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Henrico County School Board Work Session, Thursday, January 22, 2026

Date Thursday, January 22, 2026
Place Henrico County School Board, Virginia
Length 3h 16m (video)

- Official meeting video (YouTube): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-9E8mJN3Ab8>
- Official meeting portal (Henrico County Public Schools, Diligent Community): <https://henricoschools.community.diligentoneplatform.com/Portal/MeetingTypeList.aspx>

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Speech-to-text: whisper.cpp, model large-v3-turbo. Produced 2026-10-25. Each paragraph starts with its time [HH:MM:SS] in the meeting video.

[00:08:12] Good afternoon. I would like to welcome everyone to the January 22nd, 2026 work session of the Henrico County School Board. The first item on the agenda is the Pledge of Allegiance. I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America, to the Republic which stands as one nation.

[00:08:42] Please remain standing as you are able for a moment of silence. Thank you. You may be seated.

[00:09:04] All right. The first thing on the agenda is the approval of the agenda. Colleagues, is there a motion? I MOVE THAT THE SCHOOL BOARD APPROVE THE AGENDA FOR TODAY'S MEETING.

[00:09:22] MOTION BY MS. KINZELLA. IS THERE A SECOND? SECOND. ALL RIGHT. ALL IN FAVOR SAY AYE. ALL OPPOSED. MOTION CARRIES. THE NEXT ITEM ON THE AGENDA IS A CLOSED MEETING.

[00:09:40] IS THERE A MOTION TO GO INTO CLOSED SESSION? I MOVE THAT THE SCHOOL BOARD GO INTO CLOSED SESSION FOR THE DISCUSSION OF MATTERS COVERED UNDER ITEMS A1, A2, 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 INCLUDING THE EVALUATION OF THE SUPERINTENDENT AND THE REQUEST FOR RELIGIOUS EXEMPTIONS AND RELEASE FROM COMPULSORY ATTENDANCE

THAT WOULD INVOLVE THE DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION CONTAINED IN SCHOLASTIC RECORDS CONCERNING

[00:10:15] INDIVIDUAL STUDENTS AND CONSULTATION WITH STAFF AND SCHOOL BOARD COUNCIL REGARDING ACTUAL OR probable litigation involving a public nuisance where such consultation in an open meeting would adversely affect the negotiation negotiating or litigating posture of the public body motion made by ms shea is there a second second seconded by ms kinsella all in favor say aye aye all opposed the eyes have it we will now go into closed session we will reconvene the work session at the

[00:10:48] conclusion of our closed meeting all right we are back from closed session um colleagues do i have

[01:42:13] A motion to certify the closed session. I move that the school board certify by recorded vote. But to the best of each school member's knowledge, only public business matters lawfully exempted from the open meeting requirements of the Virginia Freedom of Information Act and identified in the motion authorizing the closed meeting were heard, discussed, or considered in the closed meeting.

[01:42:37] Motion made by Mrs. Shea. Do I have a second? Second. Second by Mr. Young. All those in favor? Aye. All those opposed, the motion is passed. The ayes have it. Closed session has been certified.

[01:42:57] Okay. We will now move on to the superintendent's items at this time. Good afternoon, Chair Irving and members of the board. The first recommendation is that the board approve the request for release from compulsory attendance for student case numbers 25-26-RE-8 and 25-26-RE-9 based on bona fide religious beliefs.

[01:43:24] As always, the names of students are protected under the Virginia Freedom of Information Act. Colleagues, do I have a motion for the consideration of requests for religious exemptions from compulsory attendance? I move that the school board approve the request for a religious exemption from compulsory attendance for student case numbers 25-26-RE-8 and 25-26-RE-9.

[01:43:53] Moved by Mrs. Kinsella. Do I have a second? Second. Seconded by Mr. Young. All those in favor say aye. Aye. Aye. All those opposed? The ayes have it. The requests for religious exemption have been approved.

[01:44:11] The next recommendation is for the board to approve the request for release from compulsory school attendance for student case number 25-26-CA-1. Names of students are protected under the Virginia Freedom of Information Act here as well. Thank you. Colleagues, do I have a motion for the consideration of request for release from compulsory school attendance for the students just mentioned by Mrs. Coy. I move that the school board approve the request for release

[01:44:44] from compulsory attendance for student case number 25-26-CA-1. Moved by Mrs. Shea. Do I have a second? Second. Seconded by Mrs. Atkins. All those in favor say aye. Aye. Aye. All opposed? The ayes have it. The request for release from compulsory school attendance has been approved. Mrs. Coy.

[01:45:10] The next item on the agenda is the review of the recommended annual financial plan for FY27, and Mr. John Wack, our Chief Financial Officer, is coming forward to present that plan. As he's doing so, I will note that the recommended financial plan that you will hear about this afternoon reflects a commitment to what matters most, meeting the needs of our diverse student population and providing competitive compensation and resources to our incredible HCPS workforce.

[01:45:39] The budget includes targeted investments for instructional resources and staffing. it addresses operational needs funds for year three of the henrico's cares initiative and the continued expansion of the division's career ladder and opportunity schools initiative as you will hear this afternoon as a reminder i will also just note that the recommended financial plan does not address employee compensation at this time because of the unified pay plan those salary adjustments are considered as part of the broader municipal budget process and with that i'll turn IT OVER TO MR. WACK THANK YOU GOOD AFTERNOON CHAIR IRVING SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS AND MSS COIT

[01:46:18] TODAY I WILL BE PROVIDING AN OVERVIEW OF THE SUPERINTENDENT'S FISCAL YEAR 2027 RECOMMENDED BUDGET HIGHLIGHTING THE PLANNED ADDITIONS TO OUR GENERAL FUND BUDGET WITHIN THE OVERALL PROPOSAL COMPARED TO OUR CURRENT YEAR'S ADOPTED BUDGET AT THIS TIME I'D LIKE TO RECOGNIZE THE EXTRAORDINARY EFFORTS OF OUR BUDGET TEAM INCLUDING OUR DIRECTOR MONIQUE BARNES AS WELL AS AMY BARNES AND MILLA MORRIS THEY WILL PLEASE STAND THANK YOU MILLA AND MONIQUE YOU WILL FIND hard copies of our 132 page budget document at your seats and we are posting the full document

[01:46:52] online this afternoon this presentation represents a brief summary our budget document does include detailed information online items and all of our operating funds as well as our personnel complement and much more information the superintendent has collaborated with the budget team to propose funding priorities for the fiscal year 2027 recommended budget that continue the high quality programming and strong support services our students staff and COMMUNITY DESERVE, THAT REFLECT SCHOOL BOARD PRIORITIES, AND IMPORTANTLY, ARE DIRECTLY ALIGNED WITH THE DIVISION'S STAKEHOLDER DEVELOPED STRATEGIC PLAN JOURNEY TO 2030.

[01:47:28] ALL RIGHT. I'M GOING THE WRONG WAY. I'M GOING THE WRONG WAY. I APOLOGIZE.

[01:47:53] ALL RIGHT. THIS BUDGET PRO PROPOSAL DOES INCLUDE FUNDING FOR STAFFING, PROGRAMMING, SUPPORTS, AND INITIATIVES THAT DIRECTLY ALIGN WITH OUR STRATEGIC PLAN, STRATEGIC FOCUS AREAS, which are academic achievement learning environment physical social emotional and mental health and recruit engage retain and reward staff before we look ahead to next fiscal year it's important to take note of the strides we made this year through the 2026 adopted budget that are positively impacting staff and students in the current school year the fiscal year 2026 budget provides six

[01:48:30] percent raises for eligible staff as well as mark adjustments for over 1 300 positions we expanded our career ladder and added two more opportunity schools at Ratcliffe Elementary in Brooklyn Middle, we added 52 positions at the campus of Virginia Randolph, we increased our ELL teachers complement by 25 to meet new state requirements, and we also converted 150 temporary exceptional ed instructional assistant slots into 100 full-time IA positions. The fiscal year 2027 recommended budget reflects the following notable changes from the current year. Our general fund budget

[01:49:07] is increasing by about 27.7 million dollars or 3.6 percent compared to the current year adopted budget based on the target amount we received. Our debt service budget associated with previously approved capital project debt is increasing by about 3.3 percent. The school nutrition fund is essentially remaining flat with the current year and our state and federal special revenue budgets are increasing by 2.3 percent. Overall the operating budget from all funds is growing by about 3.3 percent AS NOTING THAT OUR FISCAL YEAR 2027 FIGURES DO NOT YET INCLUDE FUNDING FOR PAY RAISES WHICH ARE A BUDGET PRIORITY AND WILL BE CONSIDERED LATER IN THE PROCESS. NOW I WILL SHARE SOME

[01:49:46] OF THE MOST SIGNIFICANT ITEMS PROPOSED IN THE FISCAL YEAR 2027 RECOMMENDED GENERAL FUND BUDGET ORGANIZED BY STRATEGIC FOCUS AREA. I'LL START BY HIGHLIGHTING SOME OF THE MOST NOTABLE ITEMS ASSOCIATED WITH THE ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT STRATEGIC FOCUS AREA. ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNER TEACHERS will be added to continue to work towards meeting new state requirements. We will continue to strengthen our exceptional education supports by adding more teachers and more instructional assistants. There are new positions to support the first year of our Cybersecurity Specialty Center at Henrico High School, and positions are also included to account for additional student capacity being added across the school system with renovations and building expansions.

