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Henrico County School Board Work Session, Thursday, April 16, 2026

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[00:00:14] like to welcome everyone to the April 16th, 2026 work session of the Henrico County School Board. Mr. Wack will now lead us in the Pledge of Allegiance and moment of silence. Good afternoon. Please stand as you're able. 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 as all. Please remain standing as you're able for the moment of silence.

[00:00:48] MY COLLEAGUES, WE'LL MOVE ON TO THE APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA. IS THERE A MOTION TO APPROVE THE AGENDA? I MOVE THE SCHOOL BOARD APPROVE THE AGENDA FOR TODAY'S MEETING AS PRESENTED.

[00:01:17] THANK YOU, MS. CONSELLA. DO I HAVE A SECOND? SECOND. THANK YOU, MR. YOUNG. ALL THOSE IN FAVOR SAY AYE. ALL OPPOSED? THE AYES HAVE IT. THE AGENDA IS APPROVED. THE NEXT ITEM ON THE AGENDA IS A CLOSED MEETING. IS THERE A MOTION TO GO INTO CLOSED SESSION?

[00:01:32] I MOVE THAT THE SCHOOL BOARD GO INTO CLOSED SESSION FOR THE DISCUSSION OF THE MATTERS covered under items A1 of section 2.2-3711 of the code of Virginia 1950 as amended pertaining to the assignment appointment promotion performance demotions salaries disciplining or resignation of specific school board employees including a personnel hearing for employee case number

25-26-e-2 thank you Mr. Shea do I have a second second thank you Mrs. Atkins all in favor say aye aye I. All opposed? The ayes have it. We will now go into closed session. We will reconvene the work

[00:02:09] session at the conclusion of our closed meeting. All right, we are back. Is there a motion to

[00:30:09] certify closed session? I move that the school board certify by a recorded vote that to the best of each school 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 MOTION AUTHORIZING THE CLOSED MEETINGS WERE HEARD, DISCUSSED, OR CONSIDERED IN THE CLOSED MEETING.

[00:30:32] THANK YOU, MR. YOUNG. DO I HAVE A SECOND? SECOND. THANK YOU, MS. KINZELLA. ALL THOSE IN FAVOR SAY AYE. ALL OPPOSED? THE AYES HAVE IT. CLOSED SESSION HAS BEEN CERTIFIED. DR. CASHWELL. THANK YOU, MEMBERS OF THE BOARD.

[00:30:47] GOOD AFTERNOON. I AM RECOMMENDING THAT THE SCHOOL BOARD APPROVE THE PETITION FOR LICENSE REVOCATION FOR EMPLOYEE case number 25-26-E-2 and authorize me to forward the petition to the State Board of Education. Thank you, Dr. Cashwell. Is there a motion to approve the petition for licensure revocation?

[00:31:07] I move that the school board approve the petition for licensure revocation in employee case number 25-26-E-2 and authorize the superintendent to forward the petition to the State Board of Education.

[00:31:22] THANK YOU, MS. ATKINS. DO I HAVE A SECOND? SECOND. THANK YOU, MR. SHEA. ALL IN FAVOR SAY AYE. AYE. ALL OPPOSED? THE AYES HAVE IT. THE PETITION FOR LICENSURE REPLICATION HAS BEEN APPROVED.

[00:31:38] DR. CASHWELL. THANK YOU. NEXT I'M RECOMMENDING THE SCHOOL BOARD APPROVE THE ADOPTED FISCAL YEAR 2027 ANNUAL FINANCIAL PLAN AS PRESENTED. MR. WACK WILL TAKE US THROUGH A BRIEF SUMMARY, A HIGH-LEVEL OVERVIEW OF THAT PLAN AS I'M SEEKING YOUR APPROVAL. MR. WACK.

[00:31:54] good afternoon chair irving board members and dr cashwell uh today i'll provide a brief overview of the fiscal year 2027 adopted budget following board of supervisors approval this tuesday on april 14th we are seeking your approval of the adopted budget that will be effective july 1st 2026 and we do uh expect to share the full new budget document at with with you at the april 30th meeting the school board approved the superintendent's fiscal year 2027 recommended budget on February 26th. When the countywide budget was subsequently compiled and presented,

[00:32:30] there was a need to adjust general fund revenues for lower than expected state aid and real estate taxes. As a result, HCPS and all general government departments were required to incorporate a 3% spending reduction in order to accommodate a 3% raise for all returning staff. The adopted budget now before the school board includes nearly all the initiatives that were supported by the superintendent's recommended budget however we needed to allow for 22.9 million dollar reduction to our general fund budget in order to support a three percent employee raise which will cost

[00:33:04] about 18.3 million dollars the budget adjustments included a less conservative approach to the employer share of health care expenses as well as anticipated operational savings and technology also in

order to balance 62 full-time positions mostly english language learner and exceptional education areas were moved to the county's hold complement. We are hopeful that most, if not all, of these positions can be restored as the commonwealth finalizes its budget and more state aid may become available. The fiscal year 2027 operating budget reflects the following

[00:33:39] notable changes from the current year. Our general fund budget is increasing by about 25 million dollars or 3.3 percent compared to the current year adopted budget. Our debt service budget associated with previously approved capital project debt is increasing by about four percent.

