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Henrico County School Board Monthly Meeting, Thursday, May 9, 2024

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[00:00:11] Good evening. We are going to get started. We extend a cordial welcome to each attendee of our May 9th, 2024 monthly meeting of the Henrico County School Board. The first item on our agenda is the approval of the agenda. Is there a motion? I move that the school board approve the agenda for this evening's meeting. Thank you, Mrs. Kinsella. Is there a second? Second. All in favor,

[00:00:47] say aye aye any opposed the ayes have it the agenda is approved thank you colleagues the next item on the agenda is the introduction of visitors we would like to take a moment just to express our gratitude to all of the visitors that we have with us today we appreciate your presence and participation in our monthly school board meeting your engagement is valued and we are delighted to have you with us today dr cashwell thank you chair atkins members of the board and

[00:01:25] to our visitors good evening we will begin our meeting as we always do featuring our students and that'll start with the pledge of allegiance which will be led by students from skip with elementary and that'll be followed by a moment of silence and then a performance highlight and so without further ado i'd like to introduce the principal of skip with elementary todd smith to come to the podium and introduce the students he has joining him today who are going to lead us in the Pledge of Allegiance. Good evening, Dr. Cashwell, school board and guests. I would like

[00:02:05] to introduce our fifth grade student, Mr. Cesar Sanchez from Ms. Lesniak's fifth grade classroom, Mr. Mac Galloway, fourth grade, Mr. Howard's fourth grade classroom, Logan Legnior from fourth grade Ms. Zafis's class and Theo Lynch, fifth grade Mrs. Frisch's class. All right, will you

[00:02:32] please rise for the Pledge of Allegiance? Pledge of Allegiance to the flag of the United States of America and to the republic for which it stands, one nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all. And if you would now please remain standing as you're able for a moment of

[00:03:03] silence and that concludes our moment of silence how about a big round of applause for our students from skip with elementary our next item is going to be the performance highlight and so we're going

[00:03:34] to make our way down to the audience so we can enjoy the student performance as well all right good evening madam chair members of the board dr cashwell colleagues and guests my name is

[00:04:13] christopher mosley i am the education specialist for performing arts and it is my pleasure to introduce for our performance highlight this evening, the Longin Elementary School fourth grade students under the direction of Mrs. Tracy Grooms. Mrs. Grooms is in her 19th year as a music educator and her 14th year at Longin. She earned her degree in music education from James Madison University. In addition to teaching music in Henrico, she also teaches private piano instruction to several elementary and middle school students in the region.

[00:04:50] Tonight, the students will be performing two selections on their wonderful recorder, your favorite instrument, Starburst, and Song of the Sea by Don Muro. Tonight, we also have in attendance their proud principal, Dr. Nicole Henderson.

[00:05:07] We ask that you stand so we can recognize you at this time. All right, and please help me welcome our long-end fourth-grade students to the stage. Thank you.

[00:07:02] Good evening Chair Atkins, members of the board, Dr. Cashwell and guests. I am Tracy Weston. I'm

[00:08:47] the Director of Professional Learning and Leadership. I'm here this evening to recognize two separate awards. The first being the Henrico Christie Award. The award recognizes a member of the exceptional education team whose contribution to HCPS has been exemplary in the service of children and their families. This award is named in honor of former Henrico County student, Christy Ann Heatwall, whose life characterized the passion and enthusiasm central to our mission of serving all students. Each year, Henrico honors a special educator from each school

[00:09:22] as a school-level Christy Award Teacher of the Year. Then four finalists are chosen to represent each special education zone, from which one is selected to represent the entire division as the Christy Teacher of the Year. For the first time ever, we had a tie. The nominees were so outstanding we could not decide between the two. Congratulations to our winners Mercedes Sadie Hodges from Hermitage High School and Carter Pope from Holman

[00:09:51] Middle School. She is an integrated services teacher at Hermitage High School and always goes above and beyond for all students and families. Sadie works with students to lead the coffee cart as a successful school-based business for students to learn and implement workplace readiness skills.

[00:10:16] Sadie also works with Jacob's Chance to support students outside the school building in order to provide additional opportunities for students to engage with others at further opportunities in the community. Sadie is a team player, always willing to lend a helping hand wherever needed. Students have flourished under her support, increasing skills for independence and personal development.

[00:10:38] Sadie is always seeking opportunities for students to participate in school based and division-wide initiatives. Additionally, in 2015 as a senior at Deep Run High School, Sadie was named as a teacher scholar. We are thrilled that Sadie returned to Henrico County and is serving the students at Hermitage High School. Hope is a middle school regional autism classroom teacher who goes above and beyond every day for her students. Carter has always been known

[00:11:15] to show up at a moment's notice to help former students struggling to transition to a new school. When her students have medical issues requiring trips to the hospital via ambulance, Carter is the first to volunteer to ride with the student and the regularly visits during the stay in the hospital.

[00:11:31] When her students require home-based services, Carter chooses to provide them in order to provide consistency to her students who often struggle with changes and transitions. This eases the change for students and their families. When her students are demonstrating behaviors in the home or in the community, she makes home visits to support the family with strategies to decrease the behaviors.

