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Henrico County School Board Monthly Meeting, Thursday, December 12, 2024

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[00:00:04] Good afternoon. Today is December 12, 2024. Welcome to the Henrico County School Board monthly meeting. Also, this meeting is being live streamed on the HCPS website. The first item on the agenda is the approval of the agenda. Is there a motion? I move that the school board approve the agenda for tonight's meeting. Thank you. Is there a second? Second. All in favor, say aye. Aye. Any

[00:00:37] opposed? The ayes have it. The agenda is approved. On behalf of the school board, we warmly welcome our visitors and express our sincere gratitude for your presence today. Your involvement is invaluable to the progress of our schools and the broader community. Dr. Cashwell. Thank you, Madam Chair, members of the board. Good evening and to our visitors. We're glad you're with us.

[00:01:04] Our first item is, as always, the Pledge of Allegiance, which is going to be followed by a moment of silence and then our performance highlight. So to kick us off with the Pledge of Allegiance, we have students joining us from Gaten Elementary School who are going to lead us in the pledge in just a moment. And as they make their way to the platform, they'll be joined by their principal, Dr. Kirk Eccleston, and third grade teacher, Carrie Stout, who will introduce them. And once they've been introduced, we'll begin the pledge. Thank you. Hi, everyone. Good evening. I am Carrie Stout. I am a third grade teacher at Gayton as well as the lucky person

[00:01:43] who gets to be in charge of these amazing students. I run the SCA, which is the Student Council Association, and I have Elena and Jacob here who are going to lead us in the pledge. I pledge 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. If you would

[00:02:12] remain standing as you're able for a moment of silence. That concludes our moment of silence. You may be seated. And how about a round of applause for our students from Gaten? And as they're making their way to their seats, the board and I are going to make our way down to the

[00:02:35] audience for our next item, which is a performance highlight. All right, good evening, Madam Chair,

[00:03:11] members of the board, Dr. Cashwell, colleagues, and guests. My name is Christopher Mosley. I am the Education Specialist for Performing Arts, and it is my pleasure to introduce for our performance highlight this evening, the Carver Elementary music students under the direction of Ms. Karina Jobe. These third grade students tonight, this phone is really small, will be performing two selections from Candles, the musical. They will be sharing Each of Us is a Light by Sally Albrecht and Jay Alhouse and Carriers of the Light by Jerry Estes. They wanted to share that candles

[00:03:50] are the centerpiece of many celebrations, a way to keep tradition strong throughout the generations. Holidays are different, but one thing is the same. Every candle shines a light when dotted with the flame. Tonight we have in attendance their very proud principal, Dr. Christy Butney. We ask that you help me recognize her at this time. And now please help me welcome to the stage the Carver Elementary third grade music students from Mr. Navez's class under the direction of Ms. Karina

[00:04:26] Jo. The National Supervisor of the Year Award presented by the National Association of District

[00:10:52] Supervisors for Languages recognizes an exceptional leader in world language education who exemplifies excellence in service to the profession, leadership, and advocacy. The recipient is selected based on their commitment to equitable access to high-quality language programs, innovative curriculum and instruction, effective assessment practices, and professional development for educators.

[00:11:14] This prestigious award honors a supervisor who inspires and empowers educators to create engaging and culturally relevant learning experiences that foster student achievement and global citizenship. And I can think of no more deserving leader, no one who better exemplifies these traits than our very own pre-K through 12 educational specialist for world languages, Ms. Stephanie Stockman, and I'm thrilled to be able to honor her at our meeting tonight.

[00:11:41] Stephanie, will you come up?

[00:12:15] We'll move forward with our recognition portion of our meeting,

[00:13:37] Starting with National Mentoring Health Month. Mr. Irving, would you please read the proclamation? Whereas research highlights the positive effects that mentoring can have on students' academic achievements, personal development, and social emotional well-being.

[00:14:00] And whereas mentors play a critical role in positively influencing a young person's life by offering guidance, encouragement, and a sense of belonging, believing in their abilities and potential. And whereas, having a positive, trusting relationship with a mentor can have a transformative effect, exposing mentees to new goals, ideas, and ways of thinking that shape their future success.

[00:14:25] And whereas, mentoring programs provide invaluable opportunities for young people to connect with others, explore their identities, discover their passions, and develop the skills needed to achieve their aspirations. And whereas, the investment that mentors make in the lives of young people have a profound and lasting impact, not only on the mentee, but also on the mentor, fostering growth, understanding, and connection that enriches both of their lives.

