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Henrico County School Board Work Session, Thursday, April 17, 2025

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[00:00:01] Good afternoon and welcome to the April 17th, 2025 work session of the Henrico County Public Schools School Board. We are going to start our meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance and moment of silence led by our superintendent. Please stand for the Pledge of Allegiance.

[00:00:18] 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.

[00:00:37] if you would please remain standing as you're able for the moment of silence that concludes the moment of silence you may be seated thank you so much superintendent the next item on the agenda is the approval of the agenda colleagues is there a motion i move the school board approve the agenda for today's meeting thank you miss kinsella is there a second second second mr irving all those in favor say aye aye any opposed the ayes have it the agenda

[00:01:13] has been approved the next item on the agenda is to go into closed session colleagues is there a motion i move that the school board go into closed session for discussion of matters under items a1 and a7 of section 2.2-3711 of the code of virginia 1950 as amended pertaining to the assignment appointment promotion performance demotion salaries disciplining or resignation of specific school board employees

their quest for religious exemption from compulsory attendance that would involve disclosure of information contained in scholastic records concerning individual students

[00:01:53] thank you mr irving is there a second second second by miss kinsella all those in favor say aye aye any opposed the eyes have it we are now entering closed session and we'll enter back into open session at the conclusion welcome back the next item on our agenda is certification of closed session. Colleagues, is there a motion? I move the school board certified by a recorded vote that to the best of each board member's knowledge, only public business matters lawfully exempted from the open meeting requirements of the Virginia Freedom of Information Act and identified in the

[00:02:30] motion authorizing the closed meeting were heard, discussed, or considered in the closed meeting. Thank you, Ms. Kinsella. Is there a second? Second. Second. Seconded by Mr. Irving. All those in May I ever say aye? - Aye. - And you post, the I's have it.

[00:02:47] A closed session has been certified. I will now turn it over to the superintendent. - Thank you, Chair Shay, members of the board. For the first item, I'm recommending that the school board approve the request for release from compulsory school attendance for student case number 24-25-RE-8 based on bonafide religious beliefs and the students' names are protected under the Virginia Freedom of Information Act.

[00:03:14] - Thank you, Dr. Cashwell. Colleagues, is there a motion? I move the school board approve the request for a religious exemption from compulsory attendance for student case number 24-25-RE-8. So moved by Ms. Kinsella, is there a second?

[00:03:32] Second. Second by Mr. Irving. All those in favor say aye. Aye. Any opposed? The ayes have it. The motion is approved. Thank you. For the next item, I'm recommending that the school board approve the appointment of administrative personnel.

[00:03:49] Colleagues, is there a motion? I move that the school board approve the appointment of administrative personnel. Thank you, Mr. Irving. Is there a second? Second. Seconded by Ms. Kinsella. All those in favor say aye. Aye. Any opposed? The ayes have it. The administrative appointment is approved.

[00:04:05] Thank you. The board has just approved Stephanie Anderson as a next principal at Sanston Elementary School. For the next item, we will have an opportunity to review the final and hopefully adopted this evening fiscal year 26 annual financial plan. And Mr. Wack is here to provide a brief overview of that. Good afternoon, board members and Dr. Cashwell. This evening, we will be seeking the school board's final approval of our fiscal year 2026 budget. This concludes this year's budget process, which included a public input session in December, the presentation of the superintendent's

[00:04:41] recommended budget in late January, a public hearing, and then initial school board approval in February, and the Board of Supervisors approving the countywide budget on April 8th. Briefly, the budget that is now before the school board includes all the initiatives that were incorporated into the superintendent's recommended budget that you approved at the February 27th meeting following a public hearing. With the Board of Supervisors approval of the countywide budget, about \$30.2 million was added to our general fund budget to provide salary increases for our staff and market adjustments for certain groups of employees. When focusing

[00:05:17] on our total general fund, it is increasing by about \$60 million, including \$46.3 million in additional state revenue and about \$13.7 million in local funds. I now would like to summarize the fiscal

year 2026 pay plan adjustments that are incorporated into this budget. All returning full-time employees will see a 6% salary increase. This includes a 3.628% wage increase plus one step.

[00:05:43] Meanwhile, over 1,000 full-time employees will see market adjustment increases between 13.8% and 19.3% when combined with the wage and step increase. The impacted positions include our custodial workers and custodians, our maintenance assistants, both our general and exceptional education instructional assistants, and our school-based school nutrition services staff.

[00:06:06] Furthermore, our extracurricular sponsorship stipends are all increasing by at least 6%, with many also receiving market adjustment increases. In summary, our operating budgets reflect the following notable changes from the current fiscal year.

[00:06:22] Our general fund budget is increasing by about \$60 million, or 8.5%, compared to fiscal year 2025 adopted, with about half of that increase attributed to salary increases. Our debt service budget, associated with previously approved capital project debt, is decreasing by 2.1%.

[00:06:39] The school nutrition fund is increasing by about 5.7% due to increases in food costs along with the salary increases. And our state and federal special revenue budgets are increasing by 2.5%, and that's primarily due to more funding for the Virginia Preschool Initiative. Overall, our operating budget from all funds is growing by about 7.1%.

[00:06:59] These pie charts illustrate the major revenue categories of our general fund budget. We can see a combination of additional state and local funds in fiscal year 2026, with a state share increasing to 56.2%, and that's the highest in modern history.

[00:07:15] These pie charts illustrate the major spending categories of our general fund budget, and we can see that instruction remains the lion's share of our expenditures budget at over 75% in fiscal year 2026. That concludes our budget overview, and I'd be happy to answer your questions.

[00:07:35] Thank you so much, Mr. Wack. Colleagues, how about Ms. Kinsella? Do you have anything? This is the multiple-th time we've seen this, but do you have anything else to add? No, I think it is multiple time. I mean, except for my appreciation for the team making these budget adjustments, pay raises, market adjustments come to fruition.

[00:08:03] Six percent, I can say I don't think I've seen six percent in this region for sure, in some other regions either. So just very thrilled about the budget we're putting forward. Thanks, Ms. Kinsella. Mr. Irving? Yeah, I would just echo the sentiment. Thank you for the team for putting all this together. Just a question for folks who may not know, is the 6% rate the largest in the region?

