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Fairfax County School Board Committee Report Work Session, Monday, June 24, 2024

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- Official meeting video (YouTube): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ck7ZMROF7OY
- Official School Board page (FCPS): https://www.fcps.edu/about-fcps/leadership/school-board

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[00:00:06] We're running a few minutes late and we've got quite a packed schedule tonight so if possible I'd like to go ahead and get started. Is there anybody participating virtually? I don't see. All right then we can go ahead and start. So thank you everybody for coming to the work session tonight on our advisory committee reports and we'll start with our advisory committees for students with disabilities. So with that I will turn it over to the esteemed chair to introduce herself, other members of the committee who are here as well as if staff members want to introduce themselves that would be great. Thank you.

[00:00:36] i can just ask to make sure you all use your microphones when speaking because the people

[00:01:19] online it that's how they work for those online push the push the button right there when it's green your mic is on when it's like yeah it's like the acsd ones um holly also has two kids in fcps one was a recent graduate in june um i also want to introduce the subcommittee chairs of the acsd that have joined us today um one of them is not able to join us that's darcy aquavella who is appointed by the city of fairfax school board but with us if you could just raise your hand our Jay Birkenbilt, appointed for Region 4; Carolyn Hayden, appointed by Braddock District; and Colleen Jones, appointed by Fairfax County Council of PTAs.

[00:01:58] Also not able to be with SRR2, other Executive Officers, Brandis Ruiz, who is appointed by the Disability Services Board; and Allie Baldessari, appointed by SEPTA. I also want to say -- I don't know if you

want to introduce yourself. Sorry. Good afternoon. I'm Dawn Schaefer, Director of Special Education Procedural Support.

[00:02:20] And Mike Bloom and Terry Edmonds-Hurt are both on leave this week, so I'm sort of representing all of us. I also have Judy Dupre, Manager of Therapy Services, along the back, and Jeff Sisk, Manager of Assistive Technology, is also here with us.

[00:02:38] So I also want to start by giving an enormous thanks to the committee volunteers that are here with me today. it is what we produce over the course of what is essentially about seven months is an enormous amount of work. And I couldn't be sitting here with any knowledge of what's contained in this document if it weren't for the people that are here with me. It's a large committee. It's over 30 people. 34, I want to say, at last count. Hopefully a little bit smaller than that if you pass the new governance manual on Thursday. But it represents a lot of institutional wisdom.

[00:03:16] And I'm so appreciative that I have this group of consummate professionals that are able to share their time and their passion for this organization. I also want to thank Mike Bloom, Terry Edmonds-Herd, and Roshna Sizemore-Hyser for their support.

[00:03:32] And I would be remiss if I didn't add Melissa Muse, who is Mike Bloom's administrative assistant, because she's just a joyful ball of light every time we meet. And I appreciate her. So I'd like to start with a few reflections on the report that you received.

[00:03:49] We are deeply committed and passionate participants in this process because we're volunteers. There really is no other reason why we would do the amount of work that we do if we weren't committed and passionate. Finding meaning in our work is really important to us. Most of us come to the table as parents of students with disabilities, and so it's not just a thought exercise.

[00:04:11] This is our experience, our lived experience, our children. The work we do is important enough that it deserves the level of commitment we give it. I don't think anybody would say they regret the time they've spent. They might be ready to be done with the time that they've spent on ACSD, but I think that we all find it very validating and meaningful.

[00:04:32] Just to frame a little bit what we represent, there are over 30,000 students in the division that have IEPs, 504s, learning differences. IEPs and 504s aren't necessarily disability, and so we count them as students with disabilities and learning differences has to do with just how they identify and how they live their experience within the division. That is the same as if we filled up both Eagle Bank Arena and the Capital One Center at the same time and would have a couple of thousand left over waiting outside. So that should give you an idea of the enormity of the community that our

[00:05:10] recommendations are intended to serve. The diversity that we have in that community of 30,000 plus is enormous but there's one thing that they have on all have in common they're all students and you can't center the voice of a student without including this community. People who know me know I don't ever use the phrase special needs and the reason why I don't use the phrase special needs is because my child's needs aren't special. His needs are to be educated, to be included, to be accepted. He requires some special things in order to get there

[00:05:46] but his needs aren't special. They're the same as every other student in this division. So that's my point of view where I come to this. I would like you to hopefully listen to the recommendations we have to make in the same way that you would listen to a community stakeholder group because that is

what we are. We're readily available in-house community stakeholder group for issues that affect students with disabilities and learning differences and that I think speaks for the only that we want to represent when we make these recommendations so starting with the executive summary it was a lot shorter than you've seen in the past on purpose Holly and I committed at the beginning of the year to keep it to one

[00:06:26] page and we didn't quite get there next year for sure but I included a table that demonstrates sorry that that shows each of the recommendations where they're located in the report if you want to learn more about the rationale of the recommendations whether that is a recommendation that has been made in the past or not and then I aligned it with the 2023 2030 strategic plan or the AIR report or both in a lot of the occasions we worked with the AIR report because when we started the process last

[00:07:01] September the special education enhancement plan improvement plan was going through some morphing and it was just easier to go with a document that wasn't going to change over the course of the year you're perfectly capable of figuring out the overlap I'm sure but that's why we did the air report instead of the improvement plan um it was not in our scope to consider budgetary impact it was not in our scope to consider which of the projects may or may not already be underway or having been considered in another capacity our job was to consider the

[00:07:35] conditions in the division right now what we experience and if there are responses to that or decisions that have made been already been made around some of these recommendations i just ask that you receive our recommendation then as an endorsement of those decisions or as the knowledge that the issue is still standing in the division it wasn't meant to suggest that you're not doing enough or you're not doing it at all anything like that so with that i would like to move on to the first of our recommendations our first committee i you've read this i don't feel

[00:08:10] the need to read it aloud to you um what i would do is sort of a over overarching policy around each of these subcommittee meeting subcommittee reports is there were thematic similarities in certain ones family engagement and community outreach had thematically their recommendations are based around equity issues i don't think you necessarily need me to go through exactly what they are but there may be some occasions when we get to the questions about clarification of why we

[00:08:46] made the recommendation we did student achievement and outcomes had three recommendations thematically they fit under the domains of data whether it be collection or disaggregation of students with disabilities and accessibility issues to materials and information available to that student community policy and regs had one recommendation around differential pay for special education teachers partly because we had to we had to choose one or you would have had a much longer report

[00:09:20] but also because that committee also takes on the task over the course of the year of reviewing any of the schedule policy updates that come up throughout the year so one of the other things that they did was review the changes to seclusion and restraint things like that one recommendation is not reflective of the amount of work that was done and then lastly is our annual school board charge our school board charge this year was too big and it was built around related services and when we were deciding at the end of last year what the school board charge should look

[00:09:56] like i remember getting the advice don't make it too small and perhaps i i erred on the side of too big because it ended up being a lot of work and it was you know we also got into that well we're talking about these services we need to add the other related services too that's how these things happen but it

was a tremendous amount of work and you will notice i think that when you go through those recommendations that they it it reflects the it was the scope of that charge was just too large they had 15 recommendations overall thematically again it was data disaggregation it was consistency

[00:10:33] in implementing services and information across different settings within the division and there were a few recommendations around program structures that they felt um the community would be better served if it didn't have to do anything to do with staff but with the way um recommendations or not recommendations guidance books were built uh that were shared with the community it's um what i want to end with before we go to questions is that it's difficult for us

[00:11:05] to remain in a deficit-based model it's not how i work naturally it's difficult when you're passionate and committed as everybody i'm certain everybody in this room is it's difficult to spend your time thinking about all the ways that you've done things wrong i would encourage you to consider that that's what an iep meeting feels like to a parent many of us are parents that deficit-based mindset can influence the way we make our recommendations and the way we talk about programs and services in the division but that's not reflective of all the positives we also

[00:11:42] experience um i as an advocate that's my profession is as a special education advocate i have worked extensively in fairfax but also in all of the other divisions in northern virginia i've worked in other divisions across the state and occasionally even across the country i'm here to tell you you have so much more going right here than most places um it would have been a much longer report and a much more fun report had I sat here and said, you're getting all of these things right.

[00:12:13] It's really some of the best of the best. I mean, I hear the stories all day long every day. It's too easy, I think, to talk about what we don't do and we don't talk enough about what we get right. But that strengths-based mindset doesn't, it doesn't deny the things that we still have to do. It doesn't deny the very real problems that we're charged with resolving.

[00:12:37] One of the things that I hope to do over the course of the next year with the ACSD is approach our recommendations from that strength-based mindset, from affirming the capabilities of all students and affirming the capabilities of the division as well. FCPS is a system, and it's students with disabilities both benefit, I think, from affirming their successes and their strengths.

[00:13:01] When you come from that strength-based mindset, deficits aren't deficits, they're opportunities for growth. We can use that strength that we have as a springboard rather than something that we rest on and say that's good enough. I think that Fairfax is so close to excellence that it's a short leap from where we are to where we could be.

[00:13:27] And I'm a fan, and it's not as much fun to sit here and talk about the parts that are broken. But I'm grateful that my kids are graduates. And with that, I open it up to any questions you may have. Thank you. I will see I see our chair, Mr. Frisch first and then Miss Marin thank you very much for the report and pardon me and to everybody from the committee for being here.

[00:14:03] You did take on quite a bit and I think the report speaks volumes about the tenacity of the team getting the work done. So thank you for that. I want to talk about the College Board recommendation. I've had several constituents over the last year who have had issues with the College Board, I'll put it charitably, being reluctant to provide the services that students need to effectively take their test.

[00:14:31] And as a monopoly, that makes life very difficult for our students. What type of feedback are you hearing from families? families so i and i forgive me that was family engagement it's a subcommittee on family engagement and community outreach that was so that was yes that was darcy aquavella's committee who couldn't be here but um from what i've observed both anecdotally and in my practice um typically speaking the college board is more amenable if the accommodation already exists in some documentation within the division you can hand over a 504 plan or an iep and they'll say okay

[00:15:08] we take that but if the family doesn't know that and if the team isn't aware of that in on a timeline procedure it becomes too late before you can fix it um that's really the issue not just deadlines for requesting the accommodations but further back from that what do we need to do in order to validate the accommodation that's being requested um just back to your point about tenacity i'd like to point out that my husband has been known to call me a rabid terrier and he is one of very few people in the world that know that i take that as a compliment so yes

[00:15:42] tenacity yes it's kind of in next to my picture in the dictionary um that's what i know about the college board but i agree that we're somewhat at their whim in my experience when you have the accommodation documented they don't question it i think this year there have been some issues with technology malfunctioning and then the college board not doing much of anything to help accommodate those students beyond a better look next time and that's really unfortunate yes it's not only unfortunate but time time is a

[00:16:20] perishable commodity you know when a student is taking an SAT for example during the end of their junior year the beginning of their senior year they don't have another three months to wait for another cycle it's a problem and I think I see a little bit of it even in Virginia where where the standard has been raised to get the read-aloud accommodation for students with reading disabilities part of it I think is really shifting that mindset around we're not the barrier to your success in fact if anything students with disabilities can be a gold star but it takes a little extra attention and that's

[00:16:59] something that can be in rare supply thank you dr. Reed do you want to talk a bit about our encouragement of the college board to perhaps be a little bit more aligned with working with the school divisions that contract i think we could write a trilogy perhaps um it they're just a multiple of topics that it feels um that the level of inflexibility for uh working with school divisions and students is, I think, really problematic.

[00:17:34] And right now, because in many ways, they are the only arbiter of, if you will, these exams and AP courses as well. They're actually, in my opinion, engaged in gatekeeping around which courses are taught for AP credit.

[00:17:50] We've had some recent experiences along those lines. And honestly, it's a great business model because our staff does all the work to provide the distribution of assessments after we pay for them.

[00:18:06] And then we have to adjust our school calendar. And, you know, I mean, there's just a lot, I think, that we would really hope to get a little more flexibility from the college board side for sure. Even simple things, you know, like parent communication by email would be, you know, another between them and the National Merit Group.

[00:18:30] But anyhow, I just think that they announced, and our team, our IT team did a fabulous job of prepping for all the AP digital exams this year and the SATs, right? Because that was completely new and

just making sure that our system was able to be stood up in a way that we didn't have problems in general.

[00:18:51] We worked very hard on that and tried also. As you recall, my academic matters a year ago was around needing to get accommodations into IEPs early. And yet, when there's been a glitch in communication, we've made personal phone calls.

[00:19:09] There's just no interest in working with us to support students in any kind of exception along those lines. And really, this is a problem that plagues every school division. at the National School Board Association, I spoke to many school board members who have experienced comparable things in their division.

[00:19:28] So thank you for making this part of the recommendations. On the subject of data collection, one of the recommendations is to desegregate the data that we collect by IDEA category. Can you talk a little bit about how that might enable the school division to be more thoughtful with its approach to targeted interventions?

[00:19:55] - I'm not sure I personally would know that that's a necessity. I do think, although I understand the data tracking challenges, I understand that it can be difficult to, for example, there's no standard indication for dyslexia.

[00:20:17] So if you wanted to know a student had dyslexia, you would have to go into the present levels or some background information, which is a much more onerous task. I am not so much a fan of disaggregating by category, simply because you can have more than one category and you can only really disaggregate by primary category, which doesn't necessarily tell you. It's also, you know, somebody who operates within the autism world, thanks to my son, you know, you can know somebody has autism and you really don't know much more than that, just based on that label. That being said, to answer your question about

[00:20:52] programs and services and how it would help that, I might defer to some of our chairs that are in the room that worked on those recommendations but I think there are times when for example if you're looking at for like chronic absenteeism that's potentially a different root cause for a student with a disability than it is for the overall student population I think we had two committees both that talked about data disaggregation if we want to answer that question go ahead Jay

[00:21:23] just come to the microphone if you could yeah so one of those recommendations came out of the student outcome student achievement and outcome subcommittee and we were we looked at it from two different angles one angle is the students with disability is not a monolithic group right and so that means that disaggregating by category was an attempt to recognize the neurodiversity within the population

[00:21:58] of students with disabilities on a more pragmatic note that it goes a lot closer to the specific question, you have a program like Burke School, I'm a Burke School parent, I take every opportunity I can to say there are a bunch of heroes who give so much every day, but in any case they're looking at the data and that program of course you have every type of disability present at Burke School, but predominantly people are there with the primary category of emotional disability, they want to look at the numbers and see well how do they apply to the targeted population within that school so that was the conversation that we had

[00:22:37] as a subcommittee that led to that specific recommendation hope that adds some color there thank you very much there was some additional conversation I know with school board charge about disaggregating data if you want to add something to that but I know for example the non-speaking population and an assistive technology that might be applicable to that population and that's more than one category theoretically and you have to understand that if you're going to target that data but go ahead I'm just going to really quickly just say we've got about half an hour more left and a few of the board members want to speak so just keeping that in

[00:23:11] mind thank you I think that was more for you thank you I'll try and be quick to see if I can answer this I think that our I know that our subcommittee wanted to know if there was an equal number of services service hours service opportunities offered across demographics and we couldn't compare that because the data wasn't collected we were only going off of anecdotal evidence that we had heard amongst parents professionals and service providers in the room and so we wanted

[00:23:48] to see if there was any imbalances across parts of the school district and if so how could we correct them but at this point we couldn't identify them thank you thank you did you have you still a minute 12 seconds left wonderful miss Marin thank you I am really curious about the vernacular and the power of it and you know dr. Reed has helped roll out you know when we talk about our English language learners there are multilingual learners and I think it's been so powerful and I want to be sure that I'm

[00:24:25] using the right vernacular that empowers and supports and so your comment about you know the students special needs well the needs are the same that's really powerful I'd like to use that more and I just wonder should we have more of a commitment to the vernacular that is most informative so I think that's a really big deal it is I will tell you that that's in my proposed school board charge for next year for this committee and thank you for that I would go on to say that the other reason I don't say special needs is because it doesn't have a definition it's one of those things that we all think we know

[00:25:01] what it means but we don't know the we're all thinking the same thing I also think there are equity issues involved because certain communities identify with their disability as part of their personhood and autism is a perfect example you know the conventional wisdom was person with you know person first language and the autism community is really leaning more towards identity first and being called autistic autistic people not people with autism so yes I agree and I think that the the equity policy and the work that's being done there is critical to all of that and hopefully we'll be able to give you a deeper dive on that over the course of next year well I've had the same thing

[00:25:40] with you know with dyslexia it's not a person with dyslexia now it's preferred to say dyslexic dyslexic thinking dyslexic thing or dyslexic person but I know I just want some clarity because I was taught to talk about the person it's the person with the disability always the person so if that's changing I want to use what is most you know equitable and appropriate I also think I mean I'm kind of in disbelief not disbelief but um I feel like we're always striving to address you know the air report many times the board you know our last term spent around this table picking apart the things and to know that it's aligning

[00:26:17] and you're seeing progress and to make a statement that we're doing a lot of things right is just really amazing and encouraging and maybe as board members we only hear the things that aren't going well but that is really just incredible I also was wondering if ACSD if it was a good communications flow I know we you're supposed to be our first stop or the staff's first stop for input from the community when it

comes to that and that sometimes happen and not and I'm just wondering if that's sort of a smoother flow at this stage

[00:26:50] I mean, I think it is. I think that, you know, Fairfax is an enormous ship and things are going to happen. They just are. But, you know, I'm of the mindset that collaboration isn't a thing unto itself. Collaboration is a byproduct of mutual respect and clear communication.

