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Loudoun County School Board, Equity Committee Meeting, Thursday, February 9, 2023

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Place Loudoun County Public Schools / School Board meeting (see BoardDocs / LCPS-TV)
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- Official meeting video (Vimeo / LCPS-TV): <https://player.vimeo.com/video/798593268?rel=0>
- BoardDocs (School Board): <https://go.boarddocs.com/vsba/loudoun/Board.nsf/Public>

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Speech-to-text: whisper.cpp, model large-v3-turbo. Produced 2026-10-22. Each paragraph starts with its time [HH:MM:SS] in the meeting video.

[00:00:02] Good evening, everyone. Today is February 9th, 2023. This is Brenda Sheridan, and I'm calling to order the Loudoun County Public Schools Equity Committee, and I'd like to welcome everyone to our first meeting of this school year. Well, not the school year, of this calendar year and of the year for this committee. We're very pleased to have all of you here, and I will let the public know that we do currently have a quorum in the room. And we were going to start with letting you know that I've been notified that Ms. Denise Corbo would like to remotely participate in tonight's school

[00:00:41] board meeting. Denise, can you please state your location and whether this is a medical or personal matter, and if anyone is with you at your location, state their names. Ms. Corbo, can you... I'm home. I'm alone, and under policy 2420, I'm asking for remote meeting participation due to an ongoing disability and medical condition as recommended by HRTD under federal ADA disability law. Thank you. I'll let the committee know that in case you didn't hear everything Ms. Corbo is home alone and she is requesting a medical exemption to participate in tonight's meeting.

[00:01:20] At this time I will entertain a motion to grant Ms. Corbo's request. Is there a motion? So moved. Alright and is there a second? Alright it's been moved by Tiffany and seconded by Saeed and now I'll open it up for discussion.

[00:01:43] So I'm actually going to speak to this and just remind everyone that I'm actually not going to support this motion to allow remote participation and in this in this committee in particular over the last year in particular last year's committee we had three times where we did not meet a quorum in the room and for this committee when it's fully right now tonight we have 30 members on the committee 33 is a full committee so our quorum to start our committee meeting tonight is 16 you saw I was counting and taking attendance. I cannot start a committee meeting unless I have a quorum in the room. And

[00:02:19] anybody who was here last year knows that we did not, we were not able to make that quorum three times. And so that committee meeting did not take place. So Ms. Corbo is requesting that tonight, but moving forward, any of you could make the same request. So I understand that for some people it would be easier with your families not to be in the room. I also think it's very important in this particular committee that you're sitting at small tables and having discussion and my fear and why I won't support tonight is that we will not be able to make quorum if enough of you would request remote participation so I'm just giving you my opinion I'll open it up for any other discussion

[00:02:58] anyone else who wants to speak or ask a question you can do that at this time all right I don't I don't hear any so the motion is to allow Ms. Corbo remote participation for a medical reason all in favor of the motion to allow remote participation this evening please raise your hand and say aye can you I need you to raise your hands and keep them up all right all opposed please raise your hand and say nay nay that motion will carry 14-3 Ms. Korver you've been allowed into the meeting

[00:03:36] thank you all right we will now move to public comment we have one speaker this evening and that is Andrea I'm going to assume I don't need to read through the whole thing you're well versed public comment you have two minutes please um go ahead and start your when you're ready good evening for those who don't know me my name is andrea weiskopf i believe that black lives matter i have

[00:04:11] committed to speak at every equity committee meeting to remind the committee of the importance of your work we fought too hard for this committee to come about and i will call you out if you do not accomplish what needs to be accomplished you represent different community stakeholders it is of course your duty to speak up for your community but it is as much your duty to speak up for all children and to help your community understand that all children each and every one deserves

[00:04:46] support if you want your daughter's right to wear a hijab upheld then you need to fight for the rights of trans students if you want your trans daughter to have the right to use the bathroom then you need to support children of color equity is for all children for each and every child not just the children of your own community black lives matter thank you that concludes public

[00:05:19] comment for this evening and we're going to move to item three the approval of the december 2022 draft minutes and I know many of you that are present in the room were not at that meeting so if you're not comfortable voting in favor of the meeting minutes from December if you weren't a part of the committee or you didn't watch it you cannot speak you cannot support it whatever your personal decision is you I would ask that you just abstain and so we'll I'll ask for a motion now to for the approval of December 2022 minutes is there a motion to adopt and any committee member

[00:05:56] can make that motion can you turn your mic on and say your name just so that the minutes are recorded thank you I'll make a motion to adopt Erica Harris thank you is there a second second Haley Stanger thank you moved and seconded is there any discussion on the minutes any questions or corrections seeing none all in favor of the motion to adopt the minutes please raise your hand and say aye

just if you could keep those up okay anyone opposed you can put your hands down if you said yes if you're opposed Michelle sorry I didn't want to call you out but okay anyone opposed