[00:11:53] Well done, Sadie and Carter. We are so proud of you and so proud you are part of the Exceptional Education family. Our second recognition this evening is our Teacher of the Year recipients.

[00:12:09] Each year, Henrico County proudly recognizes 74 outstanding educators as school-level Teachers of the Year. These educators are not only recognized for their contributions to their schools, but they also stand out among the top professionals across the district and state.

[00:12:26] Celebrated for their unwavering passion and dedication to teaching, they represent the highest standards in educational excellence. In addition to school-level awards, one finalist is recognized from each magisterial district, ultimately resulting in one teacher being selected as the Henrico Teacher of the Year.

[00:12:44] The Teacher Year program not only highlights the accomplishments of individual teachers, but it also serves as a precursor for the prestigious Virginia Teacher of the Year Award. The state recognition celebrates educators who exemplify the best in teaching across the Commonwealth of Virginia and the nation. It also serves as an opportunity to draw positive attention to the educational field and inspire a culture of excellence among educators. All 74 Henrico Teachers of the Year were honored Tuesday evening at the annual Teacher of the Year dinner.

[00:13:15] it is my honor especially during national teacher appreciation week to recognize the following teachers of the year who could be with us this evening from glenn allen high school hunter edwards greenwood elementary dennis beck and dennis is the finalist from the brooklyn district

[00:13:41] henrico virtual academy malika brown hermitage high school mckenzie kirk springfield park Elementary, Stacy Hilton. The Advanced Career and Education Center at Virginia

[00:14:11] Randolph, Adrienne Williams. Fish Elementary School, Kenese High. The Campus of Virginia Randolph, Kathy Carter. Chamberlain Elementary, Jennifer Traisman. Fairfield Middle, Crystal Rawlings. Radcliffe Elementary, Jennifer

[00:14:47] Sperry. Wilder Middle, Malik Brown. Colonial Trail Elementary, Stacy Daub. And Stacey is the finalist from the Three-Chop district.

[00:15:05] Holman Middle, Claudia Codero. Short Pump Middle, Devanya Blum. Freeman High School, Kate Stryker.

[00:15:24] And Kate is the Tuckahoe district finalist. Pemberton Elementary, Kay Farris. Three-Chop Elementary, Tracy Meir.

[00:15:42] Highland Springs Elementary, Myra Scott. Mayford Elementary, Cindy Blakely. Seven Pines Elementary, Virginia Kay.

[00:16:00] And Verina High School, Sydney Freeman. Could we have one more round of applause for our Teachers of the Year? Thank you.

[00:16:37] Congratulations again to everyone that was recognized.

[00:17:05] We can do one more round of applause.

[00:17:15] The next item on our agenda is recognition of Mental Health Awareness Month. Mrs. Kinsella, please do the honors of reading the proclamation. Thank you, Chair Atkins.

[00:17:27] Mental Health Awareness Month, May 2024, whereas children's mental health is directly linked to their learning and development, and the school and classroom environment provide an optimal context to promote positive mental health and behavioral health and to build skills that influence mental health outcomes, and whereas mental health is essential to everyone's overall health and well-being, and whereas strong partnerships with with community agencies, families, and private providers help to overcome these public health challenges

[00:18:05] and promote greater support for those affected. And whereas school counselors, school social workers, and school psychologists are specifically trained to provide a continuum of school-based mental and behavioral services that support and strengthen learning and development.

[00:18:24] And whereas Henrico Cares, A joint mental health endeavor between HCPS, Henrico County, and the community will be implemented in Henrico County Public Schools beginning in the 24-25 school year. And whereas, Mental Health Awareness Month is an opportunity to increase public understanding of the importance of mental health and to promote the identification and treatment of mental disorders.

[00:18:54] Now, therefore, let it be proclaimed that the School Board of Henrico County Public Schools recognizes May 2024 as Mental Health Awareness Month. Thank you so much, Mrs. Kinsella.

[00:19:09] The next item is recognition of National Physical Fitness and Sports Month. Mr. Young, please do the honors. Whereas 40 years ago, our nation observed its first national physical fitness and sports month to promote the benefits of exercising and leading a healthy lifestyle. And whereas since then we have learned more about how physical activity can improve mental health, reduce the risk of disease and foster social connection. And whereas Henrico County Public Schools is committed to student physical and emotional wellness and seeks to provide curricular and extracurricular opportunities

[00:19:48] for students to pursue life-ready wellness through physical activity. Now, therefore, be it proclaimed that the school board of Henrico County Public School recognizes May 2024 as National

Physical Fitness and Sports Month, recognized by the school board of Henrico County Public Schools this ninth day of May 2024.

