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Henrico County School Board Work Session, Thursday, March 28, 2024

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[00:00:01] Good afternoon and welcome to the Thursday, March 28th, 2024, work session of the Henrico County School Board. The first item on the agenda is the approval of the agenda. Can I have a motion? I move that the school board approve the agenda for today's meeting.

[00:00:20] Moved by Mr. Young. Is there a second? Second. Seconded by Ms. Kinsella. All those in favor say aye. Aye. Any opposed? The ayes have it. The motion carries. I want to take a minute to welcome our Tucker students from the ACA Center. Thanks for joining us today at the work session.

[00:00:38] The next item on our agenda is to move into closed session. Is there a motion to move into closed session? I move that the school board go into closed session for the discussion of matters covered under items A1 and A2 of section 2.2-3711 of the Code of Virginia, 1950, as amended pertaining to the assignment, appointment, promotion, performance, demotion, salaries, disciplining, or resignation of specific school board employees, and the admission or disciplinary matters of any other matters that would involve the disclosure of information contained in a scholastic record concerning any student.

[00:01:16] Moved by Mr. Irving. Is there a second? Second. Seconded by Mr. Young. All those in favor say aye. Aye. Any opposed? The ayes have it. The motion carries. We are now headed to closed session. Reconvene this meeting at the end of our closed session.

[00:01:34] Welcome back. Board members, do we have a certification of closed session? I move that the school board certify by recorded vote that to the best of each school board member's knowledge, only public business matters lawfully exempted from the open meeting requirements of the Virginia Freedom of Information Act and identified in the motion authorizing the closed meeting were heard, discussed, or considered in the closed meeting.

[00:02:04] Moved by Ms. Kinsella, is there a second? Second. Seconded by Mr. Irving. All those in favor say aye. - Aye. - Any opposed? The ayes have it. Closed session has been certified. I will now turn things over to our superintendent designee, Ms. Coy, for the day.

[00:02:23] - Wonderful, thank you, and good afternoon. The superintendent recommends that the school board approve the readmission of student case number 22-23-S-1. And as always, the name of the student is protected under the Virginia Freedom of Information Act.

[00:02:38] Colleagues, is there a motion? - I move that the school board approve the readmission of student case number 22-23-S-1. - Moved by Mr. Young, is there a second? - Second. - Seconded by Mr. Irving. All those in favor say aye. - Aye.

[00:02:54] - Any opposed? The ayes have it. The request for readmission is approved. - Great, the next item on the agenda is a recommendation from the superintendent that the board approve the appointment of administrative personnel.

[00:03:10] Board members, is there a motion? I move that the school board approve the appointment of administrative personnel. Moved by Mr. Irving. Is there a second? Second. Seconded by Ms. Kinsella. All those in favor say aye. Aye. Any opposed? The ayes have it. The administrative appointments have been approved.

[00:03:28] Wonderful. We are delighted that through that approval to welcome Allison Walden as the principal of Tuckahoe Middle School, Dylan Fail as principal of Donahoe Elementary School, and Rebecca Friedlander principal at Skipwith Elementary School. Congratulations to you each. The last item from the superintendent this afternoon is a recommendation that the board receive an update about education-related legislation that was considered during the 2024 Virginia General Assembly session, and we have our chief of communications, Eileen Cox, to introduce the

[00:04:03] presentation. Thank you. Good afternoon, Madam Vice Chair, board members, and Mrs. Coy. One of functions of the communications division is to support the school board in the development of its legislative priorities and advocacy efforts to support those priorities assistant director of communications ken blackstone serves as your primary liaison during the general assembly session and after months of tracking bills and amendments he is here this afternoon to provide

[00:04:30] you with an update on the 2024 session mr blackstone thank you well good afternoon vice Chair Shea, board members, Mrs. Coy. Today, I will be providing an update of the 2024 legislative session, which isn't quite over yet as we await the governor's budget revisions,

[00:05:03] vetoes, and amendments. In 2022, we introduced the idea of a legislative scorecard to try to help visualize if we were hitting the mark regarding what our established legislative priorities were and whether they were being supported or opposed. And today I'll review how we did compared to those bills that passed or failed during the session. There have actually been a few vetoes this week that affect some of the legislation, and those updates are reflected in this presentation.