[01:50:25] Moving to items supporting our learning environment strategic focus area, the budget includes new positions as we open the living building at Wilton Farm. Skilled trade positions have been added to our facilities department to help address heating, cooling, and ventilation needs.

[01:50:41] We are dedicating funds to strengthen our talented facilities team structure to best increase in its demands, and we are planning for operating increases for electricity and other utilities to cover recent year rate increases and account for newly added space across the school system. In support of our continued emphasis on physical, social, emotional, and mental health, MORE COUNSELORS ARE BEING ADDED IN SUPPORT OF THE THIRD YEAR OF THE HENRIKO CARES INITIATIVE.

[01:51:09] WE'VE ALSO ADDED OPERATING FUNDS TO FURTHER EXPAND HENRIKO CARES SUPPORTS NEXT YEAR. THAT WOULD INCLUDE EXPANSION OF TELEHEALTH TO OUR METAL SCHOOLS. AND IT'S ALSO A SPECIALIST POSITION WORKING WITH OUR MICKINNEY-VENTO STUDENTS IS BEING SHIFTED FROM GRANT FUNDS TO OUR GENERAL FUND BUDGET. ALSO LOOKING AT OUR RECRUIT, RETAIN, AND REWARD FOCUS AREA, THE CAREER LADDER INITIATIVE IS EXPANDING WITH PROPOSED WITH THE PROPOSED BUDGET ALLOWING FOR 150 MORE PARTICIPANTS. OUR DIRECTOR OF STUDENT ACTIVITIES CONTRACTS ARE BEING EXTENDED FROM 11 TO 12 MONTHS. FUNDING IS INCLUDED FOR MORE INNOVATIVE TEACHER TRAINING SUCH AS

[01:51:47] SUPPORT TO SUPPORT OUR EFFORTS WITH THE NEXT EDUCATION WORKFORCE AND OUR COST FOR EMPLOYEE HEALTH BENEFITS IS INCREASING AS THE BUDGET ENSURES THAT AS THE EMPLOYER, HCPS IS PICKING UP MOST IF NOT ALL OF THE INCREASES FOR CALENDAR YEAR 2026, SHIELDING OUR EMPLOYEES FROM SIGNIFICANT INCREASES. I JUST WANT TO NOTE AGAIN, AS IN PRIOR YEARS, THE RECOMMENDED BUDGET DOES NOT INCLUDE FUNDING FOR SALARY INCREASES, WHICH WILL BE CONSIDERED LATER UNDER THE COUNTY'S UNIFIED PAY PLAN. THESE PIE CHARTS ILLUSTRATE THE MAJOR REVENUE CATEGORIES OF OUR GENERAL FUND BUDGET. WE CAN SEE THAT THE TARGET INCREASE OF ABOUT \$27.7 MILLION

[01:52:23] DOLLARS MAKES UP THE DIFFERENCE IN FISCAL YEAR 2027, AND THAT WILL LIKELY COME FROM A COMBINATION of state and local funds. These pie charts illustrate our major spending categories in the general fund, and we can see that instruction remains by far the largest portion of our expenditures budget at about 76% in fiscal year 2027. Looking forward to our next steps, this afternoon we are presenting the superintendent's fiscal year 2027 recommended budget, which will be followed by the ensuing significant events. On February 12th, we plan to hold a public hearing on the recommended spending plan at 5 p.m. On February 26th, the school board is scheduled

[01:53:02] TO APPROVE THE BUDGET WITH ANY AMENDMENTS, AND ON APRIL 16TH, AFTER THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS ADOPTS THE OVERALL BUDGET, INCLUDING FUNDS FOR SALARY INCREASES, THE SCHOOL BOARD WILL ADOPT THE FINAL BUDGET. THAT CONCLUDES THE BUDGET OVERVIEW IN SUMMARY, AND I'D BE HAPPY TO ANSWER YOUR QUESTIONS. THANK YOU, MR. WACK. WE APPRECIATE THE PRESENTATION, AS ALWAYS.

[01:53:24] COLLEAGUES, I'M SURE YOU HAVE QUESTIONS. I WILL START WITH MRS. KINSELLA. THANK YOU AND THE TEAM. THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR WORK ON THIS BUDGET. I HAVE TO SAY WE'VE come such a long way in the things that we've been able to do. When I reflect on, you know, the career ladder, I know Mrs. Shea and I just went to the celebration of employees that participated and completed that last night, as well as our certified teacher program. It was just so amazing

[01:53:59] to be able to see how many folks chose to invest in themselves to invest in our students. So very proud to see to have been a part of the career ladder opportunity our opportunity schools ongoing safety enhancements not to mention because it probably should be in here somewhere that for the third consecutive year we are forbes best in state employer and i am certain it's because of the work that everyone in this room has done to expand employee engagement

[01:54:35] recruitment, retention efforts, and make those much-needed compensation adjustments when and as were necessary. So thank you very much for all of that. With all of that said, the priorities for me in this budget, I think my mindset is in Herico schools, doing more with less is not an option.

[01:54:57] I know in some places, and I do appreciate efficiency, but on the school side, doing more with less is not an option. So I wanted to highlight, as you showed on slide six, as we finish our capital projects, I know that we're expanding the programming at both Jackson Davis and Long and Elementary schools, so I wanted to ensure I'm sure we'll have the appropriate staffing for the programs, but also wanted to advocate for additional custodial services in the school in this in those schools given the programming that is going in those schools and

[01:55:37] perhaps advocate for additional custodial services at Holiday Elementary as to the programming that additional programming that school serves having heard it from employees as well as constituents also I know you mentioned recent boundary adjustments I want to say or maybe it's in the last bullet point, but I wanted to specifically request again on the record for the resources, whatever they are, whether it's staff, whatever the resources are to account for and support the

[01:56:13] students and staff at both Hermitage High School and Henrico High School in response to the redistricting efforts that the board just completed. And then let's see, also speaking to the boundary process. It certainly highlighted the need to ensure not only the efficient use of our building capacity, but it also highlighted the functional, how functional is it for those learning and working in those buildings. So to that end, I'm so glad on slide seven

[01:56:47] to see the additional employees for CNM, specifically HVAC, and I'm excited and hopeful that A market analysis has been done as to how much these folks need to be paid so that these positions will not go unfilled.

[01:57:11] Also, excited about the money I'm seeing, additional money from multilingual and special education students. I'd also like to see, as I've heard a lot from counselors across the division, I would like to have funding, firstly, 504 case management.

[01:57:30] I've heard a lot of advocacy to have it removed from counselors' plates, and I support it. So whatever funding is necessary for that, I would appreciate that so that our counselors can spend time with family and with students, counseling on academic progress and all the available pathways academically and career available to our students in Henrico schools.

[01:58:00] And then here's just a list of some other things that I've heard about, whether it's from community members, or folks, employees in and around Henrico schools. I would like for there to be money in the budget for a DLI coordinator, dual language immersion coordinator for the elementary school and of course the future middle school program, and I know there are certain things in the works for that, however, we need additional resources with curriculum and holiday.

[01:58:34] There's too much of a workload. I believe there was a written public comment in the past two months regarding this, so I wanted to make sure that was captured on the record. In addition, I've heard from folks in and around Henrico schools about elementary school science and math coaches, additional coaching, perhaps a sharing of resources that I would like to see funding for.

[01:59:02] In addition, I've heard from students and staff about more support for robotics as well as adding funding for CTE competitions like our SkillsUSA and other competitions that our CTE students participate in.

