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Henrico County School Board Monthly Meeting, Thursday, February 27, 2025

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[00:00:03] Good evening and thank you so much for joining us this evening for our February monthly meeting of the Henrico County School Board here at New Bridge Auditorium. And this meeting is also being streamed live on the Henrico County Public Schools webpage.

[00:00:21] The first item on our agenda is the approval of the agenda. Colleagues, do I have a motion? I move the school board approve the agenda for this evening's meeting. Thank you, Ms. Kinsella. Do I have a second? Second. Seconded by Mr. Irving. All those in favor say aye. Aye. Any opposed? The ayes have it. The agenda has been approved. Dr. Cashwell? Thank you, Chair Shea, members of the board, and to those who have joined us this evening, we're glad you're here. We're going to begin our meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance, which will be led by students from Holiday Elementary School, and their principal,

[00:00:56] Brooke Givens, will come forth to the podium to introduce the students who are going to be leading the Pledge of Allegiance first in English and then in Spanish. You may know that Holiday Elementary is home to our dual language immersion program. So if you would, we'll have the students introduced and then we'll stand for the pledge. So your introductions. All right. Thank you all for having us. I am pleased to announce our representatives from Holiday. We have Gabriada Avent, Deviante Safe-Right Jr., Jessica Fajardo, Valesca Tezat-Achola, and Hessler Perez-Escalante.

[00:01:36] Welcome, students. And if you would please stand for the Pledge of Allegiance.

[00:01:51] Pledge of Allegiance, States of America, and to the liberty and justice for all. All right. Now, if you know the pledge in Spanish, you may join along.

[00:02:09] Otherwise, students, go ahead and recite it for us in Spanish.

[00:02:29] about a round of applause. Thank you to our students. And if you would please remain standing as you're able for a brief moment of silence. And that concludes our moment of silence. You may be seated. Thank you again to our students from Holiday Elementary. And now the board and I are going to make our way to the audience as we are proud to welcome students from Hermitage High

[00:02:59] School who will be performing for us this evening. Hola, Madam Chair, members of the board, Dr.

[00:03:25] 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 Hermitage High School course under the direction of Ms. Kristen Melzer.

[00:03:42] Ms. Melzer is in her fifth year of teaching and her fourth year at Hermitage High School. She serves as the Performing Arts Department Chair. The students will perform two selections, Do Not Stand at My Grave and Weep, by Laura Farnell, with a flute soloist by Sophie Curtis, and a traditional hymn arrangement of Lift Every Voice and Sing.

[00:04:07] Tonight we have in attendance their proud principal, Dr. Michael Jackson. We ask that you stand to be recognized. All right, and now please help me welcome to our stage

[00:04:20] the Hermitage High School Chorus.

[00:10:40] - Good evening, Madam Chair, members of the board, Dr. Cashwell, colleagues, and guests. As we know, February is CTE month, And this year, as always, we have a lot to celebrate our students. It's only fitting that as part of the CTE month, we celebrate the Ray Tate Award, because this truly is the pinnacle of what it means to serve, have a community member serve our students.

[00:11:09] I would like to point out one statistic as we talk about celebration. I'm gonna give you a number, 99.94%. That is our CTE four-year completion rate. Now that's a lot to be proud of.

[00:11:28] This, the Ray Tate Memorial Award is given each year to a community member who has gone above and beyond to not only serve our students, but also promote career and technical education and support in Ricoh County Public Schools.

[00:11:44] You know, I had the privilege of working with Mr. Tate years ago. He was our CTE Advisory Board Chairman. he was on the health board and he was also the state cte chairman for the state cte advisory council he was always an advocate for students making sure that they had what they needed and were prepared to enter the workforce he was never bashful when it came to speaking up about promoting cte but his he always expected dedication and commitment of the individuals that were responsible for getting that work done to serve our kids.

[00:12:22] I know if he were here right now, he would be praising the work that Henrico County Public Schools has done to continue this legacy and the great work that's happened over the past several years. But he would leave us with one thing. He said, "Okay, don't stop now, keep climbing that ladder."