[00:05:41] And at the end, we'll have a quick question and answer session if you have any questions. So I've synthesized these priorities to summarize, but regarding those under academic achievement, because of large-scale accreditation revisions that are forthcoming, most bills that propose to change small components were defeated in committees with the general idea that a more holistic approach to the changes were needed.

[00:06:11] So this is not a win or a loss, but still something in progress. A few positive actions were a bill that broadened those eligible for expedited retakes on the SOL assessments and a pair of bills which allow through-year growth assessment flexibility.

[00:06:31] Another pair of bills provide guidance for broad changes to special education resources and procedures in Virginia, including the referral evaluation and eligibility of students. Regarding our priority to support ELL services, a set of three bills changed the flat student to teacher funding ratios for ELL students to a tiered ratio based upon the number of students at certain proficiency levels.

[00:07:01] Another tandem of bills continues the implementation and funding of the Virginia Literacy Act, and a Senate bill expands opportunities for qualified high school students to enroll in post-secondary coursework at no cost and establishes a work group to look at how CTE courses can be incorporated into the program.

[00:07:22] So we can check those last three boxes of this section on our scorecard. Regarding the priority of funding, obviously to say nothing is final yet would be an understatement.

[00:07:40] While there was general discussion about a comprehensive overhaul of the state funding formula. There was no legislation behind it this session. The conference budget does have funds for an SOQ study. In general, there were no unfunded mandates that passed.

[00:08:00] And I think it's safe to say we can expect significantly more in state aid than last year. The early estimate from the conference budget is about \$20 million more. But again, this is a bit of a wild card at the moment. Unfortunately, the elimination of the support cap was a late casualty of the conference budget, so we'll keep that on our list for next year's priorities.

[00:08:23] The conference budget includes a 3% teacher raise and the previously mentioned funds for additional ELL teachers and also reading specialists. For our instructional personnel teacher recruitment priority, the gold star goes to our own HB 269 for passing the House and Senate uncontested.

[00:08:47] This removes an exclusion that will allow teachers of special education to be eligible for the career switcher program, and it was the brainchild of our own director of exceptional education, Katie Smith, who testified with me in several committee meetings to get this passed.

[00:09:03] So my thanks to her, and this also makes the second year in a row that we've had a successful bill sponsored. A pair of matching bills establish a process and timeline to increase the average teacher salary in Virginia to the national average by the end of the 2026-28 biennium.

[00:09:27] Continuing with our instructional personnel teacher recruitment priority, three bills address additional avenues for teaching licenses. One establishes universal reciprocity for certain licensed out-of-state teachers and a three-year subject matter expert teaching certificate to certain individuals who have relevant work experience or expertise. Another eliminates the requirement for a passing score on the Virginia Communication and Literacy Assessment,

[00:10:02] and a third creates a one-year local eligibility license that is only valid within the issuing school division. There was no Senate bill, I'm sorry, there was a Senate bill to increase the annual stipend for national board certified teachers, but that got amended to only providing a waiver for certification or maintenance fees for those in Title I or community eligibility provision schools. And as was mentioned earlier, unfortunately, while removing the support cap was

[00:10:39] proposed, it didn't make it through the budget deliberations. There were more bills that were track that fell under the safe schools and student wellness priority than any other this year.

[00:10:57] A number of them related to firearm safety and parental accountability, including Lucia's law, which was signed by the governor this week and was sponsored by members of our Henrico delegation, Delegate Willett and Senator Van Valkenburg. Their bills hold parents accountable, where another required a locking device for households with minors, but that one, HB351, was just vetoed by the governor, who said essentially that it wasn't necessary with the other related measures that he signed. Another pair requires school divisions to notify parents of their responsibility to safely

[00:11:36] store firearms. These identical bills were amended by the governor to say they must be reenacted in the 2025 session and include a list of parental rights and responsibilities that would also need to be shared with parents. One final related bill that would have prohibited home-based firearm dealers to operate within 1.5 miles of elementary or middle schools was also just vetoed by the governor who said it would have been unconstitutional and that such firearm dealers are already subject

[00:12:10] to comprehensive regulations. So this slide has been updated to reflect these recent changes of the six, two bills passed, two have amendments pending, and two were vetoed. Regarding wraparound services, mental health, I think I may have jumped ahead in there one slide. Okay, let's see.