[00:20:09] Thank you, Mr. Young, and we're not done. next is recognition of asian american and pacific islander heritage month mr irving would you please do the honors sure whereas more than 13 percent of students in henrico county public schools are asian americans or pacific islanders and whereas asian americans and pacific islanders comprise one of the fastest growing demographic groups in virginia and whereas asian americans and pacific Islanders have made and continue to make valuable contributions to the vitality of our community

[00:20:47] and bring rich cultural traditions to our schools. Now, therefore, be it proclaimed that the School Board of Henrico County Public Schools recognizes May 2024 as Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month, recognized by the School Board of Henrico County Public Schools this ninth day of May 2024. Thank you, Mr. Irving, for that. Dr. Cashwell. Thank you, Madam Chair, members of the board. The next item on the agenda is our Henrico Highlight, and tonight we will head to J.R. Tucker

[00:21:23] High School for their school cultural fair. As you know, Henrico County Public Schools prides itself on being a community of diverse learners. We have students representing countries and cultures worldwide and speaking more than 139 languages. To celebrate this, equity ambassadors at Tucker High School organized a cultural fair featuring food, global traditions, and a unique fashion show.

[00:21:49] Let's take a look. Members, you'll likely recall that equity ambassadors from every

[00:23:52] high school across the county attended our April school board meeting to share information about activities supporting inclusion and belonging at their respective schools. And the video of that That presentation they shared with us here at the board is online on our school division website.

[00:24:08] And inclusion and belonging are also the themes for tonight's Heart of Henrico. Recently, HCPS partnered with the Special Olympics of Virginia to host three competitions that bring together students with disabilities and their non-disabled peers for a day of fun and fellowship on the field.

[00:24:28] The Big Feet Meet, Meet in the Middle, and the Little Feet Meet are similar to a school field day, but they are also so much more. Let's take a look at this video from the Little Feet Meet. The 24 Big Feet Meet, over 500 athletes and partners from Henrico County High Schools are here today to participate.

[00:25:01] We now officially declare this year, Special Olympics, VA, Henrico County.

[00:25:07] We are delighted to host everyone on the collegiate campus today, and we hope you will meet new friends and have fun competing.

[00:26:39] Many thanks to Special Olympics Virginia and all of the Henrico County Public Schools staff who helped organize these events.

[00:26:56] The smiles on the students' faces are priceless and perfectly capture the heart of Henrico. Madam Chair, that completes our Henrico highlights. Thank you Dr. Cashwell. The next item on our agenda is the mission statement. Henrico County Public Schools, an innovative leader in educational excellence, will actively engage our students in diverse, educational, social, and civic learning experiences that inspire and empower them to become

[00:27:32] contributing citizens. With that in mind, we'll move forward with our public forum. This is a time when citizens are invited to address the school board on any matter of concern about the school

division. Citizens have signed up in advance and will be given three minutes to address the school board. Speakers will be called to speak in the order in which they signed up and may not relinquish their spot to someone else. We ask that each speaker come to the microphone and clearly state

[00:28:10] your name and school affiliation, if applicable, and the subject of your remarks before speaking. After stating your name, please place the number you were given in the cart near the podium. Speakers must present their remarks to the school board, not the audience, and may provide copies of their comments to the school board clerk. The use of obscenity or defamation is strictly prohibited and will be ruled out of order. To assist you in tracking your time, there

[00:28:45] 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 to hear from you today we will not be responding to speakers concerns or questions during the public forum however a henrico staff member will follow up with speakers stakeholders have also had the opportunity to provide written comments through an online form in advance of the meeting these

[00:29:22] comments are shared with the with school board members prior to the meeting and posted in board Equal consideration and attention will be given to both written and in-person comments. To the contributors of written commentary and speakers assembled here today, thank you in advance for your participation.

[00:29:44] Your presence, expertise, concerns, acknowledgment of progress, and engagement enhance our understanding of communities' diverse perspectives. Your time and energy today demonstrate a commitment to the well-being and the success of our school communities. We know your voices are crucial in shaping the direction of Henrico County Public Schools and your input helps us with decision making. Once again, thank you. Will speaker number

[00:30:17] one please approach the podium? Good evening. Good evening Dr. Cashwell, Chair Atkins, members of the school board my name is elizabeth broda i'm a teacher and department chair at henrico high school i'm speaking to you tonight in my capacity as the co-chair of the collective bargaining committee for the henrico education association and this evening you're going to have the honor of hearing several perspectives supporting contract negotiations for all staff you'll hear from staff who work in locations across the county from members of the community and from

[00:30:57] henrico parents and we're here to show you that contract negotiations aren't being pushed by by some outside third-party force. It's us, your staff, your community, your parents. And if you're here now to support contract negotiations, I invite you to stand.

[00:31:20] Thank you. We love Henrico. It's our home. We aren't organizing because some outside force is telling us to rise up against our bosses. In fact, a negotiated contract would add clarity to the relationship between supervisors and staff. We aren't trying to avoid our responsibilities, as some have said, or to undermine the organization of things, as others have claimed.

[00:31:41] Some have even argued that collective bargaining means lawyers have to be present in all meetings between staff and supervisors, and that's simply not the case. We want to decrease the friction that comes from imbalances of power, and we're asking to do our jobs, and we're asking for the resources to do them well.

[00:31:59] And please don't think our numbers here represent the only supporters for this cause. I continue to receive messages from folks across the county describing reasons why they can't be here tonight. and all of them revolve around doing great things for students and staff. Art shows, concerts, showcase rehearsals, and retirement celebrations are just a few places where our staff find themselves tonight.