[00:33:54] The school nutrition fund is decreasing by 1.7% compared to the current year and our state and federal special revenue budgets are increasing by 0.8%. So overall the operating budget from all funds is growing by about 2.9%. These pie charts illustrate the major revenue categories of our general fund budget. We can see that the increase of about 25 million dollars came primarily from meals taxes and other local funds and that leaves the state share at about 54.4%. These pie charts illustrate the major spending categories of our budget in the general fund, and you can see that

[00:34:32] instruction remains by far the largest portion of our general fund expenditures budget at about 76 percent in fiscal year 2027. That concludes my brief overview of the adopted budget, and I'd be happy to answer any questions. Thank you, Mr. Wack. On behalf of the school board, I'm happy that my colleagues and I can unanimously support and approve this budget. While it is a reduction FROM THE PLAN WE APPROVED IN FEBRUARY, IT ADDRESSES MANY OF OUR CRITICAL NEEDS, INCLUDING AN ACROSS THE BOARD 3% RAISE FOR EMPLOYEES AND RESOURCES FOR SOME OF OUR MOST VULNERABLE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

[00:35:08] LEARNERS AND SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENTS. WE APPRECIATE THE FUNDING FROM THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS AND THEIR INDICATION THAT IF ADDITIONAL STATE FUNDS BECOME AVAILABLE, WE WILL BE ABLE TO MOVE FORWARD IN FILLING ADDITIONAL INSTRUCTIONAL POSITIONS FROM THE ORIGINAL BUDGET PROPOSAL. THANK YOU FOR THE PRESENTATION. AND AGAIN, I AM SEEKING APPROVAL.

[00:35:33] Mr. Irving, I would like to move that the school board approve the adopted FY 2027 annual financial plan as presented. Thank you for the motion, Mrs. Shea. Do I have a second? Second. Thank you, Mrs. Kinsella. All in favor say aye. Aye. All opposed? The ayes have it. The adopted fiscal year 2027 annual financial plan has been approved. Thank you. The next items are a number of leave POLICIES 6.01-6.07 THAT HAVE BEEN REVIEWED BY THE BOARD AND OUT FOR PUBLIC REVIEW AS WELL,

[00:36:12] AND I'M SEEKING YOUR APPROVAL OF THOSE LATER IN THE CONSENT AGENDA, BUT WANTED TO OFFER AN OPPORTUNITY TO ANSWER ANY QUESTIONS YOU MIGHT HAVE RELATED TO 6.01-6.07. COLLEAGUES, DOES ANYBODY, WOULD ANYBODY LIKE TO BEGIN WITH ANY QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS THEY HAVE about the policies i i would just like to make a comment sure um when i was looking through my notes and reading through the policies um i just like to highlight and thank the team thank all of the superintendent's committees thank the policy committee and thank everyone that gave any sort

[00:36:51] of feedback to all of these employee policies and just highlight the fact that mrs shea and i sit on the policy committee and the policy committee has been working on these policies since october so they've gone through quite a few iterations not just in policy committee but then they go back to other superintendent committees for feedback um from from staff um and and i'm just so grateful really for the

work done on this in direct response to the employee voice study we did about two years ago so thank you dr cashwell thank you and thank you for your work on the

[00:37:28] policy committee and I reiterate thanks to the many many stakeholder groups who provided detailed review and feedback for us I was going to say the same thing that Ms. Kinsella did after serving on the policy that these weren't these aren't just changes made by the HR department or the board or the policy committee these are changes that we heard from staff that they were interested in SEEN LOOKED AT ALL THE HR AND LEGAL PARTS OF IT GOT FEEDBACK FROM STAFF GROUPS ALL DIFFERENT SORTS OF STAFF GROUPS AND ALL DIFFERENT KIND OF WAYS AND PUT IT BACK TOGETHER SO THAT WE CAN

[00:38:06] REALLY TRY TO BEST SERVE OUR OUR STAFF AS POSSIBLE AND SO WE TALKED ABOUT THAT A LITTLE BIT IN THE FIRST ITERATION BUT I'M GLAD WE WERE ON THE SAME PAGE TO MAKE SURE WE HIGHLIGHTED THAT WITH THE SECOND ITERATION AS WELL THANK YOU AND CHAIR IRVING I DO HAVE A BIT OF A QUESTION I KNOW the board received written comment on this particular policy and in summary the submitter address changing that paid parental leave be taken continuously rather than allowing for intermittent use and eliminating the option for intermittent leave which may reduce flexibility

[00:38:43] in usage and i was wondering mrs shea or mrs kinsella if that was a part of your you know deliberation or conversation as you review the policy? I think we had spoke to that some. I think perhaps Ms. Bolden, not to put you on the spot, but might be the best person to articulate why it was written the way it was written. In a nutshell, it's written in that manner to be consistent with our FMLA policy. Could you share a little bit of details around Family Medical Leave Act? I am

[00:39:21] familiar with it but i'm not familiar with the any particular areas that speak to time frame and so this one is simply asking about the time frame between using it intermittently or continuously so in other words i want to make sure i understand the interpretation so if i want to use this this mean i need to use the whole chunk at one time versus in the past i could use a little bit here and maybe a little bit there is that your understanding as well okay so for the specific section that the constituent wrote in about they are making reference in one

[00:40:00] sense to the bonding portion of the parental leave policy and in our FMLA policy the bonding portion we stipulate that leave must be used continuously so under the parental leave policy there is a little flexibility in that or there is flexibility in that the individual can determine when they want to use the leave within a year's period of time. But again, it is written that the use is continuous, similar to what is