[00:27:11] and I also believe that most people can accept a decision they disagree with if they understand why it was made. So that's been my mindset over the course of the year, and I mean, you don't have to have met me for very long to know if I want to know something. I'm just going to ask. I haven't had a challenge with it this year. Have you? Well, that's great. I know that it maybe been a speed bump in the past, so I'm glad that that's been figured out because the members are just, I mean, you all are really experts. I guess I just want to mention the things that remain hot topics for me

[00:27:49] are the transitions, especially grade level and building level, especially from elementary to secondary. That is so huge, and I'll take every opportunity to advocate for doing that better for our kids who have learning differences. I'm going to have to work on that and figure out the vernacular. Very interested in 2E, but twice exceptional, but at the same time, I would love to move away from labeling our children and having that more holistic of like, everyone's just different and they have you know their things their talents and needs and funding of IDEA that's always something that we have to keep going about for since we get a fraction of not nearly close to the up to 40% from the

[00:28:27] government federal government so thank you very much I will say it's always okay to say disability because there's no shame in the word and we can't resolve what we can't name I say disability all the time in front of my disabled child because if I can't say it what does that tell him I usually have no problem saying that i just again i'm in the interest of wanting to use the correct vernacular and i know it has the legal definition and there is affinity to it so um i'll be eager to learn more about that thanks and miss mayor and thank you for that i um just want to jump in and say that um i have a group through the enhancement plan working on those transitions um with some additional guidance

[00:29:06] documents that um and information that staff can easily use and and implement so that we do have fidelity across the division in terms of what families and students experience as they go from preschool to kindergarten, second to third grade, since that's such a large year in terms of SOL, VAP, assessments, elementary to middle, middle to high, and then high school to post-secondary.

[00:29:33] There's also a group, and you'll hear from APAC next, that is working really hard on 2E right now. - Great, thank you, Mr. Moon. Thank you. Thank you for the presentation. I have just one or two questions and or comments on translation services. I see that on page three of your slide that currently translation services are only available for IEP and 504 meetings. You are recommending documents also

[00:30:08] to be translated. I mean, I agree. But my question goes to this. Whether you know, whether we have any data, perhaps somebody from special services might know, the translators, I'm assuming that someone who worked for FCPS currently, whether they are trained in special education now to be able to translate all those technical, potentially very, very technical terminology.

[00:30:41] Well, I think there's also a challenge around procedural timelines because 30,000 students and they need their documentation translated and the turnaround time when the division is required to deliver these documents within a certain time frame. I think there's cultural influences too because there's

families who aren't comfortable asking for that assistance or take pride in their ability to have learned English and don't want to lean into the fact that it might be helpful.

[00:31:08] And I know that you have something to add as well. Thank you for that question. To borrow from a St. John Cunning from a few work sessions ago, interpreters are the live humans who are in meetings. Translators work with documents. And so we do provide interpreters based upon families indicated home language when they do the home language survey.

[00:31:36] All interpreters and translators generally are FCPS employees and interpreters are at various levels and you're required to have a certain level of internal certification in order to be in a special education meeting and performing that role precisely because of the technical language.

[00:31:58] So how do we find, how do we determine someone is really competent to be able to translate a special education technical terminology? Iris Maldav, I probably could use some help with her full name.

[00:32:16] Comfer, I think, is her full last name. They do have an internal process where they do evaluate all of the interpreters and provide them with levels so that they know what they can do. Okay, would you be able to provide some more detailed information?

[00:32:33] I can certainly ask. You know, from time to time, I see a situation where I see interpreters or translation to written documents that are quality of which I have to really question whether we are using our best interpreters or translation services.

[00:32:54] I can pass that request. I mean, I'm a fluent Korean speaker, you know, born and grew up in Korea, but I wouldn't dare to go and translate or interpret in IEP meeting. Thank you for that.

[00:33:10] Well, and you know, too, that, I mean, you're an attorney, I believe, and, you know, the nuance of that document is critical. You know, Holly and I both are law school graduates, and moving a common change is a meaning, and that's true in the IEP as well, potentially.

[00:33:28] Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Moon. Ms. St. John-Cutting? So my question for you, well, before I ask my question, and just because I was an FCPS interpreter, the qualifications are internal, and you do take written and verbal tests within, but they are not to the legal standard, and I think that's critical.

[00:33:57] And quite frankly, we don't pay our interpreters enough. the interpreters that earn the interpreters that do that work are earning three to four times what we pay our interpreters so that's a huge ask for every document that's just the truth and a lot of our interpreters end up going to other services because they are they take special courses to become legal interpreters or medical legal interpreters so it it's that's just the way it but my other question that I was going to ask in terms of languages is how many people you're

[00:34:36] talking about the access to the handbooks which which I know family and school partnerships has a great library but how many people on your committee were multilingual or multicultural to that just because I have interpreted the documents and to miss Meron's point about using correct language um some of the language is once it's translated just because there's not and you know this or you know this there's not a you can't translate or interpret there's not the equivalent

[00:35:12] word and sometimes the translation can be really strong so that's all i can say in a way that can be hard for families so we haven't disaggregated the data on the demographics of the committee but um i mean just in looking around the room it's a pretty diverse group talking about availability of resources

wasn't a translation issue though that that was a separate thing i think that sort of got bundled in your question i might have lost track of what you were asking i i think what you're saying is was anybody there that could speak directly to seeing a translated document well

[00:35:50] i'm speaking about people that are on your committee that are people that are are multicultural or come from another country and what their feedback would be working with you in your committee. We do have that, yes. To get that voice in the committee. Several.

[00:36:06] Thank you. Did you have a question about the availability of resources? That was separate. Yeah, I guess, and the availability of resources to everyone generally, and then also the availability of those resources in different languages.

[00:36:25] So my understanding is that there is a, well, there's a list of six or seven different languages that all of the written materials are automatically produced and i mean i would think certainly if somebody wanted another one translated they could get that what we were speaking about is exactly that robust library but there's no push feature to tell families that the library exists unless or until they're on fcps news you choose or things like that different teams have different ways that they push forward the existence of that document it's all there the hard work's been done it's just

[00:37:02] there's a lot of families that didn't even know there was a dyslexia handbook i didn't even know you had you know communication rights i didn't know you know things like that that that's the issue about availability what i've seen in another division that shall remain nameless they have a qr code on the last page of the iep and the qr code links directly to one single web page that lists various disability oriented resource materials thank you thank you miss Ms. Dixit.

[00:37:34] - Thank you so much for this presentation and the report. I have been listening a little bit about the translation discussion and I know the special needs, it's much more than that. Like it's, I guess, one of the points and you know, we focus on a lot.

[00:37:50] Having, I had my own son who had an IEP and he had ADHD throughout like obviously as a, from childhood, but he had IEP in his high school And one of the things, and I've shared this before here too, is the parents don't feel very welcomed or in a part of that process.

[00:38:13] They basically are like being told as a parent, that's what my experience, that this is what's going to happen here. And they'll have like a lot of people in the room and my son was not even a part of that, all those discussions. And literally it was like a checkbox, like, okay, we'll just do reminders.

[00:38:32] that it never got enforced and I'm talking it's six years ago so it's not I'm saying one or two years ago thing right so I don't know how far we have come from there because when I think about all the parents who have her going through that I'm extremely concerned if they have the same experience as I had it was actually I think your appointees she's Turkish I believe that spoke to some of these issues in translation I know she and I had a number of conversations about that You happen to be my school board representative, by the way, so thank you for that.

[00:39:08] I think it probably does happen because it's happening with native English speakers. So if it's happening with native English speakers, if you have another layer of challenge in that communication, it certainly has been happening. To what degree I could, you know, tell you that that's measured, I don't think you could.

[00:39:28] I think it's too highly nuanced. But that conversation definitely occurred over the course of the last year. Yes. I think it's, I can say that English has been almost like my main language because we do speak English a lot in India and here too coming forward.

[00:39:47] But the point was as an immigrant, not understanding the system first of all and then coming to a new school system and then going into a special program which is basically run by school. like it's like pta is different pta is very parent oriented and you know we do a lot of work as volunteers but when you go into a school building in a school office and they're they're filling out their paperwork it just feels like i'm going to a government office i'm filling out the forms they're telling me what to do and i will walk away with what i'm told so that that voice is not

[00:40:23] i guess told that you have a voice in this i don't think english-speaking parents are told that either. I know that when I first, my older child was identified as requiring an IEP in 2004 and I remember at the time, Holly's heard me tell this story. I was a stay-at-home mom. I had a law degree. I had time. I had every resource to strengthen that approach that you could picture and I was challenged by it and I remember at the time and I still think and it drives my work every day is if I could come at this situation with those resources and struggle, what are the family is doing that don't have those resources whether that barrier be

[00:41:01] monetary or language or you know even just the ability to take some hours off of work during the day to attend the meeting and the answer is they're getting lost but if I could just add something my son just graduated so I you know there's a big difference between what I know now and what I knew when we first started this with him when he started in SCPS and in third grade and and you you don't know what you don't know even as a native english speaker um you know all of the jargon is like is like a different language um and and i'm a native english speaker and um

[00:41:40] i think the idea with translation and with pushing materials forward um rather than just sort of making them available if anyone just happens to come across them it not only makes the family's lives easier i think it's going to make the school's processes easier because then you don't have people coming back and saying my child's still not still not getting what they need where there's still problems here just you know it's a it's not only not helpful to the student it's a drain on resources for the schools as well so i think what we're trying to recommend are things that help everybody at the same time yes i i get that and uh obviously it's for uh

[00:42:19] equity too for everybody you have the resources um the point i was trying to make it i guess is lost in this discussion that the parent is the person kind of left out. I mean, it's in the process. It doesn't matter where they're from.

[00:42:35] Like you said, native speaker, non-native speakers. It's just that the parent's voice is very important. It's their child, and they are there for their child in the meeting. So they should be like, you know your child better more than us. We know your child, but we, you know, so be part of the process with us.

[00:42:53] So make them like a partner, as that's what I was trying to say. Thank you. Seeing no other placards up, I will take my 18 turns and I will have enough information to say. I just wanted to start by thanking you all for the hard work.

[00:43:10] I know it was an incredibly huge school board charge and I appreciate also some of the other areas around family engagement. So I wanted just to start by kind of framing. I'm glad you shared the number of students, 21% of our students, this applies to. I just wanted to start by framing something that popped up on my Facebook memories from 2011.

[00:43:30] And this was saying, after three IEP meetings, we still couldn't agree on communication goals. The school just told me to go write them. And my thing, what I said was, if Jake, whom I'm a lawyer and able to advocate with the time and energy and doggedness and not, my dad always said, the one thing, Ward, I will never listen to is no.

[00:43:54] This is what I wrote. how bad are the goals for the kids whose parents don't know how to fight the school and don't speak english well enough to do it that from 2011. so the fact that we're still talking about this now shows how long this need has existed it is not new so i appreciate you bringing that up i wanted to kind of talk some big picture stuff and ask a few smaller questions um you know i love i really appreciate the conversation about how the what language do we use to talk about disability right and the answer i would give is whatever language celebrates it as an identity and not what

[00:44:29] language aims to erase it right not the conversations that aims to say well we can't talk about that or we shouldn't talk about that or we don't want to make people ashamed we don't want to out them quote unquote and that's not saying anybody at the table but that's something i hear quite often when i talk to people in the community and what it does is that then leads the students to be ashamed of themselves i've had a parent ask me please take special education teacher out of the signature line emails because my student doesn't want to get an email from somebody who's labeled to special education teacher we have taught our students to be ashamed of who they are so whatever language we use it's it's less about the language and more about how we talk about them as a way of

[00:45:09] celebrating everybody as an identity so that's the first thing i really want to lift up because until we do that none of the rest of this is going to matter so as far as the family engagement i would want to say that i would love to see some conversations among staff about perspective taking i think even i do this now i'm so immersed in this world that i forget what people don't know right and so whether you speak english don't speak english or highly educated not highly educated immigrant not this is a whole brand new world to everybody and you might approach it with different levels of sort of you know we all may not be the same starting line but the world is brand new for

[00:45:45] everyone so when we're writing the translation document you know i sent you a whole bunch of feedback on that translation checklist as part of the enhancement plan we got we've got to do those from that perspective right you have parents whose whole world has changed and not in a bad way just changed how are we supporting them in that not just throwing information at them but supporting them and empowering them because when parents are empowered to be part of their school children ip they outcomes are better for students so the first thing i say to staff is everything if these handbooks are we just continue don't want to speak we've got 10 more minutes i could talk

[00:46:22] for 10 minutes if i indulge my colleagues but if anyone wants to speak please go ahead so these handbooks are great i'm going to kind of have a list of things the handbooks are great however they're huge and they're unknown and i'll tell you how unknown they are one of the things i've talked about for four years is transitions i used to present on it at the special education conference miss pokarski a foreign board member talked about transitions both our students had experiences with that at one of our previous

meetings on the enhancement plan we were both shocked to find out there's a transition handbook out there because neither one of us knew it so these handbooks are great right i see over there there's a transition handbook i see you whispering

[00:47:00] that right these are members of the acsd who don't know this exists so it is not known and these handbooks take a lot of work and time you've got to get them out there because if i didn't know about them and people on this committee don't know about them i promise you people don't know about them and having said that we need some guiding documents to the handbooks and some guiding documents that empower parents and support groups that empower parents when my son was first diagnosed the school actually held a support group for parents where we learn from each other i'm still in contact with those folks and he was in preschool we need that not just handbooks so

[00:47:35] that's the first thing um translation service i think we also need to talk about translation for testing materials and eligibility testing because i think there's a huge issue in that and i've heard and i've shared with dr reed some anecdotal issues when you look at translation how are we making sure that our students who don't speak english have equitable access in the eligibility process and not just in translation but in the testing um discipline i i love the fairness and appropriateness but i think we need to do a lot on discipline on the mindset right understanding and how to how consequences can be given with a neurodivergent and disability mindset right

[00:48:15] i think that's really important because there's no point in consequences if it's not going to be learned by the person so how are we doing that how are we looking at um i'm glad you mentioned data collection i think that's really important actually to disaggregate the data because i think just like in api world people get lost in this broader context workload model dr reed that has got to be looked at for our related service providers and how we how schools are able to give slp hours is huge i hear that all the time of my child's in a language which environment they

[00:48:49] don't need slp that doesn't make any sense i shared with you one recently where a parent was told well we do verbal behavior in our pack program therefore we don't need slp and verbal behavior and speech language services are completely opposite verbal behavior is a subset of aba started by vince carbone and the guy who wrote ables whose name is escaping me it is not at all speech and language services so that is a huge issue right there counseling oh my gosh we got to get counselors better trained i could tell you the stories and i have told you the stories of our counseling but right now counseling is too siloed away and that leads to issues with college board

[00:49:27] testing and then to go to the college board testing i have four minutes i'm sorry i have four minutes worth of stuff um college board testing our ieps and i've talked to you about this are written for one purpose right but they're used for 16 other purposes including college board testing accommodations same with 504s so what are we doing to make sure iep teams and counseling teams are looking at those as holistic documents and or what are we doing to develop other documents iep ieps are used for hearings they're not developed for hearings they're used for college board testing they're not developed for college board testing the testing accommodations we give in school may not be what college board is willing to give but yet those are the accommodations that

[00:50:06] are used for college board huge issue there um counselors counselors counselors they've got to see these students as their students too some do some don't but it's inconsistent um i would love when we look at the stuff about assistive technology and policy recently in governance we looked at our special

education policy and i know your staff made some edits on it i'm I'm wondering if that policy should go to ACSD and have them give some thoughts to what that policy should include and then bring it back to governance.

[00:50:33] That would be my suggestions on that and that might help with the AAC. That might be something the policy committee could look at next year, just as a thought. This is a lot of good stuff in here. I really appreciate the hard work. I'm just gonna end with this one statement.

[00:50:53] I love that you're talking about the deficits, gotta get with the deficit focus, right? You know I've talked about strengths focus forever. But in addition to that, have to talk about removal of barriers can't just talk about strengths focus if we don't talk about how we're removing barriers to students in our mind and how we're making sure there's a mutual responsibility for inclusion i think those things really need to be talked about otherwise it's all going to put on the student to adapt and people can only be expected to not be themselves so much right to some level we've got to remove barriers so people can be themselves um and then the last thing i will just leave you with this with this i'm just going to say this in this room because i

[00:51:32] I feel very strongly. Dr. Reed, you know how many times in the last two years I've leaned over to you and said, oh, look at how ableist that was. Unintentionally, implicit bias, but you know how many times I've done that. Got to get that mindset, but we're never, and it's all out of good intentions, but the road to hell is paved with good intentions. Thank you for the report. We have two minutes left. Anyone else want to speak in two minutes? I could just reflect a little bit on what you said. One of the things that I'm known for saying is that there is no them, there's only us, And that's really one of my guiding principles about any of our students with disabilities is precisely that, is that they're students, period.