[00:32:20] Others have contacted me to apologize for their absence, describing how tired they are. It's May, and no one has to explain tired to an educator in May. But I hope you listen tonight with an open mind and an open heart, knowing that our staff, tired or not, deserve a real seat at the table and a chance to have a voice to make effective, collaborative, and lasting change. Thank you. Thank you. Speaker number two.

[00:33:01] Good evening. My name is Aaron Lam, and I'm a Spanish teacher in the World Language IB Dual Enrollment and Immersion Program at Tucker High School. I'll be speaking on collective bargaining rights for HCPS employees this evening. This is my 10th year of teaching, and I've been a union member since day one in the profession.

[00:33:25] I've spent the past several years organizing for collective bargaining, both in my previous district and for my two years here in Henrico. Based on this experience, I want to use my time tonight to clarify some common misconceptions about what a union is and is not, and what it can and cannot do.

[00:33:42] First, I often hear that colleagues don't want a so-called third party interfering in the relationship between employees and HCPS, and I have great news on that. A union is employees using their collective power to improve their and their students' conditions.

[00:33:59] There is no one stepping in to our affairs. We ourselves are stepping up. Next, there are those opposed to paying dues. I have good news. The explanation is very simple. Only union members pay dues. Virginia does remain a right-to-work state, which means no one can be forced to join a union.

[00:34:18] So those who don't want to pay dues don't. It's as simple as that. Third, I've encountered concern over the idea of striking. Striking remains illegal in Virginia under penalty of immediate termination. This is simply a non-issue.

[00:34:34] And finally, the most common concern I hear from employees is about fear of retaliation. They feel they cannot voice their concerns out of fear. I've been asked to keep names quiet and advocate on their behalf out of fear.

[00:34:49] I've been asked for information about collective bargaining in whispers out of fear. Fearful employees do not feel empowered, and they eventually leave. HCPS employees want to improve our workplaces, but too many are afraid to speak up.

[00:35:05] With a union and collective bargaining, voices can be heard loud and clear, and we can lift up all those who seek to make HCPS the best it can be for our community's kids. Thank you. Thank you. All right.

[00:35:26] Speaker number three. Please approach the podium. Good evening. My name is Julia Lang. I'm a proud graduate of Tuckahoe Middle and Freeman High School.

[00:35:42] I'm even prouder to be part of the math team at Highland Springs high school and to represent my union brothers and sisters as their Henrico education building rep. I'm coming to you tonight because

I'm wrapping up my third year of teaching and I'm beginning to notice something. Three years ago I was hired at Highland Springs as a graduate of the Richmond Teacher Residency Program, which funds graduate school for teachers to work specifically in high needs schools.

[00:36:07] This means essentially that in return for the last three years of teaching, Henrico County paid for my degree. Pretty sweet deal. Not only that, I was going to be working in a brand new building. Today, I am the only member of my Richmond teacher residency cohort still with the county.

[00:36:24] The others have left the county or the profession. Today, like pretty much every day this year, my classroom was 78 degrees and humid. But like every day since the end of quarter three, my clock was broken, which means that I also don't get bells or announcements in my classroom.

[00:36:43] To top it off, our hallway's only water fountain is out of order. I can't tell you how excited I am to proctor a math SOL in there this coming Tuesday. We don't have enough maintenance staff to fix these problems. We don't even have one maintenance supervisor per building in this county. We talk a lot about teacher-student ratios.

[00:37:01] How do you think your child's learning environment is affected by having less than one maintenance worker per thousand-odd students? It's great that the county wants to throw down big money on an innovative teacher prep program or an innovative building design, but the one-time expenditures will never stop an ongoing problem. Bonuses, stipends, step raises are always for some, never for all.

[00:37:22] The research is in, the data is clear. In order to recruit and retain not only teachers, but nutritional staff to feed our students, bus drivers to transport them safely, maintenance workers to keep our buildings habitable and safe, registrars and office staff to keep the buildings running.

[00:37:38] We all need a voice in our contracts. We are the ones working day in and day out to create the best possible learning environment for our students from when they first step onto the bus to when they finally step across the stage. Give us what we need to make it happen.

[00:37:53] Thank you. Speaker number four. Good evening. My name is Spencer Billet. I'm a proud K-12 graduate of Henrico County Schools and a nine-year teacher at Highland Springs High School, which now means I've spent two-thirds of my life in a Henrico County public school, and I could not be more

[00:38:34] the uh estimable liz broda after the constitutional convention of 1787 a man spotted benjamin franklin leaving the building and stopped him to ask what kind of government had been formed a republic franklin replied if you can keep it sorry for the civics lesson i'm a history teacher i can only speak in historical analogies since its inception this republic has relied on public schools as the cornerstone of our democracy it is our job as teachers to activate an educated engaged citizenry it is through our schools that we achieve our best possible selves i also believe

[00:39:09] that henrico has one of the finest educational systems in this country if we can keep it the problems besetting education today are enormous and not one of us individually can claim to have the answers but i would not be a big supporter of democracy if i didn't believe that we can collaboratively solve all of our issues in the words of the father of modern education john dewey We reject a system in which educational methods are dictated to a body of passive recipient teachers. Instead, we propose the adoption of intellectual initiative, discussion, and decision throughout the entire school core. This is what collective bargaining is about. It is about

[00:39:48] empowering staff with the dignity of democracy. It is about empowering us, the staff of Henrico, to make decisions that impact the lives of our students. And it is about empowering the community through work that invigorates the community with initiative. Together, we can build the finest possible future for our children.