[00:14:53] And whereas, during the month of January, we honor and celebrate the selfless mentors across Henrico County who dedicate their time, care, and hearts to ensuring that students in Henrico County Public Schools receive the support of someone who will advocate for them. Now, therefore, be it proclaimed that the School Board of Henrico County Public Schools recognizes January 2025 as National Mentoring Month and recognizes the invaluable contributions of mentors across Henrico County.

[00:15:25] We encourage all to recognize and celebrate the difference mentors make in the lives of young people and the impact that mentoring relationships have in supporting and nurturing our students. recognized by the School Board of Henrico County Public Schools this 12th day of December 2024.

[00:15:43] Thank you so much, Mr. Irving. Dr. Cashwell. Thank you, Madam Chair, members of the board. The next item on our agenda is the Henrico Highlight, which is a time when we share a unique look at learning experiences and activities that are taking place across our schools.

[00:16:01] Today's highlight captures students from 15 schools using their critical thinking, communication, and collaboration skills during the annual Kiva Plank

[00:16:12] Challenge. A strong foundation appears to be key to the Kiva Plank Challenge, and strong academic

[00:20:00] foundations and positive relationships are also key to student success in the classroom. And at Tuckahoe Elementary School, the foundation in one classroom has been built over 50 years by the same teacher.

[00:20:16] In tonight's Heart of Henrico, we celebrate Len Archer, an amazing kindergarten teacher with five decades of experience. Let's take a look. Boys and girls, you have been in kindergarten for 43 days.

[00:20:35] That means you're 43 days smarter. Pat yourself on the back. My name is Len Archer. I am a kindergarten teacher at Tuckahoe Elementary School, and I have been here for 50 years in this classroom. Three claps, so what two letters? Being in this room for 50 years is so much fun.

[00:20:53] When I see like adults that I taught, they always say, are you still in room two? I'm gonna come see you. I know where to find you, you're still there. It's rare that you have a teacher that's so dedicated that decides that they wanna dedicate 50 years of their life to children and to families.

[00:21:12] While you're working, I'm going to come around, and you can tell me what... It's been wonderful. The relationships that I've made with my students, with their families, of course, with the faculty here. One of my brothers had had Miss Archer, and so I was so excited.

[00:21:28] I always wanted to be just like my brothers, and I was so excited to come to Tuckahoe, to ride the school bus with all of them, and to be in Miss Archer's class just like my brother Gordon was. I am an art teacher at Tuckahoe Elementary School. This is my 15th year here, and I was in Lynn Archer's very first kindergarten class, way back when.

[00:21:50] 35 years ago, I had Lynn. I was in the same classroom that she's in now, and we had a.m. and p.m. kindergarten, so I had her in the mornings, and it was just such a great way to start off every day. I was so excited when Catherine came to Tuckahoe.

[00:22:06] I guess Julie was already here at the time, and Becky came along. I was so excited to see them and hear about what they had done in their life from the time they were in, you know, in my class when they were five. What's wrong with you, Growl the Wolf? Can't you see them?

[00:22:21] I think my favorite thing is when you look at a child and you see the light come on and you see that twinkle in their eye and you're saying, oh my goodness, they've got it. They're so proud of themselves. They're going to do this. And luckily for us in kindergarten, we see it almost every day with at least one child.

[00:22:41] She's just a treasure here at our school, so it was really neat to come back to work at Tuckahoe. And, you know, now she's not my teacher anymore, but, you know, she teaches me things. It's really special working with somebody who is the entire foundation of why you became a teacher.

[00:23:03] It's been a great run. I hope it continues for a little longer. But I've enjoyed every minute and feel very blessed that I've been able to be here. for 50 years. And Ms. Archer is here with us. Would you please stand?

[00:23:25] If you would come up. Ms. Archer, you are a tremendous educator and your impact is felt all throughout the Tuckahoe and Henrico schools community. And it is such a pleasure to be able to highlight your story tonight. Thank you for your leadership in the classroom, for loving all those kindergartners throughout the years. You truly are the heart of Henrico. Thank you.

[00:24:03] Such an impressive story. Thank you again for sharing your evening with us, Mrs. Archer. Pretty fantastic highlight and heart of Henrico this evening.

