Equality in education has always meant equal opportunity, which takes student need into account. For decades, schools have provided additional help for struggling readers, school lunches for lower-income students, special help for ESL students, and much more.

[01:30:04] But equal opportunity will never lead to equal outcomes. Students' interests, their abilities, their motivation level, and their work ethic differ. Parental focus on education will also differ. So the outcomes will also be different.

[01:30:20] Outcomes will not necessarily be proportional by race either, unless you think the NBA is practicing racial discrimination. Instead of creating racial divisiveness with this ethos, we should help all students get to where their talents and their hard work can get them.

[01:30:39] Hard work matters, so let's not make a mockery of student effort with stunts like 50 is a new zero. Don't water down the curriculum. These steps are harmful, not helpful. Education is not a zero-sum game.

[01:30:55] Where more help is needed, provide it. But stop harming students of some racial groups by indoctrinating them with helplessness and grievance instead of empowerment and effort. And don't demonize other racial groups. That's just racism.

[01:31:12] Thank you. Bernadette McConville. My name is Bernadette McConville, a mother of two students at Justice High School.

[01:31:33] Justice continues to fail in supporting the LGBTQ plus students by not solving the issue with the gender neutral bathroom. Currently, the bathroom is located in the copy room near the main entrance of the school. The bathroom is being used for its intent by 5 to 10 students, and approximately 200 cisgender students use it to skip classes, use it as the restroom, or for other nefarious reasons.

[01:31:57] Those who use the restroom for its purpose end up waiting long periods of time or are forced to use the regular restroom. The administration has locked the copy room, which limits access to the restroom. When this matter was brought up by staff, they were informed the school will revisit the issue once construction is complete next year.

[01:32:17] Now construction is planned to finish in two years. With the high turnover rate amongst the administration at Justice, this issue will continue to be pushed back. The solution is converting every bathroom to dentro-neutral bathrooms. But for now, a temporary solution would be to install a door that opens to the hallway.

[01:32:36] The bathroom must be locked and a system similar to the flash pass needs to be incorporated to ensure these children have access. In regards to cost, there are grants the school can apply for to cover the expense. Telluride School in Colorado received a grant to remodel bathrooms from a Gets Better project.

[01:32:56] There is no excuse to put this off any further. The LGBTQ plus students are supported by a core group of staff at Justice, but these shouldn't be supported by the entire staff. This month, there was a hate attack against the GSA board.

[01:33:13] The school did an investigation, but there wasn't a letter to the parents. I found out by my child of this act. This act made the students feeling safe at school. FCPS states that they are deeply committed to creating a safe and positive school environment where all students can learn.

[01:33:31] Why doesn't Justice... Mary Ann Burke. Good evening, board members and Dr. Reed.

[01:33:49] In a recent survey, a quarter of transgender and non-binary young people expressed feelings of hopelessness, helplessness, and fear. These students know that they are vulnerable to those who could bully or physically harm them, and many fear that their parents will find out about their sexual identity.

[01:34:06] Parents' inability to accept their children's sexual identity accounts for the high rate of homelessness and suicide among LGBTQIA students. This is why Glenn Youngkin's model policies for the treatment of transgender students is so damaging. By forcing the school to out the students to parents before the student is ready can take away one of the only safe spaces where LGBTQIA youth can find refuge and affirmation.

[01:34:34] The consequences can be deadly, as we found out. The day that Governor Youngkin announced his new model policy on trans students, a trans student attending Lake Braddock High School went to the nearby railroad tracks and ended her life. Thank you, members of this school board, for rejecting Governor Youngkin's revised model, trans policy.

[01:34:55] But by this time next year, there will be a very different composition to the school board. I ask that every voter look carefully at the beliefs of the candidates running for these school board seats before casting their vote. I wanted to let you know that there are candidates running for school board, and particularly in Providence District, that do not support LGBTQ rights.

[01:35:22] Mr. Sabio's team, when told that this country is not safe for these students, said, well, a member of his team said that if he didn't feel safe, he should leave the country. Every voter needs to know the opinion of the LGBTQIA rights of the school board candidate for whom they are voting.

[01:35:49] Christina McCormick, Chairperson Sizemore Heiser, and members of the board, Dr. Reid. Happy Pride Month. Thank you for your fantastic pride proclamation and also for your gun violence proclamation tonight. It was also a pleasure to see many of you at the Cappies Gala earlier this week. I was there cheering on my nominated kiddo and celebrating the life-changing impact of the arts in our schools. I've had the opportunity to address the board before. I'm grateful to do so

[01:36:25] again. I do think Mr. Frisch might have stolen some of my notes tonight, so bear with me. I am very proud parent of two FCPS students, one who's graduated loving life in college, the other one is muddling his way through high school. Both of them are transgender. I've been very grateful for the support that they received at their school from their faculty, staff, and peers, but I'm worried and I'm scared and they are scared. With over 500 anti-LGBTQ bills introduced into legislation this year, we worry that it's just a matter of time before my children aren't able to access the

[01:37:04] the life-saving care that they need. We are worried that their names, pronouns, and in fact their very identity will no longer be honored at school. Our family's having to consider taking health care steps and making legal name and gender changes before we are ready because we fear that that choice may be taken from us. We are worried that hate, ignorance, and misinformation will win not just socially but politically. To that point, hate incidents against all communities have been accelerated in FCPS. Just this month alone we've had the videotape burning of a stolen pride flag

[01:37:42] at Falls Church High School, anti-semitic and homophobic graffiti at West Potomac High School this month. Your students, staff, and family see these incidents and they see what's perceived as silencer in action. I ask you to please remain dedicated to the hard-fought successes such as

[01:37:59] Regulation 2603. Thank you. Erin St. Germain. Kelly Singer. I'm a queer parent of a non-binary

[01:38:40] child in FCPS. I understand FCPS leadership is about to trot out a Pride Month proclamation. My queer child spent a huge chunk of this year in the social worker's office, the nurse's clinic, hiding in the library because their classroom was too unrelentingly hateful to tolerate, never mind the fact that the school was in violation of state and federal law.

[01:39:01] She wanted me to tell you today that she shouldn't have had to go through that. Our community is being scapegoated by a dehumanizing hate campaign that everyone with critical thinking skills knows is a cynical feint to prop up right-wing extremists. And so far, FCPS's response has been to look the other way while whistling Dixie. What are the good people in leadership at FCPS going to do about it? Kids are dying. They are self-harming. They are dropping out because FCPS is too toxic to learn, let alone thrive in. I'll be meeting with my child's principal over the

[01:39:37] summer to try and make her next year smoother, probably in vain, because the response of FCPS leadership so far has been cowardice, feigned helplessness, and complacency. And what about the rest of FCPS? Timid efforts at individual responses, general committees, the ombudsman's office are not the answer. Each family of each queer kid should not have to reinvent the wheel.

[01:39:59] This is a systemic and urgent hazard impacting our children in our schools now that needs a systemic response now. FCPS leadership needs to act now to prevent more suffering and death. FCPS

urgently needs an LGTQIA Council of Parents, Caregivers, Educators, Administrators, and Students to channel attention, communication, or responsive action to this crisis. If you fail to do everything you can to prevent, to intervene in the cynical and hateful targeting of our children, if you fail as FCPS leadership to do something meaningful, our children's disparate outcomes, their suffering,

[01:40:34] their blood is on your heads. You are responsible. Do the right thing. Vanessa Hall. Hi, I'm Vanessa Hall. I'm a parent of two FCPS children. You see me here a lot. I'm sorry, and you're welcome.

[01:40:59] Today's rally against hate was held because of a recent uptick of hate in our schools. At Oakton High School, a black cheerleading coach was told by a parent that no more black coaches need apply. And at Falls Church High School, a student stole the school pride flag, set it afire, and their friends spewed queerphobic slurs.

[01:41:19] These are just the documented incidents, but kids tell me that of N slurs shouted outside the black principal's office at their school, F slurs outside of the pride club, and T slurs thrown out with regularity at different schools around the county.

[01:41:37] plus dozens of stories of hate directed against students and teachers because of their race, immigration status, religion, income, disability, sexuality, or gender. The rally wasn't against an imaginary foe, but against hate spoken in this very room, mostly by people who ally with, belong to, and are paid by groups like Moms for Liberty, Parents Defending Education, Parents Against CRT, and Virginia Moms for America, all of which were identified as hate groups by the Southern Poverty Law Center last week.

