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[00:00:02] Good afternoon, esteemed school board members, Dr. Cashwell, staff, and all participating in our February 8th, 2024 Henrico County School Board Work Session. Colleagues, I appreciate your presence today as we convene to engage in insightful discussions concerning pivotal topics that significantly shape the trajectory of education within our communities.

[00:00:28] The first item on the agenda is the approval of the agenda. Is there a motion to approve the agenda? I move that we approve the agenda. Is there a second? Second. All in favor, say aye.

[00:00:45] Aye. Any opposed? The ayes have it. The agenda is approved. Dr. Cashwell. Thank you, Chair Atkins. Members of the board, good afternoon. The first item we have for you is an update and overview related to the Virginia Literacy Act.

[00:01:03] And while you have certainly gotten some updates along the way, once the Virginia Literacy Act was passed into law, I wanted to pause and provide a comprehensive update of where we are and our continued plans related to this.

[00:01:18] And so, Dr. Leslie Hughes, our Chief Learning Officer, will get us started. Making sure my team gets up here. Okay, good afternoon, Chair Atkins, members of the board, and Dr. Cashwell.

[00:01:36] As Dr. Cashwell said, my name is Leslie Hughes, and today, along with Taylor Snow and Mike DeSalt, who are the Secondary and Elementary Directors of Teaching and Learning, are going to provide the board with an update on the Virginia Literacy Act. While the Virginia Literacy Act is to be implemented in school divisions across the Commonwealth beginning in school year 2024-2025, we are proud to showcase that many of the foundational components within the act are not new to Henrico County Public Schools.

[00:02:07] and have been incorporated throughout our strategic plan beginning in 2020. Specifically in the goal, academic excellence, and in the objectives, students will have literacy and numeracy skills for academics and life. Yes, you heard right.

[00:02:23] A focus on literacy is not a new concept for Henrico County Public Schools. Therefore, staff in the Division of Learning have worked tirelessly to ensure teachers and staff are knowledgeable and supported on the components of the Virginia Literacy Act and how those components align to what is already in place throughout our division's life-ready literacy plan.

[00:02:49] Our curriculum, professional learning, and resources have always embodied research-based strategies that align with the best practices in reading instruction, and thus we are well, well prepared for the specific requirements of the Act.

[00:03:05] While the Act does require a few new components, which Mike and Taylor will highlight, these components will only serve to solidify what is already in place in our Life Ready Literacy Plan, and most importantly, will support our teachers in their instructional endeavors.

[00:03:24] In the remaining slides, Taylor and Mike will provide a high-level overview of the components of the Virginia Literacy Act, which are shown on this slide, and will detail how HCPS is aligned with each component at this time I'll turn the presentation over to Dr. Snow. Thank you. The Virginia Literacy Act was passed by the Virginia General Assembly in 2022 and expanded in 2023. It focuses on improving literacy outcomes for all students in the Commonwealth. The major components of the Literacy Act showcase a community of stakeholders to ensure success.

[00:04:00] K-5 students will receive core literacy instruction based in scientifically based reading research and evidence-based literacy instruction from a list of VDOE-approved vendors. Students in kindergarten through grade 8 will also receive evidence-based supplemental instruction and intervention as outlined in an individual student reading plan if they do not meet literacy benchmarks. Every family will have access to online resources to support literacy development at home and will be able to participate in the development of their child's student reading plan if their child does not meet literacy benchmarks. Every teacher will use evidence-based literacy

[00:04:38] curriculum, assess student learning using approved literacy screeners, use student-level data to inform instruction and intervention, and participate in pre-service preparation or training on evidence-based literacy instruction. Every reading specialist in consultation with classroom teachers will coordinate and oversee intervention for students not meeting literacy benchmarks and will develop and monitor student progress on student reading plans, working closely with families and teachers. Every division will develop a literacy plan ensuring the use of evidence-based literacy curriculum, staff enough reading specialists to support intervention needs,

[00:05:16] and provide professional development to support teachers, reading specialists, and principals. As we look at the 30,000-foot view, it's important to note that Henrico strategically took on the challenge of creating a division literacy plan back in the fall of 2020. Henrico's Life-Ready Literacy Plan outlined the district's beliefs for delivering quality literacy instruction.

[00:05:39] This became our guiding light for developing more comprehensive, cross-curricular approaches to literacy, communication, and best practices rooted in research and the science of reading. This plan, generated by teachers, coaches, and leaders, will continue to guide our Life Ready Literacy. Henrico's Life Ready Literacy Plan will enhance and complement the required VDOE division literacy plan. Like any good initiative or strategy, they are only as strong as those who are leading the way. Thanks to the support of our district leadership team and our school board, an additional group of reading specialists have been allocated for the upcoming

[00:06:18] school year. Having the flexibility to embed in the building reading specialist support throughout our elementary and middle schools will be a game changer for students and for teachers. The division has already set in motion a number of recruitment and retention strategies for these positions.