[00:52:14] When you talk about the ableism, I think that you could insert any other ism and you'd be horrified. But we accept certain things as just the way it has to be. And it's a lie.

[00:52:29] It's the dominant social narrative. It's not the truth. And it's harder, yeah. But, you know, it's universal design. It's accessibility. It's the right thing to do. And I did want to reflect back also on, you know, again, we tend to drop into that deficit basis.

[00:52:46] But when I look at, for example, the manuals and, you know, what does exist, oh, I can't even tell you. Like the challenge that I have professionally is that other advocates in other areas of the country don't have, I can't learn from them because their problems are too different.

[00:53:04] And I'll say, you know, this is what's going on where I am. And they look at me like, that's a problem. Because why? It's so much worse here. You have no idea how strong our offering is. And I value that. It doesn't mean we can't do better. It doesn't mean we have to deny what needs to be done.

[00:53:23] Thank you for that. And I agree. I think we are better than a lot of other places. But as I said to my colleagues earlier, I think there is no gold standard anywhere in the country. And I think we have the ability to be that gold standard here. And I hope that under your leadership, we can be there.

[00:53:40] I really believe in you and that leadership. With that, I want to thank you all for your time and your hard work. I look forward to seeing your report next year, and I look forward to seeing the staff's response to this report. Thank you, my colleagues, for their great comments. And I will turn it over to Ms. Dixit, I believe, for our next...

[00:53:57] We'll take maybe a couple minutes break as we switch over to our next report. Thank you very much, everybody, for your time.

[00:54:19] the APAC Advisory Committee presentation to the school board for the school year 2023-24 presented by Dr. Holly Glaser. She's the APAC chair, and also other committee members are here, so thank you so much for being here and serving on this committee, and we love to hear from you.

[00:54:49] Thank you. Can I see it on the screen in front of me as well? Yeah, I can keep turning back too. I just sign high. Okay, cool. Thank you so much.

[00:55:20] All right. Good evening, Dr. Reed, esteemed school board members. My name is Dr. Holly Glaser, and I'm here this evening to present the annual report from the Advanced Academic Programs Advisory Committee. In my daily life, I'm an assistant professor of elementary education at George Mason University, as well as the proud parent of a rising FCPS kindergartner. Joining me this evening, allow them to introduce ourselves. Good evening. I'm Kirsten Maloney. I'm the senior manager of advanced academic programs. Good evening everyone. I'm Dr. Narnia Ladimeji. I'm the twice exceptional

[00:55:59] specialist in the advanced academic program office. Good evening again. Dawn Schaefer, director of special education procedural support. I'd also like to introduce two of our APAC members who have joined us this evening. In the back we have Kara Berman and Michelle Cady. So if y'all can give us a wave. They're here for support. Thanks so much. All right, so before getting into the agenda for tonight's presentation, I just wanted to share a little bit about the committee makeup as well as some updates from the prior year's charge. APAC is comprised of representatives

[00:56:36] from each magisterial district, a representative from specific organizations such as the Fairfax County Council of PTAs, Fairfax County Association for Gifted, universities, and a teacher and administrator from elementary, middle, and high school levels. AAP and FCPS is K-12 and is looked to by many other districts as a model because of the broad access to advanced academics that it affords through a continuum of services approach, as well as leading the way with equity-focused efforts like the Young Scholars model. Last year's APAC report made recommendations around middle

[00:57:13] school honors coursework. A quick update before we jump into tonight's topic of 2E. AAP led content areas through a process to collaboratively develop an honors framework. The framework integrates two research-based models of instruction for advanced learners and articulates the similarities and distinctions between standard and honors courses at middle school. In addition to overarching concepts about those expectations, each content area has also mapped out more explicitly what that means in specific disciplinary areas. The honors framework has been shared with middle

[00:57:50] school teams and teachers throughout the district in order to identify what areas of professional learning are needed. It was also shared with middle and high school principals at the all-county principals meeting. Finally, there are multiple formats of professional learning available for staff for deeper learning, including asynchronous and synchronous options. I'd like to shift now to talking about the charge that APAC had for this year, addressing the FCPS progress and next steps to meet the needs of twice-exceptional learners, also referred to as 2E, or students with dual programming needs. I'll use all of that terminology this evening. On this slide, you'll see the flow

[00:58:29] of presenting our work, findings, and recommended next steps. Specifically, our charge for the 2023-2024 school year was to learn about research in the field of twice-exceptional, 2E, and hear about

central and school-based efforts to meet the needs of 2E learners in FCPS. Recognizing that our committee is comprised of members with varying levels of experience and knowledge on 2E learners. Our first task was to unpack the charge and establish the committee's background knowledge around 2E, as well as identify areas in

[00:59:06] which the committee needed or wanted to learn more. Each month we invited speakers and shared videos and documents related to the charge, which I will discuss more when we look at the committee data sources slide. Cognizant of our end goal, our report to the school board in tonight's presentation, we elected to process the information we learned each month through the lens of the five goals in the FCPS strategic plan.

[00:59:31] By making these connections to the FCPS strategic plan explicit, we hope to promote the alignment of our next steps with the goals of the FCPS school board. In our first meeting, we unpacked the FCPS strategic plan goals, and each committee member was assigned one of the five goals as their lens through which they would process information they were learning.

[00:59:52] learning each month. Following each month's presentation of material, we encourage members to ask clarifying questions, then debrief with other members focused on the same strategic goal in what we called their strategic plan focus group. In March and April, these strategic plan focus groups collaborated in developing the current state of FCPS in relation to 2E and their specific strategic plan goal, as well as possible next steps. Each group then presented this information to the entire committee, who was invited to ask questions and make recommendations

[01:00:26] for modifications. Once the possible next steps for each goal were finalized, we then analyzed them for commonalities, which have been shared as prioritized next steps in three categories. Before moving further, I think it's important to establish the definition of 2E the committee used. The Virginia Department of Education defines twice-exceptional students as children kindergarten through 12th grade who are identified as gifted by the identification and placement committee for the school division's gifted education program and are also identified

[01:01:02] as a child with a disability as defined by Virginia's special education regulations. In FCPS, this means that TUI students are students who have been identified for advanced academic services. In FCPS, since we have a continuum of services that includes subject-specific AAP, part-time aap or full-time aap and they're identified as a student with a disability whose needs are met through an iep or 504 plan one common misconception related to the aap services identification is that students with an iep or 504 plan need to be identified for level four or full-time services

[01:01:42] in order to qualify as 2e we want to make it clear that students with an iep or 504 plan who have been identified for full-time aap services along with those who have been identified for subject-specific or part-time AAP services are considered 2E under this definition. If you're interested, we can give a bit more background about why this is important. The FCPS definition of 2E was shared in our first committee by Dr. Oladameji, FCPS's very own 2E specialist.

[01:02:15] In that meeting, as well as the one after, Dr. O also shared her work with FCPS families and schools on issues related to TUI since she was hired in January 2023. In addition to hearing from Dr. Oleta Meji, the committee heard from the FCPS director of special education, Mike Bloom, on the enhancement plan for students with disabilities and Dr. Claire Hughes, professor of twice exceptional and gifted education at Cleveland State University on how to build strong family school partnerships to support TUI

students. Dr. Hughes has long been involved in TUI research in the program that she leads at cleveland state is the first program in the country to offer a

[01:02:54] teacher preparation program specifically about 2e we also reviewed the video and slides from the 2023 special education pta meeting septa on 2e with dr reid as well as this year's meeting on the same topic which several of our committee members attended to capture student perspectives we read interviews that fcps teachers held with 2e students those interviews were samples of a process that participants in the FCPS Teacher Academy class on 2E do as an assignment taught by Dr. O. Overwhelmingly, the teachers who completed the assignment said that it helped them to better

[01:03:31] understand student perspectives on their academic and social-emotional strengths and challenges. They also noted that the students were grateful to have the opportunity to share their points of view and that a committee would be reading them. Finally, we reviewed the training provided to the AAP Identification Committee members related to TUI learners, which included discussion of TUI definitions, profiles, masking of abilities, and considerations for reviewing work samples, progress reports, the hope scale, and ability testing for students with an IEP or 504 plan.

[01:04:04] As stated earlier, all of these data sources were provided and debriefed with the committee, then processed in small groups through the lens of each of the five FCPS strategic plan goals. In the slides that follow, I will share each strategic plan focus group's findings in the form of the FCPS current state and ideas for possible next.

[01:04:24] Goal one of the FCPS strategic plan focuses on a strong start pre-K to 12, which states that every student will develop foundational academic skills, curiosity, and a joy for learning necessary for success in pre-K through 12th grade.

[01:04:43] As of the school year 2023-2024, information shared with the committee indicated that transition processes from elementary to middle and middle to high schools are inconsistent. Specifically, some students have experience being told they must choose between programs to address their academic support needs and their advanced coursework needs.

[01:05:02] Others have not reported this experience, indicating that this may be a school-based issue. To address this issue, one possible next step would be to ensure that procedural support staff understand that FCPS is committed to serving the dual programming needs of students at every level. And I would add maybe adding something about AAP into the transition guide, which I learned about tonight as well. Second, FCPS signals their commitment to meeting the needs of TUI learners through dissemination of the FCPS twice exceptional handbook. However, the committee isn't sure that all staff know about this resource, as we heard earlier, and we recommend more widespread use of

[01:05:40] the TUI Handbook and Professional Learning. Alongside an increased focus on the existing TUI Handbook, the committee would like to recommend that a TUI icon be added in the Student Information System, or SIS, to raise teacher awareness of TUI students in their classes and to make data reporting more streamlined. As of right now, the data system captures information on students' AAP identification and IAP or 504 information separately. Given Given that we know 2E students have needs unique to peers who are receiving services through either AAP or an IEP or 504 plan, we believe that an icon in SIS that indicates

[01:06:19] a student has dual programming needs is an important first step in supporting teachers and meeting those needs. It's hard to meet those needs if you don't know about the needs. In addition to raising teacher awareness, this will also improve the district's ability to report K-12 data about students with dual programming needs.

[01:06:37] Finally, while the AAP information meetings held in every elementary school includes information on the eligibility of students with IEPs or 504 plans for AAP services, we're unsure that all caregivers of students with IEPs or 504 plans recognize they can have their students screened for AAP, and thus they may choose not to attend those meetings and hear that information.

[01:07:00] The committee recommends that additional ways to communicate with caregivers of students with possible dual programming needs should be further explored. Goal 2 of the FCPS strategic plan focuses on ensuring students feel safe, supported, included, and empowered within their school communities.

[01:07:22] The enhancement plan for students with disabilities outlines a plan for incorporating universal design for learning in all FCPS classrooms, which will benefit all students, including students who have or have not been formally identified as twice exceptional. To support this goal, APAC recommends making professional learning related to UDL and TUI learners mandatory for all FCPS educators.

[01:07:45] This professional learning, coupled with the FCPS Portrait of a Graduate Presentations of Learning, affectionately known as POGPOL, created by students, will allow teachers and students to become better versed in recognizing and building on student strengths, while also identifying and addressing student areas for support.

[01:08:07] At the district level, FCPS has hired multiple dedicated staff to support schools in meeting the needs of TUI learners, including a TUI specialist, a neurodiversity specialist, and a dyslexia specialist. Additionally, Dr. Reed has remained actively engaged with the special education PTA, SEPTA, and to support these efforts, we recommend seeking additional opportunities for engaging families of TUI learners, such as inclusion on the Enhancement Plan for Students with Disabilities workgroups.

[01:08:39] Goal three focuses on academic growth and excellence, specifically on supporting every student in acquiring critical and creative thinking skills, meeting and/or exceeding high academic standards, and achieving to their highest potential. This strategic plan focus group also noted that families of TUI students at some secondary schools in FCPS have experience being prompted or encouraged to choose between their students receiving special education services or advanced coursework, rather than finding a way to ensure TUI students have access to both. This issue appears to be unique to FCPS middle and high schools primarily because of differences in scheduling and staffing when compared to elementary

[01:09:17] schools. At the elementary level students tend to be placed with one homeroom teacher for most or all of the day making it easier to coordinate access to both advanced academic services and special education services. Further in elementary school the AAP continuum of services allows for students to receive subject-specific part-time or full-time advanced academic services.

[01:09:38] Once students reach middle and high school, the AAP Continuum of Services provides subject-specific and part-time services through open enrollment in honors, AP or IB, and dual enrollment courses. Full-time AAP services continue in middle school, but there is not a full-time cohort in high school.

[01:09:55] Instead, students sign up for individual advanced courses through open enrollment and with each course at the secondary level being taught by a different teacher the coordination of access to special education services alongside how a student engages in the AAP continuum of services becomes a much more complicated puzzle in terms of scheduling and staffing especially if team teaching is determined to be the need. APAC acknowledges this challenge and while we know there are other delivery models besides team teaching APAC recommends that FCPS examine staffing formulas, service delivery models, and professional learning for

[01:10:31] educators to ensure all students receive access and support to be successful in advanced coursework. This leads to the group's second note on the current state which is that the metrics used for measuring 2E students academic success such as IEP goals may focus on grade level benchmarks rather than whether the student is reaching their potential in advanced coursework. Reconsidering how we we measure the academic success of TUI students in advanced classrooms with support advanced coursework teachers and holding TUI students to high standards while providing them with the academic supports needed to do so. Along these

[01:11:09] same lines, goal four of the strategic plan focuses on equitable access and opportunity to high-quality academic programming and the resources needed to support their success. FCPS makes AAP curriculum available to all teachers as well as embeds it within the FCPS planning and pacing guides that many teachers use for unit planning. Within these guides ideas for scaffolding and differentiating up are included. We believe that we can build on this work by engaging staff and professional learning around meeting the needs of TUI learners, including monitoring fidelity of implementation of professional learning received. This also includes developing professional

[01:11:48] learning for UDL as planned in the enhancement plan for students with disabilities and communicating explicitly how UDL will support access and opportunity for all students including TUI learners. Currently, all elementary families receive messaging about the FCPS AAP Continuum of Services in multiple formats annually. TUI information is embedded in the family information meetings and newsletters and there's a TUI webpage with the TUI handbook published on the district website for families and staff K-12. At At the secondary level, students can access advanced coursework through an open enrollment policy.

[01:12:27] APAC recommends streamlining information related to dual programming services for staff and families to enhance existing communications and make explicit FCPS's commitment to meeting students' dual programming needs. Finally, goal five, leading for tomorrow's innovation.

[01:12:46] As we know, students aren't in school forever, and we want to set them up with the skills needed to thrive in life beyond high school. One way in which FCPS supports this goal is through the variety of professional learning and family workshops that are available. This includes school requested staff professional learning, stakeholder group meetings, such as director of student services, advanced academic resource teachers, or school psychologist meetings, teacher academy courses, symposiums, and webinars.

[01:13:16] Topics for these workshops run the gamut of explaining available FCPS services and identification practices, to staff roles and responsibilities in serving students with dual programming needs, to building positive partnerships between all stakeholders, schools, families, students, and educators. APAC recommends that professional learning for specific high-leverage stakeholder groups,

particularly those involved with dual programming staffing, scheduling, and implementation, be prioritized. Additionally, students ages 14 and up and earlier, if appropriate, should be invited

[01:13:52] as stakeholders in conversations related to their transition between schools and advanced coursework interest pathways and goals, as this teaches them how to advocate for themselves in school and in the real world. FCPS already has dedicated staff who are subject matter experts in advanced academics or special education. There's a special education chair in every school, elementary, middle, and high, to serve as a special education subject matter expert. A full-time advanced academic resource teacher is provided to each elementary school along with a half-time ART and many middle schools to serve as the subject matter expert on

[01:14:29] advanced learning needs. As stated previously the district also staffs a 2E specialist, neurodiversity specialist, and a dyslexia specialist to support professional learning and communicate consistent expectations. With these staff in place however there is a need for more consistent information across K-12 around 2E both in terms of identification and in terms of meeting their needs in the classroom.

[01:14:54] Because FCPS already implements the portrait of a graduate portfolios, we believe that these could be used to support family, staff, and student understanding of a student's progress and dual programming needs throughout their K-12 experience.

[01:15:10] Please note that the committee's work in this report are not a comprehensive review of the current state of TUI services in FCPS. In addition to the limitations of the scope possible for monthly citizen advisory meetings, The committee work differs from a more robust program review because it does not adequately capture the work that has been happening across the district or utilize a representative sample to draw conclusive findings.

[01:15:35] There was not an official member of the Department of Special Services attending all APAC meetings. There were administrators and parents with special education expertise, a presentation by Mike Bloom, Director of Special Education, and a review of the report by Don Schafer, Director of Special Education Procedural Support.