[01:42:07] Many who sow disinformation and chaos have been given talking points, and some are even coached on what to say. They wish to create division amongst us and to marginalize our hardworking students. We all have to say no to hateful rhetoric, and members of the school board, please continue your current efforts and increase these efforts to mitigate and reduce hate that is interfering with our public education.

[01:42:32] Speaking of which, I applaud Dr. Reed's steadfast refusal to release the full National Merit Report. Those brave Fairfax citizens who helped with the investigation should be protected from those in our community, especially who've been in this room, who have repeatedly intimidated Fairfax students, teachers, parents, leaders, and community members.

[01:42:52] Please keep our students in education. George Becerra. Good evening, Dr. Reed and school board members.

[01:43:15] I want to first thank Dr. Reed and Muthu Fagbaye for trusting me to be a co-champion on the Strategic Plans Core Planning Team, along with Dr. Ivey and Dr. Spikes. I'd also like to thank Marcy Neal, Dustin Wright, and Alicia Martinez for their support in answering all my questions, requests, or concerns.

[01:43:30] You know, sometimes it's not easy working with me. This process was not perfect, but it was also a lot better than 2014. There will never be a time when the community engagement numbers will be extraordinary or statistically valid in people's minds. What I can tell you, though, is the same thing I tell the Board of Supervisors and Planning Commissioners when they have new initiatives are being created, is how many new people come out, how many of their voices are heard, emails or surveys, not the same average folks that you see like myself over and over again or the people who come on a regular basis.

[01:44:02] I cannot answer the question numerically, but I know after attending a good portion of other strategic planning committee meetings and community forums in person and virtually, there are a lot more new people this time around. As the board passes the new strategic plan tonight, what is next? And how and when does the implementation of the plan start?

[01:44:19] More importantly, where will be the accountability? Will this be in the form of a five-year plan like the superintendent has suggested? Will it be operational expectations? Will it be on principals, executive principals, RASs, leadership team, deputy superintendent or superintendents, superintendent performance evaluations each year, or what?

[01:44:37] This implementation and accountability will start with the principals. The first thing that needs to be tackled with is each school improvement plan, where principals have to truly interact and collaborate with the parent and educator community school and not just the same folks they see each time at pta meetings or the same personnel they turn to last but not least you will soon come full circle in 11 days and voting a new strategic plan and education equity policy within this school year thank you dr reed for making your first work session on agenda item during your tenure the equity policy and the board officially voting on the business meeting on their last business meeting of the year on one day june 26th thank

[01:45:10] thank you very much Jeff Hoffman Susan Otto good evening I'm Susan Otto and I am here representing a group of parents as the director from Fairfax speak up I am

[01:45:45] a Fairfax resident and I am also a proud mom that had two children that went through the Fairfax County School System from K through 12 and graduated from college so thank you very much for their great education what I wanted to talk to you about was to on behalf of the hundred concerned parents I'm asking you to adopt the transparency on student achievement resolution that has been emailed to each of you individually and I want to thank you some of those of you

[01:46:22] that have responded in the past I appreciate that to demonstrate community support for this a petition before this meeting was also submitted with petition signatures from local parents and tax-paying residents the ongoing Attorney General's investigation should make it clear that transparency on this issue is important and not only to parents here in Fairfax but across the state well Fairfax County Public Schools announced a new regulation that was very narrow in scope and only addressed parental notification of

[01:46:58] national merit scholarships we think our students and parents deserve better given the ongoing pattern of a lack of transparency and request that you expand your existing regulation or pass a clarifying resolution that makes it clear that you're going to more comprehensively protect transparency to the tax-paying parents regarding their own children's academic performance thank

[01:47:24] you very much for your time good evening my name is Yu Yan Zhao I'm a representing hundreds of parents in our community who signed this transparency petition that Susan just mentioned. Dr. Reed, please understand there are deep divisions between school board and parents to change and mend relationship

[01:48:02] in our community. Transparency from FCPS ensuring parents rights is the foremost priority. Over the past few years we have heard a previous governor saying parents have no role in their children's education. We see school board implement controversial policies with little public input. Parents' rights

were denied and people feel as if dealing with a black box when facing FCPS. Using teaching admission policy change as an example, there's no way parents can

[01:48:37] find out how the selection process works or if there's no, basically there's no opportunity to appeal if they feel unjustified. Such lack of transparency practice and denying parents rights is not acceptable. Tonight, please focus on this petition and note the real victim on this marital war scandal are our children. Please bring yourself to the role as a parent, not government authority who needs to protect your own righteousness. Please do not use our

[01:49:14] taxpayers' money to finance lawsuits against the AG. Please have the courage to do the right thing by collaborating and work with the community to find proper solutions. On behalf of hundreds of parents, I ask you to adopt this Transparency on Education Achievement Resolution and please work towards rebuild our community with trust and respect. Thank you. Elliot Bell Krasner.

[01:49:47] Good evening and happy Pride. My name is Elliot Bal Krasner. I'm a resident of the Providence District and a proud constituent of Carl Frisch. I'm also very proud that the school board continues to recognize Pride and stands up for LGBTQ+ inclusion in a time when it's under attack and under school districts nationwide. I've had the privilege of being a religious school educator for 17 years, 10 of which have also been spent as a Holocaust educator, so I'm going to put on my teacher hat for a second and ask you all, including the audience,

[01:50:25] to close your eyes and keep them closed until I ask you to open them. Smash! Smash! Smash! You are in your bedroom, and all of a sudden you hear the sound of smash glass. You race downstairs and find that your living room windows are broken.

[01:50:42] You go outside to see that your neighbors are breaking the windows of other houses and those of storefronts located on your block. You run down the corner to where your house of worship is located to find that it is on fire. You can open your eyes now. What I have described is just a tiny taste of what Susan Warsinger, all of nine years old experienced almost 85 years ago during the November 9, 1938 pogroms known as Kristallnacht.

[01:51:06] Ms. Warsinger is still with us today, and hundreds of my 7th grade students and I have had the honor to listen to her share her story. Now what if I told you that according to a U.S. Holocaust knowledge and awareness survey, at least half and more than likely half of all middle school and high school public school students in Virginia have never learned about Kristallnacht, cannot name a single one of the more than 40,000 concentration camps established by the Nazi regime, and do not know that more than 6 million Jews were murdered from 1933 to 1945.

[01:51:36] What if I told you that 10% or almost 100,000 of those students actually believe that the Jewish people were the cause of the Holocaust? Holocaust education in public schools in Fairfax County, in Virginia, and indeed nationwide is severely lacking. But now more than ever it is critically important.

[01:51:54] Why? about the Holocaust, students learn to recognize what anti-Semitism looks like. There has been a dramatic rise in anti-Semitic incidents in our country with more than 3,600 reported in the past year. That is an average of 10 incidents every single day. They will understand why it is inappropriate to draw parallels between measures taken to fight the COVID-19 pandemic and the crimes of the Nazi regime, something that even the Auschwitz Memorial called a sad symptom of moral decay in moral and

intellectual decay. And we'll be able to define what genocide is and recognize the warning signs of it so that they are in a position to speak up and speak

[01:52:30] out against those who perpetrate genocide. They will do so. As we end the academic year and look ahead to the next year and beyond, I urge all of you to work with those who develop the social studies and history curriculum at FCPS schools to incorporate a four-week Holocaust unit and a trip to the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, which is just on our doorstep.

[01:52:50] can and must be done here in Fairfax County and our public schools in particular to educate current students about the Holocaust so that never again does not simply become again. Thank you.

[01:53:07] Richard Porter. Good evening. My name is Richard Porter. I'm a longtime resident of McLean in Fairfax County.

[01:53:23] As you probably perceive, I do not have children in the Fairfax County Public Schools at the moment, although I had three, all of whom graduated from Fairfax County Public High Schools. Notwithstanding the fact that they have graduated, I've long had an interest in the ongoings of the Fairfax County public school system, because I firmly believe that education is the critical gateway to opportunity for all of our students in this county, and that's where this board's emphasis needs to be.