[00:40:38] written in the FMLA policy, so there are no questions or discrepancies between the two policies now um the federal law does allow the employer with regard to so the fmoa policy does allow the employer to determine with regard with regard to bonding portion whether it is continuous or um intermittent and our policy to date is that that portion is continuous okay and could we speak

[00:41:13] to the communication around how we explain this to employees because currently if i'm accurate we have intermittent access so upon approval of this it would be continuous is that correct yes for that portion now there are other portions of the fmoa regulation policy leave um that are intermittent but that's more along the lines of sickness and illness so i just wanted to clarify of that and so individuals are made aware when they apply for FMLA I have a specialist who works with each person individually to walk through all the

[00:41:52] facets of their specific situation I would like to have a better mrs. Kinsella if I may this is um as I said I pulled my notes since we started discussing this and there was great time I know it's been on policy committee specifically I don't know what happened and your your committees or other stakeholder uh feedbacks but i do know that they intermittently um being used specifically with the bonding policy um they wanted it to be consistent especially when you consider the

[00:42:32] reason of the bonding policy if you will and then as uh but the committee did spend great time on it Intermittently we worked at great length to be consistent within FMLA and as well as being responsive not only to our staff but also to the students needs that we serve and intermittently given the work that we do we spent a lot of time around that topic and this is this is where we

[00:43:04] landed and we then tried to we tried to align the fmla policy with that um but the other policies um i believe we brought great clarity clarity to with leave whether it's parental you know the um other types of leave to care for family members and so forth which does allow for intermittence so i know that's probably not the best answer because this i believe and of course both of you on the policy committee i am not and so i'm going to respect whatever guidance you you put forward

[00:43:38] but i am having a very difficult time because when i looked at the other opportunities of usage for our employees they have intermittent access but this one does not and i believe there's more flexibility on the local level than it would be for the federal level or state levels so understanding that i understand wanting to be consistent but i also balance that with care and bonding sometimes doesn't take place in one moment so it would be difficult uh to use it in one moment one setting

[00:44:11] so i just i'm trying to balance being consistent which is important with care and and just really having a hard time and wonder from a marketing perspective how do we explain it to employees we we may not have that of course because we've not voted but i just want to make sure we're really thoughtful about our explanations and if we say we're doing this to be consistent then we're not consistent with intermittent with the other leave policies so i'm trying to find clarification well

[00:44:45] we are consistent with the fmla policy and how that's written with regard to bonding well specifically our our hcps leave policies whether you're talking about sick time for health care you can use it intermittently there are other policies that we have blood donor donations there there's just other policies which is magnificent that we have the opportunity to offer those i'm just wondering an explanation if the reason is consistency for this help me understand why we

[00:45:23] wouldn't do continuous for the others if that's the reason and i could be misunderstanding i think it is consistent with the FMOA policy but you're correct other policies do allow intermittent use and I think that's something that we could go back and look at to determine if that would be appropriate in this instance as well I would appreciate another look but I want to hear from Mrs. Shea and Mrs. Constella because I know a tremendous amount of work has already been done yeah and I'll just chime in I don't know all the LEAP policies off the top of my head but I do know

[00:46:00] this is not the only one that has to be used continuously for example the new organ donation policy that has to be used continuously and some others so there are there are two buckets right intermittent and um continuous but this is not the only would not be the only one in the continuous bucket i'd also like to offer just a reading of this and um yeah as mrs bolden said there's a differentiation between the child bonding and the parent leave care leave the parent care being intermittent or continuous because you know elderly parents can have things happen in a

[00:46:40] moment's notice but i think that the international standard and in most i would say private standard within the united states uh for child bonding period is when the child is first born because that's the most important period of the child's life so i for me i don't think it's controversial that that should be consistent because that's generally how it is practiced globally and within the united states in a private setting um where you know parent care sometimes a parent gets has an issue for a couple days and then they're fine and then they have another issue pop up later within the year and then you need to take care of them whereas a child as it's born um this is the

[00:47:20] most important you know period in its life arguably um so i for me i i just view this as is best practice that's practiced globally not not even in the context of aligning with fmla but that's just my my take on it and i may i think i'm understanding the question you're getting to which is the rationale for the specific change as i'm listening correct it's it's less about the the strategy and all that i'm thinking and again correct me if i'm wrong that the rationale for the change wasn't simply to make it consistent with fmla this does also make it consistent with

[00:47:58] FMLA but each particular use case for example whether it was the parent caring for the child or the bonding or separately organ donation was looked at as to whether it made sense for an intermittent or continuous and in this case for that specific layer it was decided you know again based on best practice and use case for the nature of of the work of our workforce and uh all things that that be that particular layer be continuous related to bonding um and so and that also happens to be consistent and i mean i think that's a good question that was yeah

[00:48:35] because it changed but that correct it was examined outside of that and i know that was a lot of layers to unpack there it wasn't i did i spent a good amount of time wanting to understand and i put myself in employee's shoes and said if someone had to explain this change to me whether I agreed or disagreed what would I say and I was unable to come up with justification and so it's important not only to be on one end trying to define process and so forth but from a marketing and explanation perspective I want to be able to share why this was done other than being consistent

[00:49:13] I know that's important but care is as well and bonding can happen at any age for any human WHETHER IT'S AT BIRTH OR BEFORE YOU GO ON TO GLORY AND SO IT'S IMPORTANT TO ME TO MAKE SURE WE'RE SOLID AND UNDERSTANDING THE REASON FOR MOVING FORWARD SO I APPRECIATE ALL OF THE FEEDBACK AND BETTER UNDERSTANDING WHY THIS WAS DONE SO CHAIR IRVING YOU CAN MOVE FORWARD THANK YOU UH COLLEAGUES IS THERE ANY OTHER OF THE THE POLICIES THAT YOU'D LIKE TO DISCUSS

[00:49:46] BEFORE WE MOVE FORWARD OKAY ALL RIGHT THE NEXT ITEM WE ARE SO PLEASED TO BRING THE BOARD an update related to our eSports program, which began in 2023 with pilot clubs in three of our middle schools and has been going strong ever since, thanks to incredible amounts of not only student interest and enthusiasm, but staff support from central level to the school buildings. And we're really pleased to be able to highlight our eSports program.