[00:06:35] Later in this presentation, we will highlight our steps toward our goal of securing qualified candidates for these positions. After a rigorous curriculum vetting process by the Virginia Department of Education, districts were given a list of approved vendors to make a comprehensive K-5 curriculum selection that best fits the needs of their community.

[00:06:56] After extensive internal vetting, feedback, and selection processes, Benchmark Advance was selected as Henrico's elementary core curriculum beginning in the 24-25 school year. The teachers, coaches, administrators, and specialists believed that this core curriculum offered the most engaging and diverse text for students, guidance for teachers, and supplemental resources to meet the needs of all of our students in Henrico County.

[00:07:25] They also had the most engaging and teacher-friendly professional learning components to support our staff. At the middle school level, reading specialists will teach a course called Literacy Foundations, rooted in intervention, best practices, and the science of reading as mandated by the Virginia Literacy Act. The Virginia Literacy Act also mandates K-8 literacy training for faculty and administration. The structure and trainers for this professional learning has not been released by VDOE at this time. Divisional reading specialists, however, began their initial

[00:07:59] training in the fall of 2023 to help prepare our larger teacher workforce. And as new guidance and approved VDOE vendors for training are announced, Henrico will align our professional learning plan accordingly heading into the fall of 2024 at this time i'll pass the presentation over to mr mike dusalt another component of the literacy act will revolve around student reading plans for those students identified as needing additional support currently our district already uses a variety of

[00:08:35] methods establishing literacy benchmarks aligning interventions and monitoring student progress while we await videoe release of reading templates for students the division of learning is poised to align our embedded current practices to ensure a smooth transition.

[00:08:53] Our goal is to leverage the VDOE template as yet another transparent layer of support and communication to all stakeholders, especially with our families. As mentioned in the previous slide, developing strong partnerships with our families is another tenet of the Virginia Literacy Act.

[00:09:13] New family literacy resources to support literacy at home will be linked to the Virginia Literacy Partnership website over the coming months. Additional VDOE resources will fold into current Henrico supports like bridge builder sessions, family literacy nights, school board and informational sessions, and a wide range of Title I family supports already in place in our schools. While families have access to at-home resources and strategies to provide that layer of support, continuous two-way communication aligning those resources to our students' needs

[00:09:53] will be an important next step. Henrico administrators, reading specialists, and teachers stand poised to partner with our families. Now that we have provided greater clarity around the intentional work with literacy in Henrico and how that has created a solid foundation for the Virginia Literacy Act, let's take a closer look at the implementation steps. These actions have been collaboratively developed with district leaders, teachers, and other departments to ensure a consistent communication plan on how best to prepare our teachers to provide a positive

[00:10:31] experience with their new K-5 curriculum and training. Here you will see some of the major milestones Henrico initiated back in the fall of 2023. Having a wide variety of research-based instructional practices already embedded within our district's literacy plan, it helped our central team orchestrate a timeline that left ample room for communication to our administrators, coaches, and classroom teachers as the process continued to play out from the VDOE. With

[00:11:07] collaboration from multiple district departments, Henrico has positioned itself to roll out the newly approved core curriculum over the course of the spring and summer to ensure teachers have time to explore ask questions and feel comfortable with the robust resources heading into their summer in-person training as we head into the spring of 2024 the goal is to engage in the initial core curriculum training opportunities at the k-5 level select supplemental and intervention resources and continue to leverage our current practices as they fold into our new curriculum.

[00:11:47] While we await further details to be released by the VDOE this spring, Henrico is poised to continue district literacy efforts which again are rooted in evidence-based best practices and aligned with the science of reading. Embracing these practices years ago has put Henrico in the best possible position to comply with the Virginia Literacy Act. In an effort to build and expand our culture of reading support throughout the district, the Division of Learning has spent the past few months vetting university reading specialist programs. We are proud to share with the board

[00:12:25] that James Madison University was vetted and selected as the partnering program for our Henrico cohort which will begin in the summer of 2024. Not only will this program be offered virtually to allow our staff a flexible schedule, but the district will fund the endorsement for all the selected cohort members. Interested staff are encouraged to attend our informational sessions or review our interest flyers for further details and next steps. As shared earlier, many districts

[00:13:01] throughout the state are awaiting further details regarding some of the foundational components of the act as details continue to arrive this spring such as templates approved lists of supplemental materials and teacher training opportunities the division will fold these updates into clear district communications and the subsequent plans for moving forward at the start of this presentation we gave you an opportunity to hear more about the Virginia Literacy Act through the lens of the various stakeholders. We'd like to conclude our presentation

[00:13:37] returning to those same groups, but specifically through the lens of the Henrico school community. Henrico students will have the opportunity to participate in a robust literacy curriculum taught by Henrico staff who will have the background knowledge and training to deliver it with confidence. Henrico families will have additional support to understand potential literacy gaps or enrichment opportunities specific to their child and what the roadmap forward looks like and how it will be measured.

