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Fairfax County School Board Forum, Tuesday, October 6, 2026

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- Official meeting video (YouTube): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SEiGoeAEk-o>
 - Official School Board page (FCPS): <https://www.fcps.edu/about-fcps/leadership/school-board>
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Speech-to-text: whisper.cpp, model large-v3-turbo. Produced 2026-10-26. Each paragraph starts with its time [HH:MM:SS] in the meeting video.

[00:00:01] 10:37 virtual participation mr. Moon has submitted a request to attend this morning's meeting remotely due to a personal travel out of the country is located in Seoul Korea South Korea I perform an initial review of mr. Moon's request and have found it to be in compliance with the school boards remote participation resolution I have approved the request mr. Moon please check your audio and video okay but I'm chairman yes there's a bit of an echo but we can hear you thank you thank you I now ask board members who are physically present to vote on the following all this in favor of confirming the approval mr.

[00:00:34] request, Mr. Frisch, Ms. St. John Cunning, Ms. Anderson, Mr. McIlvain, and myself. Yeah, that's why I was waiting. So we'll pause because we don't have six at the dais right now. I'll wait for people to return. All right, so we're gonna go ahead and get started. So I'm gonna call Mr. Frisch, who will begin with the forum

[00:01:10] topic, Strengthening Student Safety and Belonging. Thank you. And when Mr. Dunn returns, we'll do a vote. I'll take my time until he gets here. When we hired Dr. Reed, one of the things that was intriguing to me was that she had been on the Washington State task force to address bullying in Washington State.

[00:01:36] And as she noted and has noted since, bullying unaddressed is one of those learned behaviors that carries into adulthood if it's not addressed. And so in the years since, when we've had numerous conversations about what we could do better or why certain indicators aren't improving.

[00:01:56] And so, for example, for the last several years, an increasing number of LGBTQ kids have indicated in the youth survey that they've experienced verbal or physical bullying and harassment. And for several years, those numbers have grown instead of going in the opposite direction of fewer incidents.

[00:02:17] And so we've also heard from community stakeholders, like the NAACP, FCPS Pride, ACLU People Powered, and others who applaud our work and want us to keep innovating and doing better. So after the last youth survey showed the issues surrounding LGBTQ students experiencing greater incidence of bullying and harassment than the previous year yet again, I began talking to Dr. Reed about what it would look like to take the same holistic approach used in Washington to address the issues in our schools here.

[00:02:52] And since then, I've spent the last few months working on this forum topic, gathering information, discussing it with Mr. McDaniel, sharing ideas with stakeholders, refining the draft, discussing it with Dr. Reed, and then submitting it a few weeks ago.

[00:03:07] You'll note that the requested action for this forum topic is to direct the superintendent to conduct an assessment. And yes, the assessment is sweeping. But the challenge is sweeping and that those the results of that assessment Come to us in the form of a report with recommendations and a work session with a presentation for the board to discuss the Nature of the assessment being rather sweeping necessitates a much longer Runway for the work and so the request is that this would be complete by the end of the school year

[00:03:47] I imagine during this work that Dr. Reed and her team will find many glows of things that we do exceptionally well in FCPS and Some grows and I'm eager for the work to begin so that we can better align our practices Or our intent With the vision we describe In our strategic plans goals pillars and equity commitments. Thanks

[00:04:27] We will now allow for members to ask questions Dr. Anderson thank you for calling on me much appreciated a couple of questions I'd like to start a little bit with some of the practices that were in discussion with mr.

[00:04:47] Frisch that were employed at your very at your previous school divisions Can you give a little sneak peek in terms of what occurred there because he made reference to it as an opportunity for exploration? Thank you, Dr. Anderson think the reference was to the Attorney General Commission I served on at the request of our governor at that time and the the reason that the governor requested at that time Governor Chris Gregoire was that really bullying had become a public health concern it was one of the largest reasons children's

[00:05:26] were children were reporting to their pediatricians and families that they were not attending school so the bullying issues and this was many years ago now decades ago but they really could identify a high correlation between children's attendance and their feeling of belonging and connectedness at school so that was a that was a major issue in the development of our task force and we did have pediatrician presence on the task force because of the public health health nature of the situation and concern it also followed at that time I

[00:06:06] ask you to pause for just one second so that we can take care of that business sure yes ma'am okay now mr. Dunn is in the room I will now ask board members who are physically present present to vote on the following all those in favor of confirming the approval of mr. moon's request for virtual participation please raise your hands mr. Dunn mr. Frisch miss st. John Cuning miss Anderson mr.