[01:59:19] And then I've heard advocacy from teachers about remediation funding for our HVA, for For our non-Title I and non-opportunity schools, as teachers in the schools are doing extra work as a lot of the funding has disappeared from ESSER over the years.

[01:59:47] And then lastly, please continue to do economic analysis and adjustments where necessary. I believe that's been huge for us and in a great response to employee voice study that we went through.

[02:00:06] And then last point is I can't wait to see what the raises are. I know that comes later and that's all I have. Thank you. Thank you, Mrs. Kinsella. Next, I'll go to Mrs. Shea. Thank you.

[02:00:22] Apologies that these are my thoughts are in no logical order, but here we go. I think one thing that would be helpful for me when we, when we look at the budget, we know that the majority of our costs are spent on instruction, which is where it should be spent.

[02:00:38] We know the majority of our costs are also spent on personnel, which is where it should be spent. I think it would be helpful for me if it's not too much of a limit and it's probably, it may be in this document already. haven't had time in the 10 minutes to read the whole thing um but to understand in each of those pie wedges like instruction and let me see what some of the other ones are um administration people transportation those sorts of things within those sections what are personnel costs right and what are other costs um I think it would just be helpful to understand what each of those

[02:01:16] pie sec pie wedges look like when we're looking at um personnel versus you know software costs and hardware costs and fuel and that sort of thing i don't need it um itemized to that specificity but just kind of breaking out to personnel versus other in each of those pie wedges i think would be helpful yeah we'll say that so the budget document does it so each each of our categories such as instruction administrative attendance attendance and health those those are subtotals and then we have the individual cost centers within there and within the cost centers we have the line item details how much is personnel salaries benefits and operating costs but we

[02:01:54] we could do a pie chart to show overall um yeah what's personnel versus operating capital excellent well if it's in this i will i will dig in as we just um received it i'll dig in and look at that but i really i really appreciate it that just kind of gives me a on a macro scale kind of a deeper understanding of those wedges. I am kind of piggybacking on Ms. Kinsella's thoughts. So I certainly support adding more HVAC positions. I know we need more support in that area. Are we fully staffed with our current HVAC positions? Do we know? Not fully. Not fully. So as we look at

[02:02:33] that, I just want to make sure we can fill those positions as we add them. So if we're not already filling the positions that we have I want to make sure like Ms. Kinsella said that if we add more positions that we're poised to fill those new positions and our current positions because otherwise it doesn't matter how many positions we add if we can't fill them appropriately it's not going to impact kind of boots on the ground in terms of what's happening in our schools so looking at what do we need to do to be able to fill those positions that we're adding I really

[02:03:09] want to highlight that most or all of the health benefit increases being covered we do that so frequently it's AMA it can be easily overlooked but you know for those who work in the private sector and in other localities that's not the case and that's a huge huge benefit to our employees and so I appreciate us continuing to prioritize that even though it's easy to be overlooked because it's no you know no change or a little change um it's it's a big change on the

[02:03:45] back end in terms of the budget and so I just want to highlight providing that for employees I think it's um I think it's it's really important so thank you um do you know I get every year around this time I get questions from some of our employees who um teach in Henrico but live outside of Henrico and bring their their children with them to be students in Henrico.

[02:04:10] And so I'm wondering if we're going to continue that variance program and covering those costs. Do you know if that is included in this budget as it has been for the past four or five years? So going back several years, we eliminated a lot of fees and we also allowed for tuition waivers for our employees that are fully full-time or permanent part-time. And so those are embedded IN THE BUDGET AND CONTINUE, CONTINUE FORWARD IN THIS PROPOSAL. EXCELLENT. I AM A BIG SUPPORTER OF THOSE. I THINK IT'S THE RIGHT THING TO DO BY OUR EMPLOYEES THAT ARE THE ONES THAT CREATE THE CULTURE AND THE GREAT OUTCOMES IN HENRICO FOR THEIR FAMILIES TO BE ABLE TO BENEFIT FROM IT AND I

[02:04:46] THINK IT'S ALSO A GREAT RETENTION STRATEGY. SO I'M GLAD TO SEE THOSE CONTINUE TO BE INCLUDED. OH, I DID WANT TO LOOK, OH, I'VE HEARD, I KNOW THE SUPERINTENDENT AND I HAVE TALKED A LOT about this over the last six years but I've also heard a lot about the 504 case management I think some of that is organizational as we look at perhaps look into different types of staff overseeing different types of 504s and where they best fit but we know the bulk of that falls on our counselors and that is not direct services to our students and we really want to

[02:05:24] try to meet that 80-20 split um and at some of our schools the number of 504s is way higher than at other schools and um to my knowledge there's not a cap as to how many 504s a counselor can manage as opposed to with IEP case management there is a cap and so um I hear it I hear it quarterly from multiple ones of my schools how important that is so if that is a budget consideration of a need there I think that would be a game changer for our counseling departments who have so many different

[02:06:02] layers that they dig into and I know counseling departments who have you know approached me with it they still want to be involved in the 504 they still want to support the student in the 504 it's the case management aspect so if that needs some budgetary consideration I hear Ms. Kinsella on that as well and then the last thing I just want to highlight is we're adding more ESL positions oh and and converting to full-time for IE IAs again a game changer in terms of retention and doing what's right by our staff so I'm allowed to see that in terms of English language learner teachers

[02:06:41] move towards state compliance I think that bullet is often lost on particular our our broader community who may not understand how those standards have changed over the last couple years while it used to be a bucket of I don't know twenty to a thousand I don't know if that number is right now they're looking specifically at each level you know level one one to twenty level two and we are not in compliance most divisions in I'm looking at dr. Hughes most divisions in Virginia are not in compliance because there's just that's a big change and

[02:07:17] there's uh anyway and so i just wanted to highlight that as additional english language learner staff has been on our budget for many years um and to highlight for our community why that continues to be a top bullet um and you know where we are in henrico we're not just looking at a percentage anymore we're really trying to to meet this proficiency buckets of staffing um which is challenge which is is going to require additional investment to be to be state compliant so I just thought that was an important point to highlight as it's a it's a it's a little bit nuanced but

[02:07:57] again I support I like what I see in this budget I like how responsive it is to what we've heard from our constituents and our staff like for example our DSAs so thank you to you and the THE SUPERINTENDENT AND THE BUDGET TEAM FOR -- WE ALL HAVE A LONG WISH LIST OF THINGS WE WOULD LOVE TO SEE AND I KNOW WE CAN'T DO THEM ALL AND SO IT'S ABOUT NOT ONLY PRIORITIZING BUT YOU KNOW LOOKING AT HOW IT ALL FITS TOGETHER SO THANK YOU FOR THE DEEP DILIGENT WORK THAT IS TO FIGURE OUT

[02:08:31] ALL THOSE PARTS AND I LOOK FORWARD TO CONTINUE CONVERSATIONS WITH OUR COLLEAGUES AS WE LOOK AT priorities as well as our counterparts as we try to get those raises done with the uepp so thank you thank you thank you mrs shea mrs atkins so certainly the budget proposal um it really represents a commitment to stability it is not lost on me i i know i bring it up quite often that covet really did happen our country really was in a crisis and there are pieces that we are still

[02:09:06] recovering from and what this budget is for me and my perception is really centered around stability and increasing upon our resources and when it comes to operations and hvac some of this really is recovery because we were running them hard and so i do like what i see i also urge the division as well as my colleagues to support expanded funding for school nutrition and improve school

[02:09:38] meals specifically funding that accelerates access to fresh health or food in our cafeterias and while in richmond county public schools we do meet all required usda and state standards we really have a chance right now to go beyond the minimum of compliance and really try to shift towards excellence and i think we should do that and it benefits every learner and the research is clear, better nutrition supports better learning, healthier meals are linked to improved focus,

[02:10:14] stronger academic performance, and higher attendance. All of these things we continue to work towards and I just think sometimes it gets lost how important nutrition is. And so whether we're looking at national studies from the National Bureau of Economic Research or any other firms, they show

measurable gains when students have access to healthier school meals and at this point the evidence is no longer emerging it really is established and so i'm hopeful that our division

[02:10:51] will continue to position itself as leaders and you know several years ago hcps was among the original participants in the virginia food for virginia kids initiatives and so loved ones if you're not familiar with that, the Virginia Department of Education had a pilot, and it was designed to expand scratch cooking, local food procurement, along with fresh student informed meals.

[02:11:20] And Henrico County was selected because of our size and because of the commitment that we said we would move towards fresh foods, healthier meals, and that is why we're selected.