[00:50:16] I'll turn it over to Dr. Hughes and Mrs. Bostain. hey good afternoon chair irwin members of the board and dr cashwell as dr cashwell said my name is leslie hughes and i'm the chief learning officer for henrico county public schools joining me today is courtney bustain director of innovation and together we will share an exciting update on esports in henrico county public schools while esports is relatively new it

is important to know that it has been widely embraced by teachers administrators and parents At first glance, eSports may look like a recreational gaming, but it is so much more.

[00:50:51] It is part of our Life Ready Innovative Pathway, helping students develop durable skills aligned to the Henrico learner profile, including communication, collaboration, problem solving, and digital literacy. Over the past few years, eSports has grown from a small pilot into a meaningful K-12 opportunity that connects student interest with learning, belonging, and future readiness. To understand why this innovative work matters, it is important to begin with a broader vision that guides our work. Esports is grounded in the Division's strategic plan,

[00:51:26] Journey to 2030, specifically Goal 1: Academic Achievement, which calls for us to create learning experiences that prepare students not only for graduation, but for life beyond school. That includes helping students engage in meaningful experiences grounded in our core values.

[00:51:43] Esports creates another entry point for students to connect, contribute, and grow in ways that are both relevant and engaging. And just as important, Esports aligns directly to the outcomes we want for every learner in HCPS that are embedded in our Henrico Learner Profile, which defines the knowledge and durable skills we want every student to develop over time. When Esports is implemented well, it creates authentic opportunities for students to practice these outcomes in real time.

[00:52:13] Students communicate with teammates, collaborate towards shared goals, think critically in fast-paced situations, solve problems, demonstrate character, and learn how to participate responsibly in digital spaces. Esports may look different from a traditional learning experience or activity, but the student outcomes are very much aligned to what we say matters most in Henrico.

[00:52:36] At this time, I'll turn the presentation over to Courtney Bostain, who will further explain what what eSports is, how it has been implemented in HCPS, and to share a video with medical school students sharing why they engage in eSports. - Thank you, Dr. Hughes.

[00:52:53] Electronic sports or eSports is organized competitive video gaming, typically played in teams within structured supervised environments. In schools, it provides students with opportunities to collaborate, communicate, solve problems, and build confidence.

[00:53:09] It also helps students connect with peers develop a stronger sense of belonging within the school community. Beyond schools, eSports has also become a growing and recognized pathway for students. It now connects to college scholarships, academic programs, and career opportunities in areas like technology, media, design, and digital production. For students, that means that eSports can be both a meaningful school experience and a pathway to future opportunities. In Henrico, this work began in 2023 with a clear focus on student engagement and connection. With support from a Henrico Education Foundation

[00:53:49] innovation grant, we launched a pilot at three middle schools. From the beginning, the goal was to create spaces where students could connect, collaborate, and build community through a shared interest. Participation quickly exceeded expectations and showed us early on that this could become a meaningful opportunity for our students. Following that early success, the program expanded to the next year to all 12 middle schools. Today, middle school serves as the foundation of eSports in Henrico. For many students, it is their first introduction through structured clubs and team opportunities, and it continues to be a level where we see strong

[00:54:28] participation. It has become an entry point for student engagement, skill development, and school connection. That middle school foundation made it possible for us to take the next step into high school this year supported by a virginia department of education grant we are especially proud that esports is now a vhs sanctioned activity placing it within the same statewide structure as other recognized high school programs in our first year five hcps teams qualified for the vhs playoffs demonstrating both strong student participation and a successful

[00:55:06] program launch at the high school level students continue to build teamwork communication strategy and leadership while also strengthening their connection to school through competition and school pride.

[00:55:21] Due to the success we are seeing in the middle and high schools, interest is also growing at the elementary level. In response, we are piloting what this can look like for younger learners in developmentally appropriate student-centered ways. This year, pilots began at Glenlee, Lakeside, and Colonial Trail with additional opportunities supported through grants.

[00:55:42] Today we have eight elementary clubs. Our focus is on learning from this pilot and ensuring that any future decisions are made carefully and responsibly. At the elementary level, the emphasis is not on competition, but on structured, team-based experiences where students build foundational skills and develop a strong sense of belonging.

[00:56:04] Across all three levels, what stands out the most is the impact this is having on our students. From what we are hearing from students, coaches, and families, one thing is clear. This is creating meaningful engagement for students who are interested in gaming within a structured, school-supported environment.

[00:56:22] Students are building skills like communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and problem solving in authentic ways. They are also developing leadership, confidence, and importantly, healthier digital habits by learning how to engage with gaming in balanced and responsible ways.