[00:24:44] All right. The next item on our agenda is the mission statement. Mr. Young, would you please read our mission statement? Absolutely. Enrico 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 contributing citizens.

[00:25:08] Thank you, Mr. Young. We will move forward to the public forum. This is the 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 board.

[00:25:28] 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 member or each speaker come to the microphone and clearly state your name and school affiliation if applicable and the subject of your remarks before speaking.

[00:25:47] After stating your name, please place the number you are given in the cart near the podium. Speakers must present their remarks to the school board and not to the audience, and may provide copies of their comments to the school board clerk.

[00:26:05] The use of obscenity or defamation is strictly prohibited and will be ruled out of order. To assist you in tracking 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.

[00:26:27] The school board is here today to hear from you. 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.

[00:26:48] Those comments are shared with the school board prior to the meeting and posted in board paradox, 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. Your presence, expertise, concerns, acknowledgement of progress and engagement enhances our understanding of our community's diverse perspectives. Thank you

[00:27:22] once again. Speaker number one. Good evening, board members. Dr. Cashrow. My name is Shevin Young. I am the proud father of two daughters that attend Henrico County Public Schools.

[00:27:39] I want to address to you tonight an issue I have with school safety. Before I start my comments, I would like to start by saying or preface my comments by saying, if anything I say, my tone, my inflection comes across accusatory or insulting, please allow me grace. I do not mean that.

[00:27:58] this is a topic that's very passionate to me i have a tremendous amount of respect and love for all that you do i think you guys do a tremendous job throughout the county i know most of what you do is thankless but i do thank you for it um i have a daughter that attends varina high school i will start by saying varina high school is not a safe school it is not a safe school the school is not safe because of the wonderful students that attend there it's not safe because of the wonderful instructors that we have there it's simply not safe because of the design and layout of the school. Verona High School is an open campus. An open campus, somewhere in our history

[00:28:37] of school construction, was the it thing. It's not it anymore. This open campus allows anybody at any time to access the school. Somebody can cause havoc, vandalism, or mass destruction. It's only been by the grace of higher power that something has not happened yet. The parking lot is small, cramped. There's cars lined up and down messier road in the morning trying to get in.

[00:29:00] School buses can't enter because of the narrowness of the passageway. Again, it is not safe. My daughter entered the school at the age of 13. When she received her schedule and saw her classrooms, I literally walked the campus with her to show her kind of safe passage to the school, mainly on the interior of the school.

[00:29:19] I had to instruct my daughter how she leaves the schools to leave in groups of three or more. The reason I had to do this is to keep her safe, to make her less of a target for somebody. This is not a good feeling. This should not have to happen. At this point, we need a new school at Verona High School.

[00:29:35] This has been going on for years now. We've heard the comments about overcapacity or not being at capacity. That is a tool of deflection and a trope now. Overcapacity or not at capacity should not take precedence of my child or any child of Verona High School life. We need a new high school for Verona High School students.

[00:29:53] We need a safe and nurturing environment for our students. So, Ms. Atkins, I do not put this burden or this task at your feet alone. I ask every member of the board to please work together to get this done. this can be done you can do it our child safety is at your it's at your beckon so please hear us out listen and get us a new school thank you thank you speaker number two good evening chair vice

[00:30:29] chair and members of the school board my name is mackenzie nelson and i'm a current senior at henrico high school i stand before you today not only as a student but as a representative of many concerned peers who have deeply been affected by the recent stabbing incident at our school.

[00:30:45] The emotional and psychological toll this incident has taken on our school community cannot be overstated. I believe it is a turning point and a call to action for all of us. First and foremost, I want to express the collective concern of the student body regarding our safety.

[00:31:02] This incident has brought to light the undeniable reality that the current safety measures at our school are not sufficient while we understand that our schools administrations work hard to protect us the truth is we need stronger more effective safeguards in place to ensure we feel safe every single day our safety should always be our top priority and we believe that the immediate change must be made one area that demands attention is the use of cell phones on campus while cell phones are important for communication they can escalate conflicts and and fuel dangerous situations.

[00:31:37] We urge the board to consider stronger policies regarding phone usage with clear and severe consequences for misuse. Implementing these measures would be an important step towards creating a safer environment for all students. A critical issue that needs urgent attention is a lack of sufficient supervision and security on our outdoor campus.