[01:15:52] STILL THE INDIVIDUAL PRESENTATIONS AND INTERVIEW DATA SUGGESTED MULTIPLE AREAS FOR POTENTIAL IMPROVEMENTS. APAC PRESENTS THE FOLLOWING PRIORITIZED AREAS OF FOCUS WITH RELATED IDEAS FOR IMPLEMENTATION AS POTENTIAL NEXT STEPS FOR FCPS SCHOOL BOARD AND STAFF FEEDBACK AND CONSIDERATION. PLEASE NOTE THAT OUR PRIORITIZED NEXT STEPS ARE WRITTEN IN BLUE HERE. ON THIS SLIDE AND IN OUR FULL REPORT WE IDENTIFY THREE TO FOUR POTENTIAL ACTION ITEMS THAT WE BELIEVE WOULD SUPPORT THESE STEPS. HOWEVER THESE ARE are just ideas. And we recognize that some may not be feasible. Some may be more feasible than

[01:16:30] others. With that said, let's look at our three prioritized next steps. Develop a common understanding of 2E, build capacity to support the dual programming needs of 2E learners, and engage families and students as partners in meeting 2E students' needs. First, APAC would like to see a common understanding of 2E developed across all stakeholder groups. We offer many ideas of what this might look like in a report, including working with information technology to create a flag in SIS so that students identified as 2E or have dual programming needs are clearly

[01:17:04] visible for teachers, when a student's identified as 2E, engaging parents to understand K-12 pathways for dual programming for their student, making professional learning about the characteristics of 2E learners, to include the 2E handbook, a mandatory requirement in MyPDE for all FCPS educators which includes administrators, teachers, instructional support staff, online campus, etc. And include professional learning for school psychologists about the consistency and eligibility decisions. Second, we recommend building capacity of educators to support the dual programming needs

[01:17:40] of TUI learners. Examples of this might include ensuring that all FCPS staff receive professional learning on how to meet the dual programming needs of TUI learners. So developing a professional learning for universal design for learning and explicitly communicating how implementation will support access and opportunity for all students.

[01:18:01] That also includes ensuring broad understanding for all FCPS staff and deeper learning for those with leadership responsibilities, so special education chairs, advanced academic resource teachers, department chairs, school-based administrators, including directors of student services and counselors who are responsible for academic advising.

[01:18:21] working with school leaders to plan for a distributed expertise in each school building including goals regarding staff taking the 2e Academy course. Also the idea to use 2e goals in school improvement and innovation plans at the middle and high school levels and promoting success for 2e learners and advanced classes through careful consideration of staffing levels, different delivery models, and professional development in middle and high schools. Finally we believe in working to engage families and students as partners in meeting the needs of our TUI learners.

[01:18:55] This might happen by ensuring messaging about screening for AAP services in elementary and middle and open enrollment and advanced coursework in middle and high is explicitly inclusive of students with IEPs and 504s, articulating how the continuum of advanced academic services can meet the diverse AAP programming needs of TUI students, engaging students in understanding their learning profile, and ways to communicate their areas of strength and growth and the accommodations that support their success, and seeking additional opportunities for TUI

[01:19:29] family representation on community working groups, as mentioned before. Thank you for the opportunity to present the APAC committee report at this evening's work session. I now pass the meeting back over to the meeting manager, Ms. Dixon.

[01:19:47] Thank you so much, Holly, for this amazing presentation, and a lot of hard work has gone into this totally we can see that and now I'll open the this the floor to the board and I guess Melanie is the first one Miss Marin thank you Miss Dixit thank you very much so again I have to go back to the vernacular conversation and I just can't help but see the juxtaposition here with this conversation to the special education report and I can't quite articulate it yet but I just find it really curious that we're talking about students needs

[01:20:22] that are special or special identification and it's a totally different area than like when we're talking about special like there's a whole different committee to talk about special education so I just think like how was a board how are we going to really wrestle this and really have the true vision of our kids that some of our kids you know have the capacity for advanced work some have a different capacity I think it's important you know the definition of 2E so this is something my appointee Mel Capel and I met and

discussed really at length because I'm glad you included the stake definition and what we use in FCPS but there's no understanding of how that identification

[01:21:02] really happens so if you're in the second grade process and you get identified okay there's a clear process but what if you're a kid like in fourth grade who's maybe dyslexic and has an IEP but then it gets identified for advanced math and I could tell you that's what happened to my son I don't know did he go through some clear rubric did the teacher just say hey he's got a capacity it's unclear so I think before you know your goals of building capacity like who are we even trying to serve and I think if we're really talking about meeting every student to their capability continuing to label them and segment them and segregate them is not the goal I think that we're

[01:21:40] heading for I also dr. Reed I'd love for the board to receive a presentation on universal design for learning I'm aware that there was a presentation or a component in last week's internal staff symposium which unfortunately I couldn't make but we need to have a common understanding of what that is because we're hearing it it's thrown up as an acronym here and there like we really need to understand this and for the public to know I think the biggest point of friction for me here is the secondary students that's where we hear it in elementary it seems like it's much more straightforward but when you get to the

[01:22:15] secondary, and the kids are more maybe articulate about their needs. I know Ms. Sizemore Heismer has talked about this at length many times, but you know that's where, again, how are we defining this? What does it mean? What does it mean to have the support so a student could succeed? You know, also, again, how many exceptionalities are we going to label our kids? So what if a kid has a physical disability, an emotional disability, but they're academically advanced? Are they 3E? Like, again, where does the line stop between traditional special education and an IEP and being advanced and having an IEP for being advanced academic like

[01:22:51] we're setting up this even though we say we want to be equitable if we're saying well special ed is this and advanced learning is this well can they really be the same so that's big thoughts that I'd like you know I hope that we can continue to wrestle with so thank you for raising all of these um these topics is that I size more Heiser miss eyes more Heiser I have many

[01:23:17] Any thoughts? Apologize in advance. All right. So I'm going to start with some. I appreciate the report. I appreciate the effort. Some questions. I think I heard you say the special education staff weren't involved in the committee meetings. Could you tell me how much the special education staff? I know Mike Bloom came and gave a presentation on the enhancement plan, but in general, how much was the staff involved or available during your every meetings in terms of asking questions? I'm sure Nanya was there, but beyond that, you could pause my time, please.

[01:23:48] Yeah, so we, I mean, there's not traditionally been someone that was probably in oversight in starting the committee, but we did. It's hard to ask staff to come to multiple types of advisory committee meetings all the time, but we do have a team of people, Don, Mike, myself, Nani, and that meet regularly.

[01:24:11] So there was a lot of debriefing and making sure that there anything that the committee wanted to see would be able, you know, we didn't have any problems with collecting data that the committee asked for. We were flush with lots of things to look at. And so there was communication. It just wasn't someone sitting in the actual room outside of Dr. outside of Mike Bloom coming to present about the enhancement plan.

[01:24:36] however what i would like to add is that we did have some members who have a lot of experience in fcps and are currently administrators within fcps that have experience with working with students with dual programming needs and so their thoughts were were shared in each meeting so i do think that that's important it doesn't necessarily always have to be like a district level staff so thank you i just i just bring that up because one of the things that i was surprised wasn't discussed in here i think sometimes when you're on committees i mean i know this is a special

[01:25:14] education parent it took me a long time to even know what questions i should be asking right and sometimes maybe if you're not as familiar with the topic you may not even know what questions to ask so while you may go back to staff and say hey i mean the committee's asking these questions if they don't ask them then all that so i was really surprised to see that there wasn't much conversation about the barriers to accessing both advanced academics and special education services especially at the secondary level um because they're in what i mean by barriers i mean not just sort of training for teachers but specifically programming barriers right when you

[01:25:52] look at ida's definition right it's it to qualify you need to be looked at both your academic achievement and your functioning level, right? That's required by the law. And often I think when there's testing for special, for twice exceptional students, because they're academically bright, that sometimes school psychologists miss identifying the special education services because the special education needs are on the functioning as opposed to the academic, right?

[01:26:20] But then that mindset continues into how we've delivered programming. So for example, at the secondary, if you need support in your functioning, quote, unquote, and I'm just quoting IDEA, such as executive functioning or social skills functioning, that's a class, right? How does that barrier prevent you from accessing advanced AP courses you may want to take, right? Language courses you may want to take, an advanced diploma. And then where is sort of the barrier in terms of when you're meeting with team psychologists and counselors on developing a 504, the recognition

[01:26:56] of functioning and academic. I think so far, so much of our testing is still based on academic functioning, right? When you do eligibility testing, a lot of it is on where are you academically functioning? And if you're not functioning, if you're not accessing the general education curriculum academically, then you don't qualify. But where are we really teasing out? You might be excelling in the academic curriculum, but you're masking your functioning. And maybe in second grade, the masking isn't so hard, but as you get older, it becomes even harder. And so I just have loved to seen some thoughts around those pieces I think that's um and to kind of go on I

[01:27:34] would ask a question when you looked when I look at some of the recommendations a lot of it is on PD right for teachers what what would your recommendations be around program delivery it's kind of mentioned at the end but there wasn't a lot in here so just kind of curious so I'd like to address the first part and then I'll let you talk about the program delivery I think part I recognize that the there wasn't like an explicit focus on these are the barriers and I do think that that's important in terms of identification and our charge was was really hearing about central and school-based efforts to meet the needs of two e-learners which is a

[01:28:12] pretty broad charge a lot that's kind of like part of that barriers is certainly a component of that and one thing that we one way in which we we feel like we did capture some barriers is just through the reporting on the current state for each of the strategic goals.

[01:28:29] So there were areas where we acknowledged that in some schools, students are being forced to choose which services to receive. We also acknowledged that in other barriers, maybe parents of students with disabilities not realizing that they can be screened for advanced academic services.

[01:28:50] So I think as opposed to pulling it out as one individual category, it was kind of embedded in those next steps. It's like what are we doing, but then what are some of the barriers as well. And then I'll let my colleagues address the next question. Regarding the services, that's part of why we said understanding the continuum of services.

[01:29:13] Because from our data, most parents and school leaders thought, even as of yesterday, a school leader was still saying he's not he's not a level 4 kid because their understanding of many people understanding of the continuum is not there that you could have subject-specific kid who also has a disability and that child is still considered a 2e so that's why we said the definition comes first and then understanding of services where are the children receiving the services and so that's part of the IEP conversation that

[01:29:50] And we're hoping that if the child is identified and there's something in C's that says this child has subject specific or full-time or part-time but has an accommodation through a 504 or an IEP that the conversation then is where are the dual programming services being met?

[01:30:08] So we start with the AAP services, where is this child's strength being met and where are the challenges being addressed? So that's kind of why we said the understanding from the school staff as well as the counselors who do this placement and who do the course conversation with students can help, but also empowering students because every interview we had with students was based on that, that they had no voice.

[01:30:38] Their voice was not being put in place and their strengths were not being identified in in order for them to actually say that they want to be in this advanced coursework, especially at the middle school and high school level. I'm out of time, but I'll take a go back whenever there's time for that.

[01:30:58] I'm not seeing anybody else who want to speak. I'll just make a few comments and then go back for Sysolizer. I mean, this is such an interesting topic for me. I was speaking as a parent who as kids were in AAP full-time program and also one of them as a 2E student.

[01:31:17] So I totally understand why we need it and why this is such an important week and actually miss a lot of talented kids who are gifted and they can go places, I would say, if their needs are not met and right from the elementary school.

[01:31:37] So one of the recommendations I was hoping you would focus on or make it about the executive functioning like my colleague mentioned because it's the it's time to build and they're not getting any of those curriculum or any of those organization skills in elementary school and middle school I think in high school they have a program or a class where my son took part of his IEP or strategies for success I think it was too late by then he had not developed a lot of the skills

[01:32:11] to, you know, just keep his papers and his thought, I guess, all his work together. And that was a reason he would fall from A to B is just not turning in his homework. He would get A's and his test and then get B's and C's and not failing to, you know, turn in assignments on time.

[01:32:32] And that is a very easy problem to solve. It's giving them the tools that this is how you can manage your calendar. This is how you keep your binder. And it's actually helped them all their life. So would somebody want to talk about that a little bit?

[01:32:52] So currently we have a program at the elementary school, but it's still inconsistent. So it's still school-based as to how it's actually delivered. So in the middle school, we just got the books.

[01:33:11] And I can't really speak to that because it's coming from the special education component of the other E. At the high school, the research is that schools have to opt in to actually participate in their research through the John Hopkins.

[01:33:26] And many schools sent out an email about five times this year, and many schools did not take us on that. So everything is still up to schools willing to participate, even though we have strategy for success and personal development. From my findings, parents understanding that's true, the relevance, I'm just so glad that you said it's important because my child was in that class and it helped her throughout even now as an adult.

[01:33:53] But a lot of parents understanding of giving up one class session to go take that class, it's still up in the air. A lot of parents do not want that, they want it embedded in everything. But if you have an IEP, like my child had an IEP, that was specialized instruction.

[01:34:08] And that was the way I explained it to her, that you need the specialized instruction. And giving up one class to take that is actually helpful. But if we consistently programmed it from K through 12 or mid-elementary to, then it would be beneficial, like you said.

[01:34:24] But parents' understanding of the relevance of it, it's not the same for everyone. So I do have a question, and this is kind of just for FCPS staff. I know I worked on a -- so I'm a former FCPS educator as well.

[01:34:39] I used to teach in elementary school and I was on the curriculum writing committee for the academic habits lesson plans are those still used at all so the academic habits sort of lesson plans that we created do address sort of different executive functioning skills we just called them academic habits and they were all teachers were provided access to those and so and that I think that was an initiative that really it was through the actually the counseling office where they were really trying to get all teachers to utilize these academic habits lessons in their classrooms recognizing that these

[01:35:19] executive functioning skills addressing these at an early age are really important so that was just me thinking that that could be a resource as well yes definitely yes and I would say that is good for all the students but definitely a must for the 2e learners like I do not see any 2e learner succeeding without those tools I know parents are stepping in I know a lot of moms who are running to Schoology and trying to get their son to submit their assignments like like because they forget right that's the one of the thing with ADHD kids when I'm talking about my own experience and other other moms I

[01:35:58] know but at the same time I'd say there are students who I think we are still missing out because of their symptoms or other things maybe over overshadowing their giftedness and how do we find those students maybe we are uh maybe you have to look around the cogat and nagli you know enact testing but there's any way to because not all students to test well and in those circumstances my sons did so even one with the 2e so but some students don't take

[01:36:33] those tests very seriously and do it and so uh maybe another way to get some more students in our program and just to say something about that um one of the the slides that were shared with the committee this year were the slides that are used to introduce the advanced academic programs like identification committee where they're really looking at like full-time services in that, but so the slides are used to sort of educate new members on what they should be paying attention to in these files that they're looking over, and some of that is

[01:37:13] related to TUI learners and specifically how to interpret, you know, information they receive like progress reports, work samples, ability test scores, all the things that are in the file work samples and so I think you know one of the reasons why we focus so much on professional learning is you know that's professional learning that's provided to new committee members or committee members who are screening for full-time advanced academic services but that's professional learning that would

[01:37:44] be beneficial for all teachers. Thank you so much. Ms. Seisbelheiser. You know I said to say I feel very lucky to be able to have a seat at this table and then that the folks in the community elected all of us to have a seat at the table 'cause this is such important work.

[01:38:03] So I appreciate the chance to be able to speak and to share some thoughts. I, from my own personal experience, having had two 2E kids, I think we need to really, when you look at the definition of 2E, we do have to look beyond academics 'cause we're losing a lot of kids. And I know that's very personal to me, but that's not just, and especially when you look at the research around autism and artistic and creative ability, there is actually a link between greater artistic ability and autism.

[01:38:28] And I think that's a 2E definition we don't even talk about. I very much agree. I love the academic habits curriculum. That's the first I've heard of it. I know we've talked about unstuck and on target. I know Dr. Reed's giving me that Dr. Reed look because she knows I've been asking for unstuck and on target since my son was in fourth grade, so about over 10 years. So I'm glad we're finally doing it. I think that'll help. But I want to make sure I say we've got to help our 2E teachers and administration to understand the importance of that curriculum in that classroom as well.

[01:38:59] Because I think sometimes we still have a perception that if you're in advanced academics, you must be able in all areas to manage the work. And that's not necessarily the case. That's kind of what you're going to, right? So how do we make sure that people understand that unstuck on target, while it may be a special education, it is for everybody and important for everybody?

[01:39:21] That's the first thing I wanted to mention. I know one of the things that the charge, I appreciate you mentioned the charge, had mentioned was the research around 2E. So I was curious how much of the research you all had delved into and what the research said about what our current steps are, right? Like, I know you got a lot of information about what we're currently doing.

[01:39:37] Is there things in the research I've heard people talk about a 2E academy? Was that in the research that's something to recommend or other types of 2E programming? So I'll just ask, what did the research say around that? You could pause my time, please. I'm going to let Dr. O address this question because she presented in both October and November's meetings on the research.

[01:39:59] And we also invited Dr. Claire Hughes from Cleveland State. Remember, she was the one that had started the first teacher preparation program in the country for meeting the needs of 2E learners. So, just like no 2E learner are the same, you know, I have a 2E second, my second child is a 2E adult.

[01:40:20] The research shows that we are actually a little bit more ahead of our peers. Like, I'm on the committee with the NAGC, and they, some of the things we say are problems. Like the initial speaker, they're thinking they're not even there yet.

[01:40:37] They're not even identifying a lot of kids along the continuum. So most people are sticking to either full-time or nothing else. So the fact that we're going back and looking at kids who are subject-specific, who have domain-specific and general ability, people are actually in awe that we're doing that.