[00:12:40] Because he always believed we could do it better. And for this and many other reasons, we consider the Ray Tate Memorial Award the highest honor that we can offer in the Workforce and Career Development Department that we can offer.

[00:12:57] At this point in time, I'd like to ask Mr. Chad Blalock from Hobbs & Associates to come forward as I share a little bit of information about him. I'm gonna hand this to you and you can stand right now. - Thank you.

[00:13:16] - Chad has been a friend of ours for a long time, but last summer, Chad and I were meeting together and we were talking about our HVAC program, and we were struggling to find an instructor. And so he immediately jumped into the help mode, which is what Ray Tate would have done.

[00:13:33] He started calling individuals, trying to find companies that would donate equipment, donate people, donate time. And at the end, he got so involved, he donated himself to us every day pretty much, all year long, and has been there working with their kids.

[00:13:50] Most recently, and this is the accomplishments, When we were at a career rodeo, in two hours' time, if you ever had any HVAC work done, students have, they were in a two-hour time period, changed out a compressor on an air-conditioned unit, not once, but twice.

[00:14:08] So that's the kind of kid you want working, but it's because of what he's been able to teach that. Chad's been a part of what we do by donating equipment, helping with events like our Life Ready Expo or career rodeo, and it's been at every one letter of intent signing day, he is always willing to do whatever. This, and for many other reasons, it is my honor to recognize Chad Blalock as this year's winner of the Ray Tate Memorial Award.

[00:14:42] Good evening, Chair Shea, members of the board, and Dr. Cashwell. It is my pleasure to be here this evening to share that Henrico County Public Schools has been honored with the 2025 Innovative Technology Integration Award by the Center for Digital Education and the National School

[00:15:16] Awards Association. This prestigious recognition highlights HCPS's commitment to harnessing technology to enhance learning, empower educators, and ensure equitable access to digital resources for all students. As a part of this award, HCPS was recognized for its 23-year legacy of technology integration, its pioneering use of AI and data-driven strategies, and its dedication to leveraging digital tools for personalized, future-ready learning experiences.

[00:15:51] The Departments of Innovation and Technology play a pivotal role in developing and supporting transformative educational practices that continue to set HCPS apart. Under the leadership of our Director of Innovation, Courtney Mustaine, the Innovation Department leads efforts to integrate cutting-edge instructional technologies, promote deeper learning through digital tools and align technology use with the Henrico learner profile under the direction of our director of technology brian maddox the technology department provides robust infrastructure

[00:16:27] cyber security advancements and equitable access to digital resources across all henrico schools hcps remains committed to enhancing student learning through intentional technology integration ensuring that every henrico learner is prepared for future success and joining us this evening are members of both departments, although not everyone could be here.

[00:16:49] I want to especially thank the members who were able to come and thank you so much for your

[00:16:53] dedication and your work to earn this prestigious award. Great, thank you so much. Congratulations

[00:17:37] to all of our award winners and thank you for our students who led us in music and the pledge. We're going to move now on to some recognitions. Mr. Irving, we'll start with you. Thank you, Cherche. This is a proclamation for National Nutrition Month. Whereas food is the substance by which life is sustained, and whereas the type, quality, and amount of food that individuals consume each day plays a vital role in their overall health and physical fitness, and whereas

[00:18:12] there is the need for continuing nutrition education in a wide-scale effort to enhance healthy eating practices, now therefore be it proclaimed that the Henrico County School Board, The School Board of Henrico County Public Schools recognizes March 2025 as National Nutrition Month, recognized by the School Board of Henrico County Public Schools this 27th day of February 2025.

[00:18:39] Thank you so much, Mr. Irby. Ms. Kinsella? Thank you, Chair Shea. Youth Art Month, whereas art education provides significant educational benefits to all students, And whereas art education develops students' creative potential and improves problem-solving and critical thinking skills.

[00:19:00] And whereas art education sparks sensitivity to beauty, order, and other expressive qualities and also gives students a deeper understanding of multicultural values and beliefs. And whereas the residents of Virginia have joined state and national art associations in supporting the students and teachers of our community many of whom are artists themselves now therefore let it be proclaimed that the school board of henrico county public schools recognize march 2025 as youth art month recognized by the school board of henrico

[00:19:35] county public schools this 27th day of february 2025. thank you ms kinsella mr young music in our schools month whereas music education is part of a well-rounded learning experience for every student and help shape the way they understand themselves and the world around them.