[00:14:12] Enrico teachers will experience something taken off their plates. Having access to robust core curriculum partnered with dedicated time for professional learning will result in a reduction in the amount of teacher lesson planning time for literacy.

[00:14:31] This, in turn, will allow our teachers to hone in on specific remediation and enrichment strategies to support all students. Henrico Reading Specialists will create a balance of pushing into classrooms to enhance teacher literacy practices and be responsible for our students who need remediation and intervention so they get the targeted support they need to close gaps.

[00:14:54] and Henrico County Public Schools will see that the vision of a literacy plan developed almost four years ago has come to life and aligns well with the Virginia Literacy Act. This has only happened through the collaborative support of our board, various district departments, our families, and most importantly, the hard work of our classroom teachers and administrators who embrace those literacy instructional practices to benefit all our students. At this time, I'll turn the presentation back over to Dr. Hughes.

[00:15:28] Thank you. This concludes our overview of the Virginia Literacy Act, and at this time, we'll be happy to answer any questions. Thank you so much for the presentations. I will start to my left.

[00:15:46] I'll start over here with Mr. Irving. Folks, thank you all so much for giving the presentation. That was tremendous, and I think a lot of information. So I just have a couple questions. Some of them are from teachers, the questions that they've been having as well.

[00:16:02] So my first one, they had questions about when the training would be. This lays that out, so that's terrific. My question is, with the VDOE evidence-based literacy instruction training for K-8 teachers and administrators beginning in the fall, are we concerned that that's happening too late, and is that the VDOE who's requiring it to start then rather than being able to do it earlier in a way that might give us more time?

[00:16:27] Yeah, so... No, go ahead. I have two very passionate, passionate educators here, so please. You are correct, Mr. Irving. We are awaiting what the details of that will look like. But luckily for Henrico, a number of the strategies and best practices we incorporated in our literacy plan when it began about four years ago will be what they will be reinforcing.

[00:16:48] So this will be another layer on top of experiences that they already had. That's that's that's good to know. Another one was so with. Sorry, I want to make sure that I'm asking this correctly.

[00:17:04] Okay. So using many of the reading passages that we use are specifically tailored to use the language used on the VA SOL tests. The way that they're asked questions is not necessarily intuitive. How will the box programs that some of the teachers are going to be required to use possibly provide the sorts of things, this sort of language when they're developed by nationwide publishers rather than, you know, Virginia specific.

[00:17:32] And I think teachers are just wondering what we may be doing to make that a little bit more hospitable for them. So great question. And that was one of the main questions that we were asking when we were vetting the various companies that were out there and what they could offer. You know, the benefit of benchmark advances, they're really focused on knowledge building, going across curricular areas.

[00:17:53] So it's not only we're working on literacy, we're working on literacy within a science or a social studies unit. So it's more in context. And the more in context you have, the better your vocabulary becomes. And then when you go to have those rigorous questions on the SOL test, you're more prepared to answer them. That's terrific. Because another question was teaching, you know, 400 years of Virginia studies with cross-curricular instruction. But I think that does answer that. So that's tremendous. Has the VDOE given us any indication what will happen if following their practices does not actually lead to score increases? Not at this time. That has not been discussed. Okay. All right.

[00:18:31] I thank you. All right. Thank you. We'll turn the floor over to Mr. Young. Once again, I'd like to echo. Thank you guys for your presentation. One of my questions was, what measures does the video you suggest for evaluating literacy programs effectiveness? What you just said, we don't know as of yet, correct? Well, what we do have is we have identification of a template for students that are not making the mark, so to speak. And then what we will be doing with that has not been defined as they are still refining the actual template that we will be used. So we're awaiting

[00:19:08] further discussion on that. Okay. In regards to that, do any of our schools have more than one reading specialist there? Yes. So we have a collaborative effort with our partners in federal and foundational programming where we will have title one reading coaches and then we will have because of the support of our board reading specialists as per the virginia department of education requirement as the literacy act moving forward so you will have buildings where you will sometimes have a reading coach from title one and a locally funded reading specialist

[00:19:45] perfect perfect and has there been any consideration for our schools that's doing a little bit better when it comes to reading and literacy scores to share a specialist and move a specialist into another school that may need more help we've not had those discussions as of yet but in partnering with our our friends in federal and foundational programs discussions will be taking place as to best how to utilize those funds so those funds could potentially be used in other ways but right now we're going to start off making sure that we have at least one reading specialist and then if And if there is a Title I reading coach there, we're going to begin with that foundation.

[00:20:20] Okay, okay. And then slide 10 mentioned connection to home. And I just wanted to know, how is Henrico County collaborating with community organizations to promote this as well, like our Henrico Connect or with our family advocates or even with the Henrico Pals program?