[01:41:02] And it's just -- and a lot of research is saying the current research is truly about the partnership between families. And that's truly what we're -- the presentation we're going to be doing at NEGC in November is on that. And Dr. Reid, having worked with SEPTR and been part of SEPTR for a while, I know that the families -- children who succeed as two e-learners are because of that partnership.

[01:41:29] And that's led to several webinars that I've held about parents with families, and we'll continue to lead because that common understanding with families and schools is where we actually were not we were not there yet and that's where i really hope that when we get there and we have families who are comfortable you know at school and with their children then we can actually start doing the hard work of what does this child need to thrive in this setting so thank you i appreciate all that but it wasn't quite what i asked right i appreciate that we're doing more than other divisions which i think is what i heard right but what i asked was what does the research say around

[01:42:07] best practices right we if we're doing more than other divisions that's great but it'd just be good to know is there additional and maybe the research is saying we are doing everything right but i know when we got the um aap report a couple years ago it specified 2e as a need so that would tell me that there's best practices we're not doing so i would just like to learn more about that i mean i think um the research is saying most of the things that are coming out are just a lot of awareness about what 2e even is um so there's not a tremendous amount of there there is not research that i know

[01:42:44] about what delivery models are the best except that there is um a recognition that having a continuum of services because each each student is going to be unique in terms of what their profile of programming is going to need to be may i just say one more comment and then um i appreciate that dr you do you want to say something uh um i would love i mean i think the charge if the charges was look at research and what we're currently doing i'd love for y'all to study the second year to say what should we be doing right i think similar to our special education work we can be true leaders here and so maybe that's the next step of this this work right if this is what we are doing

[01:43:23] what should we be doing and how do we get there so i'd love to see that next year thank you for for your time and your hard work. Thank you for that. Ms. Maren? Yes, I am glad to hear Dr. Oladimeji talk about families and informing families because the recommendations about professional development, I mean, it's just not going to happen anytime soon, given the priority on literacy. And already that is, you know, causing a lot of new ideas to happen.

[01:43:55] And I think this is part of the whole movement to get away from a system of schools to a school system where it's not piecemeal. Like I see that trend just like I saw it in other programs, whether it was green, you know, outdoor learning and STEAM. You know, we're trying to get to like this is what every student is going to get.

[01:44:14] I do think what you were raising before, Ms. Dixit, about helping students with their executive functioning, especially the transition from elementary to secondary, because if students are having a disability or a limitation with social, emotional, or executive functioning, conceivably, we could help them not just accommodate it, but actually grow through it.

[01:44:36] Not everyone, of course. But so I just think there's a ton of work to do to have this be less bifurcated with our special education and just general ed instruction. So this is a big area. love to see a plan you know of how we're going to stop bifurcating this and segmenting it and really integrating it into the work of the strategic plan uh miss heismohyser thank you and i just wanted to say that was actually the last point i had written down so i really appreciate miss mary mentioning that we've got to stop siloing things right i mean it just it doesn't work right

[01:45:12] our students aren't siloed right they're they all all of them have strengths and they all have needs and so when we start styling some people as being seen by their needs and some people by seeing by strengths and the ones who have so what we can do dr re this has come to you to look at how we're even structured in our program delivery in our administrative oversight in our administrative knowledge and in our leadership team to maybe create more that cross department collaboration cross department um ownership i think would you know it's would help all of our students be seen

[01:45:48] as whole human beings and so i just wanted to maybe mention that to you something to think about is how do we end the silos miss that's actually it might i address the so totally agree siloing um we don't want to silo um and that part of that is because we don't silo in real life um everything is interdisciplinary something i was thinking about is um as you both were talking um is i was thinking about professional learning and how um it's tempting to look at professional

[01:46:24] learning as only being on one particular topic, say on literacy or on universal design for learning. And I think there's space within professional learning to embed information on TUI learners and how to meet the needs of TUI learners in relation to literacy instruction or how to use, how to leverage UDL, which you want a presentation on, how to leverage UDL in order to better meet the needs of all students, including TUI learners. So I do think I totally get it like you know as a as a former elementary educator and as a current

[01:47:00] um you know teacher preparation educator um there's only so much professional professional development that you can you know throw you can't it's you can't just fire hose your your students you can't fire hose your teachers so I think um this idea of of siloing professional learning I And I think I'm realizing that as we were writing the report, that was not our intention.

[01:47:27] Our intention wasn't necessarily to say we want a separate professional learning on the characteristics of TUI learners. We want a separate professional learning on this or that. It's more we want the needs of TUI learners and the identification of one or both sides of being a TUI learner to be at the planning table for the professional learning that's being offered.

[01:47:53] And I think that can happen through explicit collaboration between, you know, say they're designing a literacy professional learning, then you invite folks from the Advanced Academic Programs Office to, you know, you invite Nani, who's the TUI specialist, to come in and talk about how can we embed this within the professional learning because I agree we don't want more but we just want it we want it richer thank you for the response I'm just going to say one more thing is that a first I heard about 2e

[01:48:31] was in FCPS just a regular email which came from better and I didn't even know there is a thing called 2e because even my son was in AAP that time and it was he was a 2E student so FCPS done something right at least get those words out to parents and but then obviously we didn't do a lot more after that but they did a symposium or like a seminar for students to parents to learn more about 2E program and I went there and and I think a lot of parent education is still needed but I feel like we have come a long way since then but from not

[01:49:10] knowing to actually doing the whole committee on 2e so that's incredible and I appreciate all of you all the committee members for taking this charge and and and follow throwing throwing this topic was important so I appreciate it and thank you for all the school board members who have raised questions and comments today and appreciate all the time will close now thanks great so - So we'll take just two minutes for a quick switch over to Shaq.

[01:49:47] Want us to get a little bit back on track in terms of time and be respectful to our guests. So I'm pleased to introduce our School Health Advisory Committee Annual Report. Shaq I know is near and dear to many of our hearts. We have lots of issues that feed into this committee.

[01:50:07] And this year it was co-chaired by Robert Goodell and Kelly Fernandez, so I'm gonna turn it over to them to lead the presentation and questions. - Thank you, I just wanted to introduce myself and give a little bit of background so you guys know where we're coming from.

[01:50:23] I'm Kelly Fernandez, born and raised in this area, and I'm currently in communications for a healthcare association in DC that focuses on federal health policy. And so I was really excited to be invited to join the committee for the first time this year and focus on local policy. And I have four children and they're pre-K, Rising first grader, rising fourth grader, and rising fifth grader.

[01:50:43] So very heavily involved right now in the school system. So I'm happy to be here. - Amari, thoughts, thank you. My name is Robert Godel.

[01:50:59] I'm a neuroscientist by training. My background is in neuroimaging. And for the last 15 years, I've been building technologies for mental health based on the physiology of stress and sleep. Moved to the area from Boston when I joined the Food and Drug Administration as a White House Presidential Innovation Fellow.

[01:51:18] and then my work continued on digital biomarkers at the Department of Veterans Affairs. So I have three children in Fairfax County Public Schools. One will be going into third grade and two twin boys, keep our hands full at home right now for mom.

[01:51:36] They'll be starting the first grade. So it's a very personal issue for me, especially where I want to make sure that they are in a school system in a community that supports their mental health and their development in ways that I often didn't feel supported myself growing up.

[01:51:52] And so, again, I feel honored to be in this seat tonight. So just a quick summary. Oh, sorry, our staff, please support who, without them, none of this work would be possible. Lee, if you'd like to introduce yourself.

[01:52:08] - Leah Skrbsky, I serve as the liaison to this group. We've had some wonderful leadership from these two co-chairs. So I definitely think you're going to enjoy the presentation this evening. So thank you. Good evening, everyone.

[01:52:25] My name is Soray Smalls. I serve as a Special Projects Administrator for Student Wellness with the Department of Special Services. It's a quick summary of what we'll cover tonight. We just wanted to quickly review our purpose and our charge for this past year.

[01:52:43] Then we wanted to quickly go over how we really, as our first year on the committee, both Kelly and myself, found a lot of disparate data on student health and the school environments relevant to our charge. And so that required us to really look at what do we even know on this topic of student health, especially as being in our first year, not knowing much.

[01:53:04] We started from a place of curiosity and struggled to kind of see where the baseline was for the district. Quickly cover our recommendations under social isolation and culting a culture of connection, and then recommendations around reforming digital environment through intentional ed tech uses, guidelines, and curriculum.

[01:53:25] Then we've landed on a topic of discussion for innovations in brain health that set up our proposed charge for 24 to 25, and then finally to present that charge specifically by aiming to uplift student voices more directly.

[01:53:41] So just as a reminder, the Student Health Advisory Committee really will -- is focused on assisting with the development of health policy in the school division and the evaluation of the status of school health, health education, the school environment, and health services.

[01:53:59] Our committee is just such a wonderful representation of the district at large. We've learned so much from everyone on the committee, both parents, teachers, administrators, and staff. And we found ourselves having such lively conversations this year that really led to a lot of great work.

[01:54:22] Our charge for this year was really based on 22 and 23's work on the Surgeon General's recommendations around the current loneliness epidemic. And in that loneliness epidemic and isolation, they call out technology as a critical factor and why people of all ages feel less connected.

[01:54:43] So we really tried to look at the role of technology in the school system and that set up two pillars that were identified for our charge, reforming the digital environments, and cultivating a culture of connection. Now, as we try to dive into these huge topics that cover so much, the biggest challenge that we faced in making recommendations, and we were trying pretty early in our year to say what kind of recommendations would we make on such big topics.

[01:55:14] We found that the current data is just pretty disparate and it's not well connected. So while we learned a lot from the current Fairfax County Youth Survey. This is self-reporting health and other data from sixth, eighth, 10th, and 12th graders.

[01:55:30] About 40,000 students and 22 representing about 70% of those eligible to participate. Really wonderful information. However, it doesn't really get to the school wellness and what's happening in schools.

[01:55:45] And so if we're trying to look at the use of technology, we have self-reported data from the students, we weren't able to connect that to the disparate policies associated with each of the schools and how they carry out the use of technologies in those schools. Moreover we found that the school wellness survey is not really a place currently to capture the information around the use of digital technologies. So all we're really left with is how youth themselves are using devices and moreover that's really representing

how they're using devices in their personal and their academic lives not so much how schools are expecting them to use devices and technologies

[01:56:24] as part of their educational processes the school wellness survey is also challenging to interpret because there's not much variability basically an opt-in by a wellness committee and everyone is filling out the survey but we're not getting much diversity within schools or between schools to really have much in the way of takeaways for what could be changed on technology policies So the youth survey asked about student health concerns and use of devices, but we couldn't find an overview of how disparate school digital policies affect those self-reported student health concerns. And that felt like a real gap for us to be able to make real recommendations

[01:57:02] on how use of technologies can be better informed by how the use of those technologies are in fact affecting student health, the key part of what we were trying to learn. Just to give you some examples of this. We're really thankful to have Dr. Axler come in and talk to us about the youth survey and one trend we heard was how extracurricular activities seem to convey added protective factor beyond just the activity. And so we see this in terms of as students self-report the number of assets that they have where those protective factors include accepting responsibility for one's actions, having community adults to talk to, performing community service,

[01:57:42] participating in extracurricular activities having teachers recognize good work and having parents available those are the six protective factors as students report receiving three or more of those factors where the title here is three to succeed we do see overall trends in the reduction of the use of devices and the reduction of less sleep the reduction of fewer days being active and so as As students are reporting better self-care with more protective factors, they're also reporting great, less substance abuse, saying this is really wonderful.

[01:58:22] Students are reporting more protective factors, less substance abuse. Our takeaway therefore from the youth survey is that by better supporting a culture of connection through extracurricular activities, we see an opportunity to further invest in those very protective factors that the youth are able to recognize and self-report as being beneficial to them, even in the younger groups.

[01:58:44] And this is where the data gets a little bit more sparse because the sixth graders don't answer all the same questions that the eighth to tenth and the twelfth graders answers. But what we see is even extracurricular activities aren't well distributed across the system.

[01:58:59] And this is both in and away from school. What we see is that the percentages are not what we would expect, especially where we we see the protective factors being offered by extracurricular activities. So if we just skip ahead of the sixth graders who are filling out the survey, fully a third are not participating in extracurricular activities.

[01:59:22] And then over a quarter of the eighth, the 10th, and the 12th graders are not participating in extracurricular activities. So our takeaway here was pretty straightforward. If students are benefiting from extracurricular activities and ways that would tend to benefit their health let's see more extracurricular activities how do we keep it simple of course we understand it's not that simple and this is where i'd like to hand it off to kelly okay thank you so just really quickly some background on our process um again when robert and i started we really we were newbies and so we were really inspired by this

[02:00:00] charge and we kind of went around the room and asked everyone what are your thoughts on this what are your experiences from your schools and your districts and we found that just within our group there are so many disparities of experience and we found that um you know some of our ideas in the beginning leaned on the engagement of the pta and then we realized well ptas aren't all created equally across the system and so like he said it felt like we were boiling the ocean and we really wanted to find the data that would help us measure success and so when we saw the of the youth wellness survey, it really was a light bulb to all of us, oh, okay, this is what we can focus on

[02:00:37] to help us make a strategic recommendation. And again, with the help of our wonderful staff, what is feasible in these recommendations? So our first one was cultivating a culture of connection. And so the first part of that recommendation is strategically increase consistent opportunities for extracurricular and volunteer activities in all FCPS schools.

[02:01:00] And this was really an opportunity where we thought could foster an environment where students feel safe supported included and empowered when you talk to different families from these different schools you hear that a lot of kids don't have the opportunity to do after school activities because there's no bus home so for example i'm at sleepy hollow elementary school we have these amazing baruti camps there's financial aid but there isn't a way to get home so even if you can find a way to pay for it you can't do it if someone isn't there to pick you up and so that was one of the things where we're like okay there are all these opportunities to engage in the school and be a part of a community with friends and

[02:01:40] teachers who can be role models but the access is not consistent across the different schools so then we said provide avenues for students to develop social emotional and leadership skills essential for their holistic growth again i'm sure all the communities talk about you know the whole the whole student and then promoting inclusivity and allow students to explore their interests and passions outside of traditional academic settings and so that led us to our next part of the recommendation which is improve equitable access to extra extracurricular activities and volunteer activities by reducing the reliance on ptas for funding and providing

[02:02:16] data on those pta-sponsored activities collecting data on mentoring and peer support programs such as mentor works the business partnerships with fcps one of the conversations we had frequently was we'd all shout out these ideas and the staff would be like okay well that already exists so it was like oh we weren't aware so how do we build upon what already exists how do we strengthen and promote what has already been thought of and kind of built out and so mentor works was a great example they're there to support to provide attention support guidance

[02:02:52] to these students and then also businesses have the opportunity to volunteer to recruit mentors so how do we how do we build upon that and then another idea was incorporating time during the school day for extracurricular activities and a great example is thomas jefferson's period eight program and if you don't know what that is it's where their extracurricular activity is built into the day it's their period eight everyone gets to sign up for something and then the buses take them home and we just thought that was such a wonderful example of equity so the third part of this recommendation is to promote extracurricular and volunteer activities as protective health factors.

[02:03:29] So as Robert mentioned earlier, they protect against challenges such as mental health, substance use disorders, and other risky behaviors. So further analyzing this data from the youth survey to

assess correlations would be really helpful. And then also exploring the impact of Ignite partnerships on schools and strategically strengthen and expand those collaborations.

[02:03:52] and so again i was researching online to see what exists already and and how successful is it and i found ignite partnerships and they do tutoring mentoring and workforce development and i looked up sleepy hollow to see which school which businesses were involved and i didn't recognize their names so then i was like okay this is a great idea but are these all active partnerships how do we measure engagement what can we do to strengthen this program it's a great program but how how can we push it to to be more successful and so that's again just these are just ideas

[02:04:31] we are here to collaborate with you and support you in implementing anything of here that you want that you think is feasible but okay so moving on to reforming digital environments so with this topic i do want to say that we ended up pulling from last year's report because last year's report was very lengthy and they had already done so much research on the digital environment and so when we went through our conversation we spent so much conversation talking about the cultivating um the connection piece and we were we were like why are we going to reinvent the wheel with the digital part it was they did all this amazing work last year so let's look through this report and pull

[02:05:11] what makes sense because whenever we brought up digital reform we were like okay every time I look at a kid they're on their phone or they're looking at a screen they're not looking at each other and when we thought think about isolation we think okay these kids don't even know how to talk to each other anymore you know rather than talk to each other they and we do this as adults here right we all get into the room and we all sit on our phones rather than look at someone next to us and so we were like okay definitely there's something to be done into the digital side because we want our kids to learn how to speak to one another and use social skills so that they're more successful later on in life and so and so we basically went through the lengthy report from last year and tried to pull

[02:05:50] just pieces of it that made sense for this year and so that was create a culture of intentional education technology uses we understand that it makes a difference in classrooms that can be very useful but we do want to find a balanced approach so that kids are not constantly looking at screens.

[02:06:08] So our proposed additions to the FCPS's ed tech screening process are include non-screen options when promoting screen-based apps, ensure ethical technology by minimizing detrimental persuasive design. We know that there are apps out there that use lures and nudges.