[00:19:53] And whereas, the National Association of Music Merchants Foundation has named Henrico County Public Schools a national leader in music education for 25 consecutive years. And whereas, National Music in Our School Month is an opportunity to celebrate the many ways our students access and engage with music in our schools. Now, therefore, we proclaim that the The School Board of Henrico County Public Schools recognized March 2025 as Music and Our Schools Month, recognized by the School Board of Henrico County Public Schools this 27th date of February 2025.

[00:20:27] Thank you so much, Mr. Young, and we'll come back to Ms. Kinsella. Women's History Month. Whereas women around the world have made historic contributions to the growth and strength of nations and communities in countless ways, And, whereas, American women of every race, class, and ethnic background served as early leaders in the forefront of every major progressive social change movement in the United States.

[00:20:55] And, whereas, women continue to excel as business leaders, politicians, civil servants, members of the military, and heads of other career, community, and family organizations. And whereas women, including Pocahontas, Marie Curie, Rosa Parks, Florence Nightingale, and Sandra Day O'Connor were trailblazers who made significant contributions to history and to our world.

[00:21:23] And whereas Henrico County Public Schools and the Henrico community are home to outstanding female role models who continue to shape and make history in their own right. Now, therefore, let it be proclaimed that the school board of Henrico County Public Schools recognize March 2025 as Women's History Month and encourage our citizens to celebrate the strong women who strengthen our families, schools, and our community at large, recognized by the school board of Henrico County Public Schools this 27th day of February 2025. Chair Shea. Thank you so

[00:22:01] much, Ms. Kinsella. Dr. Cashwell. Thank you, Madam Chair, members of the board. The next item on our agenda are the Henrico highlights, and this is our time to showcase the innovative teaching and learning happening in our schools. This month, students from Harvey and Ward Elementary Schools are diving into their learning, trying to catch a shark during Henrico School's version of the hit TV show, Shark Tank. We partnered up to have our students showcase some of their learning for our shark tank event. I feel like we had a good pitch but it took us a while to figure our prototype. We had like this skit in the beginning that gave them a

[00:22:41] little story to start with. It was well-received. Everybody laughed when they were supposed to. You're in front of like a big crowd so it's kind of nerve-wracking you know. We did end up getting a deal. They really again took it head-on and did a great job. Shark Tank is a popular TV show that the kids are familiar with and so we designed an opportunity for them to get together in teams, come up with an innovative product that solves a problem, pitch it to sharks. A lot of different people come and support us the first year and it was like how do we make this bigger and we reached across the county line so our

[00:23:18] partners at Ward. Our students were tasked with coming up with a product that solves a problem, coming up with a presentation and a pitch and we went to the Hermitage Center a few weeks ago in order for our students to present. We We gave them the baseline requirements and they completely took off with it and exceeded our expectations on the creativity.

[00:23:48] Me and my team made a puzzle slash book. We did a skin care that helped with acne, eczema, and hives. Our project was called Cubby Keepers. Ours was the energy shoes. Me and my friends decided to make a sauce called medium sauce.

[00:24:05] It will be the perfect sauce for anyone to eat, anyone to use for their dippings, anyone to use it with their fries or whatever they want to use it for. The kids got it almost immediately. Like, we gave them the materials, we gave them what they needed to do, we presented the problem, showed them some examples of Shark Tank presentations, and they took it and they ran with it.

[00:24:28] I am very impressed with your idea. I think you guys are on to something. With that being said, I'm going to come right out of the gate, I'm going to give you the full 15%. I think adults tend to overthink and overanalyze and say, "Well, that's not really feasible." Kids don't have those limitations. They just run wild with their creativity and yeah, no limits for them.

[00:24:49] We made expandable shoes. We're axing \$4,000 for four years for our company. We thought like so many shoes are like way too expensive and like you grow out of them way too fast. This is our prototype. So we thought if we made shoes that could extend so that you would grow out of them less quick, it would be better for people that were low on money.