[00:20:37] Are we able to collaborate with them? Because some kids go home and parents don't help out and don't participate, and they go to after-school programs. is there any collaboration there yeah so that's a fantastic question and and once we get into our core curriculum there's a variety of opportunities both for take-home materials and then there's also going to be opportunities for all of our book rooms that we've had for all these years to be utilized and repurposed in different ways and i think just in an awareness of what can you do in some of these programs after school what's available on this new virginia literacy partnership

[00:21:12] site. And then just an awareness of what literacy milestones should your child be at. I think that's a start. So you know what you're looking for and have that dialogue. And I think the biggest thing is parents don't be afraid to ask the questions. There are no silly questions when it comes to your child. And we're learning as we go. And I know parents are always learning as you go. So having that open dialogue is going to be important. And just to finalize, I think you're right. My wife is right now in a conference with her teacher and my daughter improved 135 points on her growth assessment and reading. So some things are definitely working in Henrico County Schools so kudos. But you're right, we don't have that open dialogue to ask those questions.

[00:21:52] So thank you. That's all the questions, Madam Chair. Thank you, Mr. Young. Vice Chair Shea, the floor is yours. Thank you so much. I'm excited about this update. I know this has been a passion of Dr. Cashwell's literacy plan in general and then trying to dovetail with Whatever the state shares, and so I appreciate y'all's team's work with this.

[00:22:17] Just a handful of questions to try to digest this. First of all, I just want to say I really appreciate the gentle timeline that we have here, this approach to be able to what seems like really kind of sit in things a little bit, right, and garner feedback.

[00:22:36] So it says this fall we got, you shared, we got feedback from a lot of our different stakeholders that work within the schools. How were, how do we decide who participated in that group?

[00:22:52] So we took a wide sample of various departments from exceptional ed, English learners, gifted, specialist, principals, teachers, and we brought them together to hear the vendors. we had another round of vendors we brought it back to the principals and it was just kind of a what are you looking for what do you see and does this meet the needs and we were very nervous that it would be a very tight scoring rubric but benchmark advance came out head and shoulders the top choice and the teachers that have had some early access to it because we always like

[00:23:27] to do a little test market to make sure we made the right choice they have been over the moon with it, my wife being one of them. So we are very excited about moving forward with them. Well, I'm glad to hear that. And teachers ask me all the time, how do we decide which teachers get a seat at that table and get to give a voice in those things and preview the materials?

[00:23:52] Yeah. And we've always kind of gone with our partners in the division of school leadership. What folks in the building have shown a passion for literacy and or are a special teacher in terms of dealing with students with exceptional needs, per se? We want those folks to come to the table.

[00:24:09] And then we also want to have the folks who have asked the most questions. Sometimes having them at the table as well truly paints the picture across our district. So while I'd love to say we went and just said, oh, just give us your best of your best, not that that was the decision making. it was who really wants to come here and share their opinion? And that's kind of the balance that we struck. I really appreciate that. I think that's something that, you know, we always talk about how much we value staff input and how we use these focus groups and that sort of thing. But I think it's a little murky on, well, how did those come to be? And so I think that really helps with

[00:24:44] transparency for not only us to understand where these voices are coming from, but also for our staff and our community to understand where they're coming from. So I appreciate that. Again, this timeline at first glance and listening to y'all really does seem to be focused on how to make this transition

as gentle as possible, which I really appreciate. You know, things like having the self-paced initial trainings, having the final PD as part of

[00:25:18] summer pd that would already happen and not something else on the plate what are some other things that we're doing to help balance the changes and the extra workload that that brings to our instructional staff well i'm sure my colleagues would love to answer that as i've been banging the doors that we're going to need the majority of the summer in terms of professional learning time but yeah i think listening to our stakeholders i will give a shout out to our elementary principal advisory group, they really were the ones who we kept going back to and say, tell us what's wrong with this. What if we move this way or that way? And they were really

[00:25:57] the ones who helped adjust to this timeline to make it the best it could possibly be. So I just want to give a shout out to them for their honesty and input to make this happen. I'd love to hear that. I love to hear that that's a feedback loop that's coming from our personnel in the buildings as to what really works best and I mean you mentioned towards the end of your presentation that we're taking something off teachers plates and can so you and I know you hummed a little bit of a bar there but it was um couched in a lot of other things so can you just kind of pull that piece out and explicitly share with us what are we taking off teachers plates as they uh go to

[00:26:36] implement this sure and and while I would love to say that our current reading specialists and coaches are phenomenal curriculum writers of which they are. They are not able to pull the magnitude of resources and level texts and aligned cost curricular resources that go with every single unit and having the ability to have that at your fingertips in a structured way. And as you teach those particular units, to have the ability to just a glance off to the side to see what to do with an English learner, what to do with a gifted learner, what to do with an exceptional learner.