[00:08:29] Yes, it's the largest across the board region, approximately double some of our neighbors. Yes, it is. As a teacher and another one, I know that. Yes, I'm so glad that we're able to do that for our employees and especially the market adjustments are going to be huge for our custodial workers or maintenance assistants or general and exceptional educational IAs.

[00:08:50] And our nutrition service workers, 13.8% to 19.3%. That's the type of raise that really changes, I think, a lot of household balance sheets. So I'm just super grateful that we're able to do that for folks. Thank you. Thank you.

[00:09:05] Thank you so much. No additional comments from me that I haven't given you over the past few months. Just much appreciation to you, Dr. Cashwell, in partnership with our county government

counterparts to make this happen for our employees and our county so thank you so much thank you all right next on the agenda you have a lengthy list of policies coming before you as you know the policy work continues and we're grateful to the policy committee and our board representatives for that

[00:09:41] continued effort and there are three major policy packages that are returning for a second review this time and these of course are scheduled for approval at our monthly meeting. So the chapter 10 package which includes the redistricting policy is items 6.01 through 6.11 on the work session agenda and no changes have been made to the proposed language since the board's first review on February 27th.

[00:10:07] Do you have any questions? Thanks so much Dr. Cashwell and just a reminder for clarity for these policies and all of our policies that the policy itself is what the board takes action on. For some of these policies, their corresponding regulations, which is how staff implement them, have also been posted. But what we are taking action on at the evening meeting and what we are always taking action on are the actual policy pieces. So just wanted

[00:10:38] that clarification for the next 71 agenda items. And then this chunk of policies has been out for review for seven weeks, so 49 days, just for clarity. So, colleagues, on this chunk, 6.01 through 6.11, do you have any questions, comments, or edits? Okay. All right. Hearing none, On to the next chunk.

[00:11:09] Yes, the next batch of instructional policies from Chapter 7 are items 6.12 through 6.33. And based on board feedback from the March 13th work session, clarifying edits were made to P7-13-001 school calendar and P7-04-011.

[00:11:30] That was controversial subjects. Are there any questions? Colleagues, do you have any questions or additional comments or edits that you would like to see in this batch?

[00:11:48] Okay. All right. Thank you. The next batch would be facility use related policies, and these are items 6.34 to 6.43, and no changes have been made to the language since your first review of these on March 13th.

[00:12:05] Colleagues, any questions, comments, edits for this batch? I know some of these spent quite a bit of time, and by quite a bit of time, maybe even almost a whole calendar year, it seems like, within the policy committee that Ms. Kinsella and I have been working on, and Ms. Coy and her team have been really diligent getting lots of layers of feedback, as always, but particularly for some of these pieces.

[00:12:33] So, questions, comments? Okay, and these have been out for review as well since the March 13th meeting. All right, next batch. Okay, additionally, there are two policy packages that are before the board for a first review today.

[00:12:51] And while no action is requested on these items today, they're scheduled to return on June 12th for a second review at that work session and approval, requesting approval at that monthly meeting. The first is the fundraising package. These are items 6.44 through 6.49 on the agenda.

[00:13:10] if there are any questions. Colleagues, questions, comments, edits, I know particularly the fundraising piece are something that we get feedback as a board, and Ms. Kinsella and I both shared that back with the committee and Ms. Coy, principals from different levels as well as financial pieces, or financial parts of the financial team were involved in all of these conversations to make sure we're equipping the schools with what they need while providing

[00:13:43] transparency for our constituents and parents and family. Any questions or comments on these edits or changes? All right. Again, we're not taking action on this evening. This is our first review. Thank you. Next batch. All right. Also for first review are the student organizations and accounts package, items 6.50 through 6.70. Questions, comments, edits. All right. Hearing none.

[00:14:13] All right. And finally, the special education policy item 6.71 has a minor edit to a single policy here, again, for review. All right. Thank you so much. And this actually wouldn't have action.

[00:14:32] These first review policies would not have action until June. That's right. Because of how the calendar falls in order to allow at least 30 days. So both of these, or all of these groups of first review would not be up for approval until much later, until later.

[00:14:51] Any questions, comments, edits? All right, thank you. All right, next is a review, as is required annually, of our annual special education plan flow through Title 6B, Section 611 and 619, age and preschool grant application. That's a mouthful. And Dr. Hughes and Dr. Smith are here to provide that for you. Thank you, Dr. Cashwell. Good afternoon, Chair Shea, members of the board and Dr. Cashwell. As Dr. Cashwell said, I'm Leslie Hughes, Chief Learning Officer for Enrico County

[00:15:26] Public Schools. And today, Dr. Smith will present the 2025-2026 Special Education Annual Plan, also known as Title 6B. Okay, so Special Education Services for Students with Disabilities are funded through three different funding streams.

[00:15:45] HCPS receives funds from the federal government in the form of the Title 6B grants. We also receive state funds as well as local funds. As shown in this chart, the majority of funding to support students with disability is provided through local funding sources. Only 17% of our total funds that are allocated to support special education come from our federal grant line, which is the specific funding source addressed in this presentation.

[00:16:12] The six-week grant is provided in two separate allocations. The 611 funds are intended to support school-age children. Since the state has not provided allocations for the 25-26 school year, the plan that we will provide to the Virginia Department of Education and which we are outlining today reflects level funding from the 24-25 school year, which did include \$150,000 decrease in funding from the 23-24 school year.

[00:16:39] The majority of grant funds we receive be used to provide the salary and benefits of current employees. These positions include 93 special education teachers and 52 instructional assistants, additional 27 elementary department chair stipends, two speech-language pathologists, one secondary school-based compliance coordinator, three special education coordinators, one annual resident educator, and one professional learning specialist.

[00:17:07] We do withhold a portion of grant funds to support contract services, specifically we use these funds to pay a large portion of the sign language interpreter, speech language pathologist, occupational and physical therapy and nursing services across the district and support approved independent educational evaluations.

[00:17:25] Another portion of grant funds are used to purchase materials and supplies such as educational assessments or curriculum resources to support specially designed instruction. The materials and supplies line item also provides a large portion of our assistive technology and communication devices and supports required by many of our students.