[00:56:37] That is the real value of this work, providing students with another meaningful, structured way to connect, engage, and grow in our schools, while helping them prepare for the realities of the world they are entering. As the impact has grown, we've also seen strong momentum across the division.

[00:56:54] Students in schools are taking part in events where they can compete, connect, and celebrate together. We are also seeing individual student success. Earlier this year, a student from Holman Middle School was recognized for winning a regional tournament. And one of the clearest ways to understand the impact of this work is to hear directly from our students.

[00:57:14] It's really good for communications and really getting more involved with school activities. Well, it did help me get more sociable. I just thought it would be a good way to maybe meet new people.

[00:57:35] You get better at like just communication and stuff like that. Just like knowing each other and like knowing what they're good at and what you're not good at so you can like be at the best of your ability. It's just we had to figure out how to cooperate so that we can get the most points as possible without damaging our own teammates.

[00:57:55] Well, I needed something to do that would allow me to connect with other people. And I also have a big passion for playing video games. And I know that I'm not being judged at all. We're all just there

to have fun. I get to talk with others, learn more about them. It helps me talk better how we can win and we can do some strategies to win.

[00:58:16] I like that it's a team because it means that you have to work together for better or for worse. And so you can really get some good bonds going with some people that you didn't necessarily know before. And just really meet new people and have a good time with them.

[00:58:35] It's maybe better because I've came out of my comfort zone more. And I've interacted with more people who are like my day and like some of the same things as me. And I think doing this is encouraging and helpful because you get to learn how to work as a team or as partners at a young age.

[00:58:55] And you can use those skills when you're grown up in life. What you just heard from our students reflects the kind of impact we are seeing across our schools.

[00:59:19] This work is also being recognized beyond Henrico. ago. This year, the program was honored with the National Association of Counties Achievement Award for Innovation in Student Engagement and Learning. It has also been featured by Ed Week and shared at local, regional, and national conferences. Together, these recognitions reflect the intentional way this work has been designed and implemented. As we look ahead, one of our priorities is making sure as this work continues to grow, we do so with a clear, long-range plan. Up to this point, much of this work has grown through pilots and thoughtful expansion based on student interest and school readiness.

[00:59:57] This year, we formed the Council of Esports to ensure we are engaging a broad range of stakeholders as we plan for the future. This group includes students, parents, coaches, and educators, and others connected to gaming and esports, bringing a range of perspectives, including opportunities, questions, and concerns.

[01:00:16] Their role is to help guide how this work continues to grow in a way that is thoughtful, balanced and responsive to the needs of our students, our schools, and community. This program reflects the leadership and commitment and collaboration of many individuals across our division.

[01:00:34] I want to recognize our eSports coaches, sponsors, members of the eSports Council, innovative learning coaches, and the many staff members who have helped bring this work to life, several of whom are with us today. I'd like to recognize Dr. Dia Champ, Director of Middle School Education, and Rick Lilly, Director of Athletics.

[01:00:52] john gregory innovation esports specialist and patty hassan and nick labors innovative learning coaches erica kelly clark lewis and san vaughn are hcps teachers and esports coaches and gina jones principal of fairfield middle school alissa duran esports program director at shenandoah university and karin bublitz esports director at randolph macon college and john green an hva parent and esports supporter. And representing the heart of this work, Chloe Dollins, a Tucker High School student, and she was one of our original team members on our Tuckahoe Middle School esports

[01:01:29] team. She's here representing all of our incredible esports players. Thank you. We certainly would not be where we are today without their leadership, commitment, and dedication to all things esports.

[01:01:47] And I am pleased to share, Justin, as of yesterday afternoon, the Henrico High School esports team has qualified for the in-person vhs1 state championship at old dominion university on saturday may

25th they will represent our division at the state level and we wish them the very best and finally thank you to the school board for your continued support of innovation and student centered opportunities in henrico county public schools at the heart of all of this are our students. And this work is one more way we are helping them build connection, confidence,

[01:02:26] community, and strong digital responsibility and healthy habits in our schools. Thank you for your time and continued support, and we are happy to answer any questions you may have. Thank you so much for the presentation. I'll start with my colleagues. Mrs. Atkins, would you like to go first? So thank you to everyone participating in your effort and your time. I had the opportunity to attend. I did not know what I was walking into when I arrived, but the energy of who was going to

[01:03:00] win that Winter Cup was electrifying. It was magnificent. And I also think what I took from that, as well as just the competition itself, was the opportunity to see students be able to interact and engage with multiple students from multiple schools at the same time with one goal.

[01:03:20] And so that sense of belonging really was a shining light example of what it looks like authentically. So thank you so much, and I enjoyed the presentation. Thank you, Mrs. Atkins. Mrs. Kinsella?

[01:03:38] Yes, I definitely enjoyed the presentation. Having followed the program since inception, it's fascinating to me that having watched middle schoolers as a mom of, you know, kids who are 18, 19, and 20, Watching how the students were in middle school, I love that the Pilots started there, and having watched the Minecraft Club, right, and students find their place who, they don't play an instrument, right, they don't do art, they don't play youth athletics outside of school, and they don't play athletics at school.

[01:04:17] So I just really commend the work and the expansion of it, especially at the secondary level, because there is nothing like this program that is truly trying to find a place where everyone feels seen, heard, and valued, and, you know, and it's innovative and inclusive.

[01:04:40] It really is tremendous. So thank you for it. My question is really a little bit more about the elementary level, like, for example, what grades are participating, and just knowing, I love the supervision aspect of it, but trying to balance our phone policy at the elementary level, and at the same time, you know, screen time with the elementary students, like, what does this look like so far?