[00:40:07] Thank you. All right. Speaker number five. Speaker number five. Hi, esteemed board members.

[00:40:27] My name is Thomas Reuter. I teach mathematics at Henrico High School, including several sections of Algebra II and the dual enrollment calculus courses with the J. Sargent Reynolds Community College. In the past two years, I've also served as a room monitor for a proximity teacher.

[00:40:45] From what my and my colleagues have experienced for the past two years, the proximity program needs a major reset. HCPS is not getting anything in its return for its investment in proximity learning. In fact, proximity's failure to provide even minimal services will cost the county significant future dollars.

[00:41:09] Many of the current proximity students drop or fail their course, which means that HCPS will need additional staff to make up this learning loss in the future. I suspect this dropout will also result in lower graduation rates.

[00:41:25] But I know that many of you are aware of this situation, and I am here to thank you for committing to strong oversight of the proximity contract. In my conversations with Ms. Atkins, she assured me that the board is using this contract renegotiation time to establish some clear guidelines and put processes in place to ensure that students served by proximity teachers stay engaged and get the math education they are entitled to.

[00:41:53] Allow me to share with you three major problems we need your help in correcting. Number one, proximity classes do not engage students. At the beginning of the year, Highland Springs had about 1,856 students, 547, about 30% were enrolled in proximity classes.

[00:42:14] We are way down in terms of teachers. Since then, 157 of those 547 have dropped the proximity class. They are not taking that class. Since that is more than the teaching load for one full-time teacher, by the way.

[00:42:30] Think about this. almost 30% of the proximity students, about 10% of all students at Henrico High School are not earning a math credit toward graduation this year. Prox number two, proximity teachers do not meet HCSP standards for instruction. At the beginning of the year, we started with five proximity teachers. In less than one month, three of these teachers were fired. In my class, we did not have a regular teacher until the beginning of the second quarter, first semester. Our current instructor is a nice guy, but he has never been in a classroom and it shows. And finally, proximity

[00:43:07] teachers do not follow the Virginia standards of learning. They bring their own curriculum and lesson content irrespective of the course requirements. Students in proximity classes are not being prepared for the next level of math. They will be at a significant disadvantage with respect to their peers next year. That is why your support is so critical. You hold the keys to enforcing that that will that will compel proximity to honor its contract with hcps thank

[00:43:39] you thank you number six good evening members of the school board my name is dana morris i'm a high school art teacher at highland springs high school and i'm an active member of the henrico education association i've been teaching for 15 years four years in new york city and 11 in henrico i have a master's degree in art education and i'm a national board certified teacher

[00:44:16] I'm here to discuss the positive impact collective bargaining could make in Henrico County and how it will benefit teachers, faculty, and staff. In my first four years, I taught in the Bronx, New York. I never signed a contract. I was hired in 2009, right after a teaching hiring freeze was lifted, and at that time, the teachers union was in the middle of negotiating the terms of our contracts.

[00:44:37] Even without a contract, I knew what was professionally expected of me, and I understood where I fell on the salary scale and what my pay increases would be each year I taught. I knew this information because, one, like in many HCPS schools, there's a teacher appointed as union building representative that was there to assist all teachers and staff with any questions to help understand our rights.

[00:44:59] Two, unlike HCPS, there still is full transparency on the New York City Department of Education and Union website. Contracts are about to be issued in Heraco County tomorrow. I urge you, all faculty and staff to take the time to read the language of your contract.

[00:45:17] I went back and reread the past five years of my contract and two things stood out to me. One, under special covenants, G, the workday begins at the time specified by the principal in accordance with school board policies and regulations. Employees shall assume such responsibilities before and after the regular school day as assigned by the principal, including attendance at faculty and departmental meetings, extracurricular activities and other school events.

[00:45:40] Employees shall be available after the close of the regular school day for conferences with parents who request to confer with employee. This language is open-ended and does not provide any specific information regarding my responsibilities as a teacher. This creates inequity among teachers, faculty, and staff across the county depending on your principal and what they deem necessary.

[00:46:00] The only clarity this statement does provide is the principal of your school will determine how much of your time will be required and valued before and after school. Two, regardless of employees' previous experience, employees shall not be entitled to any retroactive adjustments for years of experience should compensation policies of the school board change in future years well i was just looking at the adopted 24 25 teacher placement chart for external new hires the language in our contract is basically saying a new teacher can and most likely will be paid more than a veteran teacher and that veteran teacher is not entitled to any compensation no matter how big the salary gap all of these contract stipulations and more could be negotiated with

[00:46:35] collective bargaining let me end by stating a comment on the new york city united teacher Federation website. The union contract empowers us to do our jobs well. It includes articles and rights whose sole aim is to ensure that we have the resources, support, and structures in place to do our best to educate children. A contract gives us an important voice in the workplace and a mechanism for addressing problems. You have the right to professional and fair treatment and to working conditions that help make a tough job more doable. Your rights are the product of collective bargaining and negotiations between the union and the department of ed and it's