[02:11:35] We have several pallets in some schools. At this point, we need it in all of our schools. I think we can do that. We need increased funds to do that. Families and students want cafeterias that serve food that is fresh, that is nourishing, and yes, appealing as well.

[02:11:55] So that means investing in our cafeteria teams, training, equipment, and supply chains in order for them to really you know supply food with real ingredients limiting chemicals and preservatives and all of those things these meals don't just taste better they support health and they support better learning i think it's important that we also continue to get to root causes nutrition is one of them and so please understand this is not just a food issue it's a student

[02:12:30] success issue improved nutrition supports health academic outcomes attendance and long-term wellness and by the way all of those things are our values at henrico county public schools and touch on our strategic goals so again i am hopeful that the division and my colleagues support exploring the full investment needed to expand fresh health forward school meals and including in that funding

[02:13:05] proposal ultimately training as well for our cafeteria workers additionally i am in agreement in increasing resources at henrico high school particularly from the outcomes of our boundary adjustments highland springs high school is an opportunity school there are extra resources there let's get extra resources at henrico high school as well so if families from highland springs high school decide that they do want to attend henrico high school let's make sure that henrico high school is equipped with those additional resources i also am in agreement with

[02:13:43] 504 cases and the loads that our counselors have let's look at funding for that as well and get that into this budget. Chair Irving, that's all that I have. Thank you, Mrs. Atkins. Mr. Young. Hey, thank you, Mr. Wack, for the presentation. My information is probably in no order either, but the budget is responsible. It's targeted investment in our greatest areas, the English language learners, exceptional education, career and technical education, including our new cyber security program at Henrico Haskell. I'm super excited about that.

[02:14:20] I know the wings being built right now, six brand new positions. I know you probably can't tell me what those positions are, but I am curious to one of the DLT members if you could get that to me on where we're expanding that there. But the budget also strengthens student mental health and support services with more counselors and expanded cares and telehealth access to our middle schools now.

[02:14:42] Very proud of that. And then we acknowledging that learning environments matter, right? we invested in HVAC facility staffing and the capacity at the new and renovated schools. I mean, I think all the board members are basically receiving an email about HVAC every week at this point. So the environment does, it does matter what our kids are sitting in and learning. And so every time we get a budget, it's always

responsive. So I want to give kudos to your staff because you guys are always responsive to what's going on in the present time when it comes to allocating funds. And as I move through, I know Ms. Kinsella and Ms. Shea just went with our

[02:15:21] teachers at the career ladder, so these efforts to support and retain our workforce and funding through that and expanding that is amazing as well. Two things that I'm proud of, the opportunity schools are still being funded. Two new opportunity schools, I think it's going to be a fourth year for the original opportunity schools, and I'm extremely proud of that since they're in my district, also in the Rurana district as well. I'm proud of the work to recognize the ADs, moving them from 11 months to 12 months, because they were working 12 months. And for lack of a better word, we're not being compensated for it. And to their own thing, because they can't just

[02:16:00] step away from a school. So I'm proud that we're able to do that for them as well. I do have one question, because everybody has kind of thrown things out. Where do our family advocates fall IN THIS BUDGET? ARE THEY FEDERALLY FUNDED OR ARE THEY IN THE GENERAL FUND? BOTH, BUT SO WE DO HAVE IN OUR GENERAL FUND A COST CENTER FOR FAMILY ENGAGEMENTS BEEN STANDALONE FOR THE LAST FEW YEARS. YEAH, I'D LIKE THOSE DETAILS FOR YOU.

[02:16:25] YEAH, SO TO MY COLLEAGUES, OUR FAMILY ADVOCATES ARE DOING SOME OF THE MOST CRITICAL WORK IN OUR SYSTEM, SUPPORTING FAMILIES IN CRISIS, REMOVING BARRIERS TO LEARNING, AND SERVING AS BRIDGES BETWEEN SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES. THAT LEVEL OF RESPONSIBILITY deserves compensation that reflects the impact of their work. So, colleagues, I definitely would love some support around what we can do to raise the pay of our family advocates.

[02:16:51] Every single school in my district has a family advocate, and I know the work that they do after school as well as before school and during school. So, if we can look into any way to, even if it's next year, right, like any way to kind of pinpoint the work that our family advocates do in our schools. I mean, even tomorrow, they will be distributing food going into the weekend for families in need. So just want to highlight the necessity of what they do. And maybe we should start looking into what they're being compensated for. Because I was almost shocked when I saw someone apply and they came back to me with the compensation. So that's

[02:17:29] been on my radar for quite some time. Definitely want to throw my support behind getting additional resources at Henrico, as well as Hermitage with the new moves. I think that'll be amazing. Outside of that, I think our colleagues kind of touched on everything else. No need to kind of be the dead horse up here, but I support every single thing that my colleagues said today up here. And Mr. Chair, it's back on you. Thank you. Chair Irving, I have a redirect when appropriate.

[02:17:54] Sure. You can take it now and then I'll go afterwards. I just want to support Mr. Young and his requests i think that um well not i think i would like to see in this proposed budget an increase for family advocates as well i'd like to better understand what their current salary is aligned with they are still operating as if we are in a crisis because when you think about recovery or post when it comes to food nutrition and wellness it is a continuum that's very different

[02:18:31] from academics and so i would like to see in this proposed budget an increase for our family advocates as well thank you mrs atkins um so thank you miss thank you colleagues thank you mr whack for the presentation and your team uh we appreciate you all all the work that you guys do So I want to look at some things in here, the operating fund summary, if we could.

[02:19:01] So, you know, I'm just a simple school board member, and I sometimes have a hard time looking at revenue statements, especially as it pertains to money that comes in from the state. But my cursory understanding is that when we pass these budgets, we do so with the amount of money that we expect to receive from the state, because we can't ultimately know what their budget's going to be because it doesn't go into effect generally until after we have to set ours.

[02:19:25] AND I KNOW THAT OFTENTIMES WHEN THE NEW FISCAL YEAR HITS, WE END UP WITH MORE MONEY FROM THE STATE THAN WE EXPECT. DO YOU HAPPEN TO KNOW OFF THE TOP OF YOUR HAND HOW MUCH EXTRA WE RECEIVED IN THE LAST FISCAL YEAR? SO THE FISCAL YEAR THAT ENDED JUNE 30TH, 2025, I BELIEVE OUR GENERAL FUND REVENUES CAME IN ABOUT \$30 MILLION OVER THE BUDGETED AMOUNT. SO THAT DID ADD TO the Henrico County general fund balance. And in the current year they are also I would say they're conservatively budgeted the amount of state aid for education I would expect will exceed by many

[02:20:04] millions in the current year. So you said the the amount was about 30 million and and I'm noticing on here that our total increase in dollar change will be about 31 million 27 million for general funds um so it's just something that I'm thinking about um I I appreciate the the DSA contract change I I voice and my colleagues have said those folks work tirelessly for our divisions that job super demanding especially if you have children it's hard to keep folks I think that we um are doing right by them and the students that they serve by by making them 12-month employees uh the health

[02:20:43] care costs um again I'm I'm stating this because it cannot be overstated health care costs generally in the United States, increased from anywhere between 8% and 9% annually for employers. And if you look at how much you spend on health care, I don't know if anybody looks at their W-2 statements to see how much you spend. I do, for example, because I actually switched to our health care plan last year and I saved \$3,000 compared to my day-to-day employers. And if I'm saving \$3,000 and I'm spending anywhere between \$5,000 to \$6,000 on my health care, an 8% to 9%

[02:21:21] increase is a lot of money. That's hundreds of dollars over the course of a year. And when people look at compensation, they just think, oh, you know, my pay. But if you're paying more for your health care, that's reducing your pay. So by covering these costs increase, which are not insignificant year over year, we are actively giving our employees more money than they would have otherwise. And I think that's hard to understand when you just look at your statement and you're saying, oh, well, my raise is this much. Why didn't I get a bigger one? Well, you actually did because you need to factor in the other cost savings that we're giving you and your family over time, which is healthcare is a significant increase. And, and, you know, the way that we

[02:21:58] set our, our rates and our deductible and our total compensation over the course of the year and how much you have to spend, it's significantly lower than other divisions that saves you hundreds to thousands of dollars a year. And it's, it's worth, um, recognizing that that is compensation, even if it doesn't feel like it in the moment, um, the skilled trades, you know, we need more people, plain and simple. I actually liken the situation to the bus drivers, right? And we showed with the bus drivers that if you just pay people more, you will fill the roles. It really