[00:25:12] I was in the group Cubby Keepers. Basically, it was drawers and shelves that you could fit inside of a cubby or locker. It cost \$80 to make one product. So we got to go up on this big stage, and it had this

screen behind us with our slide presentation.

[00:25:31] I did have a point in the slideshow where I had a speaking part. So everybody had a role because we wanted it to be kind of spread out evenly. So Sharks, who wants to invent? We made a water bottle that was double layered so it wouldn't fall and break easily.

[00:25:48] It was also color changeable. Our high quality water bottles, not only for cold drinks but also warm drinks. Poor Billy the Bubble Boy! Every good business has a mascot and then we just made Billy the Bubble Boy. - My project was energy shoes.

[00:26:06] - I was the kind of the main person with all the skits, all the jokes. - I kinda dealt with the finances of everything. - Our team ended up going second. When I realized we were second, I got kinda scared and freaked out, but when I got on stage, it wasn't so bad.

[00:26:25] - That's where energy shoes come in. - It's hard to explain, like, I got this. - Do we have a deal? and just the imagination that they have. Like, these projects are top-notch.

[00:26:42] I really wish that we could look into investing in them, for real. - We make the shoes that grow for you. Each pair of coats can expand up to five shoes. - There was another people doing something with shoes. They're called energy shoes, I'm pretty sure.

[00:26:57] - I'm curious to see if what you have as your insole would be able to expand. - They had an idea, maybe the expandable shoes and energy shoes could work together. - We might be a good company if we put the soles, the shoes, the heatness and cramps and stuff inside the sole of the stretchy shoes.

[00:27:25] - Well, those students are amazing and I would definitely buy a pair of those shoes. So many of the skills and abilities spelled out in our Henrico Lerner profile were on display during the recent Shark Tank event. Students thought critically and creatively they demonstrated their communication skills and collaborated on fun and informative projects.

[00:27:47] Not surprisingly, all of the Sharks were impressed with the students' work and their ideas. We are celebrating the incredible work of some of our dedicated employees for this month's Heart of Henrico. As you know, we have had more than our share of snow days recently, but thanks to our school-based and Central Facilities team members, we have been able to reopen schools smoothly they are the men and women who are cleaning our sidewalks parking lots and getting school campuses ready for students after each winter storm let's see them in action

[00:28:24] our hcps facilities team members their work is essential to keeping our schools open

[00:30:17] and susan moore director of facilities is here this evening to accept a small token of our appreciation susan the facilities team has truly been the heart of henrico during these endless winter weeks please pass on our heartfelt thanks and appreciation for all that they do please join me in a round of applause madam chair and members of the board that completes our henrico highlights

[00:30:51] for this evening thank you so much superintendent the next item on our agenda is the reading of the of the Henrico County Public Schools Mission Statement. Mr. Irving? - 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 contributing citizens.

[00:31:18] - Thank you so much. The next item on the agenda is public forum. This is a time where citizens are invited to address the school board on any matter of concern about the school division. Citizens must have signed up in advance will be given three minutes to address the school board. Excuse me. 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 up to the microphone and clearly state your name and school of affiliation, if applicable, and the subject of your remarks. After stating your name, please place the number you were

[00:31:55] given in the card next to 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.

[00:32:10] To assist you in tracking your time, there's a timekeeping system displaying the elapsed time on the screen. Speakers will also receive a notice from me when the time is expired. The school board is here to hear from you. We will not be responding to speakers, concerns, or questions during the public forum. However, a RICO staff member will follow up with speakers. Stakeholders have also had the opportunity to provide written comments through an online forum in advance of the meeting. Those comments are shared with the school board members prior to the meeting and posted publicly in board docs. Equal consideration and attention will be

[00:32:50] given to both the written and in-person comments. We appreciate your attendance here this evening. and for providing your input speaker one the mic is yours is speaker one here speaker two speaker two speaker three speaker three the mic is yours wait wait one moment i would like we need

[00:33:29] to make sure your mic is on so that we can all appreciate your comments give us just one second we'll reset the time all right guess one second to get the timer all situated as well we appreciate