[01:53:52] I also want to talk to you about transparency, but it's a different kind of transparency. Having watched the board for a long time, I, and I know its views shared by a large number of other people. You are not as transparent as you should be. I think that's a widespread belief, unfortunately. A good example of that is the report that was prepared back in 2020, in the spring of 2020, about the failure of distance learning in the Fairfax County public school system, which was a real embarrassment nationally. Now, Elaine and I have had some email correspondence about that. You're still holding that report. It hasn't been released. Transparency requires

[01:54:28] that that be released. There's no reason not to do it. I fear also you're going down the same path with respect to the National Merit Commendation Award issue. I've heard the issue, the argument that people might be subject to harassment or threat. Frankly, I don't buy it. You can release these reports, all of which are paid for by taxpayer dollars, by significant redactions. We talk about where money should go in the system, to safety, mental health. You're spending it on lawyers and you're spending too much on lawyers, in my view. I also was here back in October of 2022 when some

[01:55:04] members of this board pushed forward in a rapid fashion the ill-advised resolution on truthful education. Again, very little notice to the public, very little opportunity to have public comment. That was an embarrassment. Thank you very much. Thank you very much. Thank you very much.

[01:55:29] Kara Lewis I want to thank the school board for your pride month proclamation I have been a proud Fairfax County parent for 16 years I'm in the Springfield district honestly I have been ashamed and fearful of the vitriol and hate that I hear coming from some adults in our community please stay strong in the face of the small minority who are manufacturing

[01:56:03] unwarranted fears about LGBTQ youth accusing schools and teachers of indoctrination and claiming that their parental rights are being violated. No one is forcing anything upon their children. These kids are simply asking to be allowed to live their lives without unnecessary interrogation and interference.

[01:56:22] In reality, LGBTQ youth are more than four times as likely to attempt suicide than their peers because they are stigmatized in society by those who deny their feelings and take away their safe spaces. It has been proven that LGBTQ young people report lower rates of attempting suicide when they have access to affirming spaces. It has nothing to do with indoctrination. It is simply a matter of live and let live. Those who claim that their parental rights are being violated want to restrict the rights of parents who support their trans kids and give them space

[01:56:56] for self-realization without indoctrination. Trans youth want to be left alone. They are not imposing on anyone else. The parental rights that some people want are literally to take safety and health care and unimpeded education away from our youth. They are trying to impose one religious viewpoint on others that these youth should deny who they are. There is a separation of church and state in this country which means that you do not get to impose your restrictive religious views on others. It does not mean that you get to actively harm trans youth by denying their existence.

[01:57:30] Thank you again for caring for our LGBTQ youth and not pretending that going back in the closet is a valid way to lessen polarization in our community. We're moving on to our video testimony.

[01:57:52] Please play the video testimony submitted by Stephanie Lundquist-Aurora. Good evening and happy Flag Day. I am proud to hold high America's most inclusive flag. I heard that bothers a couple of you. When that's the case, you don't belong up there representing us.

[01:58:11] There seems to be some confusion among the board members about what this flag represents. You are attacking our children's First Amendment rights to free speech, which, in case you need a refresher, are guaranteed in public schools. Still, you compel speech with mandated pronouns and are now introducing a bias incident reporting system.

[01:58:31] Aside from issues of legality, most teachers, parents, and students are against a 24-7, 360-degree anonymous snitch line on all of their perceived biases, but you are pushing forward with it anyhow. Not surprisingly, you intend to vote on the matter on June 26, after FCPS families leave town on summer vacation.

[01:58:53] What in the world is happening? It's frightening to watch the 1984 sausage being produced. The elected board members at the May 23 work session were admittedly unfamiliar with a multitude of changes to the district's code of conduct, including this new reporting system.

[01:59:11] Basically, a couple of administrators, the chief equity officer, and outside contractors are working together to restrict the free speech of FCPS students and teachers. That doesn't sound very inclusive and welcoming, does it? Will you really vote in favor of that?

[01:59:32] Madam Chair, that was our last public speaker. Thank you. Agenda item 4.02, strategic plan update. I now call on Dr. Reed to provide a presentation on the strategic plan.

[01:59:56] Good evening, Madam Chair and board members. This is probably the last strategic planning update for a little bit, and I do appreciate the efforts.

[02:00:17] I think Mr. Becerra came up and thanked a number of our members of folks who have led this strategic planning work. I also want to thank Mr. Becerra for his help because he was a key advocate and leader in this work. We've also got some key milestones up for you.

[02:00:36] We've received feedback from planning team participants that has been analyzed and currently the step that's occurring right now is aligning the school improvement plans with our strategic plan. Our next slide is really around the opportunity for choosing a key goal area, which again, we're looking at goal three around academic excellence as well as measures from another school determined strategic planning goal.

[02:01:03] This work will help align not just our schools, but also our division departments in better supporting what is occurring in our classrooms. So we're excited about using the strategic plan as a catalyst for this work and really thinking about what are those high leverage strategies that all departments and staff will be able to utilize to support our schools.

[02:01:24] Lastly, a reminder to check our website for strategic plan information and updates and stay connected with this work as we push forward. So that is our strategic planning report this evening.

[02:01:39] - Thank you, Dr. Reed. I'll turn to Ms. Corbett Sanders for a comment. - Yes, thank you, Dr. Reed. It's actually more of a question. I think the most important aspect of the strategic plan is the integration of the strategic plan into each of the school improvement plans for each of our schools.

[02:01:59] What is the process that you envision to ensure that the board is made aware of the, how each one of the schools is implementing strategic plan in their SIP or setting targets for the strategic plan in their SIP in particular as a magisterial member I of course want to know what's happening in the Mount Vernon district. Thank you Miss Corbett Sanders and as you know this year we had multiple meetings throughout the year which were really formative check-ins on our school plans and that was I think a really

[02:02:33] major step in the work around maintaining data looks and then adjusting not just at the end of the year but at various times during the year it's anticipated we're going to continue that work our plan do check act cycle will continue board members of course the magisterial and at-large members will have access full access to all school plans and we're just excited about the team we talked about something called portfolio management where the teams across divisions and departments are working with our region offices and school principals to make sure that our resources are aligned if you remember

[02:03:11] early on the arrows going multiple directions what we want to make sure is that our resources are aligned to help schools be really clear around their work we're also looking at pyramid structures because we know that we can't start instructional work at secondary without building a strong elementary foundation so the work will be both vertical and horizontal and board members will be a a part of that process just as they happen well if I can ask you to have some intentionality in in informing the board members of what's going to be happening with these SIPs with the school improvement plans and I

[02:03:51] especially the vertical integration between elementary middle and high school and how you see those scaffolding and so I would like to understand is that something that we can expect a quarterly briefing on from the races is it something that you'll have in a dashboard is it something that you will so I know that these are all new questions I just would like to know perhaps as we start the school year next year if we could have an update on how that will be implemented yes ma'am absolutely thank you we're on it thank

[02:04:31] Thank you. Thank you. Ms. Toland. Yes. Thank you for the presentation. I was wondering about the data you were talking about IT's developing a method for schools to present data or look at data and

information.

[02:04:51] So I know you also said that every school would be looking at an academic goal and then another goal of their choice. So do you I'm just trying to imagine the data will each school be looking at the same type of data or will they have some selection as to what data they'll be looking at how do you think that will be working so one of the things we want to get really clear about is at the elementary level in particular we want to make sure that every third grader is a reader right then we're looking at secondary we've really tried to put a stake in the ground around eighth grade right that all eighth graders minimally not

[02:05:29] maximally it's not a ceiling but minimally have an opportunity to be in algebra so we know that that's work that the data around that work is going to be building K through 3 for the third grade reading markers K through 8 for the math markers so the data around those two are going to be very similar school to school across the entire division and as we look at high school course taking patterns and the increase in dual credit be it through IB AP or dual enrollment We want to make sure our students are ready with the most rigorous course taking patterns possible Because we know that post-secondary training of some sort is critical

[02:06:08] For our students and their ability to be successful in that area So I think that there will be similar data that will be across elementary across secondary schools But there will also be a unique data point that schools will be able to select That might be more contextually critical within a school community Great. And, you know, those are goals that we have right in that strategic plan.