[00:47:12] important to become familiar with your rights and use them otherwise the contract is just words on paper thank you all right if we can have our next speaker speaker number six are you here number seven speaker number seven good evening dr cashwell and members of the board my name is

[00:47:48] tina howell i'm a parent of greenwood greenwood elementary i'm here tonight to make you aware of the ongoing bullying at Greenwood Elementary. While this may be news to you, it is not news to Principal Ryan Stein. While I know he prides himself on being the golden boy of Henrico County, Mr. Stein is not quite who he seems. You see, both of my daughters attend Greenwood, and while my oldest daughter has been bullied three out of the four years that she's attended Greenwood Elementary, I was also on the receiving end of Mr. Stein's bullying. My tiny girl was physically assaulted during her kindergarten year and Mr. Stein failed to act. When I became concerned about

[00:48:25] my daughter's well-being, Mr. Stein decided to turn his aggression on me instead of following protocol and doing his job. At this point, I reached out to Dr. McQueen, who was a dear friend of my aunt, and she didn't find the situation quite as funny. Dr. McQueen allowed me to speak up for myself and for my daughter, and she set guidelines with Mr. Stein for what was going to happen going forward. Needless to say, there were no more issues. My daughter's first grade teacher was incredible and watched over my daughter. COVID hit, the world stopped, and we homeschooled.

[00:48:54] Fourth grade began and the bullying started. This time, it was girls. It lasted pretty much the entire school year, and no matter how many times it was brought to the attention of staff and administration, nothing ever changed. Mr. Stein finally decided to sit all of them down. One of the girls was head of house, if you're familiar with his house system. He told her not to apply for head of house the following year, and if she did, she wouldn't get it. True to Mr. Stein, he didn't hold to his word. When I called him out on it, he ignored my emails. She is still head of house, despite the fact that she is still a bully. This year, they upped the ante. There was a child

[00:49:30] who was hitting and kicking my daughter, taking things from her lunch, threatening that if she did not bring doubles of things, she would hurt her. The child then began to bring stuffed animals and other treats, offering them to children, and saying, if you would hit, kick, or lick my child, I will give them to you. Staff still refused to follow protocol. What I have not told you yet is that I am an SSO here in Henrico County. Every day before I cross the threshold of your school, I pray I stop at the threshold. I pray that every child in my school feels loved and safe.

[00:50:05] I pray that no teacher carries a bias from the day before. I pray that every child is given an equal education. I ask that God protect us from the evil on the inside and the outside of that building. I love on, uplift, laugh with, help and cheer on almost 700 children every day and I would lay my life down for any one of them should the opportunity present himself. Yet Mr. Stein cannot, will not and has not protected my child. This is the person that you put as principal of Greenwood

[00:50:34] Elementary. Number eight. Hi, my name is Donald Geib. Excuse me if I look frazzled. I just spent the day in a hot 80 degree room without air conditioning this is my eighth year at highland springs high school it's a beautiful brand new building and the air conditioning isn't working and the water fountain in our hallway is not working and has not been working since the

[00:51:09] beginning of the year i teach calculus geometry that's ap calculus a b and b c engineering math first I want to thank the board for some of the initiatives implemented this year at the springs most notably the tutoring program where tutors come in during the school day to assist math teachers and encourage

the students throughout the day I would encourage you to continue this innovative program it really has been successful added positive energy to the building to the math

[00:51:46] building to to the students and hopefully this tuesday we'll have some good sol results also please get creative in your staffing with real teachers in our high school this is the second year we have been short teachers this year i think we're short five teachers and one ex-ed teacher and please reconsider the proximity program that was put in place to address that issue we need real live people in the building we can work with live people and get anybody to do a good job

[00:52:25] we work well together you notice there's a lot of us from the springs here tonight um the other commendation i would like to make is you put coaches into the buildings we've had two part-time coaches without these two amazing women we would not have been able to stay above water with our severe staffing shortages please continue to support coaches next year they're thinking about taking one of the coaches away or they've already planned that and i would ask you to reconsider that they're part-time coaches at this point we really need two full-time coaches especially

[00:53:00] with the severe staffing shortage that we have tonight as we speak they're over there in our building with about 120 of our students and some math teachers preparing for the sol so this is the dedication level and two of the tutors that we had that you guys put into our classrooms are there helping also finally i would encourage you to approve collective bargaining as my other peers

[00:53:30] have spoken to you already thank you have a nice evening speaker speaker number nine good evening dr cashwell and members of the board my name is terry jones and i'm an exceptional education teacher at Tucker High School and the current vice president of the Henrico Education Association.