[00:17:44] The other charges category, as you've seen on the screen, reflects the administrative costs that are associated with the grant. Each year, our finance department receives a formula which is provided by the state to determine the amount of administrative costs which should be charged to the grant for reimbursement.

[00:17:59] The 619 portion of the federal grant is specifically allocated to support students in our early childhood special education programs as in the school age grant the majority of these funds are used to provide salary and benefits for current early childhood special education personnel for early childhood special education teachers are funded through the grant we allocate a small portion of the title 6b 619 grant materials and supplies to support early childhood special education programming and these funds help support curriculum and instructional materials for next year three additional requirements of the 2526 annual plan include proportionate set

[00:18:38] aside maintenance of effort and local and regional jails all school districts are required to keep count of those students with disabilities who are parentally placed in private schools school divisions are required to set aside funding based on a formula provided by the virginia department of education for individualized services for those students who choose to access those services these service plans can provide students with up to 36 hours per year of speech therapy occupational therapy or other related services additionally up to four hours of education educational consultative services can also be provided between the case manager and school

[00:19:16] or case manager and parent maintenance of effort requires school divisions to spend at least the same amount of local and state funds for the current school year on the delivery of special education services as were spent the previous year here you can see henrico county will spend a combined amount of nine thousand seven hundred five dollars and ninety one cents on students with disabilities for the upcoming year additionally in july of two of 2024 we renewed our mou at the county sheriff to provide funding to support one special education teacher for people accessing educational services while detained thank you for your time and attention this afternoon as as we discuss the plan for using

[00:19:55] the Title VI federal grant funds. I'm happy to discuss any questions that you may have regarding the presentation and grant at this time. - Thank you so much. Colleagues, do you have any questions about the Title VI grant plan?

[00:20:16] None from us, but we appreciate your work and your diligence. I know particularly these grant plans provide or require a lot of specificity, a lot of dyed-in I's and crossing T's. And so thank you for your teams for doing that and to ensure that we can provide the best services to our students.

[00:20:32] If I may, just for clarity, this was just going over the grant itself. It's not discussing status or performance or any programmatic, anything that we're doing in terms of special education, right?

[00:20:48] It's just the grant application. Appreciate the clarity. It would have been a much longer presentation otherwise. A lot going on in the wonderful things going on in our world of exceptional education. Thank you. Thank you so much. All right.

[00:21:04] The next item, again, it's that time for the annual review of many things in the spring, looking ahead to next year. And this is an opportunity for the board to do an annual review and take a look at our proposed revisions to the Student Code of Conduct as would go into effect for the next school year.

[00:21:23] Dr. Grant and Dr. Noel are here to present this item, which again has proposed revisions. We're not seeking your approval on those this evening. It would be a first look at those, and then those would return at a subsequent meeting to be finalized and improved in advance of the next school year.

[00:21:41] Dr. Grant. Okay. Thank you, Dr. Cashwell. Good afternoon, Madam Chair, members of the board, Dr. Cashwell. This afternoon, Dr. William Noel, Director of Disciplinary Review Hearing Office, and I will share with you student and staff feedback, as well as a few proposed changes to the 2025-2026 Code of Student Conduct.

[00:22:03] The changes are not extensive, but are certainly meaningful and worthy of discussion. The board did tremendous work last year and was proactive in addressing the topics we will discuss this afternoon. With your leadership, the policy has progressed so well that only minor adjustments are proposed.

[00:22:25] We recognize that these minor changes are designed to support schools in implementing the policy, as well as to ensure consistency across schools and classrooms. As you will hear shortly, the proposed changes presented for your consideration and discussion today focus primarily on two areas: the use of cell phones and other smart devices by students, and the eligibility of students with specific community criminal charges to participate in

[00:22:59] our graduation exercises. I will now turn the presentation over to Dr. Noel, who will provide a detailed overview of these recommendations. Thank you, Dr. Grant. Before we get into the actual proposed changes, I'd like to remind you of some annual considerations that go into this presentation and share a bit about how we solicited feedback this year in particular.

[00:23:24] Each year, we consider feedback from HCPS stakeholders, changes in state and federal law, local implementation challenges, and new technology that may impact the educational environment. This year, we solicited feedback from many of our advisory committees, such as the student advisory, teacher advisory, and principals to ensure we were collecting feedback from stakeholders with different perspectives. As we know, cell phone and smart devices continue to be an incredibly important topic, and this was the number one topic raised in our discussions

[00:23:58] with various committees and groups. Additionally, we deployed a survey to all HCPS secondary teachers on our cell phone policy and practices, which you will hear more about later. At a meeting with the superintendent's student advisory, we garnered feedback about whether or not the existing cell phone policy or enforcement mechanisms needed to be changed in any way. Here you see the questions we ask students as we dug deep into the topic. Overwhelmingly, they affirm the positive impact that the enforcement of our cell phone policy has had over the last year, noting an

[00:24:37] impact on instruction and socialization amongst peers. Generally, students thought schools were enforcing the policy, but there were some varied experiences. A majority of students also thought the rules are fairly applied. However, our students also reported seeing and experiencing inconsistent enforcement. This spring, we also sought input from our teachers about the experiences and suggestions. I met with the teacher advisory committee, and we deployed an online survey and invited all of our secondary teachers to provide input on the topic. We asked questions about their

[00:25:14] thoughts on language, the implementation support available with classroom lockboxes, and the ability of administrators to fairly and consistently enforce the policy. As you will see, their feedback

aligned to what we heard from students, generally a very positive impact on instruction, some variation in enforcement, and some suggestions for additional changes. We heard clearly from all stakeholders that the changes made this year have unequivocally impacted instruction and student engagement in a positive way. One teacher offered feedback to the open-ended question

[00:25:48] related to instructional impact. Students not having their cell phones available to them during class have significantly improved their attention and engagement. I've also seen students far more willing to communicate with their classmates rather than staring at their phones. The cell phone policy has also clarified what teachers should do if a student is caught on their phone during class time. But we also wanted to know about challenges associated with the policy and practices. We asked teachers taking the survey about how often they're experiencing issues with