[02:06:34] Right, exactly. But I understand how it would be difficult perhaps to gather that data, so I'm pretty excited that you're working on that, figure that one out. Thank you. Yes, thank you. And I think what we've realized, and we have such a great team, I think, between our principals, region, central office, what we're discovering, I believe, is that a lot of the data exists. It's just not in a format that's easily accessible or actionable so one of the things we're working on is how to elevate the data for real-time use in

[02:07:05] terms of informing next steps thank you miss amesh yeah thank you so much dr reed um this is all just really exciting i wanted to ask about the school um the sips the school improvement and innovation plans my understanding was those have been happening with the covid money right how is that different than um and i think i have always been right happening but so i'd love to hear a little bit more about you know what's what's new or like what we're looking forward to so great question miss Amish the ESSER plans required schools the

[02:07:44] ESSER funding funding plan required schools to identify what they were how they were targeting those funds and for many years title one schools also have that same requirement to identify how title one funds will be expended to support learning what we're now realizing is that as we mobilize our strategic plan that all schools plans need to identify how they're using resources and we recognize that finance are not that finance is not the only type of resource it's how do we use our time right how do we align our schedules and we've had a team recently working on elementary planning time specifically

[02:08:23] and I think one of the things that we're really realizing is critically important both for students and staff is how do we utilize time within a master schedule what courses get priority in certain master schedules k-12 so there's a lot of planning if you will that I think really we want to be thoughtful and supportive about in fact I'll just use one more example it used to be it came up in cabinet this week that all

master schedules used to be reviewed at the region office just to confirm regulation planning time and we've kind

[02:08:58] gotten away from some of those practices because um i think you know we had covet and so forth and one of the things we need to recognize is that as we have changes in leadership and staffing changes how helpful it is to go back to some of those structured practices so i think that's going to be those structured supports are going to be really important particularly as we look at transition and leadership at the school level yeah no i really appreciate you articulating that I think I didn't want the misunderstanding to be that we haven't been planning on the school level but I know you've emphasized time treasure talent right so all of those

[02:09:34] are resources beyond just money which we can track and on that point I mean I think if we counted the number of times fidelity of implementation came up in our board conversations it'd be in the thousands so I just want to make sure maybe this is an opportunity to be thinking, being thoughtful about the consistency that can be standardized, put in place around some of what we know are best practices across schools and being thoughtful, especially to make sure that that equity component is always front and center and thinking broadly.

[02:10:09] But I also wanted to ask if this might be headed in the direction of individualized learning plans at any point. I know that it came up before, but not in any concrete way, but that is something some school divisions do, and I think it would be, you know, in a similar way with special needs kids have an IEP, right? Their parents are required to be a part of that process, or guardians, and individualized learning plans, especially post-COVID, might be something to think about.

[02:10:37] I don't know if that's something you guys did in Washington, but I just want to offer that and hear maybe your reflections, or just your reactions to the possibility. So thanks, Ms. Amish. It's true that many states actually require an IEP type profile both for their advanced learners as well as their students requiring special supports I would also say that many states and I believe Virginia also is moving towards individualized reading plans to confirm and affirm that our youngest learners are healthy readers for sure by grade three because we know that's critical

[02:11:12] for future success so our early access to literacy work is critical and I suspect we're going to be moving towards more individualized planning around that topic for sure yeah no I'll be looking forward to seeing you know maybe the reading plans will be a starting point because they'll put the structures in place right it's a big commitment of resources obviously of staff time but I'm eager to see it just to make sure that we're giving each kid that by name and by need as we commit the last piece is just in terms of the data so it seems like these plans are going to be based quite a bit on the data that we have correct so then the question is how good is that data in informing us about the

[02:11:48] school environment I know miss Hall had been working on it being more expansive about how we think of what we collect and what we understand about our families because sometimes we might think that that's the picture and we don't even know what we don't know until we have more expansive data I don't know if there's any update at all I don't want to put you on the spot if there's something that can be shared about wanting to head in that direction or wanting to be more rigorous about what the data we collect about our students all right miss Hall hello and thank you for for bringing that up I really appreciate it we are still working on that we're trying to figure out how we

[02:12:27] can best include collecting additional data through our online registration as well as other opportunities to do that it's it's a work in progress it with a A FEW DIFFERENT DEPARTMENTS ACROSS THE DIVISION WE'RE WORKING ON IT.

[02:12:45] NO I APPRECIATE THAT AND JUST FLAGGING AGAIN THE IMPORTANCE OF WE'RE JUST SO LIMITED BY ONLY FEDERALLY REQUIRED DATA THAT WE COLLECT AND WE CAN DO A LOT MORE IN A COUNTY AS DIVERSE AS OURS BUT THANK YOU DR. REID I LOOK FORWARD TO SUPPORTING THESE EFFORTS. THANK YOU.

[02:13:03] THANK YOU VERY MUCH AND SEEING NO ONE ELSE WHO WISHES TO SPEAK I WILL NOW CALL ON YOU DR. REID ON AGENDA ITEM 4.03 TO SHARE ACADEMIC MATTERS. you madam chair and of course this is one of my favorite moments in our meetings and this evening our instructional services team put together really sort of a slide deck of what I would consider highlights around our content areas so I'm going to start with science and engineering and again these are summary slides which will be on our website but just the amount of talent I

[02:13:38] just want to remind our board and our community that we have I think some of the most talented young people and staff in this community and their work has been recognized not just locally but regionally nationally and internationally so just I've only included several of these which are I think some of the most illuminating but we also want folks to know that there were four grand award winning projects that FCPS students brought to the international science fair last month from using beetles to recycle styrofoam and that's a pretty

[02:14:16] incredible experiment quite honestly not that we want to promote styrofoam but beetles actually can recycle styrofoam to enhancing artificial intelligence and by the way we're really planning some interesting and exciting what I would call innovation cells for the coming year that there's just a tremendous amount going on with our young people and just really want to call that out our students staff and families as well as community partners want to turn towards our career and technical student organizations and the amount of work they've done it's amazing how many of our students are involved and how many

[02:14:53] of our students also were state or Commonwealth leaders from Fairfax County we had 16 students that served as state officers across this Commonwealth with two students serving as the president for their state organization that's I think an unprecedented data point and Miss Togby I think your student colleagues have done us proud across the state they're not just involved they are leading our youth around this Commonwealth and I couldn't be more proud of them as we think about the importance of our scholastic art and writing

[02:15:27] awards it's the reflections awards and the art regional awards as well as our gold keys and national awards in art and writing have been incredible and as I think about our future work along these lines I know I've been visited by several people too to think about increasing our forensic or debate programs and making those more accessible across the county as well as our arts and writing and we again one of the measurements you have in the strategic plan is increasing access to these activities and it's often in these

[02:16:04] moments that our young people deepen their understanding and are able to adapt and apply the core knowledge they're learning in the classroom so we're so excited to highlight our scholastic art and writing this week we had an opportunity to celebrate our theater and dance and just want to remind our

board and community that we have one of the largest public school theater education programs in the United States that is something to be tremendously proud of and the level of performance is unprecedented I've had an opportunity to be in multiple divisions around the country and I know I'm not

[02:16:42] supposed to have favorites but it is unbelievable what our young people here are able to create for those of you who attended Monday evening at our capi awards just the theatrical performances that evening were impressive again I just think that when we think about the arts and theater the writing that all of the things that our young people and our staff and our community and families are supporting this is a very special place and the community inclusion in these areas is unprecedented as we think then of our music and performing ensembles I want to remind our board and community that our schools have received high

[02:17:20] honors for excellence including Blue Ribbon State Award, the VMEA State Conference performing, MFA National Concert Band Festival performing, and our NAMFE national concert performances as well. Again we're not just excellent locally but we are regionally at state and the national level and again there There are so many opportunities for our young people to demonstrate their talents and have experiences that bring them together.

[02:17:49] It's just something I think we can be really proud of. Our Davis Career Center was a first class award winner. And this again is an amazing location. They are celebrating their first class award winner and their ability to support, implement, and design programs and activities that result in improving outcomes for all students.