[00:54:07] I want to go into the data concerning collective bargaining. So when we compare states that have collective bargaining rights for teachers to those that do not, the difference in student outcomes is striking. Research from the Economic Policy Institute reveals that in states where teachers have the ability to collectively bargain, fourth grade math scores are on average six percent higher and eighth grade math scores are impressive 4.5 percent higher these figures underscore the significant impact that collective bargaining can have on academic achievement but it's not

[00:54:42] just about test scores studies published in the journal of labor economics have found that in states with robust collective bargaining rights for teachers high school graduation rates are 12 percentage points higher this means that students and states with collective bargaining are more likely to successfully complete their education and pursue higher opportunities in life so what's the secret behind this academic success it's simple collective bargaining empowers teachers to advocate for the resources and support they need to excel in the classroom this includes

[00:55:21] smaller class sizes, better materials, and more instructional time. All factors that contribute to a conducive learning environment. So in conclusion, embracing collective bargaining isn't just about ensuing fair treatment for our educators. It's about investing in the future of our students and our community. By providing educators with the tools they need to succeed, we are paving

[00:55:46] the way for brighter prospects for all. Thank you. Speaker number 10. Number 10. Good evening, Madam Chair, Dr. Cashwell, members of the board. My name is Nora Lesko, and I'm a social studies teacher at Godwin High School in the Takahoe District. I come before you tonight to urge you to recognize that collective bargaining is what HCPS employees want, and more than that, it is

[00:56:21] what we need. Let it be said that the HCPS school board has helped create many positive policy changes in recent years but all of this can be taken away without a contract as hcps employees we should not have to rely on whether future administrations and school boards will see fit to allow us to keep these gains we should be able to enshrine these gains in a contract so that the successes that you've all made as a school board can be secured for future generations of educators and staff on behalf of the growing number of employees at Godwin and an hcps who desire a say in our contracts I implore you to look to the many people who make the schools in this county

[00:56:58] function. I urge you to look to us as experts in our various lines of work, and as such, as eager participants in the important responsibility of determining the terms of our employment contracts. As a history teacher, I would be remiss if I did not uplift the fact that the history of the ban on collective bargaining for public sector workers in Virginia is rooted in the disenfranchisement of black employees at University of Virginia, who organized with Local 550 in 1946. We can't turn back the clock to undo such injustices, but we can make an earnest attempt to rectify them by allowing public sector workers a seat at the table in Henrico County, including

[00:57:37] teachers and all school employees and support staff. There is absolutely no reason that public sector workers should not enjoy the same rights as those in the private sector. Were we to win our right to collectively bargain, we stand to improve the livelihoods and working conditions of all Henrico County employees, to become a beacon for equity among Virginia schools, to attract and retain skilled faculty and staff, and to secure HCPS's place as one of the most appealing school systems and employers in our state for years to come.

[00:58:09] As members of the school board, you are at a crossroads. By moving forward in the process towards collective bargaining for HCPS employees, you have the ability to make a historic step in Henrico County and the state of Virginia. Let that be your legacy. Thank you all very much for your time.

[00:58:29] Speaker number 11. Number 11. Number 12.

[00:58:49] I'm Stacey Beardsley with my husband, Dave, residents of Henrico County for 25 years. Holman and Glenallen are zone schools. Along here are daughters, Aubrey, ninth grader on an administrative placement at Godwin and twins Kayla and Stella, eighth graders at Holman who were denied on an appeal of variance to Godwin next year with their sister.

[00:59:17] This is why I'm here today. Facts. While in the seventh grade in 2021, Aubrey started struggling with her mental health and found unhealthy coping skills with substances provided to her on school grounds. One year later, we received an emergency call to pick Aubrey up from school.

[00:59:35] We took her to the ER and learned she had overdosed on THC while she obtained, which she obtained, on school grounds. Ten days later, I flew Aubrey to a residential treatment facility in California. She was away from our family for two and a half months at 13 years old.

[00:59:55] It was torture for our entire family, particularly Kayla and Stella, who continue to be impacted on a daily basis. Kayla and Stella's variance requests to Godwin were denied this week. This was heartbreaking to hear that our family would be split up throughout their entire high school career, especially as Kayla and Stella continue to focus on their mental and emotional health.

[01:00:18] Policy PR03011R, section 3B5 states that variance requests will not be considered to attend the school of a sibling who is admitted or placed there for an academic program or an exceptional education

program unless the student is also accepted or placed into a special program at the sibling's out-of-zone school.

[01:00:42] This is the reason for our denial. This section of the policy does not apply to us. however we do know administrative placements can happen for extenuating circumstances they did for aubrey and we're grateful we are therefore requesting your support and asking for reconsideration of our variance request for kayla and stella to attend godwin and keep our family together we are concerned that a practice rather than a policy is being applied to our situation we are specifically told siblings can't follow siblings to an out-of-zone school that is not

[01:01:18] expressly prohibited in the written variance requirements or policy. To the board, Dr. Cashwell, and your leadership, I am begging you, please do not take away the opportunity for our girls to remain together through their high school career as we continue to rebuild our family each day.

[01:01:38] Under these extenuating circumstances, when you have every ability to provide an administrative placement per code F Kayla and Stella wouldn't you want to have them at Godwin and keep our family together and I have some materials to leave with you thank you thank you you may provide your materials to the school board clerk and number 13. hi my name is Aubrey Beardsley and I'd like to say thank you to the staff for approving my variance two and a half years ago I began struggling

[01:02:17] with mental health and develop just one moment we want to make sure we get our timer ready for you and you can restart once we're ready hi my name is Aubrey Beardsley and I attend Godwin High School I'd like to say thank you to the staff for approving my variants two and a half years ago I began struggling with my mental health and developed a substance use disorder which I was placed into rehab for my sisters both play a big role in my sobriety and journey in staying sober Not only are they my sisters, they are my support system.