[00:33:56] your patience. Okay, speaker number three. Hello, my name is Justin Fitzgerald. I am a former HCPS alumni, also a recently resigned HCPS teacher at Verona High School. Today, I wanted to speak about the necessity of improving safety and support for students and staff in our schools. First point is students having the appropriate support to reduce the likelihood of violent and aggressive behaviors,

[00:34:35] especially those with the history of behaviors pertaining to IEP and BIP plans second point being is there are absolutely no policies or measures of protection in place for staff against violent and aggressive behaviors from students thirdly there's and due to those situations there's a decline the poor and declining working on working conditions which are resulting in annual high teacher turnover rate and lack of substitutes in the building with teachers, administrators, and students all feeling the ramifications for those situations.

[00:35:14] Next point being the agreement between HCPS and CPS, being Child Protective Services, that says that anybody can file a false accusation or any type of accusation and that teacher will be suspended pending the investigation which leaves about 30 to 90 days where these students in the classroom may have a sub maybe not sometimes and if that is the agreement i personally don't understand why we don't have a supporting policy which would then hire a board sub so we can give

[00:35:50] our students some consistency in the duration of whatever this investigation time frame is going to be. So just really just wanted to sum all of that up. Like we said, like you just put on the board, some of the stuff couldn't be done without the staff. I think that we need to make it a priority to support

our staff of all kinds a whole lot better because at the end of the day, our kids and our communities are suffering the consequences at a very high rate. I think we all

[00:36:24] could agree that school climate is declining each year, day by day. And if we don't take it serious, we'll continue to lose teachers, we'll continue to under support and make sure that our kids are safe as well as the staff. We're going to throw more on administrators back and it's going to make it a lot more challenging for our community to thrive and grow with the potential that we have because too many things are being swept under the rug. I just recently left a situation where I was assaulted, went to court, and the case is pretty much being thrown out and nothing is likely going to be done how many more times are we going to just sit and watch this happen and watch our kids

[00:37:03] and our staff just be um less than what we're capable of until we do something i look forward to speaking with you somebody hopefully soon to address this matter thank you thank you for your comments sir speaker number four hi i'm aaron nielsen i'm the mother of a fourth grade boy at Jackson Davis Elementary who is behind and a sixth grade daughter at Tuckahoe

[00:37:39] Middle School and the IB program. I want to talk to you guys about what we need to do about the asynchronous remote learning that was neither learning nor engaging as it was promoted a few weeks ago. Tonight I picked up my daughter and actually I had a different thing to talk to you about and I was gonna bring her here and I planned on bring her here at the last minute she said mom I want to stay and help out and get my volunteer hours tonight and have the opportunity to do that. It was on a tight schedule. I had exactly enough time to get from work to go pick her up for after school, and I decided, what do I do? The selfish thing would have been to drag her

[00:38:17] out of martial arts and bring her hair, because that would make me on time. I was a few minutes late. So I had a choice. What do I do? It's the last minute. She has thrown this on my lap. How am I to respond to this? So I ran over to Dunkin' Donuts. Thank goodness they are open until seven o'clock at night. I grabbed her dinner and I let her stay and I have a mom friend there who might have to bring her home if this runs over. So what are we going to do? I think the learning is not engaging and it was definitely difficult for parents and teachers but we don't have to say

[00:38:52] like let's rely on antidotal evidence. The SLL scores, I pulled them for Jackson Davis and I pulled them and mapped them out the other night for Tuckahoe as well. They're down 15 to 20 percent from pre-COVID numbers across the board. Past advanced rates are down 50%.

[00:39:09] And if you look at middle school math, it's down 50% for the kids who are not in the advanced classes. The advanced classes have fallen as well. And it was okay at the beginning and they're falling worse and worse. Washington Post had a great article about it.

[00:39:25] Our children are falling behind and our SOL scores are showing. We sent our kids home for well over a year and they didn't perform and they are suffering. So to put them home for two days and just expect them to learn, we know it's not true.

[00:39:40] COVID showed us it was not true. So what am I asking you to do? I'm asking you to pull back April 21st and put our children in school and to put them first. The moment we had them and the moment they walked into our lives, they became more important than us.