[00:31:59] This gap in security has contributed to an environment where students don't feel fully safe. I strongly urge the board to consider increasing security and supervision, particularly during lunch breaks. Given the open nature of our campus, we believe that more visible security along the walkways and in other common areas would help address safety concerns.

[00:32:21] Enhanced security in these areas will also serve as a deterrent preventing similar incidents from occurring in the future. In response to this, a group of students have already begun to work with our school support and wellness directors to create a student-led efficient resolutions program.

[00:32:38] This initiative will offer monthly lessons that focus on managing anger, resolving disputes peacefully, and building emotional resilience. We also hope to partner with local mental health organizations to ensure we have the necessary resources to support our peers.

[00:32:54] However, these efforts can only succeed if we have the full support of administration and local authorities. Additionally, the emotional impact of this incident cannot be ignored. The trauma caused by such an event requires time and space to heal. We believe that the remainder of the following week of the incident should have been used for students to process the situations and begin their emotional recovery.

[00:33:18] It is essential that we as a community prioritize mental health and well-being, as this plays a crucial role in our ability to recover and move forward. This isn't just about raising concerns, it's about a call for action. We need real, tangible changes to ensure our safety and well-being.

[00:33:34] We want our school to be a place where we feel protected, respected, and valued, not only in terms of the academic environment, but in terms of our emotional and physical security as well. I respectfully ask for your support and collaboration in creating a safer, more supportive school environment for all Henrico County students.

[00:33:54] I would also like to thank Ms. Castillo-Rose for her sensitivity. - I also wanna just make you aware that your time has run out. Please sum it up in the next second. Okay. I would also like to thank Ms.

Castillo-Rose for her sensitivity and continue to bring support throughout my high school career.

[00:34:12] Thank you for your time and attention. I look forward to working with you to implement these meaningful changes. Also, if you have that written out, you're more than welcome to give it to our school board clerks so that it can be distributed to each school board member. Speaker, speaker number three.

[00:34:36] Can you hold on one second? Oh, I'm sorry. Hold on one moment. All right, please proceed. Good evening, Henrico School Board. My name is Logan Corey, and I'm a freshman at Henrico High School and attend the Center for the Arts.

[00:34:57] I've had several unpleasant situations in my school life, but nothing prepared me for what happened on December 4th. Unfortunately, this was not the first school stabbing that happened at a school that I attend. When I was in seventh grade, there was a stabbing at Brooklyn Middle School, and I was shocked that something like that was happening.

[00:35:17] I remember transitioning to my next class and hearing on the intercom, we are now going into a lock-in teach. This is not a drill. The words, this is not a drill, have me in a panic. But luckily, we have practiced what to do during a lockdown. I hate that we have to prepare ourselves for something like this, but I'm glad I knew what to do.

[00:35:39] I've observed at the weapon scanners, security doesn't check bags that are flagged red and often ignore them. I've also seen fellow students skip through the scanners without consequences. So I ask, what more rules should be put in place to make sure violence like this won't ever happen again, especially in our county?

[00:36:03] And what use are the rules when people just choose to ignore them? Rules already say, and the Code of Conduct, that parents and students sign annually that we can't bring any form of weapon to school. So how can a stabbing even occur if any form of weapon is banned?

[00:36:19] There's obviously a lack of willingness on this part of school administrators to treat rule-breaking seriously and enforce the fullest consequences available because they're scared it will reflect badly on the school. Good law-abiding members of the school community deserve and demand to have their safety prioritized over not hurting the feelings of the criminal element.

[00:36:42] By the time we're a middle and high school, we know the difference between right and wrong. Those choosing wrong need serious and real-world consequences. School is a place where you are supposed to feel safe, not being scared or wondering if you will return back home. If my classmates and I are feeling this way as teens, just think how our parents feel.

[00:37:03] And this is what a student said upon what happened. I feel as if this situation could have been prevented by quicker action from the school. They've stopped many fights before they escalated to even hitting each other. Why is this one any different?

[00:37:21] Parents send us off in good faith that nothing would happen while their child attends school. As we all try to decompress as a school and a county, I hope nothing like this will happen ever again. Thank you. - Thank you.

[00:37:39] All right, speaker number four. Speaker number four. Speaker number five.