[01:05:11] Absolutely, and they're very important questions, and we take those seriously, and that's why we are using the pilot to really see what this would and could possibly look like in elementary currently only students in grades three through five we're practicing in a closed environment and we're really working on code of conduct and teamwork and responsibility so we are exploring that and we're going to use the esports council to help us look into that further because we want to make sure before we have any expansion conversations that it is developmentally appropriate and we are supporting that balance in our schools thank you so much that's all i had

[01:05:47] thank you uh mrs shea thank you miss bostain is exactly what i'm going to say because i say it every time we talk about esports which is um i'll be very quick to admit i was wrong about this um when it first came out i kind of had a puzzled look about it um we're a very minimal screen time household and so the first thing i thought was why do we need to give encourage students to have even more screen time, right?

[01:06:13] And then I went to the first competition in the Tuckahoe Middle School library. And I said, oh, I get it, right? It wasn't about the specific games. It wasn't about the screen time. It's about exactly what that slide says about making sure every learner has a place to belong.

[01:06:30] And the fact that the library was electric with students connected with each other, competing but also more in a collaborative way it like like that i got it and so um as y'all were presenting that just kept jumping out at me um a couple quotes of y'all saying it's an entry point for engagement and school connection strengthen the connection of students to school team-based skills and belonging meaningful engagement a structured way to connect and then to hear our students talk about how it put them out of their comfort zone they learned about their other teammates and to meet people they wouldn't have known to get them out of those silos of having the

[01:07:10] same classes with the same people we know that also happens on the performance stage or the sports field but as miss kinsella alluded to not all students are involved in that and so making sure that like we like this says making sure every learner has a place to belong i think this is an essential part of that and so i appreciate you and your team having a better vision than i did clearly and the success that has come from this and seeing all of our students benefit from it.

[01:07:37] So thank you. Mr. Young. Thank you for the presentation. I took my son on a college tour this past maybe two weeks ago. It was ODU and then it was Virginia Wesleyan and we were talking about scholarships and Virginia Wesleyan asked is he an esports gamer it's two thousand dollars there and I looked at my wife and I said you shouldn't have pulled him off the video games. Right so I mean the gaming community is intense. It's real. It's a real thing. It's not a fictional space.

[01:08:08] It's where kids come together. And I'm so happy that belonging and innovation are intertwining when it comes to eSports. I couldn't be more happier last year losing to a group of students at the health event that we're all about to go to. They took turns beating me in Mario Kart, right?

[01:08:24] So, I mean, just the excitement of being able to come to school, find your niche, do something you love. And that in turn makes you want to go to school the next day. Makes you want to show back up. Makes you, it's that motivation that some kids didn't get until 2023. I knew when I was an athlete, I used to love because I had practice after school. That was my motivation for keeping grades up and staying engaged. And so now I am pleased. I'm happy that HCPS got this thing right.

[01:08:54] Shout out the principal, Gina Jones and her crew over at Fairfield Middle School. I believe y'all won a championship of some sorts, two or three. And then I have Henrico Haskell going back to my alma mater, Old Dominion, to compete for a championship as well. So super happy, super grateful. I'll be following this. I'm a gamer. So I'm super excited about this, Mr. Chair. Absolutely. So I'm hearing Mr. Young, exactly kind of what we've all been talking about, about making sure every student finds their niche. I challenge us all on our team to think about what other niches are we missing, right? Like what other niches are we missing that

[01:09:34] like e-sports and performing arts and athletic sports and speech and debate and all those something, what are the niches that have not been explored yet that can give students this connection point to make sure they feel like they have a place to belong? So just a challenge to us all. Yeah, I'd like to thank it as well. I think that, you know, at a time when children and teenagers have never been lonely or anything that we can do to bring a sense of community and i think just connectedness between people um is extremely important and the point about the screen time i

[01:10:10] think that it's it's always important to recognize that like not all screen time is created equal right like if you are with i i think back to when i was a kid because when i grew up you know like the nintendo 64 was coming out and the playstation the xbox so i came through these iterations and i remember going over to friends houses or friends coming over to my house and it was just wasn't even about the games per se but it's just being together with people and that is fundamentally different than playing a game by yourself in a room online where you don't see anybody but having an opportunity to do it together and be physically near people i think is extremely important and i think we need to lean into that in any way that we can in any aspect because again

[01:10:48] with kids feeling so lonely the opportunities we need to have opportunities for them to not feel that way and to feel like they have a community even if they don't you know identify with the other things that we've seen like sports or even you know academics or whatever it is that they that they have a place to be with people in person um so i just think that's great and i'm and i'm i'm glad that we're doing it and leaning into it more thank you all right thank you again for the presentation and a huge thanks to those who came and joined in the audience to be recognized as

[01:11:24] being such an integral part of this i'm so proud of henrico county public schools nationally recognized e-sports program and the work that you all continue to do bravo and thank you for being here one last round of applause all right the next presentation uh will come from uh dr katie smith and that is related to the our our requirement rather annually to present the special education annual plan title 6b flow through funds and dr hughes and dr smith will share that presentation Okay.

[01:12:02] Good afternoon, Mr. Irvin, members of the board, and Dr. Cashwell. Again, I'm Leslie Hughes, and Dr. Katie Smith is joining me today, and as Dr. Cashwell said, together we'll present the annual plan for the use of special education federal grant funds known as Title VIB.