[00:06:31] McElvena myself all those opposed dr. Anderson motions passed back to dr. Anderson do you need to have him test Mike here I did that it was actually dr. Reed who was mid-sentence thank you the second reason that the Commission was launched was it was directly following the Columbine school shooting which as you know ushered in a whole really intentional look at the after action of that whole tragedy and one of the drivers that was discerned and often is

[00:07:10] is bullying in some fashion so we felt like it was an important topic at that time and we really looked at how important it was to maintain inclusive school environments and to make sure that all the adults in the school understood the importance of making sure that children felt connected safe it could be their authentic true selves at school both for attendance and student achievement reasons so I think many of the practices we employ here are similar I think a review a comprehensive review I agree with mr. Frisch is always a good

[00:07:48] idea our data is trending in an interesting probably a non-positive way for our LGBTQIA plus students and we have one or two grade levels I think as we looked at our healthy youth survey recently grade 6 and grade 8 and we know that those are challenging years for adolescents and I think taking a closer look at that and looking at current best practice research is always prudent so I appreciate the call to action on this topic because it intersects with so many of the other topics that are important in schools absolutely thank you this

[00:08:26] Commission that you served on I imagine it generated a report is there access that you can provide to us of that report you know I that might have even been before computer computer databases no but it was I would say it was the late 90s so let me go back and I'm sure there I know there was a report and we did actually I was asked at that time to do training across our state with the Attorney General office on awareness and action required because as mr. Frisch

[00:09:03] correctly asserted it's one of the few behaviors that has a huge and high correlation from childhood to adulthood if we don't interrupt that bullying behavior so yeah I can take a look and see if we can locate that thank you and I forgot the name of the Commission can you share that again I would have to go back on what we what it was named Chris Gregoire was our governor at the time and she commissioned that or she was the Attorney General at the time actually commissioned it so and later became our governor thank you one of the things

[00:09:39] that you mentioned and as did mr. Frisch was the the trajectory going in the wrong direction for our LGBTQ students are these the only students that are experiencing that trajectory well we're not presenting that report this morning I think there are there were areas of concern and areas of tremendous growth right there is tremendous improvement across the board and our mental health data and I want to celebrate that that's a result of the hard work of our staff our families our community our county partners and there

[00:10:12] are still groups of children at certain age levels who we know are still experiencing struggles that we need to review and explore best practices to improve so I think the healthy youth survey has some mixed data and we will be sharing that soon you as a board have that data but I so it's a good news and not

so great news maybe the best of times and worse depending on the perspective so I think this is a timely look. Sure and I did ask the chair to provide an opportunity for us to have that as a public discussion because I

[00:10:50] think there's some things in the youth survey that have you know they continue to be alarming this you know among them but there's some new things that I think have come to light regarding student nutrition and those practices that a public conversation would be very helpful. One of the things that I want to be sure that I highlight because it is my belief and obviously the data show that this is not the only student group that is experiencing this negative trajectory or non positive I think is a term that you use so I want to be sure that we are capturing the experiences of all of those students because as you

[00:11:29] know the NAACP was in a meeting just very recently with you a few months ago before school started to talk about the experiences of black students and I don't believe that has changed across FCPS and the challenge is to feel included to feel that sense of belonging so I want to make sure that whatever work you are engaging on encompasses everyone who is an FCPS not just this single group which was probably the impetus for mr. Frisch but others as well I don't even know if the survey goes into deep why I don't remember if

[00:12:06] the survey goes into deep exploration of you know the experiences of female students in certain schools that I think should be reviewed as well I am supportive of this exploration because this is very much in alignment with what I have said before when we've talked about ensuring that students have their three you know that they're connected that they belong that they are tethered to our schools and that was also one of my primary reasons for ensuring that we provided transportation to our kids when they were in the boundary phasing