[00:27:12] That is so powerful because the hours and hours that our teachers spend doing that on their own, that's where the lift is really going to be seen. And hopefully that'll give them that breath of time to really kind of take a step back and be able to focus even more intentionally on our kids.

[00:27:31] And that that piques a question as you as you say that. And I really appreciate them having that structure for those extra resources. We're still going to maintain teacher autonomy in the classroom as well.

[00:27:46] Can you encourage us with that? So again, just think of it as, again, our kindergarten through fifth grade groups, we're looking at three-week units, cross-curricular, and they are going to follow a specific skill for that period of time, and the materials will come and go.

[00:28:05] So while they will have a skill that they're focusing on, if they have something that relates to that particular skill or concept or writing activity or they want to integrate it through another content area, they have the flexibility to do so. It's the basic roadmap of where they need to go.

[00:28:20] And then, of course, we always want our teachers to put their own spin on it as they know the students better than anyone. Great. Thank you. And then to shift a little bit to our literary specialists. So I'm excited we're adding more positions. It says that we'll have at least one per school on the slideshow.

[00:28:38] Does that include our eight small elementary schools that typically usually have half of an allocation? All 47 elementary schools will have a reading specialist. So even those eight would have a full

position. That's incredible. Thanks to you all. Thank you. And you mentioned with the literary specialist that they'll be pushing in to the classroom.

[00:28:56] They'll be doing remediation as they collaborate with classroom teachers. So I know we use our literacy coaches a lot to collaborate with classroom teachers as they collaborate with classroom teachers in planning, which is so important.

[00:29:12] I just want to make sure that our teachers don't become overwhelmed with meetings during planning time. And so the beauty of having this core curriculum is that massive amount of time our coaches that have currently been kind of helping with planning in various buildings, we're now able to go back into the classrooms and model and really lift up folks who may not have had that detailed literacy experience coming out of college maybe 10, 15, 20 years ago and give them the confidence of how to implement this in such a way where there's a gradual release, just like we do with our students.

[00:29:47] So am I hearing correctly that because we'll have this structure with so many resources that these that are literally literary specialists will likely be spending less time in planning meetings with teachers and more time actually pushing into the classroom to model?

[00:30:04] That is our goal. Once we have teachers that feel that they've got the gist of how all this comes together. Yes. Awesome. And then just one last question. sorry I didn't mean to be so robust but the more y'all I know the chair looked at me to come here and she saw me like scribbling papers and highlighting as I was reorganizing my thoughts because y'all just shared so much information can you and it may be too early because VDOE is you know where they are but could you share some examples of how this might look different like implemented like I'm a student what might I expect to look different next year with this

[00:30:42] implemented as opposed to this year with what we have implemented? So I think the scaffolded activities when it's time for breakout time, we used to call them independent time where you'd have a group coming to the back table. The volume of activities that are collaborative in nature, so students will not be by themselves as much with this new core curriculum.

[00:31:05] There's built-in opportunities for students to work together and then also there's greater opportunities for how students see their own learning so because there are so many different resources associated with the skill for each unit students will have some more choices in how they kind of move forward with that particular unit so that'll be something that'll be new for teachers and it really gives students that voice and choice that really engages them the most great thank you you so much. That concludes my scribble list. I appreciate it. Thank you, Vice Chair Shea.

[00:31:42] Mrs. Kinsella. Thank you. Where to start? So very excited. All 47 elementaries will have a reading specialist. And are we trying to recruit those 20 additional reading specialists now that we need? We have a large list of folks that would like to participate in our cohort, and we are getting a larger group from outside the district as well. Great. How long will the specialist endorsement that you mentioned through James Madison on slide 14 take?

[00:32:18] Great question. We'll be finishing up in May of 2026. And the beautiful part of James Madison, and the ultimate reason we selected them, is they chose to do their program so it would be job-embedded with the focus of, you're taking a classroom teacher. How do you do this type of work So it's applicable in the classroom and not overwhelm them.

[00:32:37] And because they were willing to do that in a virtual setting and because they were one of the highest rated universities for the program, it was an easy choice for us. OK. And then just always being cognizant of screen time, especially for the majority of the presentation really was Kate, Kate, Kate, Kate five.

[00:32:53] So it's sounding like are we going from like handheld or paper things to more computer or tablet time? What are we thinking about the screen time there? Honestly, I would think we would see more of a reduction because of the robust materials, decodables.

[00:33:12] And the beautiful part is kids are going to be taking home these readers at the end of units. So they're going to build their own libraries at home. So it's a win for everybody. It is a win. I appreciate you highlighting that it is a win because I agree with you. What else might we be removing?