[02:18:10] top quality affordable catering while learning important workplace skills are a program where everyone benefits and we thank the um our davis center and programs for their work when we think about inclusive schools i've had the opportunity this year to be both at woodson high school and annandale high school and had the experience of our special olympics unified sports most recently this spring as well as best buddies programming and this is an example here at annandale but they are involved in programs across the division. As an example of our college

[02:18:46] readiness exemplars I want to remind our board that again as one of the highest achieving divisions across the country we had 833 students receive our national merit commended student recognition across the division with an additional 238 semi-finalists in the class of 2023 many of whom have moved on and been awarded scholarships as finalists in the competition with announcements of further scholarships to come and our AP exams we had over 35 000 given in 2022 with 72 percent with

[02:19:23] a three or better which is an outstanding data point over 8 000 IB exams were also given with 73% OF SCORES WITH A FOUR OR ABOVE. ESSENTIALLY I THINK OUR STUDENTS ARE JUST DOING AN AMAZING JOB IN A VARIETY OF CONTENT, ACADEMIC, AND APPLICATION AREAS.

[02:19:46] SO ACADEMIC MATTERS FOR THE EVENING IS COMPLETE AND THIS WILL BE ON OUR WEBSITE FOR A CLOSE LOOK FOR OUR COMMUNITY AS THEY PERHAPS WANT TO PUT SOME OF THESE SLIDES UP ON THEIR REFRIGERATORS. THANK YOU, DR. REED. I'll call on Mr. Frisch.

[02:20:01] Thank you very much for academic matters tonight. I was at many graduations with you earlier this month where they would announce the National Honor Society or other scholars and a significant portion of the graduating class would stand to be recognized because we do take their scholastic achievement seriously.

[02:20:27] WE ALSO HAD OUR ACADEMY STUDENTS WHO ARE GOING TO MILITARY ACADEMIES RECOGNIZED. I APPRECIATE YOU MENTIONING THE INTERNATIONAL SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING FAIR. WE HAD TWO STUDENTS OF THOSE 16 FROM PROVIDENCE DISTRICT, SO WE'RE VERY PROUD ABOUT THAT.

[02:20:42] AND MS. SEISMORE-HEISNER AND I WERE ABLE TO ATTEND THE CLOSING DINNER FOR THE DECA STUDENTS AT OAKTON WITH MS. TOGBY. AND IT WAS REALLY GREAT HEARING EVERYTHING THAT THEY'RE UP TO AND HOW CREATIVE THEY ARE. winning awards at the state and international level and national level.

[02:21:00] At Oakton, they started a coffee shop that serves coffee to staff before school starts. They realized in our regulations that they can't sell coffee to students or during the day, but they can sell coffee to our staff before the day begins.

[02:21:16] And so they've gotten very creative. Their marketing genius is on point, or as the kids say, all cap. Yeah, yeah. I don't know yeah I was I spent a lot of time at the cappies and I picked up on a lot of slang but then the cappies I mean how many talented kids did we see performing at the cappies nominees dancing acting our student journalists so we have a lot to be proud of here many of us were at the sixth grade all-county chorus for the first time in in several years and it was just a delight to see our kids performing again so I very much appreciate this you probably

[02:21:55] could have gone on for another 30 minutes with all of the great things happening from an achievement perspective in our school system absolutely thank you Mr. Frisch and again just a big shout out to our staff and our students and families that support them this is this is our work thank you Ms. Maren yeah I'm so glad you shared about the theater arts because I've just been like crazed since the cappies and since a friend of mine her daughter won one of the cappies and I just just stunned at that and I should say stunned because as mr. first said we expect this of our students but one thing I was wondering is in thinking about

[02:22:32] South Lakes High School and their achievement and winning best musical and nine others Cappy's and the Brandon Dixon Awards anyway I could go on but you know I was wondering about the data of how many students are involved in in our production so I did happen to speak with the director who was actually the first teacher this year the new teacher to South Lakes is here but you know a 100 students were in this performance. Is that usual or not? And I think when I looked at that great roundup of data you had, I'd love to know, and again, this could be a matter of equity too, but what did the involvement rates look like? And I can't recall if we've ever had anything like

[02:23:09] that, or at least for maybe athletics or something else, but as you are creating these very robust dashboards, I think that would be really valuable information to have by region, by pyramid in the future. Thank you. And that's the intent. It's one of the measures that you've identified in the strategic plan which means we will need to be reporting on those publicly in the coming year.

[02:23:34] Thank you. Dr. Anderson. Thank you. I'm actually very glad to follow what Ms. Marin has said because this is wonderful information. But a couple of things that you shared really struck out to me and you know the achievement is great.

[02:23:51] You talked about increasing access. You talked about being excellent in FCPS and I'd like to have some sort of data to TO SHOW THAT THAT EXCELLENCE IS HAPPENING ACROSS ALL OF FCPS. SO I

DON'T WANT TO BE LABORED THE POINT, BUT GETTING THE INFORMATION AS DESCRIBED BY MS. MARIN I THINK WOULD BE REALLY IMPORTANT TO REALLY SHOW THAT WE HAVE EQUITABLE ACCESS AND OPPORTUNITIES ACROSS THIS DIVISION.

[02:24:15] ONE OF THE QUESTIONS THAT I HAD REGARDING SOME OF THE DATA THAT YOU HAD THERE, WHICH IS 823 STUDENTS ACROSS THE DIVISION, WHERE -- IF YOU COULD PUT THE SLIDE BACK UP, I DON'T REMEMBER. IS THIS THE COMMENDED?

[02:24:30] Scholars it was the one that has 823 on it was I believe that was the college 33 Laura the college readiness exemplar I believe has the national merit recognition I think that's where we're headed yes 833 13 thank you can you speak to how is that oops how is that number how does that show up across our pyramids and what was that number last year I do not have the number in my head over last year but I do know that we looked

[02:25:06] at I can get you that information for the Monday letter upcoming we did pull the data from all the schools and again I would have to say I don't recall which schools had how many students but we can provide that chart to you as well right because I think in years past there have been zero students from the Mason district I think I raised this to you in the fall when we review the data so I'm really hoping that that has changed in this year similarly you showed the data for the IB and AP exams, where I think 72%, I'm sorry, 72% of the students

[02:25:43] receive scores of three or better in 2022. Again, looking for the growth, what was it before? So we can, because outside of that context, I don't know how to treat that information. Right. And we, we will have the 2023 data, probably within the next month. We don't have the 2023 yet. So when we get that, we'll see 22, 23, and we could also provide you the 21.

[02:26:08] - Okay, and lastly, I know from multiple conversations with you regarding the academic matters, I know you have a few that you are picking to present, but it is really difficult for me to really ask questions and to really dig into the data when I'm seeing this for the first time right now.

[02:26:27] It would be very helpful if this was posted as everything else must be for the board to review in advance and to be able to engage with you more meaningfully. Thank you for that feedback. - Thank you, Dr. McLaughlin.

[02:26:43] Ms. McLaughlin, I just elevated you. It is your last year. - Oh, I got an honorary degree that I wasn't aware of. I know it's that time of year. - Clearly I need more coffee tonight. - No, no worries. Actually, the board is going back into closed, so I am mindful and want to just briefly say, Dr. Reed, that as you know, one of the things that's so important to me is data and context.

[02:27:04] And so, sort of capturing what Dr. Anderson said, And knowing that, again, you've arrived on the scene, so a lot of this is from the time of your predecessor who was with us for five years, but I really would like for the division to get into, I think, a very substantive and important practice that we need to see data over a five-year period.

[02:27:29] Anything in a vacuum is really difficult to celebrate, and, you know, the community hears us often say, look, isn't this wonderful? Look how amazing we are as a national school division. And again, it's tough to judge.