[02:06:25] And then audio options make it easier to access and use audio-based resources. Examples are audio books and podcasts for older students and sound recordings for elementary students. of those examples was elementary school students do a meditation in their classrooms and some found that their teachers are using videos with music and so they're staring at the screen when they're supposed to be meditating rather than just using an audio recording to listen and really be more mindful and not staring at a colorful screen or whatever the screen is and then also accessing offline materials so they don't have to look at a computer to look at what they're supposed to

[02:07:01] learn the next portion is use guidelines and use technology to combat the overuse of technology so developing centralized guidelines and tools for school grades and families is essential i know there are some digital citizenship notes online already we certainly think that there could be we could branch those out a little more and then also know just there there are no district wide screen time

guidelines today and i know this is a conversation again amongst a lot of committees where we just want consistency across the county because how do those disparities affect student

[02:07:38] health we don't have the data on that but we do know that it depends on the teacher and so different elementary school students are not having the same experience with digital use and then also leverage features of existing tools to produce better reports of screen usage so for example one of the great actually i heard this great example the other day high schoolers will get slides a slide deck and they'll be on their laptop but they can easily just minimize the slides and check their messages or do whatever apparently speed light speed can allow you to freeze the screen so that you can only look at your slides and you can't be distracted

[02:08:13] by other things and then also i have heard people say that you know do you have to use slides for every class can we can we go back to note taking so that students can have to write and focus more on what they're being taught rather than just kind of looking at the slides and being like, well, my notes are already written for me. I can kind of, you know, doze if I need to.

[02:08:34] And so those are just different examples of what could change. So by centering the student and not the technology, we can ensure a more balanced approach. So the last portion of this is updating the curriculum on screen time impacts and with wellness initiatives. So helping educators evaluate how technology meets that instructional objective its impact on students and what traditional methods it might replace and then also encouraging the broader use of the ed tech triangle with classroom educators I don't know how familiar familiar everyone is with that but it's just basically is the is

[02:09:09] it transformative is it supportive or is it restrictive or is it disruptive is it not really helpful it's just creating a bigger problem or teaching bad habits and so that's something to consider when you're choosing what to use in the classroom and then also consider wellness activities that don't involve screens such as a screen-free day or week of course with adaptations for students who do need those those screens so I will turn it over to Robert as we took a step back we realized as we took a step back we realized that let's say we

[02:09:45] were to improve the digital environment let's say we were able to address social isolation with increased extracurricular activities. I think as a committee, we kind of landed in a spot that it may be necessary to improve those things, but they may not be sufficient to actually really bend the curve, especially where we're seeing, you know, still thousands of kids in Fairfax County public schools attempting or considering suicide every single year. And so that's from self-reported data. So what about the kids who are not self-reporting that health outcome? And certainly I would argue that, you know, as a student health advisory committee, the worst outcome for a child

[02:10:21] in our school system is death. And so we wanted to take a step back is where we ultimately landed the year. And part of it, certainly me being a neuroscientist and my kids are watching at home, the one thing that I tell them, and they now roll their eyes at me at the ages of six and eight, it's the most important thing you do every single day is get a good night of sleep. Because if you're getting a good night of sleep everything the next day is going to be that much harder and yet when we look at the self-reported data and this is only from 8th 10th and 12th graders we're not even asking sixth graders about sleep i went to my elementary school i tried to have some conversations

[02:10:59] about sleep but adequate sleep is how the brain recovers from stress it's how we ensure basic cognitive functions like focusing learning memory critical decision making and self-regulation and And

yet, when we look at this data from 8th, 10th, and 12th graders, 16% are saying they're getting less than six hours a night of sleep, 53% are getting six to seven hours of sleep, and only about 31% are reporting eight or more hours of sleep.

[02:11:33] These are kids. Brains are still developing until they're 24, 25 years old, right? And so if they're not getting enough sleep, we're not just causing harm in day-to-day performance and academic performance, we're causing mental health issues and we're certainly causing much more lifelong challenges associated with what does it mean to be the best version of themselves.

[02:11:55] So again self-reported data from the kids themselves are telling us this. Now devices are part of the story but we need to probe the data further especially with regard to mental health concerns and so back to these three to succeed we see the protective factors playing out those with extracurricular activities seem to have widespread impacts across health concerns but the cross correlations on the self-reported data from the youth we weren't seeing that data so in the self-reported data we're asking for it and everybody wants to help right but we think we

[02:12:34] could use your support in getting these cross correlations run and the data that already exists. This is not new data, this data that already exists. We're the cross correlations of sleep, extracurricular activities, and digital uses to better understand how to best address these concerns, most especially on a school-by-school breakdown. Are schools, some schools, just not sleeping as much as other schools? Do that correlate with increased mental health concerns in the self reported data from the students themselves you know this is where that data is there we don't know if it exists we just didn't have access to it and if it does exist we'd love

[02:13:09] to see it but in general high stress specifically affects basic cognitive functions we'd love to share more information with you next year we know it wasn't part of this year's charge but this has a long history in the neuroscience the more that stress goes up the more that cognitive functions decline this is basic science at this point i got my phd 20 years ago it's been around for decades but we're not teaching that as part of the educational process we're certainly not teaching how loss of sleep makes it that much harder to study and remember and perform in school and we think there's an opportunity as part of the strategic plan to really get after these

[02:13:46] challenges as part of innovate offers more often i'll get to these numbers in just a few minutes so we still have an opportunity to really have a discussion here tonight with the limited time that we have but hopefully to have a follow-on conversation or set of conversations i'll I'll certainly be available all summer to support your work in any ways that I can.

[02:14:04] And then next year, we'd love to get after some of these issues, but really put a target on the board for 2030 as part of the strategic plan on how can we innovate specifically in brain health for student health and make that a priority, not just for students, but their families and staff countywide.

[02:14:21] I just read an article yesterday on how increased noise in where kids are growing up is affecting cognitive development. And so you can just imagine how increased rates of noise and where kids are sleeping at night across our very diverse district is leading to academic challenges that we could be all over as part of an innovative school district.

[02:14:40] So in any case, the focus on social isolation and the digital environment seems necessary, but not sufficient to cover for the broad range of challenges affecting student health as identified suit by the

youth survey. And so one question we just had was how can the FCPS strategic plan for 2030 Incorporate innovations in brain health to better address significant health concerns that are already apparent and readily apparent in the youth survey data.

[02:15:07] And then secondarily, how can we uplift staff and family wellness to better support the students that they already are so caring about. For topic 1.2, we saw an opportunity to better enable preventative support for developing and maintaining brain health.

[02:15:25] The tier two support is really great. We have tools like Hazel Health, pediatricians who are plugging into the district you know this is really wonderful if a kid needs help that help is increasingly available to them and and that's wonderful the problem is it's a bit little bit like cancer once you have cancer that's a problem you have to address it after the fact we've done a lot of work as a society over the last 30 years better addressing the causes of cancer now is the opportunity to do the same thing for mental health what are the causes of mental health concerns and when do they start very early in childhood and when is it part of

[02:15:59] the ways we expect them to work and to perform and to be great kids which we all want so for this topic we saw an opportunity to ask how can the strategic plan incorporate innovations in brain health to enable preventative support for students to better build their brain power as a resilient muscle. Maybe it's a toolkit in every classroom. Every classroom has a first aid kit. Maybe every classroom needs a toolkit to better support the developing brain and getting the most from the brain as a resilient muscle. And so as part of this, you know, it's asking some really basic

[02:16:36] questions, but how can students learn how to best train and maintain their brain power? Are we able to enable brain health in childhood? What do we do good skills look like to support how students focus, learn, remember, decide, and self-regulate their emotions? And then how do students learn how to best use their brains to empower their academic performances in the rest of their lives? I'd like to point out that student athletes today know more about how to train their bodies than the students do on how to train and maintain their brains. And I think that's just really where the focus is. You know, we're really focusing on athletic performance,

[02:17:15] how to get the most from your body, where's the equivalent focus for how to get the most from your brain, especially where brains are so diverse and the best of our society and the best of our culture, the best creativity has come from the best diversity that we see. All brains are able to produce just phenomenal work, but most especially in a time of artificial intelligence.

[02:17:39] We wanna uplift the human, what humans are capable of and how to make them competitive in the future going forward. Finally, for topic 1.3, how do we prioritize innovations to pilot and evaluate brain health initiatives with students and the impacts on staff and families?

[02:17:57] So here the question really becomes, how can the strategic plan for 2030 incorporate innovations in brain health to pilot and evaluate brain health initiatives with the students, the families, and the staff based on the impacts being felt?

[02:18:13] so just as an example this came up as a topic of conversation probably no surprise but we continued to return to it knowing that it was a topic of of the zeitgeist how can we pilot and evaluate later middle school start times in this upcoming school year we asked we asked our middle school principals how many are supportive of later middle school start times and you know depending on how you look at

it, 20 percent of principals are supportive. On the one hand, that sounds pretty challenging for Dr. Reed and her leadership team. If only 20 percent

[02:18:49] are supportive of something, how are you going to roll it out? How do you recruit the innovation leaders or even the classrooms? But what if we were to flip that around and say, rather than try to start with 100 percent and try to convince 80 percent, what if we start with 10 or 20 percent, those that are raising their hand and say, you know what, I think this is really important.

[02:19:09] we see this as an opportunity to learn from those folks that are most ready for innovations rather than try to you know try to start with everybody when you know 80 the super majority are not ready and then this also led to a topic of discussion that we had hopefully it helps with conversations you all have but what other impacts of lost sleep can be readily piloted and evaluated with interested participants so we found ourselves asking is homework part of the problem i know on my first day on the committee i pointed out part of i think part of the challenge is if

[02:19:43] you had a job where you're working 8 10 12 16 hours a day you come home exhausted and you're asked to do even more work as part of your day before you can go to sleep and your deadline for getting that work in is 11 59 p.m what kind of terrible job would that be we would all say that's a terrible job. And Dr. Reed's smiling because that probably is her job, but that doesn't mean it has to be every child's job. And so we found ourselves asking, what if we were to recommend rolling back that deadline for school work? Is 9 p.m. really so bad? And we've got some early

[02:20:22] feedback. Well, what about the kids who are going to extracurricular activities? They don't even get home to 9 p.m. Our response is, that's part of the problem, right? They're not getting home till 9:00 p.m. and then they're expected to do more work we've got to look at this more holistically because we're having real impacts here on how the students are developing so as we were sort of bundling everything up presenting it to the committee and getting ready to send it off to you all one parent and a ninth grader were discussing the report this is the feedback we got back the brain is an organ but it develops like a muscle so you have to use it and rest

[02:20:58] it. It's introduced as part of his PE health unit. So far so good. The problem is two tests, a quiz, and a major project due in a two-day span or two hours of math homework a night for an extended period of time not getting the rest and stress relief that's needed. And I just point out again stress is a physiological function that's causing brain damage on a day-to-day basis. The only way that that brain damage is fixed is with enough sleep. So that's the science today. Even if kids know the importance of sleep and stress management, they aren't in a system conducive to prioritizing

[02:21:36] it. This is a ninth grader saying this. We couldn't have said it better ourselves. The students know. And so our biggest takeaway, honestly, for y'all is how do we better listen to our students going forward? How do we uplift their voices? And then just as an example, Fairfax County, we tried to find what's the biggest arena.

[02:21:54] We think it's Eagle Bank arena, we can't be sure. But Eagle Bank arena has a capacity of 10,000 people. So again, from the youth survey data, this is again only 70% of eligible students. This is also only the eighth, 10th and 12th graders. This does not include the sixth graders, which probably should start asking sixth graders some of these questions.

[02:22:14] But of those eighth, 10th and 12th graders, 1600 students have reported attempting suicide the year 2022. 4,400 students reported considering suicide in the year 2022. 9,200 students reported experiencing high stress. And then 11,600 students reported symptoms that would be qualifying them for a diagnosis of depression or a depression-related mental health concern. And so we would fill their Eagle Bank arena with the number of students who are having mental health concerns

[02:22:52] in one way or another. And that's where, just think of that visual in your work. Those are the students, how are we going to address them earlier in their educational process? How are we going to support them more as part of academic performance? This doesn't all have to be about tier two support.

[02:23:08] It's important, it's necessary, but how do we start before the cancer is realized? How do we start about presenting cancer before it happens. I would argue that could start with kindergarten. Kids can be learning about sleep and the importance of sleep. Let's make parents' jobs easier at getting their kids to bed, you know, not harder. It shouldn't be a battle of using devices or not devices. So finally, we land on where we are with potential charge for next year. We'd really like to dig into this topic, continuing to pursue on digital devices, continuing to pursue on social isolation but really trying to use the neuroscience as it exists today based on lots of history

[02:23:46] to just continue to do the research revisit with you in a year's time but really put an eye on the 2030 plan for how can we be strategic here and so we propose researching the following topics to determine the impact of neuroscience on improving student outcomes academic performances health but also happiness for the rest of their lives so number one research topic is fostering brain health for all students families and staff county-wide and we have in our appendix innovation proposal from david behar who was a student fairfax county public schools he's really

[02:24:22] interested in pursuing increased social worker support that's something we'd love to support him on it seems like a really interesting way to try to get after the problem most especially as resources are limited. How do we do a lot of these things with the resources we have, not ask y'all for more resources? Number two, how can we enable preventative support for developing and maintaining brain health, maybe starting as early as kindergarten, starting with how sleep and stress are the same physiology for your developing brain and how that fuels your academic performance for the rest of your life. I certainly have these conversations with my kindergartners and I don't think it's just them. I think every kindergartner is able to understand why sleep is so important for doing

[02:25:02] well in school and focusing well in school, why devices right before sleep are not going to help them to fall asleep. And finally, number three, how can we identify innovations to pilot and evaluate brain health initiatives with the students themselves? Let's uplift their voices. So in that spirit, we'd like to meet with student groups to obtain their feedback as to the best ways to build and nurture their brain development and growth really put the question to them how can we help them to focus better build a focus muscle build their learning and their memory muscles and from a very early age because they know but they don't know how to ask the right questions

[02:25:39] so questions for them may include what cognitive muscles are they concerned about and how can school environments help and hinder who are they growing into for you all the data that we're getting back from the youth survey we love those cross correlations so we can better understand are there some schools that are doing health really right?

[02:25:54] And are there some schools that are struggling? Maybe the highest performing academic schools are actually struggling the most with mental health concerns. So how can we make academic performance and brain health critical to how kids are being developed but not sacrificing their mental health?

[02:26:11] Again, we think this data already exists. We just need the analyses to be run. And then finally, Shaq would like to obtain student feedback on how technology, extracurricular activities, sleep and stress management affect them. We hope that the data collected can be used to place Fairfax County public schools at the forefront of holistic student development in the coming years.

[02:26:31] And that's certainly where we would love to place it, not just in what's possible next year, but let's give ourselves six years to really make the moves that are possible here with prioritizing the neurosciences of student outcomes. Thank you so much for your time tonight. Really appreciate it. Happy to take any questions.

[02:26:47] - Great, well, thank you, Robert and Kelly for the very fulsome presentation. And I would just editorialize at the outset that this really gets to the core of our work when it comes to mental health. And it's so timely, because we're dealing with these issues in real time, whether it's extracurriculars, phone, social media use, sleep, later start times, or loneliness, those are all things we're dealing with right now.

[02:27:11] And this committee has a long history of pushing this school system where it needs to be pushed, whether it's on later start times, school food, all those things, so we're greatly appreciative of this work. Given the time, we're gonna limit interventions to two minutes each, so I see we already have four folks.

[02:27:30] So Melanie, Carl, Rachna, Ilyon. - Okay, I'll do my best. So thank you, I found this presentation helpful, thoughtful, validating, and also frustrating. The challenges of brain health and connectivity are not gonna be solved solely within the walls of our schools, so I really need to continue to stand firm that the solutions are public health solutions.

[02:27:51] They are whole community solutions. And so we have a public health office and the head of that public health office is one of the highest paid executives in this county, over $300,000. Where is that partnership? That's what I ask for my colleagues.

[02:28:07] Where is the partnership to talk about the mental health services? This school division has done so much to focus on social emotional health and that is needed for students to achieve their academic success, but it can't be at the expense of it. So I really urge us to widen this lens to not just be, this is FCPS's issue to solve.

[02:28:29] The survey, thank you for really examining that survey. From the time I've been on the board, we've bemoaned the limitations of this data source. Is it time to do something different? What would you recommend? Dr. Reed, what is a better data source than relying on students to take this survey?

[02:28:45] Sometimes they take it seriously, sometimes they don't. This has been a long time issue, and if we're going to base decisions on this, we need better data. I think, also, I want to push on attributing the school experience to some of the challenges raised. Is the digital policy affecting the self-reported student health concerns?

[02:29:04] What evidence is there that ed tech is promoting isolation, or is it the tech used after school? I don't know what that data is, but I want to trust teachers, and if they need guidelines about how much screen time to use, fine, but I certainly want to trust that they know and if they need that help, professional development. I might need just 30 more seconds, Ryan.

[02:29:26] Yes, Enhanceville, we have Schoology and Lightspeed, but what does the research say on the other hand, too, about handwriting? I mean, we have AVID, they're focusing on note-taking. We're expanding AVID. By the way, we're also changing middle school start times. And I just want to mention the part about noise. My goodness, I can't believe you mentioned that, David.