[00:33:30] appreciate mrs shea highlighting um and you highlighting in the presentation that it's we're removing things we're uninitiating things which is a legislative priority of the board and we hear that often when we're in our schools so what else might we be removing yeah i think as time moves along and teachers start to get the feel for these particular units the way they are set up and integrating both science and social studies it's our goal as we begin to become more comfortable that our own pacing and we'll begin to adjust. And then you're taking less time with the science associates because it's pulling into the literacy block. So that's our goal as we

[00:34:10] continue to move along. Obviously we don't want to jump in, but so fast. So we'll be doing that slowly, but intentionally. Okay. So thinking about, I do appreciate the virtual opportunities for our teachers because I know that's, that's been some feedback. I've heard that they really appreciate the professional learning some of it when it's virtual right maybe they could do it at home and then I'm seeing some of the virtual learning on the timeline that's going to be done I would imagine on our development day in February starting February 20th it's up to the individual buildings and the administrators and the staff how they collectively decide to move forward that

[00:34:48] meets their needs okay and then how will the summer training occur and how will the our employees be paid for summer learning? So that's a really good question. Enrico years ago began that switch of having the ability to come in during the summer for their traditional work week six-hour day, and it has been an overwhelming success. We've seen teachers not only come for their six hours, but more than their six hours because they're hungry for these types of experiences. So this will be embedded as part of their six-hour summer professional learning. Three hours will be due to the literacy two hours will be for the math new standards and then we've still been able to leave

[00:35:27] them an hour of choice so that they're they can continue to move towards a science of social studies exceptional ed english learners where they feel like they'd like to grow well great because i think is um people are maybe as as folks are hearing about you know another new plan because we've been through the jam plan and some other plans through you know over the years teachers are like oh here comes another one right um and i want them to not feel overwhelmed Absolutely.

[00:35:55] So thank you for that. And then who is going to, as adjustments need to be made to the individual reading plans for the students, who's in charge of doing all that data entry or tracking that?

[00:36:11] So while the template has not been released yet, according to the Act, the reading specialist will be overseeing the program. And I think when we get a greater detail of what the plan actually looks

like and then how do we embed what we've already been doing so it doesn't become something else. It's just the same thing in a different way of reporting it back.

[00:36:29] Well, thank you for that, because I'm concerned that that in and of itself was going to become a lift. And then what is the score? Is it under a 400 that they're using? We have not seen that data yet in terms of how they plan on identifying that. And again, just remember, we're moving away from the PALS, and we're moving to the Virginia Literacy Partnerships, Ballas, I think it's called.

[00:36:51] Okay, and then, let me see, here I come again. Okay, so in 10th grade, we have the writing SOL. And in 11th grade, we have the reading SOL. In no part of this presentation or any time have I heard any support for our high school students, which I continue to my colleagues, Ms. Atkins, Ms. Shea, know that I'm all about supporting all kinds of literacy until we walk across that stage when we graduate Henrico School.

[00:37:26] So can you please give me a little bit as to how we're going to support our students in high school? Yeah, I mean, I think first and foremost, having such an intentional and robust elementary curriculum feeding into really, and we're doing intervention really well at the middle school level already, but intervention that is really specifically targeted and tailored to specific student needs embedded in that literacy foundations course rather than incorporated into just into day-to-day instruction, I think will create student gains across K-8.

[00:38:02] That we'll have students coming into high school prepared for what we've been doing throughout the last two years in our high school ELA curriculum is ensuring that what we're doing in high school is aligned to the science of reading, is aligned to these research and evidence-based approaches that we talked about in the presentation.

[00:38:23] So it's not just, I mean, I hear you on the foundation and future students will roll into high school with a better, stronger foundation, but we are ensuring that currently to our students in nine to 12. Yes. That's what I'm hearing you saying. Absolutely. I just wanted that affirmed on the record since this plan highlights K-8.

[00:38:43] So thank you for that. Madam Chair, that's all I had. Thank you, Mrs. Kinsella. I also have just a few questions as well that sort of spark. Does the Literacy Act cover teaching cursive writing and reading? And if it does, can you share whether educational curricula are tailored to accommodate this skill at both elementary and at secondary?

[00:39:06] So I will speak to the elementary. While the new standards have not been officially approved, the draft has them in there. And our core curriculum also has those experiences embedded within the curriculum. So, in fact, we will probably see an increase in the amount of cursive utilized over the next couple of years.

[00:39:26] Fantastic. And I don't want to assume, but I'll ask as far as the training for cursive writing, is that been developed or do we need to pause until we get the final approval? Yeah, I think when we get the final approval, I think we can go ahead and start that plan moving forward. Thank you.

[00:39:42] Are there any specific provisions within the Act that address the needs of English language learners learners, as well as students with disabilities? So part of the district literacy plan submission, there is a section for supplemental or students for English learners, exceptional students gifted.

[00:40:04] Any of those materials will need to be approved by the state. So the submission window and approval window is going on right now. So each department who have direct instructional literacy components has to submit for approval. So we are in the process right now. Can you give me the timeline of that?