[00:39:58] They will always be more important than us. Their children will be more important than them. We have a choice to make. to show them what we do as a community in rare times. It's the South. We're not

going to have this happen again for another 10 or 15 years.

[00:40:15] But we are a community that needs to pull together and show them that we are going to put them first. We have choices to make. As J.K. Rowling said, we will be judged by our choices and not by our abilities. I'm asking you to put them first.

[00:40:31] Thank you so much. Speaker number five. Good evening. My name is Laura Schreffler-Howell. I'm a parent of elementary school education students.

[00:40:50] Our nation's children are further behind than ever. Virginia is ranked last in the United States for math recovery from 2019. Henrico County students are further behind than ever. They are performing poorly on pass rates on a majority of subjects with a significant decline since 2018.

[00:41:10] We are falling behind neighboring counties who pass at notably higher rates. Henrico County is coming in under history in social sciences, math, reading, science, and writing at 50 to 70%. Hanover and Goochland counties are coming in at 75 to 89%.

[00:41:29] These statistics speak for themselves. I was happy when you moved from remote learning to increased time and added days, because frankly, I was shocked at the myopic, original decision that Henrico County had made to first defer to remote learning should any more school closures occur, especially after the pandemic where we learned that remote learning is not effective.

[00:41:50] for it has quite a disparity in demographics that it can successfully educate. It leaves out families with preschool, elementary, middle school children, families whose parents work multiple jobs, whose parents work outside of the home, families with no local family, low-income families, families who are English as a second language, families with special needs children, and most certainly families whose parents are actually teachers.

[00:42:19] If you're going to select an alternative option for education, first proved to me that it works. Your current decisions are not a solution for working parents, but I should not be surprised as the trend is to completely ignore the fact that most households have two working parents. Moreover, not everyone works from home.

[00:42:36] When schools close, it leaves working parents in an incredible lurch, having to scramble to find childcare. As school closures continued into the new year, I was pleased to see the first logical choice be made that we would eliminate a scheduled half day, but that is one day and not the multiple days that school has missed.

[00:42:55] A 20-minute extension is better than remote learning, but it is not enough. The only choice should be eliminate remaining half days, wellness, clerical days, or extend the school year. I realize that some weather, unexpected disasters arise and schools must close. It is far too often and an abundance of caution.

[00:43:13] As health care workers who actually have to go to work, no matter the weather or the state of the world, I am all too familiar with the fact that school systems ignore this fact. It seems the decisions are based on fear of litigation or disapproval. I grew up in a small town and I believe in community.

[00:43:32] A community in which it's everyone's responsibility to care for one another. Education is the partnership between parents and the school system. When my kids are at home, I support the educational

efforts. When they are at school, you are driving education. - Thank you so much. Appreciate it. - I have one more sentence, if I can, please finish.

[00:43:50] When your loved ones are ill, I provide care for them at the hospital while you care for them at home. - Thank you. - When there is a pandemic-- - Can you share the rest of your, we're happy if you would like to share with the clerk, We're happy to read the remainder of your comments. Please do better. Our students deserve it. Thank you. Speaker number six.

[00:44:13] Good evening, Dr. Cashwell, board members, colleagues, and community members. My name is Lauren Galloway. I reside in the Three Chop District and teach in the Tuckahoe District. I submitted comments to the work session two weeks ago about teacher voice, virtual learning, and communication.

[00:44:33] I was pleased to see my comments recognized in the Henrico Citizen Education article, along with many other thoughts from my fellow teachers. It cemented the idea for me that teachers are on the same page. For the record, no one from the school board has reached out to me to answer my questions or discuss concerns posed in my letter from before. My principal has no update for me.

[00:44:55] My TAC representative has no update. Once again, I stand at the edge of the void. Reading my peers' comments in the Henrico Citizen article has emboldened me, and I have decided to take action. It was disheartening to read that due to low participation in a survey sent in July of last year, there is not enough teacher support for collective bargaining.

[00:45:17] The survey was sent through the clipboard and not given any extra attention than a typical news and updates that are regularly shared there. The survey was sent during a time when most teachers do not check email, news, or updates from the county as we try to reclaim our time and boundaries from the previous school year.