[01:02:52] Me and my sisters are very close, and I feel that going to different schools creates distance between us. I also feel that high school is something that families should be able to go through together. I've always pictured going to high school with them and growing as people together. Part of the reason that I am still sober is because of Stella and Kayla.

[01:03:09] If there were ever any temptations to relapse at school, I know that having my sisters there would remind me why I continue to stay sober. In summary, my family belongs together and should be there to help each other through everything. I'm hoping you can provide support in getting my sister's variants approved.

[01:03:27] Thank you for your time. Thank you. Number 14. Good evening. My name is Marlene Sherlock, and our family lives in the Fairfield District.

[01:03:44] We're zoned for Brooklyn, and we attend high school in Three-Chopped. After hearing your work session this afternoon and looking at the survey results and the quite poor participation rate, particularly for parents and family, I thought I might chime in. There was mention that the folks at VCU help with formulating the questions, but I'm here to tell you that the questions are just too general to provide any real input from parents, and I'm going to guess from students and staff, too.

[01:04:10] You seem so interested in tying a specific question to some high-level strategic plan objective or goal that you never get down into the weeds of what really affects your stakeholders on a daily basis. And there's always the ever-present concern of why bother.

[01:04:27] They won't really do anything anyway. Instead of asking if a school building is safe or in good condition, ask us if the bathrooms are available and clean and safe, or are they locked, vandalized, and smell horribly of vape? And there are a lot of questions about mental health and about how, but how about student physical health and well-being?

[01:04:48] Do my children have sufficient P.E. or recess time, or is it taken away as a punishment? Do the water fountains work? Do my kids have enough time to get and eat their lunch without having to wolf it down? We know you cannot teach a kid who's not there.

[01:05:06] Does transportation get our kids to school on time? How about asking a teacher, a bus driver, or a front office staffer if they've had a student, or worse, a parent curse at them? Ask a teacher if they have enough planning time. ask if they've been pressured to pass along a student or are they backed when handing out a less than stellar grade. I know parents of students with various challenges often struggle to get their IEP and 504 plans put in place and actually followed. How about asking how difficult of a struggle it is to get those fair and appropriate public education accommodations. Finally, there

[01:05:46] are two glaring disconnects. You might think we have clear expectations and consequences for bullying, but the kids aren't buying it. Maybe it's your definition. Maybe you've talked about it over and over and over, but do they really know what it is? Is any slight considered an affront?

[01:06:05] At some point, I think we could all take a deeper breath on what it means to be offended and to do as they say in Ashland, be kind. I think the golden rule still has a place in modern civil society. And I'll say the same thing I mentioned last month. It's about consistency, consistency, consistency. If you make a rule, regulation, or policy, please enforce it the same in every

[01:06:31] classroom, every school across the entire district. Thank you. Number 15. Good evening. Thank you so much for your time tonight. I'm a resident. My name is Beth Kordatis. I'm a resident of Fairfield and a proud mother of two two children who attend Henrico County Public Schools.

[01:07:01] I have a son who attends Hermitage High School and a daughter who attends Moody Middle School. I've also been a teacher at VCU teaching general education which feels a little bit like 13th grade since 2007 and a proud union member of the United Campus Workers since it formed roughly two years ago. We at VCU at Virginia public universities still do not have the right to do collective bargaining but the teachers and the schools in Henrico could and they should.

[01:07:35] When teachers have the power of collective bargaining they have a more powerful voice to advocate for good work conditions. They have a chance to advocate for their students needs. They're empowered to be a stronger voice for Henrico schools. Henrico students and staff are superb.

[01:07:56] I've seen this year after year with my students going through the Lakeside, Moody, and Hermitage, but we've heard them talk tonight about many of their concerns on things like staff shortages, building and maintenance issues, best practices for curriculum, and classroom policies, and they deserve a seat at the bargaining table.

[01:08:18] Please vote to allow the Henrico Education Association to become a collective bargaining unit. Thank you very much. Thank you to all of the speakers this evening for sharing your thoughts and concerns.

[01:08:44] Dr. Cashwell. The next items are consent items, and they can be taken as a block. Colleagues, are there any questions or feedback on any of the consent items? All right, is there a motion?

[01:09:01] A move that the school board accept, adopt, approve, and or award items 9.01 through 9.10 on the consent agenda as presented. Is there a second? Second. All in favor, say aye.

[01:09:17] Aye. Any opposed? The ayes have it. The items have been approved. The next item on the agenda is unfinished business. Colleagues, do you have any unfinished business?

[01:09:34] Moving right along, the next item is new business. Colleagues, any new business? The last item on our agenda is the announcement of meeting dates. The school board's next meeting will be a work session scheduled on Thursday, June 6, 2024 at 3:00 p.m., followed by the monthly meeting at 6:30 p.m. at Newbridge Learning Center Auditorium.

[01:10:02] The meeting time may be adjusted as needed. This meeting is adjourned. Thank you.



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