[00:26:22] unauthorized use by students. Nearly 40 percent reported daily issues and another 19 percent cited weekly challenges, which takes us to our next theme of enforcement. Our stakeholders share that consistent enforcement is the biggest challenge with the policy and practice. This was true of students, teachers, and principals who have varied experiences this year. About half of our teachers who reported who responded to the survey reported using storage containers while others report requiring students to use their backpacks a significant majority report feeling supported

[00:26:58] by their administrators but we still have room to grow in that area it goes without saying that consistency is key when policies are enforced consistently by every teacher it sends a clear message to students that the rules are non-negotiable in addition it emphasizes how consistency creates a unified approach and reduces confusion for teachers and students. Everybody knows what's expected. Ultimately, consistent implementation helps students to understand that policies apply equally to everyone, which in turn supports fairness and discipline. A clearer and more

[00:27:35] uniform approach allows for a streamlined response and empowers teachers to handle infractions without needing to involve administrators at every instance. In some of our discussions with teachers we asked about additional restrictions and while in this survey teachers organically raised the issue generally there was support for additional restrictions though our students didn't support this quite as vehemently we also have been in ongoing conversations with our principals about the topic throughout the year and generally they have shared similar feedback they have seen

[00:28:09] a positive impact on instruction experienced challenges with consistent enforcement and many support the idea of the change at the secondary level to prohibit the use of cell phones and the smart devices throughout the entire day. Additionally, we asked TAC representatives whether they thought it would be helpful for the 2025-2026 cell phone policy required students to deposit cell phones and unauthorized smart devices in school-provided containers during class. There were 56 total responses to this question, with an overwhelming majority

[00:28:45] supporting the change, 52 yeses to only four noes. It was this robust feedback that led to the proposed changes to the 2025-2026 Code of Student Conduct. There are no proposed changes to the cell phone policy for elementary schools. The consequence of violations for elementary schools remain mostly the same. However, at the TAC meeting, concerns were raised about the consequence for the fifth offense. Student must daily turn the device into the teacher. It was shared that this would be rather burdensome to do every day. Because of that, we propose changing the

[00:29:20] language of the fifth offense to device no longer allowed in school. Moving on to our secondary schools, what you see here is our current cell phone policy. We propose removing the language about during scheduled class time and replacing it with language about keeping phones and smart devices away during the school day. This is based on feedback from our stakeholders. As a matter of practice, based on the feedback, we will require students to put their phones and smart devices in division-issued containers during every class. This will provide even more consistency throughout

[00:29:56] and between schools. They will keep their phones and devices away in their personal belongings during class change and at lunch. The consequences for violations of a secondary school policy remain the same. It is important to note that school-level consequences should not ever include suspensions or expulsions of a student for only a cell phone violation. There are exceptions to the cell phone policy. Our schools understand the procedures and have been working with families to work through a process to meet our students' needs. It is worth noting that the practice has

[00:30:34] been in place in HCPS throughout the year, but we are making the language clear and more transparent for all by recommending this language is incorporated into the Code of Student Conduct. The proposed language states any student pursuing an individualized education plan, Section 504 plan, individualized health care plan or limited English proficiency plan may possess and use a cell phone or smart device on school property to monitor or address a health concern or an accommodation or assistive technology support.

[00:31:06] Moving on to another important topic, the last proposal has to do with SBAR code BESO18 and whether or not students with certain community criminal charges may participate in our graduation exercises.

[00:31:22] The proposed new language to state that students who have completed all requirements to earn a high school diploma but have an active SBAR code of BESO 18 reassignment due to criminal charge under Code of Virginia 16.1260G may not be allowed to participate in Henrico County Public Schools graduation exercises due to potential safety factors that may impact the community, including the victims.

[00:31:49] However, the student may be allowed to participate if the charges have been taken under advisement, null prost, deferred, reduced, or dismissed by the courts. Additionally, we'll bring forward edits relating to cyberbullying.

[00:32:06] The HCPS Code of Student Conduct currently has clear language to address instances of bullying, which includes cyberbullying. However, one specific piece of legislation, Senate Bill 908, that was passed this year now requires that much of what HCPS does behind the scenes to support students and empower them to bring forward any reports of cyberbullying must now be specifically written out in the Code of Student Conduct.

[00:32:32] Over the next few weeks, staff from multiple departments will convene to bring forward such enhancements to the language of the code regarding cyberbullying to really capture in one place within the code of student conduct the work HCPS is undertaking to combat cyberbullying.

[00:32:48] Lastly, there are a few other minor edits that we're proposing this year. We recommend removing the employee rights and responsibilities section and include that language in the contract addendum. and we have clarifying edits for the acceptable use policy at the end of each year we discuss strategies to support our school leaders in implementing and of implementation of revised policies this

year is no different and we will provide training to our school leaders on the language on changes to the policy language and enforcement practices we will update our guidance

[00:33:25] documents and share resources and best practices with administrators and teachers alike as they they prepare to set expectations with students at the start of each school year. Thank you for your time and attention and now I will answer any questions that you might have. Thank you so much team. I know when I'm in secondary schools, this is the question I get most often from students unsolicited. They'll just come up and they say, hey, what's going to happen with cell phones next year? This is, you know, even been since the fall and so I really appreciate the amount of time your

[00:33:58] team has taken, along with Dr. Cashwell and other division leadership, engaging so many different stakeholder groups in this conversation, and those groups all being part of people who are in the building every day experiencing this from different lenses. So, before we can start with discussion, I just want to say thank you for that work. I think that is so important and so critical to making sure all of our student code of conduct, particularly this piece, really reflects needs.

[00:34:27] So I'm going to start with Mr. Irving, because I know you are passionate about this. And so I'm going to let you tee this off. Thank you for the presentation. I would say that I'm very supportive of the change for the, you know, banning cell phones for the entire school day.

[00:34:47] We, given that I teach in Chesterfield, we implemented this back in January, which, you know, it might not have been best to do it in the middle of a school year, but it was the choice that was made. And I would say that as someone who, you know, already had an extremely strict cell phone practice in my classroom where I didn't allow them for any reason at all, I would say that it's been very positive building wide.

[00:35:12] We don't have the luxury of having containers to put the phones in, so it's up to, it really falls incumbent upon staff to enforce all over the building. So I think, you know, us providing the cases in every classroom really advantages our educators, and I hope it makes it a bit easier for them.