[00:45:36] The survey also did not give an indication that one of its purposes was to gauge teacher interest in collective bargaining. To quickly summarize, the survey was sent at a time when most teachers would not see it, given no extra emphasis than a typical update, and its true purpose not shared.

[00:45:53] Does this seem off to anyone else? I understand that the board wanted to gather this information before the fall, and even before the school year started. That is a commendable intention. What is not commendable is the way it was done and then subsequent data used to make decisions that affect teachers and staff.

[00:46:11] The night the article was published, I couldn't keep up with the texts for myself and my teammates. Texts like, what is collective bargaining? What does that mean? What would collective bargaining do? I myself did not truly understand what it meant either. After reading the article and doing some quick research, I realized it's exactly what we are all talking about.

[00:46:31] Teacher voice. I immediately signed up to be a member of the Henrico Education Association, signed my CB card, and emailed HEA to find out the date of the next meeting and how to become more involved. I am committed to making sure my peers understand what collective bargaining is and what is at stake, teacher voice.

[00:46:52] I hope you can see that teachers do want a seat at the table and we will advocate for ourselves. I look forward to what we can achieve together and making our voices heard. Thank you for your time and I will see you in a few weeks. - Thank you so much.

[00:47:09] Speaker number seven. - Good evening. My name is Bara Al-Khifaji. I am a senior at J.R. Tucker High School and I'm a part of the Advanced College Academy and live in the Three Chop District.

[00:47:31] The most particular reason for the school overcrowding is the lack of attention for the zone students. Tucker houses three very rigorous specialty center programs, Advanced College Academy, International Baccalaureate, and the Spanish Immersion. Throughout the four years I have attended, we understand that we have previously had an issue with accreditation due to lack of attendance and passing grades.

[00:47:53] This issue was trying to be solved by admitting more specialty center students in an attempt to leverage the performance. However, as a specialty center student, my classmates and I can vouch that this overcrowding and reliance on our performance is negatively impacting us as well as the rest of the school.

[00:48:10] The phone policy, for example, is not being properly implemented in zoned classrooms. I have experienced this firsthand and have spoken to students who are solely in non-specialty center classes. These classrooms do not properly collect the student's cell phones compared to ACA classrooms, which properly follow the cell phone policy.

[00:48:27] This leads to more disturbances and issues throughout the school. These classrooms, in these classrooms, the instructors do not begin by asking the students for their phones to be placed in boxes. This is causing behavioral issues and not allowing for proper instruction time.

[00:48:44] Tucker's overcrowding is due to inconsideration for zone students and the reliance and the reliance on the specialty centers. This leads to issues, as my classmate will further mention, as well as pressure performance. We hope we take these grievances into consideration and thank you for your time.

[00:49:02] - Thank you so much. Speaker number eight. - Hello, my name is Michaela Swales.

[00:49:17] I live in the Fairfield District and I am a senior at J.R. Tucker High School. My school was rewarded a brand new building during my freshman year. This building is around 265,000 square feet and costs over \$100 million. The new building was great for the population of students in 2021.

[00:49:35] Four years later, my school's population has grown to around 2,032 students, with a freshman population of 577 students. This has created complications in my school, including not having enough space in the commons for lunch.

[00:49:52] Many students stand during lunch, sit on the ground, or in the bathroom. I have had personal experiences of my friends and I having to search through the crowds for places to sit. These crowds aren't only an inconvenience for students, but also for administration.

[00:50:10] This year, fights have been hard to control, and the massive amounts of kids gathering at the seams do not help. It is extremely challenging to stop a fight when there are over 300 kids in one area. Tucker's administration has been doing their best to control the massive amounts of students and ensuring student safety.

[00:50:30] Four years ago, my school was given a brand new building was big enough for the amount of students then but now four years later there are too many students for the building to hold it isn't wise to tear down a new building and start over however it is important to consider the number of students you are letting enroll in a school that already has three specialty centers that take on average 75 kids per year thank you thank you so much

[00:50:59] speaker number nine good evening my name is marlene sherlock and our family lives in the the Fairfield District. We plan and drill for a lot of kind of rare things. We have fire drills and tornado drills and active incidents or lock and teach drills. I think it's time we drill for schools need to be closed, but learning needs to continue. Calendar year 2025 has been a mess.