[02:22:35] is simple sometimes. And so I would like us to have that focus when we're going into these conversations about how do we fill these roles? Well, it's probably because we're not actually paying people enough for the amount that they could earn in the private sector, and then advertising our great benefits

package that we have. And maybe that can have, you know, a similar effect to what we did with the bus drivers we we can solve these things we don't just have to you know beat our heads against the wall all the time um electricity costs i think this gets lost sometimes everything is becoming more expensive electricity especially um you know we worry about

[02:23:12] data center development and whatnot and rightfully so and they're not you know they use a lot of electricity but we also have increased residential usage of electricity we increase our buildings when we open them up on weekends, that's electricity that we're spending on that we would not factor in otherwise. And something that I would like us to explore as a division, and it wouldn't be a piece of the operating budget or the general fund, would be looking at a study of how assessing our buildings and which ones can we add solar to. Because solar, you can make a cost-benefit analysis of, right, we are using municipal bonds, which we have a quadruple AAA rating, so we should have the

[02:23:50] lowest interest rates possible on those things. They're also tax-free coupon payments for anybody who lives in Henrico County who wants to purchase them. So it's a good investment opportunity for our people. And I think it's also a good investment opportunity for us where what is the break-even cost of installing these solar via debt payments at these low interest rates? And how much does that offset our electricity costs moving into the future in buildings where it makes sense and we know that they're going to be there for a while and the roofing conditions can handle the panels.

[02:24:19] But I think it's certainly worth looking at. And I also want us to keep in consideration that in July 4th of this year, federal tax credits for solar, especially for our buildings, expire. And if we don't lock in specific PPA rates, which is power purchase agreement rates at lower figures, we're actually missing out on a lot of money in the long term that we could be using to offset our electricity costs, which are only going to go up. They're not going to go down, at least for the foreseeable future.

[02:24:51] So how do we look at this from a responsible, holistic lens of saving us money in the long run on our budget and not just thinking, all right, well, this is enough for a cost, but over the next decade, does this save us money? And, you know, I think it probably ends up that it would.

[02:25:08] So that's something that I would like us to explore. And, you know, maybe that's a tandem project with finance and facilities. And another thing that I want us to think about, and I was having a conversation with one of my colleagues today, and we were talking about screen time usage with students and how we used to have textbooks and how textbooks came with problem sets and then they came with test banks.

[02:25:32] And they came with this whole system that teachers used and it was all created for them and you could augment it as was necessary, but it didn't, it took a lot of work off the teacher, which could then be used for grading and assessment and spending more time with students rather than spending a ton of time having to create material that may not even be the same as everybody in your department or across buildings across the county.

[02:25:55] and it's a lot of time on teachers and I think that's the thing you know above and beyond pay that they care about the most is their time and through the budget could we look at opportunities to purchase you know instructional kits to help reduce the amount of time that our staff are spending having to make things when these things exist and there's professionals who make them and they're well done and they're aligned with state standards and they check all the boxes that we need to from a professional

and, you know, lens. And I think that's, that's worth exploring because I think, you know, the cost trade-off and retaining our teachers would be, would be

[02:26:35] significant. You know, I want to give a shout out to the IAs for planning time that have allowed a lot of our staff to have more planning time when they've been used appropriately. I think that's been a worthwhile investment and I hope we continue more of it. And the last thing would just be, you know, what Mrs. Shea said about the cost breakdown in the presentations. I think that, know it is in the books but making it accessible to the people who watch these meetings and showing a more detailed breakdown in the presentation I think is something that I would support and I think other colleagues would support as well and perhaps something that we can include in the future so that people can really see well this is instruction and what is the breakdown of how

[02:27:13] much is spent where um but I appreciate everything you guys do and we threw a lot at y'all and you know we're thankful to have you could I could I redirect for of course of course um you know so this might be a question for Dr. Hughes not to put you on the spot or Miss Coy filling in um you know talking about um curriculum resources so it was my it's my understanding which I could be wrong that we have a pretty robust curriculum team who um like particularly with elementary school huge lift in terms of aligning the curriculum and but in doing that has provided

[02:27:52] this resource bank of these curriculum materials for our teachers that they can um use and adapt just like um Mr. Irving was saying um similarly with the the VLA um that was almost like drinking from the fire hose there were so many resources um but we also have a lot of that um so I know at elementary there's a robust library digital library of resources is that correct um and and do we have the same thing at secondary in terms of you know for our various um uh departments if

[02:28:31] you will no not yet can you hear me now i can um yes we do have resources in secondary as well that supplement the curriculum of course those resources vary per subject uh area and some subject areas that are certainly more robust than others but we try and have a core curriculum for all of our courses and then supplemental resources that um are available for the teachers so that they don't spend time searching for things on their own excellent so so so my understanding are some of those are subscriptions and things we purchase from the outside and some of those things are

[02:29:07] things that your team on teaching and learning really works to develop we have some internal curriculum writers during the summer that some of our teachers work but always expanding that library that's correct so uh okay thank you so much colleagues all right well thank you for your time um mrs corey wonderful uh the next items on the agenda are policy related and are for review at this meeting and seeking the board's approval of the proposed changes at this evening's monthly

[02:29:41] meeting the first policy is a recommendation to retire policy p1-02 purposes of henrico county public schools as an institution and include the relevant language from that policy into the newly revised P1-01 goals of education as they pertain to individuals. Colleagues, do we have any questions or discussions or comments on either the policy retirement or the revision? Hearing none. The last item presented to the board today is a presentation update on Opportunity Schools and as the team is

[02:30:19] coming to the podium I'll just note that today's presentation will provide some context for the initial development of the effort we'll highlight some of the successes and lessons learned and some of the considerations as we contemplate next steps as Mr. Wack noted the FY27 budget includes a fourth year of funding for that those original opportunity schools as currently structured and so I will turn it over to Dr.

Grant and the team for the presentation thank you and good afternoon chair irving members of the board miss coy today my colleagues and i will provide an update on the henrico county public schools opportunity school

[02:30:57] initiative the opportunity schools initiative is directly aligned to our journey to 2030 strategic focus area of recruit engage retain and reward staff ensuring that every student would benefit from benefit from the support and expertise of staff who are valued recognized and well compensated opportunity schools serve as a shining example of why hcps has been consistently designated

[02:31:33] as an employer of choice fostering supportive engaging and rewarding workplaces our update we'll begin with a look back at the staffing challenges atps face in 2022 followed by the creation of the opportunity schools model how the model was evolved and where the initiative stands today the presentation will conclude with key considerations that will guide the future direction of opportunity schools i will now turn the presentation over to kenya jackson talent Acquisition Ambassador and Anne-Marie Seely, Director of School Quality.

[02:32:13] Good evening. To better understand the persistent challenges prior to the launch of the Opportunity Schools Initiative, let's take a step back and review the trends that were emerging at that time. Division-wide data from 2020 through 2022 reveals how vacancy rates steadily increased over this time period in the midst of the COVID-19

[02:32:44] pandemic in 2021 the overall vacancy rate was just two percent by 21 22 that figure more than doubled to five percent and in 2022 23 it climbed again to seven percent while these percentages may appear modest at the division level they represented a significant increase in the number of classrooms without permanent teachers more importantly schools that had been traditionally hard to staff

[02:33:17] bore a disproportionate share of these vacancies with some experiencing double-digit vacancy rates as vacancies rose provisionally licensed teachers became an increasingly important part of staffing across the division. In 2021, HCPS employed approximately 200 provisionally licensed teachers representing about 6% of the teacher workforce. By 21-22, that number rose to 250 teachers,

[02:33:50] or 7%, and in 22-23, the number grew to 382, or 11%. While the use of provisionally licensed teachers ensured that classrooms were covered it also introduced new complexities for instructional quality and support the presence of provisionally licensed teachers was most concentrated in schools already struggling with high vacancy rates these educators often enter the profession with strong commitment but require significant mentoring coaching and professional development to reach

[02:34:28] full effectiveness this dynamic compounded challenges to instructional consistency and anticipated demands on principals and experienced teachers to provide guidance and support these trends make clear that staffing challenges could not be solved by numbers alone to better understand what would really would truly drive teacher recruitment and retention particularly in schools most affected by vacancies and provisional licensure, we turn directly to our

[02:35:01] educators. As part of the division's career ladder work, HCPS conducted a series of focus groups on recruitment and retention in hard-to-staff schools. Six focus groups were held with elementary, middle, and high school teachers from a mix of both hard-to-staff and non-hard-to-staff schools.