[01:12:20] Good afternoon. Special education services for students with disabilities are funded through three different funding streams. HCPS received funds from the federal government in the form of the Title VIB grants. We also receive state funds, as well as local dollars.

[01:12:36] As shown in this chart, the majority of the funding to support students with disabilities is provided through local funding sources. Approximately 53% of the money used to pay for special education services comes from local tax dollars, with state revenue accounting for approximately 30%, and only 17% of total funds that are allocated to support special education come from federal grants, which is the specific funding source addressed in this presentation.

[01:13:02] The 6B grant is provided in two separate allocations. The 611 funds are intended to support school-aged children. Since the state has not provided allocations for the 26-27 school year, the plan that we will provide to the Virginia Department of Education in which we are outlining today reflects level funding from the 25-26 school year.

[01:13:23] There was a decrease in the amount of roughly \$8,800 from the previous grant award in 24-25. The majority of grant funds we receive will be used to provide the salary and benefits for 89 special education teachers, 47 instructional assistants, 2 speech-language pathologists, 3 special education specialists, and 6 coordinators.

[01:13:45] Additionally, 26 elementary department chair stipends are also paid out of the salary and benefits grant line. We do withhold a portion of grant funds to support contract services. Specifically, we

use grant funds to pay for a large portion of our sign language interpreter and nursing service costs across the district and to support approved independent educational evaluations additional funds are used to support coordinated comprehensive early intervening services also known as cceis which i will discuss in detail in just a few minutes the other charges category that you see on this the screen reflects the administrative costs which are associated with

[01:14:21] the grant each year a 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 another small portion of grant funds are used to purchase materials and supplies such as educational assessments or curriculum resources to support specially designed instruction additionally the materials and supplies line item also provides funding for the assistive technology devices and software required by many of our students all school districts are required to keep account of those students with disabilities who are parentally placed in private schools or

[01:14:58] homeschooled. The proportionate set-aside amount is the required set-aside funding based on the formula provided by the Virginia Department of Education for individualized service plans for those students who choose to access those related services. The 619 portion of the federal grant is specifically allocated to support students in our early childhood special education programs.

[01:15:21] As in the school age grant, the majority of the funds are used to provide the salary and benefits for early childhood special education personnel however only four of the 44 early childhood special education teachers are funded through this grant we allocate a small portion of the 6b 619 grant for materials and supplies to support early childhood special education programming and these funds help support curriculum and materials three additional required elements for the annual plan include comprehensive coordinated early intervening services known as cceis maintenance of effort and local and regional jails cceis is a required set aside

[01:15:59] from the total grant amount which requires identified school divisions to use funds to decrease disproportionality this part of the grant is not specific to students with disabilities funding may be used will be used to hire board certified behavior analysts and registered behavior technicians these skilled behavior experts can work directly with students in our schools to try to reduce out-of-school suspensions and reoccurring behaviors. Additional funding will also be used to purchase tier two and tier three behavior and social skills curriculums to support general general and special education students. Funding has also been identified to support the implementation of these curriculums by providing professional learning directly to teachers

[01:16:39] as well as adopting division train-the-trainer models to support implementation and sustainability. 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 as you can see henrico will spend a combined amount of local and state funds the amount of twenty thousand three hundred eighty one dollars and fifty one cents additionally in july of 2025 hcps renewed our mou with the county sheriff to provide funding to support one special education teacher at the local jail thank you for your time and attention

[01:17:15] this afternoon as we discuss the plan for using the title 6b federal grant funds i'm happy to to discuss any questions you have regarding this presentation and grant at this time. - Thank you, Dr. Smith. Colleagues, do we have any questions about the presentation?

[01:17:34] Mrs. Atkins. - Thank you so much for the presentation. And I always say what a small but mighty team, Dr. Smith. So thank you for all that you do is certainly not enough in your department to cover all that's needed.

[01:17:50] But I wanted to make sure you heard it from me that you and your department are seeing, I see it deeply. I see the work that you try to accomplish across Henrico County public schools in the space of exceptional education. I did have a question around equipment.

[01:18:10] Where do the costs for equipment come out of? What piece? - What equipment specifically are you referring to? - Well, that's the part where I'm a bit, I'm struggling a bit. So maybe- - Perhaps the assistive technology? - Well, not only the assistive technology, there's a list of equipment that our students use and because sometimes it's sparingly I'm having a hard time trying to discern the usage of equipment so if it's contracted out or if it's internal because I'm wondering if it makes more sense to sort of purchase some of this stuff versus spending

[01:18:48] the dollars externally to get the service of the equipment how could I figure that out do you are - Are you talking about the related services? - Yes. - Okay. So for related services, so we have contract positions. So we have contractors when we can't fill internal positions.

[01:19:04] And so we have to rely on contractors, or for instance, if we have a student that moves in with sign language interpretation, for example, we might have to contract an ASL interpreter if that student has an existing one in their IEP. So that's some of what we do in order to make sure that no student goes without the services that they have we rely on our contract partners when we need to and and that's the part i'm aware of because i know we don't we're not able to fill the need we have the budget situation so what we're doing is we're contracting the services out but i'm wondering um if you could provide me with what those numbers

[01:19:42] are and the type of equipment um the utilization of the different equipment it would be interesting to find out if there's a trend in certain services I know with ASL we have that the TTY I mean there's a a long list but only what we use most frequently because we don't have the budget to fill the positions that we spend the extra to contract out and I'm just wondering what those numbers are yeah absolutely no problem that's all that I have colleagues anything else thank you all as always

[01:20:15] for the work that you do and continue to do okay all right yes now we're going to move on to THE CONSENT AGENDA. ARE THERE ANY REQUESTS FROM COLLEAGUES THAT ANY ITEM BE SEPARATED FOR DISCUSSION OR INDIVIDUAL ACTION? HEARING NONE, IS THERE A MOTION TO APPROVE THE CONSENT AGENDA?