[02:29:42] So I have been trying in the town of Vienna for years to work with families who have been advocating to have the noise ordinance changed from 6 a.m. to 7 a.m. because every morning their children are woken up by businesses starting their business. That is a local policy issue.

[02:29:58] So we can spend $25 million to change the high school start time, which we did years ago, and we could spend time and money now doing the middle school start time. But if we don't have these partnerships, we can do everything right. can have kids feel connected and engaged at school when they go home they feel disconnected isolated tired so i love all the recommendations and this isn't an assault on those i just want to be so clear that our schools cannot do this work alone it's all the community's responsibilities to help raise healthy children thank you uh carl thank you and thank you to the committee for the work

[02:30:35] um this is a fortuitous discussion given the work that the school division has been embarked on as part of our strategic plan particularly around the protective factors and it is another proof point as to why we need to continue to push to expand our middle school sports programs you know there are lots of places in this county where athletics particularly when they're younger are not available unless you have means and so i see our expansion of middle school sports as a

[02:31:12] a game changer as it relates to this because it's not only is it giving them the connection factor it's also a physical activity and for many people it's the only access they have to something like that additionally the school division has increased its support for debate and forensic programs in our high schools acknowledging that it's not available equally across the school system and so they're supporting the educators who are who are bringing those programs to students one area that we looked at before the pandemic that kind of got shutter shuttered as we had to

[02:31:49] deal with the pandemic an initial budget that we considered had funding put aside for equitable offerings and after school programs at the middle school level uh you know acknowledging the pta barrier that some schools have where you know there are ptas with tens and you know tens of thousands of dollars in the bank and then there are others with hundreds of dollars in the bank or less or more um and not all services offered are equal so um encouraged to hear that reference

[02:32:20] as well i did notice uh in the analysis of the wellness uh survey that the one fact the one thing that was consistent across all of the the uh protective factors was alcohol use by students very very low but consistent regardless of the number of interventions that students had and

[02:32:42] I'm also curious if because there has been a long-term trend particularly among hard drugs and alcohol use or excuse me tobacco by students of dropping I wonder how much of that is attributed to these activities and how much of it might be attributed to other things because even as the fentanyl

epidemic is happening students are using far fewer hard drugs than at any time since we've started keeping track.

[02:33:13] so thank you for the work. Great, Rachna. Thank you, and again thank you for the work. I really appreciate all the hard work here, and I love the focus on extracurricular and volunteer activities. I think we've all anecdotally talked about that's the reason that kids come to school, right, often is the stuff that gets them engaged and connected. It's a great way for inclusivity. It's a great way to teach leadership, so I won't repeat much of what my colleagues said about the inequities in terms of the access to extracurriculars. I think it's really telling that a third of our sixth

[02:33:48] graders don't have don't access any extracurriculars after school. I think that's a really telling point in the student survey. So it goes to show the importance of our middle school after school athletics programs of our middle school after school activities and even our strategic plan where we talked about the importance of having equity and access to enrichment. I think those it fits right in there with us. So I'd love to see more work on that and I thank you Dr. Reed for work you've done with your team to date on bringing middle school sports to us for the first time in decades and um the focus on this i'd love to see as you talked about ed tech and screen time and

[02:34:22] digital citizenship i think that's so important to talk about right we um you know we think about the crazy things we did as kids and kids now have with impulse control it's so much harder there's so much more impulses they have to control right because it's all right there at their fingertips were and so i think it's really important to expand really how the correlation between digital use and criminal justice right and how things online can be seen as harassment and stalking in a way that used to be you had to get in a car and go somewhere i think that's really important because that impulse control is hard i think it's really important to talk about bullying and

[02:35:01] harassment when it comes to digital citizenship i think it's important to talk about in this new world how digital citizenship can build connections but how it can it doesn't take the place of that human connection right like we need to teach responsible usage um and then and just on the brain health side i think this is really exciting stuff in teaching kids about their brain it fits right in what acsd talked about the previous reports if i may beg for like 10 more seconds as well as um aap right and what we talked about about how do we talk positively about different brains and i think that is so important to teach people just like you're diverse in in

[02:35:37] many identities you're diverse in how your brain thinks and that leads into being diverse in how your brain functions and what's important for your brain right and i think couching it for our students we just don't say hey go to sleep you need sleep but why does it how does it impact your body you know or um and i and i last thing i really do agree we need to figure out the correlation right between screen use sleep and access to that enrichment activities you know it sometimes we and and the causation because i think we correlate a lot i don't know how much we dig into causation and last but not least yes this is a public health issue we can't solve this by ourselves we've got to engage families in this i will stop i know it's much more than 10 seconds

[02:36:17] thank you mr mcleveen um thanks rasha and just we'll give you a few minutes to the end of the response we just want to get through everyone real quick um so we have ilyang and then seema okay thank you thank you uh recently i've been reading uh this particular book written by a new york University

professor, a social psychologist named Jonathan Haidt, the Anxious Generation, and he talks about how the great rewiring of childhood is causing an epidemic of a mental illness.

[02:36:47] He talks about how use or overuse or abuse of our digital devices content is affecting at a mental health of our youngsters right here and and suggesting a solution which requires community-wide effort so school is one side but there is another side so parents and family and community uh you know we may do our best but the we need to have a partnership in our parents to be do even better job at home than here because i'm assuming that you know most of the time

[02:37:24] My kids are in class, they are supposed to be able to learn something. When they go home, they don't necessarily use all their time doing productive things, but something other than that. That's where we need to have cooperation, help from our parents.

[02:37:42] Now the task is, how do we communicate that message out to parents and community out there? And as you are also wrestling with, you know, school board, you know, dealing with the cell phone use policy. And from a number of years ago, we went, you know, we have invested a lot of money in going into one-to-one device.

[02:38:04] Now we are replacing those devices. Have we gone into a wrong direction, relying more and more on digital devices and affecting a mental health of our students?

[02:38:19] I only have 11 seconds left right there. some of the things coming into our mind and whether your advisory committee has any position to take on these questions. - Perfect timing. Okay, Seema.

[02:38:36] - Thank you for the report and the detailed analysis and the graphs. The slide with the student kind of resonated the most with me when it said, yeah, we understand the brain needs nurturing and this, but we have this homework and this project is due.

[02:38:54] That's how a high school, typical high school student is in the county right now, especially if they've taken a few AP courses and an IB program. My son graduated this year, and he was repeatedly going to sleep around 1 o'clock or 2 o'clock at night.

[02:39:12] And I would say, why, absolutely, that's not the right thing to do, and you have to get up at 7. But it's just a course load. He had seven APs or something like that. So, I, with the homework, additional homework, there was a lot of time it was taking to do the assignments.

[02:39:31] So, I don't know if this homework is a question, whether it's help students or not help students. Because after school, like you said, they have other activities and then they come home, take a little bit of downtime and they want to, and then they have to do their homework.

[02:39:47] And usually, students do it the last day, unfortunately. So they have like all the stuff going. And so I just wanted to bring that as a parent and as a now, I think we get all letters at the school board office.

[02:40:02] And most of the students who write to us are asking for no homework. So maybe we have to look that as one of the things and how to unburden some of these students who can thank you. - Okay, great.

[02:40:19] So that's a lot thrown at you in 10 minutes. you like to offer any commentary yes thank you for all those comments i'm this is such a great topic that i feel just invites this conversation this is kind of what happened every month with our meetings because everyone could talk forever um so i completely agree this is a public health issue and that was kind of where we struggled is okay our charge is to focus on the

school board but this is a bigger issue than the school board so i completely agree partnership is key and really making sure everyone is invested and making everyone in the community understand we're in this together this is our future you know this is the future of our economy it's the future of

[02:40:57] our kids everything it's all connected and so i think really driving that point home to make sure that everyone does their part is really key and then also you know to i guess you mentioned the message to the parents about what can be done at home and i struggle with this because i have four kids. And when I get home from work, I have things to do. I got to clean the kitchen. I got to cook dinner. I've got to do all these things. What do my kids do? They sit there and fight behind me.

[02:41:27] How do I get them to be quiet? I might let them watch a show, you know? So, and, and, but I mean, I, and so I have been really mindful of that and like, okay, go play outside, go play kick the can with your neighbors, do whatever you got to do, go outside. But not everyone has that opportunity.

[02:41:42] You know, there are some kids who don't have yards. There are some kids who are just, or they're stuck in their apartments and they don't really have a lot of alternatives. So while we can give that message to parents, I just want to kind of look deeper into how can we empower parents to really make that change in their own lives because I know it can be a challenge.

[02:42:02] Thank you, Kelly. And then just to be clear, we are really, took this year certainly as new to the committee to take a step back and do this reassessment. And so it started with the data, it started with where we are because we were just wanting to understand where's the baseline here.

[02:42:19] And so I would encourage, certainly before scrapping the youth survey, take a step back and look at the data that we already have and reanalyze it. Certainly we encourage that as part of our work. We would love to get after those cross correlations next year.

[02:42:35] Dr. Axler has been wonderfully supportive of that type of work. I think recognizing your support and that type of reanalysis of that data would better help. Certainly from a leadership perspective, Dr. Reed's team would help us to understand where is the baseline here already, including from this year's youth survey data.

[02:42:52] Let's get after some of those cross correlations 'cause you're absolutely right, they're not causation. It is just correlation, but we didn't feel comfortable making deep and wide recommendations without good enough data. And that's where we felt like we landed is that the data right now is a little bit too disparate, especially to get after how schools themselves have disparate digital policies.

[02:43:13] And so if that's the case, then it should be pretty straightforward. I'm a data scientist by training, should be pretty straightforward to then look at how those disparate policies create disparate health outcomes among those students based on the self-reported data. And some of which it's gonna be a little bit, you know, challenging given the variability, but there will be some interesting signals for us to continue to follow up on.

[02:43:35] And certainly we're not gonna change these things overnight, but our hope is that when we revisit with you a year from now, we'll have made more progress based on an updated charge and we can continue to tackle these things in the years ahead. I think it helped that Kelly and I both have young children and so we're looking at what kids are they becoming in Fairfax County public schools over the next six years and how can we better create work and workflows to better make that happen.

[02:44:02] One thing I would say and maybe point out is part of the challenge with devices is all devices are not equal. We're a generation of television, right? We grew up on television, watching television. But there's also good work now that video games are not all negative.

[02:44:19] Video games actually have protective effects on mental health among kids. I'm not in a position here tonight to make any recommendations on video games, but there are now video games for both mental health and for education. And so these are topics that we need to look more after. I would argue, though, that this device, the smartphone, is more like cigarettes.

[02:44:39] I think that data is coming in. It's much more addictive than any devices we've seen previously. I think some of the concern in Jonathan Haidt's book do point out the challenges that working parents have. They do want to come home. They do want to put their kids in front of screens.

[02:44:55] And so maybe it's making recommendations on the types of screens that are healthier choices versus others. But just as schools limited access to cigarettes in schools 20, 30 years ago, it's not so crazy to say that the addictiveness of the smartphone should lead us to much more restrictive policies in schools because these are causing cancers, they're causing bullying effects, and I think that data is becoming more prevalent. It doesn't mean that those phones are not available to kids after school on weekends. We don't expect schools are going to be able to have much of a say on it, but we think we'd be much better off, personally, maybe I'm speaking for myself, if we were to see

[02:45:32] phones as more like cigarettes than they're often given credit to, especially because they're addictive. One thing I just want to reiterate as well not just the course correlations available in the youth survey but we think there's time in school to lighten up a bit and maybe have extracurricular activities baked into the school gate if it's good enough for Thomas Jefferson it should be good enough for every other school in the district and if it means at the end of the day kids are playing chess or doing robotics or art or maybe playing football it's part of the school day then they go home on the bus feeling much better we don't have to pack every minute of

[02:46:09] the school day with academics but I'll leave that as the last thought is while social and emotional learning is really important and we were glad to see the current state of it I was surprised to find that cognitive functions are not currently part of social and emotional social emotional learning programs so kids are learning to self-regulate fantastic but kids don't seem to be learning about how memories are formed, how sleep helps you to learn better, how stress management makes it easier to learn because as your heart rate increases and you get more anxious during a test, it makes it harder to remember things. These are the basics of the cognitive science revolution, but that dates

[02:46:48] back to the 1970s. And so as part of our work next year, we'd love to bring more of this research to your attention and better have a more informed discussion as part of next year's meeting. And Certainly in a time between now and then, happy to support any way that I can. Maybe last words before we have to go to our staff, if they wanted to add anything.

[02:47:07] I want to make sure their voices are heard. I just want to thank you for the tremendous amount of time that you and the members of our committee have put in this year. And your leadership and what you're offering to us in terms of the work that you do. It's very enlightening and certainly gives us a lot of things to think about.

[02:47:24] So I appreciate being part of the team. Great. Melanie, you want a last word? I think I can do justice to summarize. So again, thank you. And I think when I think about some of the big things that the school division is trying to do now, like the middle school start time so that kids have more time to sleep. And even also the early release Mondays for literacy development. Like if we can practice exercising, dealing with change, if it's for the benefit of our kids, maybe that's part of what this is. I know as parents, though, I'm guilty of it. I want my kid to do things right. And it gets later in the evening. Then you sign up and you're doing

[02:48:02] things and you know they should sleep but you know so how do we as parents come to grips with that but again maybe the more we hear that sleep is a number one thing beyond anything maybe that will start to chip away at those decisions but it's very hard when you want to give your child everything so um but I think if we could practice the change in you know for the sake of our kids you know we'll get there so thank you wonderful okay well we'll take maybe a five minute break so people can have a bathroom stop yeah okay thank you all

[02:48:35] really appreciate it okay I'm going to call this meeting to order I will be standing in for my colleague Kyle McDaniel as the meeting manager for the pre-k and early head start parent policy committee meeting I will go ahead and

[02:49:10] have our distinguished guests please do the introductions of themselves okay Good evening. My name is Monica Jones, and as the chairperson of the FCPS Pre-K Early Head Start Parent Policy Committee, PPC, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your support for this program and for the opportunity to address you this evening

[02:49:45] on behalf of the program and the parents involved. I'm pleased to speak with you. I'm pleased to speak to you on the behalf of Pre-K and Early Head Start, along with our director, Lisa Pilsa, joining with staff and other committee members. I would also like to acknowledge that we have Farima Nazari, the parliamentarian, who are also serving on PPC's executive board. Good evening. My name is Reyna Martinez,

[02:50:24] Vice Chairperson. I would like to thank each and every one of you for the support you have given and give to the Pre-K and Early Head Start program. good evening my name is elizabeth king and i'm the treasurer thank you for being here tonight and listening to our presentation the fcps pre-k and early head start program provides high quality preschool education and comprehensive services for their students who are identified as having

[02:50:59] economic and educational risk factors the purpose is to provide a strong start and develop kindergarten readiness skills including academic and social emotional skills. During the school year 2023 through 2024, the pre-k program had 123 classrooms serving 2,112 students. While the program provides services to over 2,000 students, I do not believe that the pre-k and EHS program is meeting the

[02:51:34] total needs of our community. We will talk about that more on a later slide.

[02:51:51] The Pre-K and Early Head Start program serves a diverse population of students including students who are found eligible based on income and other risk factors. The top chart shows the family income reported for the fall verification report for students attending the program this year. The bottom two charts show some of the diversity of the students in the program.

[02:52:15] 71% enrolled students are in the zero to 130% of the federal poverty level. Additionally, 18% are between 131 to 200% of the federal poverty level, which shows the majority of our students come from economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

[02:52:36] 16% of our students have been identified as having developmental delays or disabilities. This percentage includes the students who were already in school system with IEPs prior to entering our Pre-K program, as well as those identified during the program year.

[02:52:58] 75% of our students come from multilingual home. For our students, Pre-K offers a language-enrich environment that provides experience with English prior to their kindergarten year. Pre-K also offers comprehensive services connect with families to connect families with community resources sorry guys as required by

[02:53:36] the federal head started virginia preschool initiative grants the program provides comprehensive services to children and their families in the areas of eligibility recruitment selection enrollment and attendance governance family services health and nutrition education mental health and disabilities to help them be successful and handle a variety of challenges they may face main strategies our program uses is relationship building with each and every one of our families the relationship building process begins from the start of the application process and families are supported and the student is transitioned to kindergarten as a widowed single

[02:54:14] parent this program has been a blessing for me the fact that it is completely free once accepted into the program has lifted a huge financial burden off of my shoulders and my son benjamin who has an IEP, learned and developed so much during this past school year. His teachers gave him the best possible preparation for his transition to kindergarten and updated me regularly with progress reports. Benjamin loved riding the school bus this past school year and having the program at the local elementary school means that he'll have an easy transition to kindergarten as he's already familiar with the school setting and the staff there.

[02:54:50] It lifted a weight off of my shoulders not to have to worry about breakfast and lunch during the school week and knowing my child was fed a nutritious meal i was personally connected with services that i didn't know were available available to me and my son received a grief bag that included books which helped both of us in our grief journey um these are the books that are in the grief bag i was also able to pursue a new job opportunity that i wouldn't have been able to do without the program it is easy to think that this is just some free child care but this program

[02:55:30] tremendously impact the family participating in it once families are in the program they are supported by comprehensive services required by the federal historic and virginia preschool initiative grants including educational and child development program services health health and nutrition which includes breakfast lunch and afternoon snack as well as mental health family engagement support for children with disabilities transition services governance and community

[02:56:07] partnership and transportation here are some highlights of our program for the school year 2023 through 2024 collaboration between the early between the office of early childhood and transportation increased access to bus transportation for students that feeder schools by aligning more with early childhood special education feeder sites and increasing some routes

[02:56:36] For school year 2024-2025, there will be a feeder site identified for every base school in FCPS education. The program completed all of the Virginia Quality Birth to Five requirements.