[00:35:33] I would say that my students have been overwhelmingly positive about the ban throughout the school day. I, you know, rarely see phones, I would say, throughout the day, and that's even during hallway changes where they have to keep them away. During lunchtime, I would say the only time that I mostly see them is during class when the students are out in the hallway, like going to the bathroom or something like that.

[00:35:59] But if we are instituting the requirement that the students keep them in lockboxes, and that will be the requirement, like the expectation, I imagine that we won't see much of that because if your phone's in a lockbox, it's hard to take it to the bathroom. I think that also will lead to far less skipping.

[00:36:17] It'll lead to less instances in restrooms, which we know behavioral instances occur, and they are many. But my hope is that this helps really alleviate those concerns. I myself have noticed with the phone ban that, you know, attention among students in class is, they're much more engaged than they have been previously, and that's obviously fantastic.

[00:36:42] I think my end-of-the-year assessments have shown that so far. We're, you know, really succeeding in a way that I think students haven't for a while, and I'm hopeful that that'll bear out in the data as we move forward and we continue forward with this process. I did have a couple questions about the data that was collected.

[00:36:59] I saw that only 47% of teachers reported using the division-wide boxes in classrooms. Do we have feedback as to why that was? Now I can get that information for you, though. Okay. Yeah, because I think that's a concerning number to me. I think that plays in a little bit to only 70% of our teachers feeling somewhat supported by their administrators. I would love to see that number approach 100%. I know we'll never reach 100% fully, but I would like to see

[00:37:34] attack as close to that as possible. But the 47%, I think that it's either, I think that there's some laxness, naturally, with some people who are not, their personality is not inclined to be as authoritarian, I think, with the enforcement of rules. But I also think that maybe there's some apathy feeling, you know, well, my administrator is not going to support me on this anyway, so why am I even doing this? I would encourage folks to not take that mindset, because I feel like if you're holding up your end of the bargain, that's all that you can do.

[00:38:07] And you as an educator, if this is the policy, you need to carry it out to the best of your ability, because then you can at least say, well, I did everything I could. And if something else is happening, then that's somebody else's responsibility, not yours. You should be doing everything that you can to limit it. Because I can say for myself, I was one of the strictest people in my building before the total ban came. And it was the easiest for my kids because it was every single day. The answer is always no. And I think something with the school day ban, it makes all this a lot easier. The answer is just always no. It becomes very black and white. It's not well.

[00:38:41] he's the students in this situation or this situation the answer is just always no and I think our young people benefit from things being very clear rather than you know blurry occasionally I had a question yes can I ask they were given the opportunity this year either to use the lock boxes or keep the cell phone in their backpack I understand okay so that may not have been okay So we'll eliminate that for next year, obviously, with our change.

[00:39:12] I think it was on the themes from teachers. It said 70% of survey respondents requested usage be limited during the entire day and an open-ended question about other changes they would like to see. What were the other changes they'd like to see? Because I'm guessing if I'm thinking of the survey is you select one and maybe not all, or how did the breakdown of that question go?

[00:39:33] That's the, I think it's the next slide. One of the changes that they would like to see is the consistency of all teachers utilizing the lockboxes. That was the biggest one. Yeah, and I can say as an educator, I think that that's one of the hardest things to enforcement is when a kid says, well, my other teacher doesn't do this.

[00:39:53] And it's easy to respond, well, I'm not that other teacher. But I do think that when people don't follow the policies as they're supposed to be, it does undermine morale and undermines the enforcement. So I do hope that we will see the consistency, because that's remarkably important, and it makes buy-in easier for the students when rules are always evenly applied, and they know what the expectation is every single time.

[00:40:17] I did have a question about the proposed consequences for secondary schools, and I don't think that was in the presentation, because there was not a change. So I have questions about language, and I'm reading out of the book right now.

[00:40:38] It says, failure to comply with the policy mentioned above will result in the following actions. And then on the third and fourth offense, we changed the word. School-level consequences shall be applied to may be applied. What was the rationale behind that change? The change there is because under the governor's law, they said that cell phone offenses by itself won't constitute suspensions or in-school suspension.

[00:41:05] But if it's a matter that you're using your cell phone and you've been told to put it away and you're being defiant, then there's a possibility that building level consequences may apply. That's why I figured if we change it from shall to may, that would take care of that. Yeah. And I guess the way, you know, what we call things matters, right? Because I think, you know, we have in-school suspension level offenses for defiance of staff requests.

[00:41:34] And so, you know, I think getting creative with language, because for me, when I look at it this way, if we're not able to offer an in-school suspension for these types of offenses, I would really think changing the way that we're doing the consequences might make sense. Because I think if we're not able to levy a consequence that is more than just the parent having to come pick up the phone until the fourth time that you do it, perhaps it makes sense to get rid of our first offense on here and go immediately to the first time that your phone is taken, your parents have

[00:42:12] to come pick it up. I think that we need to incentivize the behavior we want to see. And if I'm a kid and I know that the first time I get my phone taken, my mom or my dad's going to have to, or my guardian's going to have to come pick it up. And that may not be today. I think I'm going to think a lot harder about whether I'm going to do this or not my first time, because I don't want to lose my phone potentially if it's taken on Friday and I not get it back till Monday or Tuesday.

[00:42:38] And the situation, if it's the third or the fourth, fourth or fifth time, then it's more than a cell phone issue. At that point, it becomes a matter of defiance. And then the school level consequences may apply at that point. And one of the things, and I appreciate your feedback, and we can certainly continue discussion, particularly with our administrators who are dealing with the consequences portion of this code to make sure that there's understanding.

[00:43:06] But they felt, you know, very empowered to implement this in a meaningful way and have it, you know, stick with meaningful consequences for students. But we also want to be careful that we're not, you know, removing a child from instruction solely for the possession of the cell phone, which is clearly not allowable.

[00:43:27] So I think it is when there are other things at play, helping administrators understand how to leverage other parts of the code and those consequences appropriately. and certainly something we can handle in training as well with our administrators. So should the board move to approve any of the changes within the code, then we would work throughout the summer to prepare our training and detailed guidance for our administrators on topics such as this.