[02:27:45] Are we going up? Are we going down? Are we staying flat? And I think that helps us as a board and you engage a more meaningful reflection and analysis of it. So I know that this is just academic matters and it's not, you know, this is not a work session, but I would say maybe less of the density of lots and lots of things and maybe, some sort of quality of we could have seen a bar chart over the five year and and celebrated hopefully seeing um upward progress that being said thank you so much for providing the uh data

[02:28:22] point on ap scores being three or higher and what that is because those are passing scores and it's encouraging to see that number so thank you thank you for that feedback miss corbett sanders thank thank you very much I love the data you presented I would ask that since you're going to put this on the website that we add a couple of additional data points and those data points would be we've just gone through high school graduations

[02:28:55] how many students graduated and how many graduated on time the second piece which is something that I ask of each of my schools every year is what is the dollar amount of scholarships that were given to the kids I usually look at just the schools in Mount Vernon but it would be helpful to have it across the county okay similarly if we could have a list of or not a list but a data point on how

[02:29:29] many students entered into the military and then the last data point is I love the AP and IB but the dual enrollment courses taken by kids I know one school People in particular had almost a million dollars worth of GMU credits given as a result of dual enrollment and it would be helpful for us to understand how many dual enrollment credits were granted and extrapolating that to the cost if they were to go to George Mason or another state university.

[02:30:06] Those are all the things that really demonstrate that the investment we're making in public education is so critical. Thank you for that feedback. Thank you. Thank you very much, Dr. Reed. I'll just say one really brief thing I wanted to mention is I do love all the data points and, you know, the CAFI's are near to my heart.

[02:30:29] My son was a CAFI's nominee last year and that was incredible and I say that to bring up the point I'm trying to make is in the slide when we talk about inclusive schools, one of the things I've mentioned many times is we cannot just look, I think the Unified Special Olympics are phenomenal.

[02:30:46] I think best buddies and programs like that are phenomenal. But we have to remember that those programs are open to students who generally access the Category B programs. The students in Category A programs, from my experience, are told that those programs aren't for them, but they can participate as a buddy.

[02:31:04] But there are a lot of students who are in Category A programs all day long and are in these small group self-contained settings. Many of them are included in many extracurriculars and activities, but it would be really nice to get an idea of what that inclusion looks like because often the two data points we look at inclusion are unified Special Olympics and Best Buddies and we're leaving out a whole section of students and probably a lot of really positive data points to be perfectly honest and I'm happy to talk to you offline but I bring that up because my kiddo was one of those kids in the cat a class who clearly was well included in theater enough to get a cap these nominees nomination so I think when we talk about inclusion we need to be much

[02:31:43] more broad at how we talk about it and the populations we talk about it for and the data points we look at. Thank you for that feedback. Thank you very much. I really appreciate all your time so thank you Dr. Reed for your time. Okay thank you. We'll move on to agenda item 4.04 Student Representative Adams. I call Ms. Togby. Thank you Madam Chair. Sorry thank you Madam Chair. Good evening and happy Thursday everyone and wow what a hectic last few weeks it's been. I got to join a few board members and members of the leadership team at graduations

[02:32:20] this past few weeks so special shout out to Lewis High School and Lake Braddock for allowing me to join them on their very special day at one of the ceremonies I got to spend about half an hour before everything started happening for all the lineups and things like that I got to talk to the officers about just their overall high school experience and you know how they felt about this kind of like one cultivating moment that kind of is the end of their FCPS careers and their journeys with us um and it was honestly really amazing to hear about the progress or specific notes that they kind of just remembered from middle school elementary school

[02:32:59] and the differences whether they might have had an older sibling who might have told them about how their 10th grade year went versus how they experienced their 10th grade year and how they hope that let's say if they have another sibling on the way um how they hope that their 10th grade experiences even better than theirs. So things like that just really kind of made me excited and happy. But it was also a really frank discussion in the sense where they also were willing to share certain points where they were kind of disappointed in whether it was the certain ways we treated the past with virtual school or how we treated our way coming back into the buildings, things like that. I think it was just a really frank discussion that I wish

[02:33:38] everyone at this table could easily have access to have because it was kind of grounding in a sense where it was a reality check where I got to think beyond my region, beyond my pyramid, and I'm sure you all would even be able to think beyond your own boundaries. And then on a different note, I wanted to kind of mention how the recognitions and proclamations that we have shouldn't just end here. We shouldn't just take a photo and then that's just kind of it. I think that it matters that we see the level of excitement whether it's with the board or with the audience beyond this room it should be in the classrooms whether it's through

[02:34:15] the excitement of what we just talked about or in the classroom through the curriculum and I think that our students can learn certain histories and students can feel as though their identities and their history that they might know from their parents are actually reflected within the classroom so just kind of like a reminder that representation matters on all fronts, whether it's about Pride Month or Caribbean American Heritage Month. It doesn't necessarily matter if you have direct ties to what might be represented or a struggle that might be highlighted. It's important that you want to support and uphold that group, even if

[02:34:52] you're not necessarily one that's directly affected. Two weeks ago, I got to join people across the county to watch Vice President Harris speak about the importance of gun violence protection and prevention putting aside VP Harris's remark I thought it was really heavy-hitting when she mentioned that there is a need for common-sense legislation and I thought that that was a really impactful line that she kind of said and prioritizing gun violence protection within schools is critical for ensuring safety well-being mental health and academic success which I know we're all here for so nobody should be

[02:35:28] explaining to a six or seven year old why they're crouching in the back of a classroom as a drill because it's pretty messed up actually. Today or tomorrow is the last day of school for a lot of students and also it's my little sister's birthday so happy early birthday Maria and I want to wish everyone an amazing summer and for the first time ever I don't get to say see you next year which kind of hit me today um but i know i'm still gonna be wishing you all best of luck in the fall

[02:35:59] i can't wait to hear all about the 23 24 school year well miss togby we hope we see you next year when you come back to visit thank you very much as always agenda item 4.05 superintendent matters i call on dr reed thank you madam chair well since last we gathered um the team in the office did calculate the number of graduations I attended so I was able to attend 23 of them including the Chantilly Academy fire and rescue program where I saw mr.

[02:36:39] Frisch and just had a fabulous time seeing that and most recently this week had an opportunity to join Sheriff Kincaid and pastor Walton and miss Tolan at the adult detention center graduation and it was I think you know just all the comprehensive high schools and the different programs and so forth it's just exciting to to be there for those celebration milestone for our students on May 30th I was invited to Cooper Middle School to be part of a

[02:37:12] special NASA event principal Lisa Barrow had the Artemis 1 mission leadership and their mission manager was there as you may recall last year the school symphonic band and percussion students performed the introductory song the Artemis generation for an Artemis 1 launch broadcast so our music went to space which is pretty exciting and the cafeteria is full of young people were who are listening very excitedly to an astronaut and the Artemis mission manager also that day I was able to attend Fox Mill Elementary School to be

[02:37:50] part of their ribbon-cutting event which was really exciting as Miss Togby mentioned and several others of you Friday June 2nd we did host as a division the vice president and secretary of education on a backdrop of a conversation again around school safety and the impact of gun violence in in our schools and communities.

[02:38:13] Thursday, I attended on June 8th, the Fairfax County Retired Educators Scholarship Luncheon. And this group every year awards scholarships to help our students pursue careers in education. And this year, they honored five deserving students and just really appreciate our teachers and educators coming together to support the next generation of educators.

[02:38:35] And finally, of course, this past Monday, it was fabulous to be part of the CAPEES event. And then last evening, our FCPS Honors event where we had an opportunity, our HR department put together a fabulous program that honored a number of our staff in a variety of categories.

[02:38:53] And again, just a proud evening to be part of Fairfax County Public Schools. And all the best and don't be a stranger, Ms. Togby. We're expecting great things and just looking forward to all that you're gonna see do and the impact you're going to have in your next season so that's my report thank you thank you Dr. Reed we're going to move on to agenda item 5.01 strategic plan I now call on Miss Sizemore Heiser for a motion I move that

[02:39:31] the school board adopt the strategic plan is there a second I second it Miss Sizemore Heiser would you like to speak to your motion yes please I will try to keep this brief but I just wanted to first to celebrate that we are here at this moment a year ago or last August when the board first had its retreat to

commit ourselves to re-engaging with the community on the strategic plan and dr. Reed mentioned we'll have this done by the end of this school year I have to say I had a few doubts especially when we talked about the robust community

[02:40:06] engagement that we wanted to do but it has been really wonderful to see that here we are with a strategic plan and all the community engagements before I talk about that I want to thank you dr. Reed for your leadership I want to thank my colleagues on the board for the incredible amount of time and energy we spent in our retreats and our participating community forums and in planning teams to work on this and i want to thank the um the champions of the treaty plan dr ivy dr spikes dustin wright um marcy neal for really shepherding all of the work through this so this is um it's just very very exciting that here we

[02:40:44] are coming out of COVID really re-engaging with our community some of the statistics around the community engagement is pretty amazing we had 65 plus planning team meetings in community engagement held across 11 teams 117,089 feedback survey responses and 4,500 student submissions from principal-led groups we had six convenings of the core planning team four of the instructional focus team, eight of the student voice team, we had 28,000 school and department participants over two convenings.