[00:12:49] So regarding wraparound services, mental health was clearly a focus during this session. Of three school-related bills that passed, one requires full-time staff in public schools to complete updated mental health awareness training, the second one adds additional relevant topics to the physical and health education code, and a third directs the VDOE to create a model MOU for school divisions to partner with organizations that can provide virtual mental health resources.

[00:13:19] regarding our priority advocating for the unhoused and food insecure a house bill hb 168 requires the department of education to develop a resource document on supports and services for unhoused students another house bill that would have provided universal free lunch failed while the senate version of that bill was amended to have a vdoe study group estimate the statewide cost impact so while these measures passed it was not a complete win as they were amended in a way that doesn't provide as much direct support as originally intended

[00:13:59] and our final priority of maintaining local school board control the student discipline bills the hb 398 and sb 586 were adopted along party lines following a conference committee that resulted in restorative practices having to be considered versus required. Another pair of bills directed school divisions to notify parents of instructional material deemed to be sexually explicit. This was an attempt to clarify that the 2022 law it references is not to be used to remove

[00:14:37] books, something that had been misinterpreted by some school divisions. The governor vetoed this pair of bills as unnecessary. Another pair of bills related to parental notification for school-connected overdoses was amended in conference to have the Board of Education establish guidelines for such

policies and doesn't require any actual implementation or development of policies or notifications by the school division. As referenced in another priority, we now have the flexibility for alternatives to the three-year growth assessment during

[00:15:13] 2024 to 2026. And another bill also provides flexibility to develop alternative instructional time models. And finally, school boards can now carry over unexpended local funds for capital reserve projects. So that is how the legislative session wrapped up, at least for the moment, with many bills being adopted that support our legislative priorities for this year.

[00:15:47] We will see how the veto session goes on April 19th. It certainly will be interesting. And after that is over, we will create an updated legislative scorecard document that we will share with you and post to our website.

[00:16:04] And with that, I'm happy to answer any questions. Thank you, Mr. Blackstone and Ms. Cox. I'll start to my left, Mr. Irving. Thank you so much for the presentation. We appreciate the updates on the action of the state. So I have a few. I do want to touch on the one that you said about the board flexibility to develop alternative instructional time models.

[00:16:27] I believe that's House Bill 1477. Just looking at the the LIS website, it's saying that it was communicated to the governor yesterday and he has not done anything yet. But do we anticipate that that will be signed?

[00:16:45] That bill started off as quite a large bill and had a lot of different components to it, and it essentially just got whittled down just to saying that the boards could adopt or could develop alternative instructional models if they chose to.

[00:17:08] because it was watered down in essence, I don't know that that would raise to the level of a governor's veto. Of course, it's hard to say what he may or may not veto, but I don't get a sense in the folks in the circles of our educational legislative liaisons, that wasn't one that we thought might be, you know, rise to that level. Okay. So is the, to the best of your knowledge,

[00:17:43] is the text that's currently on the LIS website, like accurate as of now? It is. They, it was amended and substituted several times. So if you look at the very last, um, action where it says which, um, which amendment or substitute was adopted, um, that, that would be the one to look got. Okay. Because to me, the way that I read this is it is a remarkably impactful piece of legislation that I think has flown under the radar, getting rid of the, you know, potentially being able to get rid of the 140 clock hours, pursuing alternative pathways, students being

[00:18:20] able to show, you know, 80% competency in course at any speed, place, and time means that essentially students would be able to test out classes and create pathways so that they can pursue work-based learning opportunities in a more flexible manner than, you know, having to be up against the deadline of sitting in a seat just to sit in a seat. So I think in terms of like the broad scale impact, it's maybe larger than most people appreciate in terms of what the flexibility it could provide us should we choose to use it. So that's one that I've been keeping my eyes on, and that's certainly good to hear. That did generate a lot of discussion when it was

[00:18:56] in the committees. Yeah, yeah. No, I think it's flown under the radar relative to some of the other ones. It's obviously remarkably disappointing to see the support cap not being the support of the removal, I think, you know, for a job that is very difficult, not allowing us to utilize more of those

individuals. So the safe storage being postponed, that's obviously very frustrating to me, just given my district and the concern that many parents have about, you know, safe storage and wanting to make sure that they're, you know, because I think when we think about firearms and

[00:19:32] buildings, we think of, you know, incredibly traumatic events in buildings, but it's also, I think we don't put enough emphasis on the suicides that come from guns and not having this stored safely at home, you know, 60% of gun deaths in the United States are suicides. And it's, I think something that maybe doesn't get enough attention, but that's really what this bill would serve to prevent almost more than anything else is just children who, you know, maybe are having a hard time in life, just, you know, making them be more protected. So it's, it's disappointing to see that there won't be action on that until next year. The bill that was vetoed would have

[00:20:11] called for a locking device on a handgun or firearm, not a storage of it. There were a number of bills that were passed last year that did relate to firearm storage. In fact, the governor referenced those in his veto explanation. Yeah. Yeah. And I, and I'm also thinking of our, you know, requirement to notify parents of, you know, just a responsibility to, to be responsible.