[00:43:51] Okay. That all makes sense to me. I thank you for providing the clarification around the May, and I agree with what Dr. Cashwell just said. I would still be in support of having the parent or guardian retrieve the device. Even on the first attempt, I know that one of our middle schools in the name is escaping me at the moment is currently seeking this path. And I think that's the correct one. I think we have to make the consequences such that it is that makes you think twice about what you're going to do before you do it. Because I do think that most kids will follow the rules. But I think

[00:44:26] if we if you make them think twice that I may not be able to get this for three days, just for taking it out, I'm going to think twice about doing that. So that's that's certainly a change that I would I would encourage us to to pursue. Everything else makes total sense to me. I thank you for the for the presentation and the and the work that y'all do. I know that this is a large undertaking and I appreciate the survey data. I think that's huge getting feedback and I do think that it's very encouraging that our students recognize that this is a good thing for them.

[00:45:02] I think you know cell phone use can be seen as a form of addiction like anything else where you don't even realize that you're going to do it and i know that even us as adults have this happen to us and it steals our attention away and as and if we can start maybe doing this when children are very young and they're used to spending eight hours a day without their device maybe when they get home they'll think oh i don't actually need this and it starts to remove some of the um the dopamine hits that they get from being on the device and just constantly thinking about it and maybe we can help encourage a new class of young people to break a habit that I think

[00:45:41] all of us wish we didn't have. And we can't cure all of societal ills this way, but I do think doing a piece and removing distractions and being able to focus on what we're here to do, which is educate students, I think it makes the job a little bit easier. Thank you.

[00:45:57] Thank you, sir. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Irving. Ms. Kinsella? Thank you. I've been waiting on this presentation. I feel like this year was perhaps being such a large division, a phase in of what does a cell phone policy look like in Hureko schools.

[00:46:14] And by and large, I think it's gone really well, as the presentation showed. And as Mrs. Shea said, and Mr. Irving, I appreciate how many stakeholder stakeholder groups we got feedback from.

[00:46:29] I can say on this, I have not heard anything negative about it, except for maybe what it looks like in practice day to day, right? Like tracking offenses. And to that, I have a question about how do we track the offenses for cell phones?

[00:46:52] It is through PowerSchool, right? The same as other disciplinary tracking? Yes, ma'am. Correct. And on this one, is the teacher, the teacher is responsible? not admin or in some cases maybe this is to the consistency piece who is responsible for entering the admin would be responsible for the teacher would make the referral or any staff member who witnessed the offense and then it would be handled by the designated administrator okay so it but through power school all of it is through and the school handle discipline is is monitored and

[00:47:31] tracked that way. Okay. Um, just, just for clarity, um, I had students both through student government day and student advisory who, um, Mr. Madison, you, Mr. Irving, you just hit on it. Um, that actually said as a result of this policy this year, they actually use their cell phones less after school, or at least thought about use after school when they had the choice. Right. So I think that's, been an unintended great consequence of this policy that students are actually using some

[00:48:07] self-control and maybe choosing to be off the electronics. So what does secondary, what does it look like at lunchtime or in the halls with, if you're going to have an infraction, if you're a student, what does that look like? Well, the understanding is that cell phones are not used at all during the school day. The only difference now is during class, we require them to have them in the school-issued containers during class change and at lunch, they're supposed to be in their backpacks, but not allowed to use.

[00:48:42] - Right, but what does that look like when, as we know, the brain-- - If a student were to not follow that. - Yeah, the brain is not fully developed until 25, right? So then we would follow the consequences, and that would be anything, perhaps depending on the circumstance or the moment or when this is occurring in a hall change or lunch.

[00:49:03] you know, then the individual, the administrator, teacher, staff member who would witness it would note to the student that it wasn't allowable. And then the consequences would be doled out as listed in the student code of conduct if referred. And then as to slide seven, Dr. Noel, I know you don't do research and assessment, but I have to say 80% of secondary teachers who responded to the survey, which was 1,643 total. That is a pretty high number responding to a survey, is it not?

[00:49:39] I mean, we were pleased with the results. So I would just like to, I would just like to thank all of our staff who took the time to reply to this. In addition, I received quite a bit of feedback from educators and staff about what it looks like and with questions because the consistency is clearly the theme they'd like even clear more clear language in the student code of conduct i have a question about student code of conduct language on page 10

[00:50:14] of the actual document must retrieve the device parents must retrieve the device from where like that is always from the office correct and it is during business hours right of our schools. That's correct. The administrator, when, you know, when there's an offense and a consequence, the administration would be notifying the parent or guardian anyway, and that would be part of the conversation, would be the retrieval of that. Because from staff, what I've heard is, could we provide as much clarity in the document? I know sometimes less is more when it comes to

[00:50:52] policy but staff has actually asked me quite a number of them for as much clarity and as much detail as possible as because this is the document students and parents sign at the beginning read and sign at the beginning of every year in addition to that I received requests from staff about communication what is communication of this look like to our families and training right for our staff what is What does that look like?

[00:51:28] I would note very similar. You mentioned going into this year sort of as a first run of this and beginning in the summertime, in advance of this school year, we equipped our administrators with items they could use in their school messages so that there would be broad awareness.

[00:51:45] Of course, this is less new, but still something that deserves a lot of attention. And should the board adopt any changes as they're proposed here in the version that would go into effect next year, would reflect that any of that in our communication to families and continue both at the division and school level equipping our school leaders with tools to use for communication you know and certainly one of the things the team has done a great job they put together ready-made turnkey if you will power points and resources for student code of conduct assemblies that are

[00:52:19] developmentally and level appropriate for students to hear you know all about the the rules and the associated consequences at the beginning of the year again making it very clear what expectations are and setting those in the buildings at the beginning of the year so certainly would start in advance of the school year and run throughout the duration as needed and we would equip our folks with the tools to do so and then my last question is how will the students how is it going this year because i know it's looked differently in the classroom setting for example and i'm i'm trying to think about what it's going to look like for our students

[00:52:56] who do have the exception whether it's a medical exception or an iep exception to have the phone what does that look like so for them like yeah are they just going to i would imagine get called out frequently this has occurred all throughout this school year this process was set forth at the beginning of the year and you know we guide our schools through a consistent practice with this to make sure we're meeting student needs appropriately.