[02:35:23] teachers consistently identify three working conditions that matter most across all schools appropriate demands on teachers time strong school and division leadership and effective support for

behavior management when asked about compensation teachers emphasize two key points salary increases for all staff promote retention and recruitment and working conditions in hard to staff schools warrant differential pay for teachers in hard to staff schools a third theme emerged salary

[02:36:00] increases alone are not enough they must be paired with additional strategies to strengthen recruitment and retention the feedback from teachers made it clear that compensation alone would not solve the challenges in hard to staff schools what was needed was a comprehensive model that combined financial incentives with embedded supports this became the foundation for the opportunity schools initiative building upon the feedback opportunity schools were designed

[02:36:33] with a layered set of supports and incentives with a vision of the initial three-year designation to directly address staffing challenges and provide an appropriate milestone to comprehensively assess progress licensed instructional personnel were provided a three thousand dollar annual incentive supplement acknowledging the additional demands of teaching in these settings and reinforcing the division's commitment to equitable compensation each school was assigned a full-time

[02:37:07] teacher fellow to allow instructional coaching for new and provisionally licensed teachers and professional learning support for all staff to reduce the strain of daily coverage schools were also given an additional full-time permanent substitute teacher ensuring greater stability in classrooms at the secondary level schools were supported with an additional associate principal and at the elementary level a student support interventionist strengthening building operations and discipline management. Opportunity schools were equipped with tailored professional learning

[02:37:47] opportunities specific to licensure status and instructional needs so that teachers receive targeted development rather than one-size-fits-all training. Principals themselves participated in professional learning tailored to the unique demands of leading an opportunity school, reinforcing leadership capacity together these elements formed a comprehensive framework pairing financial incentives with embedded supports to stabilize staffing strengthen instructional consistency and improve the overall teaching and learning environment

[02:38:26] in hard to staff school locations with the opportunity school model established the next step was to determine how to identify where these supports would have the greatest impact. To guide this process, a combined rate that measured both vacancies and numbers of provisionally licensed teachers was developed. Schools with combined rates of 25% or more were prioritized as these settings faced the most significant challenges in maintaining stable staffing.

[02:39:03] this formula provided a fuller picture of staffing instability than looking at either factor alone ensuring that the designation of opportunity schools was grounded in a transparent data-driven process in spring 2023 the first cohort of opportunity schools was established the nine schools comprising the first cohort are shown here since its launch the opportunity schools model has grown in both scope and support a key innovation has been the establishment of

[02:39:42] principal meetings designed specifically for opportunity schools these sessions provide a forum for solution-based dialogue peer collaboration and targeted district support ensuring leaders receive practical strategies aligned to their unique challenges another development has been the increase in the annual incentive supplement for licensed instructional staff. The stipend began at \$3,000 in 23-24, rose to \$3,300 in 24-25, and increased again to \$3,500

[02:40:21] in 25-26. This stipend increases were adjusted annually and proportionately to each year's adopted annual financial plan finally the cohort itself has expanded in 2425 holland springs elementary joined the initiative followed by brooklyn middle and ratcliffe elementary in 2526.

[02:40:46] these additions demonstrate how hcps continues to refine and extend the opportunities schools model to meet staffing challenges with the opportunity schools model established and expanded the question becomes what impact has it had to answer that we turn to the most recent data and feedback which show both the progress achieved and the challenges that remain looking at the division as a whole

[02:41:21] vacancy rates have decreased since the launch of opportunity schools in 23-24 the division-wide vacancy rate reached six percent and remained at that level in 24-25. By 25-26, the rate declined to four percent. This sustained improvement demonstrates that the target supports provided to opportunity schools are contributing to broader stability across HCPS. Provisionally licensed teachers have been a critical part of HCPS staffing, particularly during the height of vacancy

[02:41:59] challenges. By 22-23, that number grew to more than 382 teachers, or roughly 11 percent. In 23-24, that total peaked at 477, accounting for 13 percent of the teacher workforce. Since then, the division has seen steady improvement. In 24-25, the number declined to 409 teachers, or 11 percent and in 25-26 it dropped again to 372 teachers or 10 percent these reductions reflect

[02:42:38] hcps's commitment to strengthening licensure pathways mentoring and professional development particularly through the i teach initiative ensuring that more classrooms are staffed by fully licensed educators while continuing to support those entering the profession.

[02:42:58] When we compare Opportunity Schools in 2022 to their status in 2025, the impact of the initiative becomes clear. Across the cohort, many schools have experienced significant reductions in teacher vacancy rates, while others show mixed progress with improvements in some areas and ongoing challenges in others provisionally licensed teacher rates also vary across the cohort

[02:43:31] in some cases the proportion of provisionally licensed teachers has decreased while in others the rates have increased taken together these comparisons highlight both the successes achieved and the areas where continued investment and refinement are needed the opportunity schools initiative has stabilized staffing in many of our hardest to staff locations but the data also underscore the importance of sustaining supports and adapting strategies to meet evolving needs

[02:44:06] good evening knowing the valuable insight focus groups provided as we were developing the opportunity schools initiative we once again conducted focus groups with teachers who have been at the original opportunity schools all three years teachers described their experience with words like exhilarating needed and supported while the financial incentive was important they emphasized that students and colleagues remained the primary reason for staying workload supports such as teacher fellows permanent substitutes and student support interventionists were seen as critical to reducing the daily strain and stabilizing classrooms professional learning was valued

[02:44:46] especially when tailored to licensure status and instructional needs though teachers noted the additional need for more differentiation. Overall, teachers stressed the importance of maintaining both the financial incentives and the embedded supports to sustain progress and stability. Principals from elementary, middle, and high schools also shared their perspectives through the focus group structure. They described the Opportunity School's experience as supportive, positive, and rewarding, though not

without challenges. They identified the teacher fellow role and the additional associate principal as especially valuable supports. Financial incentives

[02:45:22] were acknowledged as helpful for recruitment, but principals emphasized that retention is driven by the embedded structures that reduce workload and strengthen instructional leadership. Professional learning for both teachers and principals was seen as contributing to academic gains in poor subjects. Principals strongly recommended maintaining the teacher fellow and additional associate principal roles as key elements of success moving forward. Over the past three years, we have seen significant progress in the opportunity schools, and we also see there is more work to do.

[02:45:54] therefore we are recommending one additional year for our current opportunity schools during the fourth year division staff will review data in order to plan for transition from the opportunity schools initiative this includes potentially determining off-ramp supports that may be differentiated or reduced based on the needs of the school additionally staff will look at data to determine if there is a need to extend the support to additional schools the leaders and staff at the opportunity schools have maximized the additional support afforded them with this initiative and we look forward to our continued work with them at this time we are happy to answer

[02:46:28] any questions you may have thank you all for the for the presentation um a ton of wonderful info um i will start with my colleagues uh and start with mrs Kinsella thank you i appreciated this update so much having watched it um from its inception having gone through the pandemic and watch the vacancy rates increase watch the provisionally licensed folks increase as well

[02:47:01] one of the key things for me is is just really the the intentional just the intentional way we are having the focus groups and and Dr. Cashwell has so many different superintendent committees right to just gather the feedback gather the feedback much like our students our teachers need to be supported as well right like what resources do they need to be successful so I'm fascinated by the next steps and love the fact that we're extending it to a fourth year

[02:47:38] and I hope that the communication of whatever the off-ramp looks like most importantly employees who have been depending on this additional stipend if you will have plenty of time to adjust because that's a lot of money to adjust to um but just thank you for all of your work and i so appreciate this presentation and the progress that we're making um in our schools that that need it most chair thank you mrs kinsella uh next i'll go to mrs shea thank you um like ms kinsella said

[02:48:16] excited about this um update i remember the ins we remember the inception of the program and And I think the Opportunity Schools, it's not about investing more, it's about investing right. It's about investing correctly. And I think that the team has really taken time through focus groups to hear from teachers and administrators, like, what's the need?

[02:48:39] What's the difference maker? And so if I'm hearing from you correctly, kind of summing it up, it's both the financial incentive, but really, so that's important, but really leaning in on those extra supports for our teachers. that not only take things off their plates, but support them in, you know, provisionally licensed are going to be teachers within their first three years, right? And those first three years are tough.