[00:40:21] Because for sure, that will impact some of your schedule here. Yeah. So right now, the submission window has already been submitted. So we are awaiting the final approval at the state level. What we're hearing, it should be sometime in March. So we've got our fingers crossed that that comes to fruition.

[00:40:40] And I'm going to add a prayer to it. You and me both. All right. Also, I wanted to understand, I didn't hear much around how our libraries are involved or how our librarians have been able to give feedback to use the resources that we have within our school buildings.

[00:40:58] Can you share with me how we're incorporating our libraries and our librarians in this act and in this process, along with training? So I think it's going to be really important when the actual training comes out that all of our teachers are a part of that training. That's identified in the act itself.

[00:41:15] But as far as the core curriculum goes, this is going to be, I don't want to call it a layup, but the fact that we've got units that are vertically aligned and are cross-curricular, and we have all across the district at the same time moving through the core curriculum, we're going to have more collaboration than we've ever had before because a school like Montrose over to Twin Hickory are all going to be in the same place at the same time with the same focus.

[00:41:42] So as they begin to have their planning meetings, there's going to be more of a united planning front because we're all operating off the same sheet of music. I'm so delighted to hear that. Specifically, you know, as I talk to librarians that want to be a part of the conversation, especially around literacy.

[00:41:59] So to have them to have the ability to also receive the training so they understand more of what's happening in the classroom and align it with the materials that are in the library. So when students come with their preference, they can better arm them and align them with what they're learning in the classroom.

[00:42:17] So I appreciate you sharing that. And let's see, do we have any data? Of course, this might be a premature question, but do we have any data on how early childhood education intersect with the Virginia Literacy Act?

[00:42:32] So those who have not come into the school system yet, do we have data on how these are going to intersect? So we continually take the assessment data that they have in pre-K and cross-reference those with kindergarten just to make sure that our programs are working effectively. We have not gotten any guidance from the VDOE yet in terms of how they may play into the Virginia Literacy Act because they've been very specific that this is K through 8. Correct. Yeah, I was a little concerned because so much of the focus is about the existing and I'm curious about what's coming and how are we making sure that they understand

[00:43:10] what that looks like in pre-K. - And we'll work very closely with Tina Ossoff in federal programs who oversees our pre-K program and of course, Katie Smith for exceptional education as well. It's very important that those curriculums line up because certainly we want our pre-K students to be engaging in activities that prepare them for school.

[00:43:29] And so as this continues to unfold, we'll continue to work with them so that they can continue to look at their curriculum to say what might they need to put in place to help better prepare their students moving forward. - Wonderful, and I just wanna make sure that I am solid.

[00:43:45] This act does not include guidance on pre-K, correct? - That's correct. - I didn't see any, so I just wanted to make sure this is really just for the student that's entering. Is that correct? - Well, I would like to add, this presentation speaks to the Virginia Literacy Act, the requirements and how we're implementing them.

[00:44:05] And while the Virginia Literacy Act requirements speak to new and additional components K-8, we have a pre-K through 12 literacy plan, life-ready literacy plan intact today that we continue to follow that pre-K through 12 continuum.

[00:44:22] Because I think to Mrs. Kinsella's point, you know, we understand literacy needs at the high schools just like we do with our pre-K students and ensuring that smooth continuum. them. So the Literacy Act requirements are added into that pre-K through 12 focus. So I know our presentation made it sound in some ways like we're only doing things K-8, but we're just speaking to specifics of how we're implementing this new Virginia Literacy Act set of requirements and curricular requirements while also still continuing our work pre-K-12, if that makes sense. I hope

[00:45:01] It does. It does. Because I think as we are trying to implement this, for sure, we're implementing something just as a piece. It is not completely a whole from pre-K to high school.

[00:45:18] That's right. So I just wanted to clarifications on that. So I appreciate that as well. Yeah, it's important. And that's why our literacy plan is pre-K-12 and all things we do and alignment. So as we're folding in required components, that may mean we adjust our pre-K-12 plan accordingly.

[00:45:34] So I want to assure you that is happening. Wonderful. Well, thank you for that. And thank you for the presentation and for all your hard work that will continue through the summer and beyond. Mrs. Shea, did you have something else? Yeah, I missed one question in my scribbles. Sorry, I didn't highlight it.

[00:45:50] But this goes along with the rollout and the timeline. And so this is a major rollout for our elementary schools, as Mr. G. Salt said he wants all the PD time. But, you know, this is a major rollout, particularly for our elementary school teachers.

[00:46:07] Are we minimizing then this summer other major rollouts for our teachers? I think we continue to look for ways to connect this together. That's truly the benefit of this core curriculum is it's bringing it together.