[00:12:45] because we cannot ask kids to get engaged to get connected and then sever that without any support so to me we have to be mindful of making all of the decisions that impact this kind of that could potentially impact this kind of outcome and/or works against some of our own strategies to help students feel connected thank you thank you so just to be clear the the forum topic which is on board docs does capture many student groups and we collab I collaborated Kyle

[00:13:24] and I collaborated with multiple stakeholders including Fairfax County NAACP on the draft of this forum topic to ensure that we were capturing the perspectives of stakeholders who have brought certain concerns to the school division. Mr. Dunn. Thank you. This is a very important topic. As someone who is bullied heavily as a child, I care deeply about this subject in ensuring that every child has a safe and inclusive learning environment. I wanted

[00:13:58] understand if the study would focus solely on categories of students based on demographic or socioeconomic factors or would it be focusing on bullying in general because someone can be you know I someone can be you know Hispanic a Star Trek nerd you know high academic achiever a track and field star you know they can have multiple identities right and you could be bullied on any of those bases you could be bullied just for existing so I'd like to understand that well I think it's a it's a good point and I think it's important to note that

[00:14:35] when we talk about bullying bias harassment etc when it relates to race when it relates to religion when it relates to gender or gender identity or gender expression or sexual orientation or religion none of those are one item right so when we talk about race we're not just talking about our black students our Hispanic students our Asian students we're also talking about white students we're talking about any

student who experiences those things because of their race same thing as it applies to sexual orientation is a straight student

[00:15:09] experiencing those circumstances in religion is it a Jewish student is it a Muslim student is it a Christian student who's experiencing those things so I think these categories necessarily catch many of the types of bullying and harassment and the you know it's not only around characteristics that these incidents happen you identified some of them but some of the ones that are outside of those personal characteristics but I think broadly speaking the forum is designed to capture all of it thank you and I also

[00:15:47] wanted to just clarify my understanding does this also look at disciplinary practices because I'm a very data-driven person and I want to make sure that whatever disciplinary processes we have in place are being evaluated for it for their efficacy I mean I've spoken to many families who have children who are being bullied and they've been concerned by and some not universally but in some cases the restorative justice practices where someone who's a victim of bullying has to sit down with their bully and essentially reach a detente and and

[00:16:24] normally these victims have nothing have no idea why they're being bullied or or they don't want to have that interaction because it caused them to relive the trauma so you know I I would be interested in and and outcomes and seeing what evidence there is including from the best and latest research from the field on on how we can make sure that we are not just studying it but also ending bullying in our schools so it truly there is safe inclusive learning environment for all children based on what the what the data shows in terms of how to how to handle those instances and prevent their reoccurrence yeah talk

[00:17:02] about restorative justice specifically which I'm a big supporter of you identify rightly that some incidents do not avail themselves to restorative justice it's often the aggressor who is not availing themselves of the restorative justice and so one of the questions that asks in the forum topic is in addition to restorative justice what is the optimal approach to addressing these behaviors when restorative justice is not capable because of one party not agreeing to it right I don't think that the answer to this type of behavior is to think restorative justice helps to change the the root of the behavior and

[00:17:40] And we don't necessarily approach it with the same vigor if there's not restorative justice. So I do want to see what the assessment turns up as it relates to these incidents when restorative justice is not an option that is agreed to by both parties.

[00:17:57] And does this forum topic include study of just what we're doing or what other school divisions are doing, what the research studies show? We're asking for best practices here, so it would have to. Excellent. Thank you. Mr. Moon, isn't that his hand? Isn't that him?