[00:53:23] And you know, whether a student have an accommodation that allows this use or any other different scenario during the school day, you know, it would certainly be known that it's allowable and a student wouldn't face a consequence. Our teachers, whether a student has an IEP or 504 plan or other medical plans, are made aware of what a student's specific needs are so that there's clarity beginning at the beginning of the year.

[00:53:49] Okay, so maybe in the hallway or during lunch would be the only time where it would be a question, right? Yes, and we would make sure, I mean, administrators will know who in the building has this allowance. I support this, and even the students from Superintendent Student Advisory and from Student Government Day said they very much appreciated, if this was what the board was going to be discussing and moving forward with, They very much appreciated the phased-in approach, and like I said, great unintended consequences as a result, right?

[00:54:23] They actually chose not to be on their phones as much outside of school. Thank you very much for this presentation. Thank you so much, Ms. Kinsella. All right, digging in. So I support whatever helps teachers, administration, and building staff to be able to do their jobs most effectively when it comes down to it.

[00:54:48] I spent a lot of time in classrooms in various schools, and I know that there are a wide-ranging opinions from some of the adults in the building on what options are the best path forward, though clearly from those that participated in some of our stakeholder groups in the survey, which I really, again, appreciate y'all's work and also their participation.

[00:55:12] There seems to be a majority direction for that. I just, I want to, you know, as we possibly move forward towards this change, just make sure we're equipping staff with whatever they need to focus on teaching, the business of teaching, learning, and student safety at the end of the day. And so it sounds like, again, the consistency of enforcement is where some of the challenges are coming in. So, you know, really for us as as a board and as division leadership to look at how do we support consistent enforcement.

[00:55:51] And so if that's with the changes that have been proposed for the student code of conduct, if that's what we need to do in terms of policy level, I support that. But just making sure as we implement in the schools that we're giving them anything that they need to support consistent enforcement.

[00:56:10] I'm glad to see that number rise to 70% of teachers who feel like they have support from their administration to follow through with this. Like Mr. Irving said, I'd love to see that number get close to 100, but we're certainly making progress in that, in both the policy and the implementation.

[00:56:30] I would love to hear, I think it's too soon for right now, but as the coming weeks come, I would love to hear some reflection from Fairfield Middle School as to what the impact of their change that they made post spring break has been.

[00:56:46] How has that impact student teaching or student learning and also the staff's ability to focus on teaching and learning since, yeah, so that's kind of what we're looking at for next year and to see what

gains or what challenges have come with that to help us have an idea of staying ahead of anything we need to next year for implementation if we move forward with this change.

[00:57:15] Another thought I have, which actually ties in a little bit to the next section of acceptable use of technology, is another concern I have as we move forward to less and less access to the cell phone.

[00:57:32] is that some of the phone activities will get pushed to having on the computer. So when I started in the classroom, smartphones weren't a thing, they just had laptops, right? And so a lot of the activities they're doing now on their phone happened on the laptop.

[00:57:47] And so we have securely, right? We have a lot of things in place, but we also know that our students are often smarter than we are and sometimes come up with workarounds. So I just wanna make sure our teachers are equipped to, with what they need to appropriately monitor what's happening on the laptops, especially some of our, with the size of some of our classrooms and the class size within some of our classrooms and growing bodies of students, it can be hard for teachers to circulate, constantly circulate and get where they need to be, you know, while they're working with

[00:58:25] one student, but trying to monitor the laptop of another student, you know, that sort of thing. And so really engage within division leadership about what supports can we provide teachers in that respect to make sure we're not just moving phone activities then to the laptop.

[00:58:41] We want to mitigate the distractions as a whole and not just move the problem elsewhere. But again, I support whatever helps our teachers, administrators, and building staff focus on teaching and learning. And I appreciate the significant work and conversations that have gone into this to figure out how we solve it best in Henrico. I know Mr. Irving wanted to redirect.

[00:59:07] Yeah. So Mrs. Kinsella brought up the point about what does it look like for enforcement during lunch and class change. And having experienced this myself, I do think that that's going to be one of the biggest challenges in terms of just how it goes reported like logistically. Because say I'm outside my classroom in between class change like I'm supposed to be as an educator and I see a kid with their phone are we going to be offering to schools like this is the step by step of how teachers communicate that is that like a google form or is it just sending an administrator a message saying check the camera in this hallway at this time like what does that

[00:59:43] look like logistically to make it ease of access because I think the kids the only way that this works is you know that if you pull it out in the hallway and you get seen you could just have your phone taken later in the day and you'll think to yourself oh that's when it happened and and I think that that that matters for enforcement it certainly does and so should the board adopt the change then we would work on that with our guidance and so going into this school year we provided really good guidance for our administrators administrators to share with teachers and we would update it accordingly to give advice related to the changing of classes and those sorts of things to assist.

[01:00:22] And, you know, the other thing is we're also always open to change. So we recognize that how things look in August and September and the guidance we've given may need to be revamped some. So we're certainly going to stay tuned in to our administrators and teachers like we would with the implementation of anything.

[01:00:39] And if we can provide more support or more guidance or shift practices a bit, we'll certainly be responsive to do that so that we are implementing the policy in the code as you've intended it to be. Yeah,

because I'm just thinking as an educator, whatever we can do to make it the easiest on people when they see it to report it in a timely manner is just going to be key to implementation because if it's hard to report, I just worry that there will be some apathy of like, you know, nothing I can do about it this time.

[01:01:09] But that matters for enforcement. Certainly, and I don't want to underestimate the challenge in that and really related to any and all student discipline and enforcement. I mean, it's certainly not easy. It's a challenge for our administrators related to other infractions as well. And so Dr. Noel, Dr. Grant, her directors and team are, you know, really tuned in to working with our principals and teams as they're going to, you know, potentially encounter challenges with this and will be responsive and help make adjustments along the way as we need to.

[01:01:38] But certainly, there's, you know, I don't want to miss noting that as clear as any language can be and processes can be, you know, the actual work of enforcement and implementation, it is work.

[01:01:54] And it is something that, you know, requires the time and attention of our administrators and our teachers. And we appreciate that they're putting forward that extra time and attention on this and we'll work to support them. I agree. Thank you so much. Anything else, colleagues?