[00:46:22] and how does everybody's department and or training benefit students. And that's really been the goal of me harping over this for the last few months as we head towards summer. And we've made it clear in the Division of Learning meetings that our focus this summer will be literacy and that while we know there are other professional learning needs that the teachers have, we need to figure out other ways to get them that information so that they don't feel overwhelmed and that they do see a clear focus and that support.

[00:46:51] Thank you. That's all. All right. So I just want to, again, commend Mike DeSalt and Taylor Snow. You have three very passionate people about literacy standing up here, so I feel like we were fighting for the questions because we're so passionate, but they have worked tirelessly with their teams.

[00:47:07] As they stated, this work began in 2020. It's not something new, but they have worked to make sure that they are looking through the lens of what teachers need and how we can support teachers and how we can best serve our teachers so that we can serve the students in the division.

[00:47:23] So I just want to give them kudos. They've been amazing. So thank you for your time and your support. We've got a great team. Absolutely. Thank you so much, Dr. Cashwell. All right. Next item is the acceptance of grants. I am seeking your acceptance for two of those, and they are consent items so they can be taken in a block.

[00:47:44] Thank you so much, colleagues. We've seen the recommendation. One is for the Youth Garden Grant. The other is the Walmart Community Grants Team and Facility No. 1523. Is there a motion? I move that the school board accept, approve, and or award Items 3.01 and 3.02 on the consent agenda as presented.

[00:48:10] Is there a second? A second. All in favor, say aye. Aye. All opposed? The ayes have it. The grants have been accepted. The next item on the agenda is the public forum.

[00:48:27] Citizens were invited to submit comments for the board's review by noon on Wednesday, February 7th, 2024, utilizing a designated link on the HCPS website. We are grateful for the participation of citizens who took advantage of this opportunity, and we sincerely appreciate their valuable input.

[00:48:48] Comments have been compiled and submitted to the board ahead of today's meeting. Furthermore, these comments have been made accessible through board docs for reference. Next is unfinished business. Colleagues, I invite you to address any outstanding matters at this time.

[00:49:08] Are there any feedback updates that we'd want to share? Hearing none, we will proceed to the next agenda item, which is new business. Board members, do you have any new business? Hearing none, we will take a brief recess and reconvene for the public hearing at 5:30 p.m.

[00:49:42] We will now reconvene. The next item on the agenda is a public hearing to solicit input on the recommended fiscal year 2025 annual financial plan. Mrs. Debbie Hargrave, budget director, will share some information before we proceed.

[00:50:00] The floor is yours. you good evening madam chair school board members and dr cashwell so the the superintendent's budget was presented a few weeks ago on january 25th and um tonight we're holding our public hearing next slide oh do i run it i'm sorry okay okay you're gonna do it thank you okay so our total budget um is in front of you our total funds um most of our money obviously is in the general fund

[00:50:39] and our target increase from the county manager was just about 27 million debt services also increasing we get those numbers from the county food services going up we are using up some of their fund balance and our state and federal grants are going down because esser funds are ending so overall we do have a 34.2 million dollar increase the general fund revenues you can look and see that actually all of the revenues are exactly the same as our current years adopted

[00:51:12] on this chart except for the 26.9 million dollar increase so that is our target increase from the county and our general fund expenditures are pretty much similar to what they have been in the past with 75 being spent on instruction the only other slice of the pie that really changed There's our admin administration, attendance in health.

[00:51:40] And that increased because of our new department called safety and security. And that budget is about \$8 million, which is the increase from the prior year. Okay. And that is it. And do we have anyone to speak?

[00:51:58] Colleagues, are there any questions or feedback? All right. We will move forward with our hearing. citizens had an opportunity to sign up in advance with the school board clerk. Citizens present who wish to speak may do so.

[00:52:17] We ask that each speaker come to the microphone and clearly state your name and school affiliation if applicable. Speakers must present their remarks to the school board, not the audience, and may provide copies of their comments to the school board clerk. Once you have finished speaking, if you did not sign up in advance, we ask that you write your name and contact information on the sign-in form located on the table in the back of the auditorium. The use of obscenity or defamation is strictly prohibited and will be ruled out of order. Speakers are allotted three minutes to address the school board. To assist you in tracking

[00:52:56] your time, there is a timekeeping system displaying the elapsed time on the screen. Speakers will also receive a notice from me when the time has expired. The school board is here today to hear from you. We will not be responding to speakers, but we will carefully consider your comments regarding the annual financial plan. We appreciate your attendance here this evening and for providing your input. All present that wish to speak on this topic of budget,

[00:53:27] the microphone is yours. All right, let the record reflect that we did not have any speakers this evening. The last item on this agenda are the announcement of meeting dates. The school board's next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, February 22nd, 2024, with the work session at 3 p.m. and the monthly meeting at 6 30 p.m. here at the New Bridge Auditorium. The meeting times may be adjusted as needed. This meeting is adjourned.



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