[00:18:17] No. Just that. I thought we were having hamburger helper for lunch thank you I'll be here all weekend all right seeing no others I just want to miss st. John cunning and then we'll do a go back so first of all I want to thank both you and mr. McDaniel for bringing this and I think that the new report does also indicate that a lot of our immigrant children are experiencing more bullying I do see this as an all-encompassing all kinds of bullying we do know that there are

[00:18:52] certain populations and certain situations where people where there are more are experiencing more bullying is what I want to say and I think getting that information and trying to work with whatever best practices are I mean I know it's aspirational to try to eliminate all bullying I don't know

that that's ever possible I would wish that it would be my hope is that as we go with this and move forward that we also start looking at a component that engages families because it's not just the school's responsibility to mitigate

[00:19:31] bullying behavior it's also the parents responsibility to educate their kids and so we could have that family engagement part of the school is telling them one thing and their parents are not telling them the same thing then we're working against against each other so that's you know that's where I'm putting my parent liaison hat on and saying that having that component, as Dr. Wiedese moved forward with that, looking at how we can engage families and parents to help be partners with us, as well as our partners on the Board of Supervisors and our other organizations in the community. I think you rightly identify our

[00:20:10] immigrant students as one of the categories of concern out there. You know, we changed a couple years ago when Dr. Anderson and I did the trust policy we encouraged the SRNR to include a stipulation about outing students on their immigrant immigration status and it's important to have that rule but it doesn't necessarily change behavior or address where bullying might stem from so I think we have some good work that can be done here. Mr. McElveen.

[00:20:47] So I would just like to join the chorus and thank Mr. Frisch and Mr. McDaniel for their their work on this just in terms of the historical perspective back in 2011 2010 2011 we had seen a rash of student suicides around the county which forced this board to reckon with the fact that we had a zero tolerance discipline policy and so that set us off on about a decade of work in this area moving from from zero tolerance to restorative justice but we've never really had a opportunity to look back and reflect on what's going well what

[00:21:27] what is not so I think this is the time is right for that opportunity so again I appreciate it look forward to hearing what we find thanks chair lady lady thank you so obviously this is an ongoing topic that we wish we had a magic dart or panacea for right so I have a couple thoughts you know one is how important it is for our leadership to be human-centered. I mean there is a

[00:22:00] point where and I have a quote somewhere here I just saw but it has to do with human stories and versus data. Data is a it's a challenge, right? So I went to a conference this weekend called the Festival of Education and I went to a a talk to a presentation on Ted Lasso and how Ted Lasso exhibits leadership.

[00:22:25] It's the best session on leadership I've ever been to because she basically talked about how disconnected disjointed all these characters are at the beginning of the show and if most of us have seen parts of the show but for example when Colin came out to his teammates finally then he became an unbelievable footballer right but when he was all uptight around not feeling that safety, he couldn't be his best self, right? You have Keely who sees people but she lacks some sort of traditional education, yet she starts her own business and she thrives, but she's ability to see people where they are and leverage it. Nate, who just wants to be seen, right? Like the whole thing is

[00:23:04] he doesn't, he feels invisible, right? Yet he's got all these talents. So and then there's other parts of it about, you know, being curious, asking questions of people I could go on and on this is an important topic I just I just I'm not sure I think this fair this county has done tremendous work in this regard I certainly know that from the mental health perspective from central office I'll push down into our schools that the efforts that we take to see our kids and get to know our kids and we know the number one thing is connecting them to

[00:23:41] some activity right so and the other thing I'll say is you know you can't fit a you know square peg into a hole you know what I mean like or whatever the saying is vice versa because they're certainly I remember as a child growing up certainly wanting to be part of a certain friend group and they they didn't want me in their friend group and my mom would just say find some other friends or you can continue to beat your your head against a wall right so I think to my colleagues comment about families right like we've taken this on

[00:24:14] as a school system, but this is like a village, and seeing and validating kids, but it's also, you know, I remember having a conversation with my dentist about the physical pain that younger people feel when they're in the dental chair, and he's like, I don't even have to touch some people, and they're like screaming, and I made the analogy, it's kind of like emotional pain, right? Like if we don't learn as we're growing along that people say mean things and some things happen, it's hard to to build our character.

[00:24:45] So I 100% support any endeavor in this area, but I also support families and honest conversations. And you know, everyone wants our kids to feel safe when they go to school, regardless of what they bring as their background.

[00:25:05] So full support, but again, back to leadership. I think that the tone we set in our buildings makes a huge difference in seeing kids where they are. and working to uplift them is of paramount importance. Thank you.