[01:02:11] You know, and I, you know, agree with so much of what was said, and Dr. Cashwell, I appreciate you bringing up that division leadership will continue to be nimble and responsive to how things are implemented, and I think that ties a little bit back into the clarification I tried to give about policy earlier.

[01:02:31] So the student code of conduct is the policy, and then, like, the regulations and the implementation is separate, and so we are taking action on the code of conduct, the policy at a future meeting, but it's still important to us to understand what those implications are on regulation.

[01:02:50] One of my schools has confiscated over a thousand phones this year, and so really looking at any adjustments we make, how do we, for teachers, but particularly admin in this scenario, help them still be able to do their wide range of other responsibilities that go beyond being the phone police. And so again, lots of work's been done here, lots for the board to think about, about how do we continue to let our staff concentrate on teaching, learning, school safety, and try to take phones out of the mix as much as possible. So thank you for y'all's work. Anything else?

[01:03:28] All right, that's all. Thank you. All right. That concludes items for me at this point. All right. Thank you. That concludes items through number eight on our agenda. The next item on our agenda is the public hearing around the strategic plan that is scheduled for 5 p.m. And so we are going to take a brief recess until 5 p.m. Welcome back. It is five o'clock, which means it is time

[01:04:01] for our public hearing on the strategic plan. Good afternoon, Madam Chair, members of the board, Dr. Cashwell. This afternoon we're holding a public hearing on the proposed Henrico County Public Schools 2025-2030 strategic plan which is posted on the Henrico County Public Schools website along with the feedback form through April the 25th. The school divisions current strategic plan is set to expire at the end of the school year. The proposed new plan builds on the

[01:04:39] successes of Destination 2025 and continues to drive our progress. The proposed plan as a result of collaborative efforts from students, staff, family, and the community reflecting our collective aspirations and needs. Since the process began in the fall of 2023, we have undertaken multiple phases of community engagement to refine our vision, mission, and core values. Over the past several months, we

organized more than 22 focus groups with HCPS committees, advisory groups, and community partners to identify our strengths

[01:05:18] and areas for growth. Additionally, we gathered valuable insights through our annual survey and a community survey about the plan conducted last fall, ensuring that community voices are central to our work. Throughout this school year, we have identified strategic focus areas and developed detailed plans. We are now collecting feedback on the proposed plan with the goal of seeking school board approval in May. Throughout this school year, a strategic plan steering committee and various work groups have diligently worked to refine the foundational components

[01:05:54] of the plan. They have identified strategic focus areas and goals, developed detailed strategies and actions, and established measures of success. This collaborative effort has been instrumental in shaping a comprehensive and inclusive strategic plan for the future of our schools. We believe education is about preparing students for life. Our proposed vision, Empowering Every Learner, reflects our commitment to creating an educational environment where every student has the opportunities needed to reach their full potential. By providing flexible

[01:06:31] learning pathways, encouraging student input and decision making, and fostering a culture of exploration and innovation, we empower students to take ownership of their education and pursue their passions. Our mission focuses on collaborating with families and the community to equip students with essential knowledge and life skills. Being ready for life means giving students the knowledge, skills, and experiences they need to handle challenges, take advantage of opportunities, and succeed in a changing world. Our core values are at the heart of everything

[01:07:08] that we do. They shape the learning experiences we provide, the relationships we build, and the culture we create. We represents Henrico County Public Schools as an organization. It's educators, staff, and leaders working together to serve students, families, and the community. These proposed values guide our decisions, ensuring that policies, programs, and initiatives are rooted in what's best for students. Through data analysis, a review of previous strategic plan updates, and other documents, the Strategic Plan Steering Committee identified four key

[01:07:47] focus areas: academic achievement, learning environment, physical, social, emotional, and mental health, and recruit, engage, retain, and reward staff. With the help of work groups, these focus areas were further refined by developing specific goals, strategies, aligned actions, and measures of success. Each work group, facilitated by division leaders, focused on a particular area, bringing together diverse perspectives and expertise to ensure comprehensive and actionable plans. They identified clear goals, outlined detailed strategies to

[01:08:24] achieve these goals, and established specific actions to be taken. Additionally, they established metrics to monitor progress and maintain accountability, ensuring that each focus area is thoroughly addressed and aligned with our overarching vision and mission. This has resulted in the proposed plan for which we are soliciting feedback today. The full comprehensive plan is available on the Enrico County Public Schools website for public review. That concludes my overview, and I'm happy to answer any questions or turn the floor over to any speakers. Thank you

[01:09:01] so much, Dr. Hinton. Since it's a public hearing, we'll focus on anybody who would like to give a comment on the public, on the plan, strategic plan. I believe I have an official, if we do have people here, I'll read our official rules of public comment. Anybody? Anybody? All right.

[01:09:30] Well, I will skip reading that page then for you on our rules of public comment. Dr. Hinton, Hinton, I really thank you for your work and your presentation. I know it's been an iterative process, we talked about that with so many things with policy and feedback and staff feedback and stakeholder feedback, and this has been an iterative process as well, and I know that you've made changes with each iteration from a wide group of stakeholders, and so I appreciate that.

[01:09:59] I hope the public will continue to engage in this, even though we didn't have anyone participate in the public hearing. As Dr. Hinton shared at the beginning of her presentation, this is posted on the division webpage and there is a link for feedback. It's been pushed out via ParentSquare and some social media. It's widely available, it's widely accessible, and we really hope our stakeholders who haven't been able to participate in work groups will dig in and comment because this is the direction how we craft the direction forward for the

[01:10:34] division for the next five years. I also want to thank Ms. Kinsella for her work on the prior plan from actually the very start to the completion so thank you for that as well as Mr. Irving's work on this plan serving on the strategic plan committee. All right well that concludes our public hearing on the strategic plan. The next item on the agenda is unfinished business presented by the school board. Colleagues, do you have any unfinished business? Hearing none, the next item is

[01:11:08] new business. Colleagues, do you have new business? Hearing none, I will move to the announcement of upcoming meetings. The next meeting will be held here at 6 30. It is our monthly meeting right here in Newbridge. See you then. This meeting's adjourned.



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