[02:49:03] And so having the right supports that they can grow as a professional in their skills and their confidence so that they know, like, I can do this and I'm good at this and I want to hang around because, to use Ms. Atkins' word from the budget, stability matters when we look at school community and we look at

continuity for kids and so I'm excited to see these outcomes I did kind of a back the envelope calculation and it looks like overall our vacancy rate in these nine schools on average has decreased about seven to eight percent and that's significant

[02:49:37] right that's significant when we look at stability and having the master teachers down the hall that just have been at it so long that they've seen everything and you just know when you have a tough day because every teacher has tough days you can walk down the hall and say what would you do here right and that's some of the greatest supports for our teachers so thank you for this initiative I look I look forward to as we figure out I not we but as you all figure out what schools to continue with supports and what to offer them do we know in

[02:50:14] approximate timeline for when that evaluation for kind of ongoing cohorts will be made we're thinking about coming back to you all in early fall to lay out a plan of how we're going to start off ramping or adding additional if needed excellent that's that's helpful and you know part of me feels sad to think of schools you know off-ramping from this but also excited because it It shows that it was successful, right, that they've, and so kind of mixed emotions there,

[02:50:50] but excited about the program overall, excited about the differences we're seeing in terms of staff retention. But we know that also plays into student outcomes, not just academic, but also social and behavioral and all of that. So just tremendous job to the team to identifying what the difference makers are and continue to be and making adjustments as we go appropriately to to maximize this investment in these supports

[02:51:18] so thank you thank you mrs shea i'll now go to mrs atkins so thank you so much for the purposeful work these are intentional actions so that you can customize collaboration one of the things so often i've seen in the past is when pursuing excellence folks are pursuing it individually but what Opportunity School does is bring in more resources and learn how to work collaboratively.

[02:51:52] And then you take all these different puzzle pieces of experience and put them together and have a full picture. And that's the start, having the full picture of how do we help these young minds see their own potential first. And it's unique with the Opportunity School because you have the collaboration you have the additional resources from leadership to counselors to maybe even ias depending upon the unique unique needs of that building and that's what makes opportunity

[02:52:26] schools efficient so now i'm going to look at some other things i have on my checklist that kind of just is at top of mind for me um let's see here so one of the things i did have a question on is how are we capturing the experiences in each of the schools so that we can use those as training modules for future schools sure I will say one of the best ways that we do this is when we meet with the principals and starting this year we also meet with the associate principals we do that after the

[02:53:05] principals meetings and associate principals meetings each month we are having them share experiences like tell us about how you're using your teacher fellow or you're bringing them a problem of practice and and there's people in the room from a variety of departments and we're collaboratively solving that problem with them so they're hearing about each other's experiences they're also seeing each other's experiences because one of the things that we ask them to do is visit each other and so we don't schedule that we did that the first year where we went together as a group and that became more of an imposition than it was a benefit so this year

[02:53:43] what we've said is visit your your partner school maybe your feeder school but another opportunity school and spend some time with the principal and talking about the challenges that you guys are facing and folks have really learned a lot especially visiting their feeder schools and seeing the the things that they're doing that they might carry on to the next school and then they come back to the monthly meetings and they share that with us what did you learn so what we ask them is what is what did you leave what is something you left that principal with and what is something that you learned from that principal and that has been really valuable in

[02:54:19] them seeing day to day how the opportunity schools are using the supports that they have and so it's wonderful because essentially you'll get to understand what you heard what you saw and then see if it follows through in practice is it memorialized anywhere other than just the conversation themselves so what's exciting is different schools are unique is it captured somewhere that you could pick up and read or video or how how is it captured so folks in the future

[02:54:55] that may become or have the wonderful chance to have these resources labeled as opportunity schools if they picked up a packet or what is the introduction from history that you could use in the present and continue to shape and mold this initiative?

[02:55:15] So we definitely have meeting minutes that we capture when we're discussing at the end of each principal's meeting. But then we also have artifacts. So when we're asking the schools to problem solve, we're asking them to share resources. So if we say, hey, our problem of practice this month is around staffing.

[02:55:32] Let's share our questions, our interview questions. So the principals are coming with interview questions and interview scenarios. And how are you interviewing folks when you're looking at a pool that's different than some of your partner schools or some of the other schools?

[02:55:47] So we are also gathering artifacts that then we can share amongst the principals and the associate principals as we're solving the problem of practice. Perfect. Also, I just want to let you know I appreciate setting the tone in your presentation with understanding the challenge. Often times I hear staff talk about receiving new initiatives and new tasks and all these things that's on top of their plate. But I love the fact that you start with let's first understand the challenge instead of diving into solutions

[02:56:25] and work to fix something and not really understand what you're fixing from the jump. So I do appreciate that one thing i wanted to share was i received feedback around opportunity schools and particularly just the label itself sometimes sounds like a deficit label if you're familiar with that term i don't want to describe it so with that being said i wonder if the division ever looked into alternative naming or alternative labels whether it's beacon schools or whatever

[02:56:58] you know has that ever been a conversation with the division i don't remember that we played around with different names and how we came up with opportunity schools i wonder if we could just take a look and explore and see if there are some other names i say that because opportunity schools is now established i'm wondering if we could transition it to something else that's just for your consideration I think it was valid in its infancy now we're now at teenager stage and

[02:57:32] I'm wondering with that progression is it time to change the name it's a success and I'll leave that there um and then let's see I am interested in a deeper understanding of I think you used the term off-

ramp uh i prefer transitioning and so i want a deeper understanding of that and what does that look like i know we don't have it today but i i i heard you say the fall i'd love for the board to

[02:58:07] get something a little bit sooner than that because of the implications of salaries as well as the implication of resources are these resources going to have to go to a different school are they going to shift and move into a different position a different location all of those things i think getting an update just a little bit sooner in the fall wherever you are at that point that's great but before i think is is really important because i think the board may have some guidance on how to transition versus just here's the date i i think we should avoid coming back in the fall

[02:58:45] and saying here's the date. I'm going to be real clear with that. And then I had a kudos tailoring the development for leaders uniquely was a game changer. That's the feedback I received. Oftentimes when you're going for PD, everyone's getting the same training. But when you're a success school, you're getting it uniquely to you and then you're sharing the collaborative experiences. So kudos for that i'm ecstatic about the success um that we've seen so far particularly in fairfield

[02:59:24] and varina i know it's going to be expanded i know it's going to do well and i think it'll be a model for other divisions as well so thank you so much that's all i have chair irving thank you mrs atkins uh mr young yeah thank you um everyone for the presentation um opportunity schools have proven um they work especially in stabilizing our staffing I do have a couple of questions, I want to play devil's advocate just a little bit here, and I'm sure we have something that we can offer here.

[02:59:56] How many teachers have left opportunity schools to go to non-opportunity schools in this last three year span? So since the program launched, 51% of our classroom teachers have remained at the same opportunity school as compared to 60 percent of our classroom teachers who have remained at a non-opportunity school and so that difference or the loss could have been attributed to

[03:00:28] promotional changes um transfers separations retirements um let me get it right 51 remained at the same opportunity school right and then 60 was the number for the non-opportunity schools correct and then um is there a transition from let's say east end schools to the western schools when we're looking at the the 60 i want to know where the 60 is is it 60 leaving eastern henrico or is the 60 we're seeing just a more of an even spread across the county i think i don't have the

[03:01:06] specific data you know in front of me i think typically our our teachers who transition from non-opportunity schools transition to other non-opportunity schools as opposed to um our teachers transitioning from opportunity schools to non-opportunity schools thank you thank you for that and then if you're a new teacher to the profession or career switcher like what's what what percentage would you give it that they start their careers at opportunity schools or something like that if they're a career switcher or brand new to the teaching profession so division so

[03:01:42] division-wide there is a higher increase of provisionally licensed teachers i think that trend is growing and will likely continue to grow with the alternative pathways i think the vacancy rate is what stabilizes the amount of provisionally licensed teachers coming in and so when those vacancy rates are higher you know it will result to a higher number of provisionally licensed teachers but with our teacher licensure cohort that we have in partnership with iTeach we are able to ensure that they are getting those resources to develop their pedagogical skills

[03:02:22] very quickly and become very effective we find that a lot of our newly hired teachers the first question that they ask is what are the supports available to me at the school and so when we can say you know resources such as you will have a teacher fellow there's an additional associate principal there's an additional permanent sub or student support interventionist we find that that tends to be very appealing to our newly highly candidates yeah i like i like that response because i'm not so sure we should be off-ramping board um i think we should stay the course um with