[00:37:57] - Good evening. My name is Ixani Burnett, and I am another student who attends Henrico High School, along with Mackenzie Nelson, and I am a senior for the Center of the Arts. I wanted to make aware

of the safety at Henrico High School and how much it impacts the student body currently and in the future.

[00:38:15] I am sure you all are aware of the situation that occurred December 4th, 2024, and how that situation affected us physically and emotionally. When this event occurred, it brought to my attention how inhumane the situation was, and it was being broadcasted on social media platforms such as Instagram and Twitter, with his unconscious body laying out on the ground bleeding out while getting medical attention.

[00:38:40] I believe, as a student, there should be an enforced consequence for the exploitation of that student. During the following days, Thursday and Friday, I experienced a sense of unnatural silence within the school. I believe during those days, we should have had time off for students and staff.

[00:38:59] And for those who rely on school lunch, we'll still have the opportunity to still be offered lunch as well as grief counselors. One last thing I wanted to mention was seeing the aftermath of it all. the poorly cleaned up crime scene and still seeing the dried up blood on the pavement and on the door.

[00:39:16] As I saw this, it spoke something to me. We are not safe, and as students and staff, we need something more effective with a sense of strong community. I am afraid that if we do not come up with something, we will have more victims with similar stories.

[00:39:32] McKenzie and I, as Henrico High School student bodies, we are asking for effective solutions. Thank you for giving us the opportunity voice my concerns we are hoping to move forward together as warriors thank you speaker speaker

[00:39:52] number six i need to speak to the clerk please sure hey my name is cheryl wilson first of all

[00:40:46] i want to take my head off to these children to the right because um ryan young is my child's representative um but in those documents you all have our decision letter from the hearing officer stating that parent and child are the prevailing party. The second document up under there is where Tiffany Young and Murray Hart falsified the implementation plan to make it as a split decision. Thirdly, behind that is also a letter from Hank Balsworth from the Legal Aid Society

[00:41:19] talking about the three-tier retaliation that Henrico High School, Henrico County does to our children. It was a sad day, December the 4th, because I've been fighting for my grandson for two years. And I would never place my grandson back into a situation or in a place to where you have principals that doesn't read IEPs. And then he's criminalized for his disability. That's something I would never do as a parent. Now I've watched for the last two years, I've given this

[00:41:57] school district every means of support to try to comply and do the right thing with Jaquaz. 2025, it's going to be a different ballgame because I see now our children are at risk. And it's deeper than me standing here saying, oh, I'm looking forward to you all helping us.

[00:42:17] That's not going to happen. In the next few years, I'll be running for one of your jobs to make sure that this doesn't happen in the school district. I was working corporate security for Delta Airlines for over 16 years. It's nothing you can do with the open campus.

[00:42:35] There's no kind of protection you could do for open campus because they can throw pipe bombs, anything, land, anywhere. I've done this job for years. So with that said, I'm going to continue to pray for the Fairfield District children at Enrico High School because I know what goes on inside the walls.

[00:42:55] And I would take it that you all start walking some of these halls yourselves. Start greeting some of these children Because with a day like they had on December the 4th, there's no way they should have went to school on the 5th or the 6th. They should have had time to heal mentally, physically, and emotionally.

[00:43:13] And I'm praying with that \$266 million that you get for mental health, that you apply to some of these children that don't need to be in your school, that does have mental health issues, that needs to be in a facility instead of forcing them back into your school system, knowing that you don't have the services to support them.

[00:43:33] Thank you. Speaker number seven. Speaker number seven. All right, this concludes our public forum section. The next item on the agenda are consent items. Dr. Cashwell.

[00:44:08] Thank you, Madam Chair. As you can see, these items are listed in a block and they can be taken that way unless board members have questions about any specific items. Colleagues, do you have any questions remarks or feedback regarding the consent items hearing none is there a motion i move that the school board accept adopt approve and or award items 9.01 through 9.16 on the consent agenda as presented is there a second second thank you all in favor say aye aye any opposed

[00:44:45] the eyes have it the consent items have been approved next is unfinished business colleagues do you have any unfinished business to present today moving right along to new business colleagues do you have any new business that you would like to present on today all right the last item on the agenda is the announcement of meeting dates the school board's next meeting will be a work

[00:45:16] session scheduled on thursday january 9th 2025 at 3 p.m at newbridge learning center auditorium the meeting times may be adjusted as needed this meeting is adjourned



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