[01:20:39] I MOVE THAT THE SCHOOL BOARD APPROVE ITEMS 8.01 THROUGH 8.15 AS PRESENTED IN THE CONSENT AGENDA. THANK YOU, MR. CHADE. DO I HAVE A SECOND? SECOND. THANK YOU, MR. YOUNG. ALL IN FAVOR SAY AYE.

[01:20:55] ALL OPPOSED? THE AYES HAVE IT. ITEMS 8.01 AND 8 THROUGH 8.15 ON THE CONSENT AGENDA ARE APPROVED. WE'LL NOW MOVE ON TO THE PUBLIC FORUM. CITIZENS HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO SUBMIT WRITTEN COMMENTS THROUGH AN ONLINE FORUM IN ADVANCE OF THE MEETING. THOSE COMMENTS WERE SHARED WITH THE SCHOOL BOARD AND ARE POSTED IN BOARD DOCS FOR PUBLIC RECORD. COLLEAGUES, WE'LL MOVE ON TO UNFINISHED BUSINESS.

[01:21:24] does anybody have any unfinished business chair irving i have two okay so last week i had the privilege of attending the heart youth council environmental sustainability summit it's a mouth full however while i was there it really reminded me to follow up on an initiative and wanting to know where we are with a resolution for environmental sustainability so i'm glad you were able to stop BY THAT EVENT. IT'S REALLY POWERFUL. AND I KNOW OUR STUDENTS WHO PARTICIPATE IN STUDENT GOVERNMENT DAY GOT TO HEAR A LOT ABOUT THE WORK THAT'S GOING ON ACROSS BOTH THE GENERAL

[01:22:04] GOVERNMENT AND HENRICO COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS RELATED TO SUSTAINABILITY AND SOME OF THE PLANS THAT THEY'VE BEEN ABLE TO BE INVOLVED IN. IT'S REALLY POWERFUL. SO YES, WE ACTUALLY AT ONE POINT HAD LOOKED AT A DRAFT RESOLUTION AS A BOARD WHEN WE WERE COMPETING FOR I BELIEVE IT WAS THE VDOE GREEN SCHOOLS THAT PROGRAM IS NO LONGER IN PLACE AND AT THE TIME IT TURNED OUT WE DIDN'T NEED THAT RESOLUTION BUT CERTAINLY HAPPY TO SHARE ONCE AGAIN WITH THE BOARD SOME OF WHAT WAS PUT TOGETHER FOR THAT FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION AND COULD EVEN BRING IT FORWARD TO THE NEXT MEETING WE HAVE ALSO COINCIDENTLY PLANNED FOR OUR NEXT

[01:22:42] BOARD MEETING A PRESENTATION RELATED TO SOME OF OUR ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY EFFORTS SO COULD CERTAINLY LOOK AT BOTH OF LOOK YOU know certainly have that presentation and look at the potential of considering a resolution as well thank you for that and um looking forward to learning more i know a lot of work was done and i think it's worth it uh to share it with the board for their their review and then the other piece of this i'm just going to use unfinished business to share so as the finish line comes into view for some it's promotion for others it's graduation uh and so maybe this is better in old

[01:23:19] business versus new business but um i just want to say i continue to hear the stories of heroes and i want to highlight a few who made sure that a student didn't have to run to the finish line alone and they are caseworker christopher higgins principal of orina high school miss sears arlene robinson assistant principal kai whitaker guidance counselor and dante boston exceptional education teacher over the past year we had a student who faced periods of homelessness while carrying the

[01:23:52] weight of ongoing mental challenges and no burden is worth not seeing and so she did not walk that road in silence the individuals that i mentioned refused to let her go unseen they showed up they spoke life into her and reminded her again and again and again and again of the greatness already living inside of her and because of that that student will be walking across the stage not only with a diploma but with resilience and knowing that the community of individuals that i mentioned

[01:24:26] are there for her and i know that story is uh probably resonates across all of henrico but certainly wanted to take the moment as well as thank her grandmother who called me and just gave praises for the individuals that will Rhino High School and for Henrico County Public Schools and we should take the opportunity to celebrate achievements and stories of success because they are across Henrico County High School but this is just one that I thought was that I needed to mention so thank you Chair Irving for the space. Thank you Mrs. Atkins. Anyone else on

[01:25:02] UNFINISHED BUSINESS. OKAY. AND THEN WE'LL MOVE ON TO NEW BUSINESS. DOES ANYBODY HAVE NEW BUSINESS? OKAY. ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE FUTURE OF FUTURE MEETING DATES. THE SCHOOL BOARD'S NEXT MEETING WILL BE A WORK SESSION ON THURSDAY, APRIL 30TH,

2026, AT 3:00 P.M., FOLLOWED BY A MONTHLY MEETING AT 6:30 P.M. MEETING TIMES MAY BE ADJUSTED AS NEEDED. THIS MEETING IS ADJOURNED.



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