[02:41:20] We had 15 convenings of community forums. This truly is a plan that is not just the board's plan, not just the leadership team's plan, not just our staff's plan, but our community's plan. Because at the end of the day, our public schools are here to center our students, to educate our students, but we're here to serve the community.

[02:41:41] Public schools, I believe more than anything else, are what leads to the success of our future, of our community, of our society, our economy, and our democracy.

[02:41:59] Public schools are where most of our future leaders are educated, our future innovators, creators, the leaders of our economy, the ones who hopefully will take care of me in my old age. So a new strategic plan with a vision for the future to guide us is imperative, important, it is vital that our community was a big part of it it was amazing to see all the different voices come together at the table all the new voices as george becerra said i think i forgot to mention george as well as one of our community champions so thank you george come together in the same room with the common goal of finding the best path forward the best vision for our schools and our

[02:42:38] students i'm very excited of the hard work of our colleagues on the goals that we have our five goals starting from a strong start through preschool safe supported included empowered students academic growth and excellence for our students equitable access and opportunity and leading for tomorrow's innovation this is truly a student-centered plan with pillars equity commitments and measures so we make sure not just that we have a plan but that we implement it and i'm very excited next week to have a policy governance retreat so we have a conversation together on the board's consistent oversight of the implementation and reporting from dr reed on this plan

[02:43:17] so i will not take up too much more time i know many of my colleagues wish to speak but i am i just want to say thank you to all of my colleagues on the board for all your hard work for your dedication for your passion i want to say thank you to our community for showing up for caring deeply about our schools and our students i want to say thank you to our staff for showing up and working hard and caring deeply for our students this is going to be great for fcps and and it's going to take us into an even better future.

[02:43:47] So with that, I will ask Mr. Koufax, would you like to speak to your second? Yes, thank you. I want to thank all of those who participated in our diverse, extensive engagement to develop our new strategic plan focused on student success with a joy for learning.

[02:44:07] As a board, we wanted to make this a community effort with robust involvement as opposed to a committee effort with a small number of subject matter experts writing this plan. As Ms. Sizemore Heiser referenced, we engaged over 100,000 parents, caregivers, organizations, advisory and advocacy groups, local and state elected leaders, businesses and community partners, faith leaders, staff, students, and our board.

[02:44:40] There's a lot of people I wanna thank and I won't mention everybody, But I particularly do want to thank our consultants Mutu, Fogabye, Lauren Caffley, Kenneth Jones, Dr. Reed, Dr. Ivy, Miss O'Neill, Mr. Wright. That whole team back there, thank you.

[02:44:57] Thank you for all of your support and your very hard work behind the scenes to get this done. You are the reason this plan is becoming a reality. I was proud to be on the core planning team with my colleague, Ms. Sizemore Heiser.

[02:45:13] We had six six-hour meetings, planning team meetings, and an additional, our board had eight five-hour meetings. I attended several community meetings where we had the opportunity to hear from parents and other community stakeholders. I am thrilled that Student Learner is at the center of the strategic plan.

[02:45:33] I am even more thrilled that goal number one emphasizes a strong start, beginning with a goal of students participating in a licensed pre-K program. We will need community partnership for this to happen, and we expect it.

[02:45:50] Through goal number two, we will continue to be committed to safe, supported, inclusive and empowered experiences in our school. In goal number three, we will work to ensure academic growth and excellence for every student. Goal number four will secure equitable access and opportunity for all, and goal number five will assure that every student will graduate ready to lead for whatever tomorrow brings.

[02:46:17] I look forward to a results-focused effort to meet the wide and varied needs of our students so they are ready to thrive in life after high school. I am excited to second the strategic plan motion, and I am more than ready, Dr. Reed, for this focused work to begin.

[02:46:39] Thank you very much. Ms. McLaughlin. Thank you. Dr. Reed, I do look forward to supporting tonight, but for the Braddock District residents that I do represent, I do want to make sure that it's understood that I was disappointed in how we found ourselves with the consultant we used.

[02:47:01] i i feel like i hope is a lesson learned for the division not just for you um that we should not be doing sole source contracts i also really struggled with the 500 000 price tag attached to this um there are 12 of us and you'll have heard 12 different views on it um but i i did feel that a strategic plan could have been developed strategically without requiring the immense amount of staff time that took to do all these meetings you know it's concerning when you look at the back page under family and one of those focus

[02:47:37] groups and it's 61 participants for those five convenings and it really wasn't 61 participants because I went to do the meetings and you know we had about 30 parents that showed up the drop-off was pretty steep and I think it's because it was just too much of a time commitment that we're asking from our

busy families. I would have preferred that we would have had a core planning team that we used our educational experts to bring this information together and then bring best practice at a national level that PFI has done and I think then we could have engaged with the feedback.

[02:48:14] But all that said, I do want to convey my deep appreciation to you because I know you're a strategic leader and I know that this you inherited a system that you're really trying to elevate to the next level. So for that, I deeply appreciate that. And to what my colleagues have said, I appreciate everyone who invested an immense amount of time in it. And I do hope that this will help our division better serve not just our students and families, but also our employees going forward. So sorry I wasn't as Pollyanna as maybe some others would be, but I'm sure it didn't

[02:48:51] surprise some thank you mr. Frisch all right so I appreciate our chair and vice chair you know reading out some of the goals and that we have in this new strategic plan and I can imagine that somebody sitting at home here's one of these goals and says that sounds good but how are you going to do that and so I've identified one of the measures and underneath each of the goals that I I think illustrate the types of things that we're gonna be looking for year over year at our schools to see whether or not

[02:49:31] we're making progress towards those goals. And I think it'll put some more meat on the bones. So for goal one, strong start pre-K to 12, one of the measures we will be looking at is English language learners meeting expected growth and reclassification criteria.

[02:49:51] That is a black and white thing that we can measure to see if we are having an impact and if we're not having an impact we can course correct that's just one of the measures for number two safe supported included and empowered one of our measures is student attendance and absenteeism rates again that's something that's black and white that we can measure year over year and we can make adjustments to make sure we're getting the improvements we want for goal three academic growth and excellence one of our measures is successful completion of algebra one by eighth grade obviously we want students

[02:50:27] who can go do more than that to do more than that but that again not only is that a civil rights metric but it's also something that we can measure every single year to see how we're doing and it's just one of those measures for that goal for goal for equitable access and opportunity one of our measures is the availability of an enrollment in advanced rigorous coursework and programs in k-12 that's something that we can measure we can identify where we have shortcomings we can implement changes and again a black-and-white measure that we can monitor year-over-year and then goal 5 leading for tomorrow's innovation

[02:51:04] one of the goals one of the measures of that goal is increasing the percentage of students earning an advanced studies diploma again something that we can measure every single year and those are just a few examples from the various goals that we have in this new strategic plan that show our board's commitment to moving critical numbers to make sure that our students are achieving everything that they have the potential to achieve and that we're harnessing their talents. There are also measures in here about extracurricular activities and the arts. There are measures in here around special education

[02:51:41] services and all sorts of other things that we will be measuring every single year. And not only will be measuring to make sure that we're on the right path but we'll be using this as a measure for not only our superintendent's performance evaluations but also how we choose to spend the resources of the school division so i look forward to having those conversations because that's where the rubber is going to

hit the road is if we're willing to put all of our weight behind this and see it through i appreciate all of my colleagues active engagement on this as well as the many community members who participated in and the number of staff people who were relentless and making sure that we got from point A to point B very much

[02:52:21] appreciated thank you thank you mr. Frisch miss Marin yes I think this process and the product are both worthy of celebration thank you dr. Reed for beginning your tenure here in FCPS with a focus on studying this North Star the solid guidance for the school division so that FCPS stays laser focused on students academic achievement and set students on their trajectory for life-long success. Furthermore, this plan is validated by a process that was based on unprecedented community engagement with community staff and students. I am excited for the board and superintendent to work together this coming fiscal year to intertwine the strategic plan with

[02:52:58] the budget development work to achieve the most cost-effective budget that produces excellence and success for students. Thank you, Ms. Marin. Ms. Corbett-Sanders. Thank you, and I'm pleased to

[02:53:13] I follow Ms. Marin because a couple of things about this plan and many of you know that I had frustrations with the last strategic plan when it was first rolled out because of the lack of quantitative or measurable objectives and the need to link our strategic plan with the budget.