[00:25:20] Dr. Anderson for a go back. Thank you. I would be remiss if I didn't also raise this other group as part of the conversation. Again, not saying it's the only group, but it's a group that I hear about quite frequently, being the Mason representative and being so close to the mosque is the experience of Muslim students, particularly Muslim girls.

[00:25:41] So I want to be sure to lift that in this conversation for the consideration. I had a question. This is primarily, I guess, for staff, perhaps the Chief Equity Office, in terms of when it comes to bullying and harassment and the other components outlined in this PowerPoint presentation-- I'm sorry, in this forum topic, could we get a quick sense of what are our current practices?

[00:26:07] I know what our expectations are, but what are our current practices? Restorative justice is one that Mr. Frisch just raised. What else do we engage in to try to impact behavior changes in students?

[00:26:24] - Dr. Anderson, I can start that process. - Right here. - And then I'll turn it over to my colleagues over here. Really, we look at bullying prevention as part of our broader mental health and wellness initiative, and that's really on a continuum. So we start with, what are the efforts that we engage in to try and teach skills, provide knowledge, education, and prevention before bullying ever takes place, all the way through earlier intervention efforts, and then our response efforts after an incident takes place.

[00:26:48] So I think we start with things like our health curriculum, which includes scaffolded lessons K-10 around what bullying is. How do you be a good bystander and upstander skills? How do we show and feel empathy toward our peers? How do we find trusted adults and respond in those circumstances?

[00:27:03] We have school counseling lessons also scaffolded through K-12. Our social and emotional learning practice is to try and build connections in classrooms so students feel connected to one another, feel connected to trusted adults. Once we start noticing that there are challenges with bullying, in addition to a disciplinary response, we also try and connect both those who are the perpetrators of bullying and those who are the victims of bullying to supportive interventions.

[00:27:27] Because somebody had mentioned previously looking at the root of the problem. So a disciplinary consequence may be appropriate, but may not necessarily address why the bullying is taking place. And so we have MTSS teams in school buildings to get professionals together to determine, why do we think this may be happening?

[00:27:42] Does the student feel isolated? Do they feel like they're struggling academically? Are they having a difficult time socially or emotionally? And how do we put in place supportive interventions to target those challenges and to build skills to help students know how to interact with one another in supportive ways? And that includes relationship skills, self-awareness, social awareness, self-management skills, responsible decision-making skills, so we can teach those skills that may not arise naturally to be able to support students.

[00:28:09] Then we look at some of our disciplinary responses up to and including restorative justice, which my colleague Dr. King can speak to in greater but I did want to highlight that we look at this as a larger continuum starting all the way in the front end of before anything ever takes place building the environment and skills that youth need to be able to prevent bullying from occurring in the first place and I'll just add before parents and students are offered restorative justice the SR&R offers interventions for acts of any violation of the SR&R and I think the most important thing is educating families around the definition of bullying because sometimes it's overused

[00:28:48] when an incident happens right it's pervasive and continuous act but if a little child sometimes comes home from school and shares with their parents that somebody called them a name then the parents are calling the school and saying my child is being bullied and so we need to start with making sure that we educate everybody around the word bullying and how do we respond to that and as dr. axler said their Fairfax County offers a lot of interventions and the SR&R specific particularly this year gives a list of interventions that schools can do when acts of violations of the SR&R happen with our students

[00:29:27] thank you do we have any targeted and intentional parent work because I know we have some parent academies at some of our elementary schools and you have the quad meetings where certain things are presented to parents around this topic. Yeah I actually spoke at a recent quad meeting and I'll be at the one this Friday as well. There's professional learning that's available for parents both through the Family Academy but also some more in-person opportunities. There's some in particular where families are maybe having difficulty with their own children on demonstrating behaviors that may be challenging. There's a Loving Solutions intervention that's offered to families

[00:30:06] by our school social workers. Those are typically like you said more targeted so not necessarily universally available, but we have school-based mental health professionals in each building who, when made aware of challenges, can connect families to the appropriate resources.

[00:30:21] I can add, and if appreciated, Dr. Axler's presentations to families. One of the things that the research shows is that bullying is a learned behavior, that we can talk about wanting safe spaces for our children.