[00:51:39] We ran out of the many built-in days we had, and we're now stuck with adding, what, 20 minutes to the school day for almost an entire month. But what does that really accomplish except for check off a box. Since our division doesn't use the 180-day metric, let's talk about the 990 hours of instruction time. At the secondary level, how is adding five minutes to any one class meaningful?

[00:52:05] Worse, how does adding 20 minutes to a freestyle enrichment time and even calling it study hall qualify as instructional time? The overall add-on, no matter where it happens during the day, throws family schedules off, and students who have to be to work by 5 o'clock are scrambling to figure out if they can make it.

[00:52:27] An earlier article this month in the Henrico Citizen described some of the challenges, and it's clear we have lost any mojo we might have had from remote or virtual learning. How is it that we spent almost an entire year of y'all telling us that learning online was okay, and we can't do one or two days this year?

[00:52:46] If we're truly trying to make our students college and career ready, I think it's hard to deny that virtual education in some form or fashion is here to stay, certainly for adults, and it should be for our kids too. Our technology infrastructure needs to stay up to date.

[00:53:05] Teachers need to be able to quickly pivot to an in-person lesson, to something online, and students definitely need to learn online education etiquette. It's also clear that we would have plenty of work to do to deliver meaningful services to our special needs community that we so miserably failed during COVID.

[00:53:28] So, just like you did a slow rollout of the weapons detectors, let me suggest an outside-the-box idea. How about a few planned virtual days this coming school year? And so what if the DOE doesn't accept them?

[00:53:43] Can we not count them as some of the many days that we already build in? I sincerely believe we'll all be better for it when the time comes, and it will come. Whether it's all puns intended, weather, too much snow, too much water, no water, no power, those are all things we need to have contingencies for.

[00:54:02] I realize there's no good answer, but we need to be ready. And I'll throw this in. I miss Andy Jenks and his calls to us. The robocall is very impersonal. You can do better. Thank you. Thank you so much, speaker number nine.

[00:54:19] this concludes the speakers that I have on our list I can only I can only go with the names I have on the list but staff would be happy to meet with you

[00:54:37] discuss. The next item on the agenda is our superintendent. I do not have any items. There are consent items which can be taken in a block. We have the approval of the financial plan. Oh, that's right. That's a singled out item. Yes, a very important item.

[00:55:10] We are seeking approval of the previously presented Fiscal Year 26 Annual Financial Plan. Colleagues, we have had multiple presentations on this, including at today's work session. Are there any

comments or questions before we consider the approval?

[00:55:32] All right, hearing none, do I have a motion? I move that the school board approve the Fiscal Year 2026 Recommended Annual Financial Plan with two additions with necessary changes to accommodate adding 100 full-time exceptional educational instructional assistants to the general fund personnel complement and 10 more English language learner positions next year.

[00:55:53] Thank you for the motion. 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 recommended annual financial plan has been approved. Thank you, Chair Shea and members of the board.

[00:56:11] And the next items are consent items that can be taken in a block. Thank you so much. Colleagues, just to remind you, we are looking at consent agenda items quite lengthy, 10.01 through 10.31.

[00:56:28] Are there any of these items that you would like to separate out for separate discussion or decision? Hearing none, we will move forward with them as a block. Do I have a motion on consent agenda? I move that the school board accept, adopt, approve, and or award items 10.01 through 10.31 on the consent agenda as presented.

[00:56:54] Thank you for the motion, 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 consent agenda has been approved. The next item on the agenda is unfinished business. Colleagues, do you have any unfinished business?

[00:57:15] Hearing none, the next item on the agenda is new business. Colleagues, do you have any new business to share with us? Hearing none, the final item on the agenda is the announcement of the upcoming meeting dates.

[00:57:32] Our next meeting date will be a work session on March 13, 2025 at 3 p.m., right here in the new Bridge Auditorium. The time may be adjusted as needed. Thank you for attendance this evening. Meeting adjourned.



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