[02:53:39] And so I believe that this plan really sets the system up for success as long as we have those guiding principles, which are that as we develop the, as you, Dr. Reed, develop your proposal for a budget for next year, which will be released in early January, that there should be a full alignment between this plan and the budget.

[02:54:09] Secondly, I think there's been a lot of discussion in the community, nationally, about the importance of the important voice of parents. And I think what's so important in this plan, which differs, is that we are being quite explicit in the important partnerships with parents and that collaboration.

[02:54:38] And so when you look at the first goal, it very explicitly lays out the importance of partnerships with families and key stakeholders and that families are part of a collaborative decision making.

[02:54:58] I think we've implicitly said that in the past, but I actually think it's very important that we are explicitly stating that here. And the strong start pre-K through 12 allows us to recognize that in Fairfax County we have high amounts of mobility, so people don't necessarily come to us only at age 3, but that they may come to us at older ages.

[02:55:28] And no matter when you enter the system, that we are going to welcome you and we are going to work with you to ensure that you have a strong start in our system. And then the other piece that I think is really important is the four pillars.

[02:55:44] The four pillars are really the four foundations, the cornerstones of a strong strategic plan. And so I would encourage that people don't just take individual piece parts but that they look at the four pillars as well as the goals and the measures and then in January that overlay of the budget the one thing that I would like to know and we don't necessarily need it tonight is a plan for how we are going to have periodic updates to this board on

[02:56:22] each of the five goals and perhaps we'll be discussing that as part of our strategic governance retreat next week because I think that that will be critical in ensuring that we all stay stay focused and stay on the same path to success.

[02:56:42] So with that, as you can expect, I will be supporting this motion tonight. Thank you. Ms. Bukarski. Thank you. I want to thank our consultants, Dustin Wright, Marcy Neal, and of course, Dr. Reed.

[02:56:59] I think it's incredible the amount of work that has gone into this. I don't think most people actually realize the amount of work that it's taken to get where we are and you know at the end of the day I don't think there is anybody in this division that could say that they had not been given and outside community an opportunity to be part of this re-envisioning excuse me of what FCPS is you know what direction FCPS is going to go and not just one opportunity but many and and that's all we can do at the end of the day is give

[02:57:37] people opportunities and ask them to engage and I think many many did and from the very first meeting of that core group where very different people with very different ideas and you know different opinions about all sorts of things came together and were able to get to a final product I mean I think think it's amazing and I think you know it gives me hope as to where we could go in the future and where we need to go for our kids because our kids need us to

[02:58:15] focus on the things that matter and I think the things are matter are right here so I'm very excited for the next few years for FCPS thank you for all the work again and I I'm just looking forward to see where this goes thank you thank you Dr. Anderson thank you I do want to make sure that I say thank you to all the staff who've worked on this this was a tremendous undertaking and so that has to be honored similarly I want to express my thanks to community

[02:58:53] members Mr. Becerra I still see you back there in the shadows thank you and all of the others who joined with you and I did appreciate your commentary regarding not just having folks like you who are typically engaged be part of the process, but when are we hearing from the new voices? So that's something that I'm going to kind of carry that nugget with me. So thank you for laying that groundwork. I appreciate my colleagues kind of highlighting various parts of this. The part that I really wanted to hone in on are the equity commitments

[02:59:28] because I think that really speaks to the needs at least of my part of the community because we have a lot that are taking place in Fairfax County but when we dig a little bit deeper we found that we don't have that across we don't have that happen consistently across the division so I do want to take this moment to kind of put a stake in the ground as we're talking about I think Ms. Corbett Sanders asked when are we going to get updates Mr. Frisch made a very good case to communicate to our community that we will have some measurable

[03:00:01] information that's going to be very clear in terms of are we moving forward as a division the stake that I want to put in the ground is to have that data be disaggregated by pyramid it is really important to hear what is happening in all the 25 corners of Fairfax County sometimes it is difficult to identify how are we doing across the division when we have data that's lumped in by region and we need to get to a more granular level so Dr. Reed I'm hoping that is something that will be taken into under great consideration as you know this is always something that I ask for and if

[03:00:40] we're putting all of our eggs in this basket we have we must have the information in a manner that supports that that shows that we are committed to to making sure that we have the information being provided for every part of Fairfax County.

[03:00:59] So I think that kind of information will also give us the data that is needed for us to course correct. You know, we talk about the talent that is provided, I'm sorry, that is innately in all of our students. But how are we really digging into data that amplifies that?

[03:01:18] if we just provide region level data or FCPS wide data, we miss an opportunity to really hone in in each and every one of our very unique communities. So thank you. I look forward to that and you're shaking your head so I'm gonna take that as a yes.

[03:01:35] So I'm writing that down in my notebook as to the things that Dr. Reed said yes to. But thank you all for all of this work. It's tremendous. - Thank you. Ms. Tolan. - Thank you.

[03:01:51] Yes, I also say a huge thank you to our staff that worked on this and our community. Mr. Becerra, thank you. Also, I want to give a shout out to our communications staff as well that hosted all of those meetings all over the district.

[03:02:11] Thank you so much for that. Thank you to my colleagues for doing a very good job of explaining each section of the strategic plan, so I don't have to do that. I just want to mention I had the good fortune to participate on the instructional focus team, a team that had also many, many hours of work and thought that went into the plan and with lots of data analysis and lots and lots of discussion.

[03:02:38] This is where our central office instructional experts and our school-based professionals at all levels participated in this planning. And this is where the rubber really hits the road when we're trying to implement this. And I know just from chatting with people out at schools or, you know, friends in the central office, people are wondering just exactly how the implementation will happen.

[03:03:03] But that's pretty normal when you have a new plan. But my experience in both the private and the public sector is that when an organization has clear goals and we have measurements for them, staff feels more empowered to do their work and to do good work and everything runs more smoothly. So I'm super excited about that. And as was kind of mentioned here, we have to realize this document is a living document. And as we move forward and start to measure our progress, we'll need to be nimble if what we are doing is not working. But this gives us a tool to be able to do that and figure out just exactly what is best for our

[03:03:42] students along the way. The overarching goals will probably not change, but our ways to get there may need to be adjusted. And I just want to say I'm super excited to be part of buckling down after our vote tonight to start the implementation of the plan. Thank you everyone for all of your hard work. Thank you, Ms. Tolan. And seeing no one else who wishes to speak, I'm going to call for the vote. The motion before us is on the screen. All those in favor, please raise your hands. Ms. Marin, Ms. Omish, Ms. Tolan, Ms. Corbett Sanders, Ms. Darnat-Kofas, Ms. McLaughlin, Dr. Anderson,

[03:04:21] Mr. Frisch, Ms. Cohen, Ms. Bukarski, Ms. Keyes-Gamara, and myself. That motion passes unanimously. Yay! Thank you very much everybody. Thank you to the team who's here and all your hard work.

[03:04:39] Congratulations. Moving on to agenda item six, consent agenda. Our adopted rules of parliamentary procedure Roberts rules provide for a consent agenda listing several items for approval of the board by a single motion many items listed have gone through board review and documentation has been provided to all board members and the public in advance items may be removed from the consent agenda at the request of any board member prior to the meeting the consent agenda items are on the screen is there any objection to approving the consent agenda hearing and seeing no objection

[03:05:13] the consent agenda is approved agenda item seven new business the following are new business agenda items there will not be a vote on these items this evening but action is scheduled at a future meeting the new business items are on the screen agenda item eight board committee reports there are no committee reports to present this evening and agenda item nine board matters the board has elected to skip board matters for tonight so we have with that the board will now return to closed session thank

[03:05:49] you very much everybody for your time effort and the work on the strategic plan thank you very much