[00:30:38] But as adults, if we don't behave in a way that is not bullying. If we don't model the appropriate behavior, both in problem solving, critical thinking, our relationships with one another, our children pick up more so on what we do than what we say.

[00:30:59] And so I think one of the keys to that is understanding that no one is influenced or impacted by our intentions, but rather by the actions we take. So our work with parents is really important for all of our children to understand that how we talk about one another, how we talk about difficult things, matters.

[00:31:22] And our children pick up on those cues. And I think that's why Dr. Axler and Dr. King, in particular, have really had some great conversations with families on this topic. It's important. Sure, and I think I take your statement an opportunity to kind of manage my own expectations around what we are able to accomplish because while we have students with us for significant number of hours it's not all of the hours we're not their only influence and so there's limitations there in terms of what could actually be happening so I just wanted

[00:31:59] to raise that I had one last piece and I can't remember what it is thank you Ms. St. John Cuning. So again just going back to my family liaison experience I know that a lot of family liaisons would provide some of these programs and we would provide them with some of like Loving Solutions and what's the one that follows Loving Solutions there's another one I was there and I was a facilitator for some of them however having said that the county would fund

[00:32:37] those it would be an outside person that would come in I mean we were connected to some outside people that would come in and the county would the the county would fund it not the school system and then they cut funding for that so although a lot of family liaisons have some of the skill set in terms of the funding and even though family the family and school partnership office has people that are trained to do it it's at a cost and and so when we were able to find either a nonprofit or account or the county program that was funding it we would bring them in and I will tell you that those programs are amazing and what

[00:33:17] they do to teach families and teach parents and the best result that I ever saw is like that word of mouth where then parents start speaking to each other and they start sharing the information as well as you know I know we're talking about the restorative justice program was brought up that was another thing that through a non-profit FCPS came out and did a whole restorative justice program to show us how it worked I mean I wish you could do it for the school board to show us how it works because once you sit there and go through it and

[00:33:54] see how in-depth and how thoughtful it is you realize the value of it so there's a lot of great things going on I think that at this level for a lot of us we're not aware of it but I just wanted to share the piece that I'm aware of and also explain the piece about how the funding has been cut for some of this programming. Thank you. Did you want another go back, Dr. Anderson? Oh, no. Okay, then I will finish up. Dr. Anderson surfaced an important thing that I think should be

[00:34:31] noted, which is the intersectionality and how that impacts different student groups. It's not reflected in our survey data, but there are independent studies out there that show you how, for example, black or Hispanic LGBTQ students are significantly more likely to experience bullying than even LGBTQ students, generally speaking, who are already more likely to experience that kind of bullying. And Dr. Reed talked about the learned behavior, and I want to be clear that behavior is not just learned at home right parents often say well they

[00:35:09] didn't learn that here right students learn what is acceptable based on the climates that we allow in our schools and so I've visited virtually every GSA in Fairfax County Public Schools over the last five or six years and it's shocking how little how significantly many things have changed for for students in

those groups and how many things remain the same to my experience just a few years ago and so you know we can't control the climate that exists

[00:35:46] outside of our school building but students shouldn't have to carry the weight of the world on their shoulders when they enter our buildings and walk the halls they should be able to focus on their work in our schools and so I think this is a needed step to take to ensure that what we're doing to try and create those climates in our schools translate into the the actual impact that we desire as opposed to just the words that we use in talking about what we aspire to for the school system and so the requested action for the board to

[00:36:22] consider now is that we direct the superintendent to conduct this assessment and to return to the board with a report of recommendations for a work session with a presentation by the end of the school year that's that's what the forum topic says miss lady given that is that something you feel you can do it's a great question I I did share with mr. Frisch that I think we can certainly have this ready by June 30th I would have to connect with you

[00:37:02] about the work session scheduling whether that can be scheduled prior to June 30th but the work certainly can be done yes ma'am thank you all right all those in favor mr. McElvain miss chair lady miss Anderson dr. Anderson Ms. John Cuning miss Marin mr. Dunn mr. Moon and myself that's unanimous for all the board members present I will second the motion just to make sure we're on the up and up for the clerks since we didn't have a second for the vote thank you all right that's it for the forum thank you everyone so the The form is now adjourned at 11:14.



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