[02:56:55] Over 230 students were supported through the multi-tiered systems of support, including academic readiness, behavior, and wellness, support for children with disabilities. During the school year 2023 through 2024, the pre-grade program has increased the number of early childhood inclusion classrooms and inclusive learning opportunities.

[02:57:25] Next year, early childhood inclusion will continue to be expanded. Mental health. The early childhood mental health team has continued to expand the resources available using the trauma-informed lens, including the conscious discipline approach and the second step curriculum. Family engagement. The pre-K family services staff supports families with school readiness through family center meetings, individual goal setting, and ready-rosing.

[02:58:02] The Pre-K and Early Head Start program measures the impact of its service provided using the Virginia Kindergarten Readiness program data. This is called VKRP.

[02:58:20] This assessment measures the areas of self-regulation, social, math, and literacy skills. On this graph, blue represents all FCPS kindergarten students in the fall of their kindergarten year.

[02:58:35] Red represents economically disadvantaged students with pre-K experience, and yellow represents economically disadvantaged students with no pre-K experience. Students from an economically disadvantaged background perform around 30% better than their peers who did not have any pre-K experience.

[02:58:59] I can personally say I have seen a huge impact, academic improvement with my son this year. He has learned a lot of new words. His vocabulary has expanded dramatically, and this is a powerful evidence that when we invest in the Pre-K program in the quality of their instructions, we will be able to narrow down the achievement gap.

[02:59:25] The pre-K and early head start program is required to maintain a wait list to be able to fill slots that are vacated and to measure unmet need. The pre-K program does prioritize four-year-olds to receive a pre-K experience before kindergarten.

[02:59:45] We would like to note that not all three-year-old applications are processed. This past year, approximately 1,400 three-year-old applications were held to be processed for the following upcoming school year. Students who miss 15 consecutive days in a program, for example due to a vacation, not due to illness, will be moved to the bottom of the waitlist.

[03:00:05] In this case, a spot would be filled with someone who is already on the waitlist. The large number of students on the waiting list shows a need for more classrooms, however the waitlist number may not show the true need in our community. It can be overwhelming as a parent to find out and apply for early childhood programs, and these challenges are compounded if English is not the family's first language.

[03:00:28] Families who desire to participate but have not applied for the program cannot be counted in the number of applications. Pre-K staff tries to assist families through the application process. The Pre-K program works to serve as many families as possible, But this map shows there are still many students in Fairfax County who do not receive the preschool experience.

[03:01:01] While the program provides services to over 2,000 students, this map shows that there are more students out there who may be benefited by the quality pre-K opportunities. As you see here from the map, there are certain areas of the county where there is a higher need.

[03:01:23] The Parent Policy Committee executive board members team together to facilitate meetings and planning events so that the parents, early childhood leadership, and community can become more involved and invested in our children's social, emotional, and educational development.

[03:01:57] In order to become a PPC committee member, all members are required to attend quarterly PPC meetings in person and or virtual, attend family center meetings at their school, communicate with family service specialists, and share ideas to make decisions.

[03:02:32] Throughout the 2023-2024 school year, FCPS, Pre-K, and Early Head Start parents had the opportunity to serve on the Parent Policy Committee, PPC, and Advisory Committee to the FCPS Superintendent.

[03:02:49] PPC meetings are held at the Lee Center every quarter. Childcare is provided as well as dinner for the parents and the children. Parents were selected at each Pre-K and Early Head Start side to be representatives to the PPC. At the beginning of the school year, we started with 170-plus volunteer representatives to serve as parent leaders at their base school in six regions in Fairfax County, either as a regional representative or alternate representative.

[03:03:17] We also have four community representatives collaborating with us. Amy Tristan from the English Empowerment Center, Carla Parides from the Fairfax County Health Department, Brooke Luther from the Fairfax Resource Center, and Patricia Moreno from Anton Health Keepers Plus.

[03:03:45] This chart shows the executive board members who supported this presentation to the school board.

[03:04:13] This list does not include regional, alternative, and community representatives who have been part of our PPC meeting. Their contributions to the PPC have been invaluable. We thank them for their work. Each year, the Parent Policy Committee puts forward recommendations to the school board on how the parents feel we could best support the pre-K and early Head Start program in the future.

[03:04:49] I will share this year's recommendations with you. recommendation one include pre-k classrooms and the ttt staffing projections for schools so that all pre-k students will be included in special classes for example art pe and music this would also ensure that pre-k teachers have dedicated planning time recommendation two provide an additional teaching team staff member to each pre-k classroom this would support staffing coverage for pre-k teachers and ias to have their duty-free lunch as well as lower the adult child

[03:05:23] ratio to ensure a high quality pre-k experience while meeting the evolving needs of students enrolled in the program recommendation three include pre-k classrooms in the mental health staffing for schools or provide more early childhood specific mental health resource staff i would like to go into some more detail for two of the recommendations for recommendation one ttt staffing is about narrowing the achievement gap for fcps at large children who are from affluent families are more likely to access private camps and extracurricular opportunities children from

[03:06:01] economically and educationally challenged families with language barriers and cultural fluency who are not having clear smooth access to basic school and community information are less likely to be engaged in enrichment activities to summarize if you look at the percentage of program participants based on family income for the school year 2023-2024. Almost 90% were from a household making under 200% of the federal poverty level. This tells us most of the students attending pre-k and early head start are from families who would meet the income requirement for free and reduced

[03:06:39] lunch. Currently, some of our pre-k students have sporadic access to enrichment opportunities. Their access depends on the pre-K teacher's advocacy to use the school facilities such as the gym, extra lesson planning, and preparation.

[03:06:55] The burden to create such opportunities for pre-K students mostly lies on the pre-K teachers. FCPS already has teachers specializing in teaching STEM, music, PE, and arts at most elementary schools.

[03:07:11] Giving our pre-K students access to existing resources will have a huge impact in closing the achievement gap. The pre-K teachers will be able to focus more on teaching core curriculums. The benefits to FCPS at large will grow as our pre-K students grow.

[03:07:30] Enrichment opportunities also means that students get hands-on learning and may discover a talent they have at a young age, for example, loving music and wanting to learn an instrument. for recommendation three including the pre-k classrooms in the mental health staffing also means that pre-k students have access to this resource at a younger age if a need arises there could be a variety of trauma for example a terminally ill parent at home and if you have the extra mental health staff at school they can guide the teachers so in return they can guide the children more effectively in dealing with that situation it is incredibly important

[03:08:08] that every student in a school setting has access to that. Children handle trauma differently than grownups do. We think it's critical that our children have access to services that will support them to manage difficult emotions, especially related to traumatic experiences.

[03:08:29] - Thank you for taking the time to listen to our presentation about the pre-K program, our students, and our work on the Parent Policy Committee.

[03:08:46] We hope that all three recommendations are taken into great consideration to support our students' success. It has been an honor to represent the diverse FCPS, pre-K, and the Early Hazard families. Thank you.

[03:09:10] - Before I open it up to the floor, I want to say thank you very much. That was a great presentation. I know some of you were nervous, but you did a great job. So thank you. Are there any questions? Ms. Marin.

[03:09:27] - Thank you so much. Early childhood education is my first love. That's where I started my career 20 years ago. and knowing about the vocabulary development is so important. So what you said really I know is true. And I was wondering how, you know, when you interact with your friends and others, like are they, are you able to share that knowledge out?

[03:09:48] Like how does, you know, because we have such limited seats available, like are you able to share some of that knowledge? - Yes, I do. I'm choosing to be fluent, to have him be fluent in Spanish at home. So for me it's like at home it's only Spanish.

[03:10:05] But whatever he knows in English, it's from school, from the school itself this year. And I tell my friends, and even at work, talking to his teachers, it's been a huge difference. It still is at home.

[03:10:20] He's just trying to push the English in, but it's just, no, we have to keep Spanish at home and English at school. But yes, I am very grateful to have had him this year there where I work because I also work in the school that he attends this year.

[03:10:39] I have a representative school where the program is near the school and it's a huge asset to the families and not having to figure out all the transportation. Well, I just, you know, when I look at the slide that shows the wait list, I mean, my heart just continues to break. And I know that we're trying to make strides.

[03:10:55] Dr. Reed you are systematically trying to get those numbers up and but we have just got it. It's going to take again more than just the school division. It's a state investment. So we're going to keep trying but it's not nearly enough. So thank you for sharing your experience. Thank you and thank you for this. I really appreciate the report and I appreciate to pick back pick up on what Miss Marin said. Dr. Reed I appreciate that you know from the sometime you got here you've really focused on increasing preschool slots in the slideshows that we did in from the

[03:11:33] year to this year increased by 250 300 slots and I know that's still a focus to increase but I see the number of applications have gone up more than the number of slots so to your point that this is what we do need the state and the federal government to help support on that I really appreciate the recommendations because it really goes to making sure that even in our preschool programs we're educating the whole child right you're talking about mental health you're talking about access to enrichment as a parent whose child went through our preschool programs and the special ed side it was always a sadness of mine right that his experience in preschool is very different than my daughter's experience in preschool with field trips and

[03:12:11] music and art and it was very much drill drill drill for where he was at and so i really hope we can look at this dr reed as we're expanding our inclusive preschool and our preschool offerings to help bring in some of that mental health support as well as enrichment i think all of our students deserve it you know kind again piggybacks on the conversation we had earlier we should be treating all of our students the same right and so i think that's really important so um i thank you for those recommendations i think they're they're really valuable to bring um and i hope we can continue one question i did have i don't know on the parent policy governance structure i don't know who picks

[03:12:48] who's representative on because we don't have appointees i know a lot of the representatives are based are picked by each school leader but i saw that msaoc has a representative which is fantastic but if we're expanding inclusive preschool perhaps acsd should have a representative as well i would think that would be an important piece especially on that inclusive preschool side so i just wanted to mention that as a suggestion that alongside msaoc we should add a acsd as a rep so thank you and again i appreciate the work and i think we'll continue to work on doing what we can to expand our preschool offerings and make sure that they provide all the enrichment that our

[03:13:24] students deserve. Ms. Dixon. Thank you for the presentation and I'm really inspired by all of you who have taken time and been part of this committee and this is an important work. I always talk about you know that how early we can educate our kids is a success for them in the future and you know a

lot of parents have that I guess flexibility and time and you know then they can teach their students at home before they go to kindergarten and that's they get the head start

[03:14:03] not the head start we're talking about the head start to an academic success so i think this is like the the best way to get to equity which we all talk about is get those students a chance to be in the school learn from the education educators and get the enrichment which i guess they are they wouldn't get it otherwise so i would say this expand this should get definitely get expanded this program um and i and as little this uh you know children are three four year old

[03:14:37] they can learn so much more i am i'm i'm just saying this curricular uh we're talking about music and and and my brain goes to you know playing chess for example um i taught my kids they were three four year old and they can they could play a game of chess so if this some extracurricular after school things can be incorporated in their pro in their schedule uh that would definitely help them and they can get to that you know when they go to elementary school then now they can join all those extracurricular clubs right after school clubs

[03:15:12] so yeah this is this amazing thank you for your good work mr mckelveen i think mr moon was first mr moon oh thank you thank you for the presentation i just have a couple of questions either committee members or staff can provide uh responses uh a looking at the number of student number of children on the way list 400 some i i'm assuming that includes both a students for pre-k

[03:15:44] and early head start correct am i correct correct and number of classrooms for the eHS Early Head Start has remained the same as six for the last three years. Is there, like, artificial limitation in limiting the number of EHS classrooms?

[03:16:08] So it's not so much of an artificial limitation. It's a matter of the facility and access. For our Early Head Start children, we serve our children who are ages six weeks of age to three years.

[03:16:32] And with the Fairfax County government, they're calling themselves the Early Childhood, I'm sorry, it's formerly known as Office for Children, but it's the Early Childhood Program and Services. They hold the bulk of the Early Head Start grant, and being able to place, we have six classrooms in the county at three schools, placing and opening Early Head Start classrooms.

[03:17:01] It is very expensive. It costs about $35,000 per child, so we do have just the six classrooms. And to get more slots from the federal government, they're issued during certain times and cycles and in certain areas.

[03:17:22] And Fairfax County has not been an area that would be open for additional slots from the federal government. So is the funding mostly coming from the federal government rather than locally funded? It's braided.

[03:17:38] It's 100%? It's braided, so it's the federal government and local dollars as well. Okay, what's our share, local government share? Our local government share? Percentage-wise, half, one-third, quarter, 80%, would you be able to guess?

[03:17:59] I would prefer not to guess, but I can get back to you with that answer. Okay, because as far as development of the brain is concerned, brain capacity of children is concerned, I'm not an expert, but I think most of the capacity gets built up by the age of three.

[03:18:18] So if you need to make an investment, perhaps the earlier the better. I mean, I'm not saying we should not be doing pre-K. That's not the point. And I always understand about cost implication.

[03:18:34] It seems to cost much more for ESS per child basis. and I could guess why, but so this is a question. It costs about $35,000 per child for EHS. Is there any model where the cost can be reduced and accommodate few more children?

[03:18:57] Well, that's not feasible simply. - I don't have the answer for that question, but I can look into it, Mr. Moon. - Okay. - As far as a model that is cheaper, I would probably assume daycare and home providers as far as in the public school systems.

[03:19:15] I'm not certain. Okay, but even in the past, my experience with the prior board is that there have been a lot of questions as our funding is limited, whether we can find the solutions where per child cost, whether it's EHS or it's pre-K services, somehow find a way to reduce, but but provide the service to more children.

[03:19:41] Thank you. - Mr. Fisch. - Thank you, and thank you to our parents for their work on the committee and their work in helping to build out this report. I do wanna mention that this is a top focus of our strategic plan and that the school division is doing everything it can to expand service, including talking to our county partners and others, and that while it is a very large expense, to Ms. Maren's point about the need for others

[03:20:21] to help us get there, the advocacy of parents like you is gonna be one of the things that gets us there. So I hope you will continue to remain engaged in this work and carry your message to other elected officials who can help move the ball for us.

[03:20:44] - I'll take my turn now. - First of all, thank you very much. And thank you to the parents. I know it's a lot of work. To what some of my colleagues have said, I was at a round table with Senator Warner about preschool and he talked about the limitations of funding from the federal level and how we're gonna, and you know, I said this begs the question of, we're trying to piecemeal everything and what we really need is universal pre-K for our kids because that's so important.

[03:21:19] I just want to commend you for your work. I was a Head Start student, and I know how important that is. I don't know if any of you have been to Head Start classrooms at all. I know that my work in the classroom, in the schools, I've been in the Head Start classrooms and the kind of work that our previous presenters were talking about where you work with the parents and where the kids have their meals in a community setting and, you know, learn to serve each other and clean up and take it's just not the academics it's the life skills and

[03:21:55] i think unless you go see that people don't get the importance of everything that's being taught to those children and kudos to our amazing amazing head start teachers because they are off the charts and i know some teachers that have been doing it for 30 years and would never trade it for anything and are just saying it's getting a little bit hard for me to get up and down the floor because I'm getting older but I but it's these little ones that I love you know so I just want to commend you and thank you and um if any of you the parents particularly want to

[03:22:30] share a specific story that you think is important because your voices really are the most important and if you feel compelled to do so we would welcome it so I will I will share um my experience um with pre-k um with the pre-k program this year um I've been very hands-on um with my child's

[03:23:10] classroom um volunteering um just about every time they needed volunteers field trips and you know just events at the school and I see all the things that they teach these children outside of the academics. I think that was an amazing point. I'm noticing things that my preschooler brings home that I didn't teach her. And just how to be more self-sufficient, cleanse themselves. And I'm not

[03:23:48] saying I teach her that, but I'm just going, I'm just going to go on to the things that I can, I can tell she's, she's picked it up somewhere else, even if it's just a terminology that is different from something that I was saying. And I really do believe that Fairfax County could benefit from a universal pre-K program. I have four children, and the preschool is the youngest one.

[03:24:19] It has been a struggle to get into the pre-K program. She has been the only one who's been successfully able to get in there. I did get my middle two into a private preschool, but it's still not the same it is still not the same as going to pre-k head start in a school setting um it is a very important program and it's not just about academics yeah she can count but there are so many other things the social emotional um part that prepares them for kindergarten the

[03:24:55] kindergarten readiness um part um is important and i feel like most of that stuff you can really only get in a preschool hazard setting. And I am ready and happy to continue this fight to expand.

[03:25:19] I do see the differences between FCPS preschool, private daycares, and none at all. So, thank you. Seeing no other placards.

[03:25:36] Oh, Mr. Moon, do you want to go back? Okay. No other placards up? Thank you so much for your time and your presentation. We are actually now adjourned. We don't have a two-minute break. We're adjourned.