[00:20:39] But everything else I think is tremendous. I think we're making a lot of progress on these priorities. There's a lot more green check marks on here than there is alert symbols. So that's certainly positive. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Mr. Young. Mr. Blackstone, thank you first for the presentation.

[00:20:57] I also wanted to talk about the safe storage, which you just covered, so a little disappointed, but that's fine. Could you explain to me about the special education exclusion? I know this was a big bill for the county. What were some of those exclusions that were kind of blocking our teachers?

[00:21:14] - Are you talking about-- - Career switchers. - Okay, the HB 269? - Yeah. - If Dr. Smith would like to come up, I can give a brief description, and she can go into more detail. But essentially, in the career switcher law that was existing, there was an exclusion for teachers of special education.

[00:21:32] And then there were separate criteria for those teachers. So it really was an equity issue of being able to allow the same access without having to take additional college courses and so on.

[00:21:47] So that's kind of a 30,000 foot view. And Dr. Smith, if you'd like to add anything. Sure, so right now we don't, it's not a surprise, we don't have a lot of people going through the four-year traditional path to enter becoming a special education teacher.

[00:22:04] And so the only other pathway that we have right now is called the provisional licensed teacher track, where our teachers actually take one course and then they have five years to take all the other courses. And at the end of five years, we hope that they've completed their coursework, but in some cases, teachers may not have completed their courses, may have only taken that one course that's initially required.

[00:22:24] and so in an effort to make sure that our students have teachers who are qualified, highly qualified for the job, this was a passion project of mine where through the career switcher program the teachers would actually take all of their coursework up front from a two or a four year university in an expedited manner and then after that it's usually it'll probably be about an 18 month program after that they have the ability on a career switcher license to be hired by a school division for one year to

demonstrate the knowledge, competencies, and skills that they've earned in that career switcher program with the support of a mentor and with

[00:23:00] the support of continuing 20 hours of additional professional learning from the college or university to support their first year in the classroom. And at the end of the first year of the classroom, then the school division can apply for a full teaching license. So it's a pathway, should a college or university take advantage of it, that will actually create a pipeline of qualified teachers from the get-go of hiring as opposed to us as a division and the teachers supporting their coursework over five years. Thank you. That was great work, and it's not only Hebson-Ryco, but all schools. Absolutely. That's correct. Great work. Absolutely. We'll probably three years out if it were, if school divisions pick it up from designing the coursework

[00:23:39] to getting students enrolled, but hey, I'll take three years. Perfect. Thank you. Thank you. We should call it the Dr. Katie Smith bill. All right. No further questions. Thank you. Thank you again. - Thank you so much, Ms. Kinsella. - Thank you, Vice Chair Shea.

[00:23:56] I definitely appreciate the scorecard format. It makes it so much easier to keep track of the items as we go. We are fortunate to see English Learner funding be a priority, mental health initiatives be a priority.

[00:24:13] Thank you again, Dr. Smith, for your advocacy and success regarding special education. That's a game changer for everyone in the state. It is, however, unfortunate that given the state of education in Virginia, there wasn't progress made on the support cap, as Mr. Irving said.

[00:24:34] And the SOQ funding, no changes to that, which makes it very fortunate where we live in Henrico, where our locality and our counterparts support funding schools 100%. I do have a question about where is the state in terms of getting teachers to the national average?

[00:24:57] Because that's something that a locality can't do by itself. Yes, there was, let me go back in my notes here, there was a bill that was a tandem bill, at one of Senator Lucas's bills on the Senate side that did call for the national average to be raised for teachers to be paid at the national average by 2026, by the 2026 school year.

[00:25:35] So let me see. Okay, I'm sorry. By the end of the 2026-28 biennium, to clarify. And there was a matching bill that was in the House by delegate Clark, I believe.