[03:03:00] this because it's not only beneficial to our students but it sounds like it's also beneficial to brand new teachers to the profession and so i'm concerned because i'm looking at the provisioning license numbers in 2025 i'm concerned because i'm looking at vacancy rates in 2025 and then i hit a word off ramp and it's no knock on anybody here but i just think that this needs to be continued until we figure it out just a little bit more because it looks like we're making extreme progress and i hate to see that progress cut off when the results are improving but it's still not where we want them and i think i can speak collectively for everyone so i just would like

[03:03:36] to maybe have some more conversation with board members maybe we pause but that word off-ramp or or not continuing this i am fearful that if some of these schools on this list loses this or is off-ramp that um that they would be in dire need more so than they are now but every principal i talk to loves the Opportunity Schools. They love the Teacher Fellow. They love it. So just for my colleagues, you know, just talking to you all, I don't know if the appropriate word right now is the off-ramp because this thing is really, really good and it's going in the right direction. I hate

[03:04:14] to see us change course with something that we haven't perfected just yet. So when we come back in the fall, you know, I do want to see what you have to offer. But I also, I know we can't, we don't place teachers in schools they are hired directly at the schools but i do think that we could put our best teacher fellows our best math coaches our best reading coaches the best people that we have the central office staff in these schools like the best of the best need to go into our highest need schools um what we can control that i know we can't control where a teacher class um we we went through that already but having the best math and reading coaches and the teacher

[03:04:50] fellows i think all of our teacher fellows are actually amazing um the ones that i've met um but we're meeting the challenge head on. I appreciate the presentation. Once again, no off ramp and revamp. Let's get better with that. Okay. Mr. Chair. Thank you, Mr. Young. I echo the thanks for the presentation from my colleagues. I'm being mindful of the nightly meeting at 6:30 and we'll try to keep my remarks pretty brief. I think I look at all of this somewhat differently

[03:05:25] than many of my colleagues do i think that the the framework is somewhat paradoxical because if it works and you get down to the vacancy rates and the provisionally licensed rates that we're looking for the extra pay goes away the extra supports may go away but then if people leave because the extra pay goes away because that's that's a decent decrease in somebody's family budget do these schools just end up in the exact same position but then they will have to wait a time period before they can even be added back again and then at such point you know i mean i

[03:06:04] ideally this program doesn't exist because you have the vacancy rates at such a level where you don't need this and so for me i i think it's it's challenging because you give these supports and then if you take them away and people leave and you create the exact same problem it becomes cyclical and i don't think you know that's what any any of us really want and ideally what the program is not supposed to be.

The other thing that I look at is the then and now. And, you know, we use 2022 and 2025. Well, the division wide vacancy rate was 7% in 2022. And now it's 4%. So

[03:06:41] it means it's gone down by 3%. But I think compositionally, when we look at this, you know, it's hard to tell if this is correlation or causation on the part of the opportunity schools, because if the division wide vacancy rate declined by definition, the schools with the highest vacancy rates were contributing the most to the division-wide vacancy rate. And so through natural passage of time, more people entering teaching again after the pandemic, did the opportunity schools do this or did we just do this through natural effect of, you know, we've seen behavioral reductions over

[03:07:17] time over this time period? Did it just happen naturally because more people came in the division and then those schools had the most vacancies? So by definition, they were the ones that were hiring. And I don't think that we can say one way or another, you know, did this program cause that or was it just something that happened?

[03:07:35] And, you know, I think for me, I want to be, I want to have humility and not just assume that I know the answer. And so I look at it through that lens because the provisionally licensed rates, that's, it's essentially a wash. They're basically the same as they were in 2022.

[03:07:52] The vacancy rates have declined, but like I said, that could be compositional and a larger division artifact of just, you know, math of people coming in and the schools with the highest vacancies being reduced because of that. So I'm unsure. And then, you know, I think it would be a mistake to say that when students, because I've heard this mentioned, when students switch schools, that they're losing these supports.

[03:08:15] But by definition, if they're going to a school that's not an opportunity school, then that school has the resources and the supports that we're trying to give to the opportunity school to reach and level them out. So I don't think that's a loss. It's just them going to an environment that we're trying to create at the schools that they were leaving.

[03:08:34] So I, you know, I think a thing can be well-intentioned, but also is it doing the thing that we want it to do? And I'm, you know, I am unsure, and I don't want to say definitively that I know one way or another, and it's worth looking at, but I do think that it's, you know, I come in with questions rather than just being sure of what a thing is. That's, that's what I have.

[03:08:58] Thank you folks for, for hearing us out and answering questions in the presentation. Thank you. That last presentation concludes items presented by the superintendent. Okay. Colleagues, we will now move to unfinished business. Do we have any unfinished business?

[03:09:20] Hearing none, we will move on to new business. Colleagues, do we have any new business that we wish to present to the board? I do, Chair. Yes. Colleagues, as we look ahead to 2026, I want to share a few items for your consideration.

[03:09:36] I also welcome your thoughts in this moment or at a future meeting along with the message for Varina, Sanson, Highland Springs and beyond. First, we know that civic engagement is critical for our students. I would like for us at some point in 2026 to engage in a discussion on African-American studies. I also would like for us to have a discussion and entertain the idea of adding a voter registration page or link to our website as well.

[03:10:09] Also, I just want to share with you I continue to closely follow legislation in addition to our legislative priorities that we've already set. I want to thank Ken and several others for their advocacy work already. This session really does have some bills that could have a meaningful impact on schools in Virginia of course that includes Henrico County so I just wanted to share a few of them so that they're on your radar if you're interested. Senate Bill 66 that would allow localities with voter approval to implement additional sales tax to fund school capital

[03:10:48] projects. Senate Bill 4 and House Bill 96 would make breakfast free for all public school students regardless of their income status house bill 31 would create a supplemental pay program for licensed educators working in schools with high teacher vacancy rates that is one that i'm watching closely and you may want to watch that closely as well senate bill 39 proposes using technology to identify students at risk for self-harm or harming others now that's going to be

[03:11:23] directed to the Department of Education. They're going to look to create a committee to recommend best practices if that moves forward. And then recently Senate Bill 220 would revise the Virginia High School League rules so that athletic eligibility is determined by school enrollment rather than residency.

[03:11:44] And that is one that I just started paying attention to. And this is an important discussion really for ensuring fairness and opportunity for student athletes and for folks who are watching school board members do govern academics and the VHSL has their own set of requirements as well and because it's a statewide league we are tethered to those requirements and additionally I'm also watching bills related to environmental justice especially those addressing

[03:12:20] pollutants and industrial development near schools and in neighborhoods, as well as exposure to hazards that are causing impacts on families and students. My district continues to advocate for environmental justice as we face challenges including limited access to health care and industrial zoning that does not support community health.

[03:12:43] Also the saturation of toxic industries along with limited quality health care, really in my opinion is a martin day slow demise of human life and we won't know what that impact is on young bodies for some times i just don't think that that's worth the risk and then i also just want to share a quick announcement uh for varina sanston highland springs and beyond we're going to host a community food distribution at john roth middle school on january 31st from 10 30 a.m to noon all families are welcome you do not have to have a child attending henrico county public

[03:13:21] schools to get help also shelf stable food will be available for pickup on friday january 23rd and colleagues this went out probably an hour or so ago but i think it's worth mentioning so families know if anybody want to chime in on it but um shelf stable food will be available for pick up on Friday, January 23rd, that's tomorrow, from 4 to 5:30 p.m. at Brooklyn Middle School, as well as the Oak Avenue Complex. And if you are getting prepared for winter weather, I hope that

[03:13:55] you are, I encourage families to connect with our family and community engagement team, because in addition to shelf-stable food, they also offer water, first aid kits, blankets, hats, gloves, and just overall they are the best resource period take advantage of it if you need it our family and community engagement employees staff family is what i see them as are working

[03:14:32] consistently i said in a conversation earlier they're still operating like covet exists and here we are again working they are working if you need the help the help is available shout out to cole johnson who heads that department as well so that concludes my announcements colleagues i didn't know if you had anything to address about this winter weather we may or may not get at all but open the door for that thank you mrs atkins um we'll now continue with the announcement of the

[03:15:09] meeting dates tonight. The next meeting will be tonight here in the New Bridge Learning Center Auditorium at 6:30. The school board's next work session will be on Thursday, February 12th, 2026 at 3 p.m., followed by a budget public hearing at 5 p.m. Meeting times may be adjusted as needed. This meeting is adjourned.



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