[00:25:51] So that was passed. And, you know, as of now, has not been vetoed or amended. So so we're waiting. We're waiting. We're waiting. Thank you for that update. And then lastly, I just want to highlight I'm going to defer to Mrs.

[00:26:07] Shea to share thoughts and comments regarding Lucia's law. Thank you, Miss Kinsella. And then you're done with. Yes, I'm done. I didn't know if you wanted me to share thoughts and then come back to you. I appreciate it. One question for you, Mr. Blackstone. Can you go back to the dual enrollment piece? I missed the details that you shared. I believe it was around CTE dovetailing with dual enrollment.

[00:26:41] Yeah. Yes. So the essentially the Senate bill SB 627 expands opportunities for qualified high school students to enroll in post-secondary coursework at no cost and also establishes a work group to look at how CTE courses can be incorporated into the program.

[00:27:07] So it establishes a college and career-ready Virginia fund and program. Great. Thank you so much. I want to echo my, all my colleagues' comments about the disappointment, not with you, Mr. Blackstone, but with, on the state level, that SOQ funding and ratios were not re-evaluated, as well as the support cap staying in place.

[00:27:38] place. In Henrico, we are poised to be the best compensated locality in the region. However, we cannot just on the local dollar move the needle for the entire education sector. And so we need help from the state in order to do that. And so I really appreciate our partners over at Henrico County local government and the Board of Supervisors for their support with the local dollar to get us to the level of compensation we have.

[00:28:12] But in order to really move this needle for our staff, our employees, the state funding model has to change. And so I'm disappointed that statewide they weren't able to move the needle more on that.

[00:28:30] Hopefully it will happen at some point. Well, and I believe there will be something that happens with that. I think they just felt like it was too much to tackle right away following the J. Lark study from last year.

[00:28:51] So I think it was just something that they just kind of agreed to take up, you know, the next session. I think there is interest in doing that. It was just something I think they felt like it's such a huge chunk to bite off and try to do it in 60 days.

[00:29:14] I think there will probably be some more studying of that. And then some legislation introduced next year. And then regarding the support cap, it was interesting because no one ever said anything all through the session about eliminating the support cap.

[00:29:30] It never came up. And then, like, at the very last minute in the conference budget, it's, you know, they just kind of quietly just took it out. I just think, you know, seeing that \$311 million, whatever the cost of it was, was just too much.

[00:29:45] You know, it's just like, well, you know, we could always pull from that fund or we always have that. So it was interesting to me that it was never mentioned other than everybody was universally in support of lifting it. And then at the end, without kind of any discussion about it, it just was removed.

[00:30:04] It is disappointing. Well, thank you for your work and your update. And then I do want to just acknowledge Luther's Law and that this is a significant step in the right direction for accountability for parents to safely store their firearms and keep them out of our schools.

[00:30:20] And I want to thank Senator Van Bockenburg as well as Delegate Willett for their work on the bill and to thank Governor Youngkin for signing the bill, particularly to have signed it on March 26th, which is a heavy day in my district and in my community.

[00:30:40] And having Lucia's Law signed on that day was definitely a ray of light. So thank you for all who worked to help get that bill through. any other questions comments thank you so much as we leave i would just leave you with this thought based on the format that you all use to develop your priorities and then the scorecard format for tracking those mr blackstone is going to be presenting at a national public relations conference this summer to share how how that works and how we've engaged our community through

[00:31:19] the town halls as well to ensure that we're really putting forth the priorities that reflect our community's needs and desires. So I just wanted to say thank you for that and make you aware that it will

be a model for school divisions across the country.

[00:31:36] Thank you so much. Thank you. Thank you both so much for that report and for the hard work behind it. That concludes items from the superintendent. Thank you so much. The next item on our agenda is unfinished business. Colleagues, do you have any unfinished business you would like to bring forward?

[00:31:56] Hearing none, the next item on the agenda for the work session is new business. Colleagues, do you have any new business that you would like to bring forward during the work session? All right, hearing none, the last item for our work session is the announcement of meeting dates.

[00:32:13] Actually, our next meeting will be at 6.30 right here today. But following that, on April 18, 2024, there will be a 3 p.m. work session. a 6 pm public hearing on surplus of real property in the brooklyn district and a 6 30 monthly meeting that will be held right here in the new bridge learning center auditorium the meeting times may be adjusted as needed this work session is over



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