[00:06:35] please raise your hand and say nay and were there any abstentions just so we can record the number of abstentions we have two abstentions okay so that motion will carry thank you all our minutes are adopted so now we're going to get down to why we're here so the we're going to move to item 4 introductions item 401 is the charge purpose and function of the equity committee so I'm just going to remind everyone that the charge of the equity committee is the reviewing and recommending policy to the school board to support the district toward being a

[00:07:15] culturally competent school system our role is to use our individual perspectives for a collective voice and our purpose is to use that collective voice to enact change so as what I want to speak to right now is the fact that I am here as a school board member but I'm also a mom and I have religious beliefs and I'm part of the Sterling community so what I'm trying to get at is that I'm not just a school board member while I'm sitting here Anna you're not just a principal Erica you're not just

[00:07:50] the representative from the JRCC we all represent a wealth of different lanes as I like to say and our personal lanes cross our professional lanes cross with our personal lanes so while you were nominated or put on this committee by a school board member or you're nominated by a group and approved by the board we expect your lanes to cross that's what makes us such a rich and diverse committee so the 33 hopefully people that will sit on this committee over the course of this year we want to hear from you we want you to question we want you to challenge and we want you to be open and we are even okay if you get a little uncomfortable because that is the wonderful part

[00:08:30] of this committee and over the last we're going on four years now in april it'll be four years that this committee has existed the dialogue and the grace and the ability to sit and learn and listen in this room has is what keeps me coming back and wanting to be on this and serve on this committee so I'm grateful to everyone who accepted your nomination or self-nominated however you got here tonight I'm very grateful and I'm super excited to welcome back our previous members

[00:09:04] that are returning and to welcome our new members and that we will all, this will all be old hat by April, okay? That's a goal. All righty. So I want to also remind everyone that you are serving as a contributing member of our committee and attending our monthly meetings and adhering to pre-work and post-work of the committee.

[00:09:31] We very often give out homework here and we ask that you do that homework and in some case we might ask you to go back and ask the people that you are representing for their input as well so you can come with a with a good voice and not just your own opinion in that case and to make sure that you make time and put these this meeting on your calendar so that you don't schedule something else by mistake and so this committee does not meet in July but we meet the first Thursday of every month from 5 30 to 7 30 and hopefully you knew that commitment before you agreed to it. So we look forward to everybody being here. Like I addressed in the beginning

[00:10:09] of the meeting, I need a quorum in the room in order to start the meeting. So if I don't have a quorum in the room, I cannot start. Okay. And then I usually give 15 minutes and then I have to respect the time of the people who did come. And as if you were here last year, you know that that was very painful to have to dismiss the members that did come. And our role and our Authority is to make recommendations as a committee to the school board that does not diminish your personal voice If you

wanted to come and speak to the school board as an individual contributor You're always welcome to do that or send an email

[00:10:47] But when we when we work on policy or we work towards any recommendations, we will take votes if we want to we will perhaps Every month I'm required after every meeting I'm required as a board member to represent a viewpoint or something we discussed during the meeting and let the other board members know what's happening and so I look forward to being able to bring any recommendations that this committee wants before the board anybody have any questions on any of that all right so that was all very formal and very business-like

[00:11:25] but I want everyone to be comfortable in the room so I also will ask your permission to call you by your first name and there are a lot of you in here that I've probably never used your first name such is when I called Anna. Anna, that was a first for me because she's a principal. And so I just want to make sure that we decided a long time ago that first names made it a little bit more comfortable at the table and to build relationships amongst the group that we would use first names. Does anybody mind that? Great. I appreciate that. Alrighty. So now we're going to go around and

[00:12:02] we're going to go around the room and we're going to ask you to introduce yourself. I'd like you to just tell us just your first name if you want you can tell us your last name what group you nominated you and that you're representing and then why you're here I don't want a five minute speech because we have a lot of work to do but I know you're all saying but Brenda you've been talking for at least five minutes that's right you can call me out for that too but but why you're here why being on this committee is important to you so I'm going to be very quick I'm Brenda Sheridan I'm a school board member I'm chairing this committee I have been for the

[00:12:40] last almost four years I'm super excited to be here my why for being here has always been about speaking up for marginalized students my lens started with socioeconomics and my lens is much cleaner and wider now and so I'm just going to say marginalized students so I'm going to go to the next do you want me just calling you randomly or you want to go next Robin we're just going to go around the tables and we'll just keep going so I'm actually going to ask I'm going to remind everybody because it's different for us with the remote participation of Denise when Denise is

[00:13:18] speaking all the other mics have to be off or you'll notice her voice will get garbly and we won't have a good connection with her so I'm going to actually ask her to go first I'm going to turn my mic off because no other mics are on I believe and Denise I'm going to ask you to go first okay or second because I already went so it's not even first Denise Corbos board member at large and I'm thrilled to be part of this committee I've been following this committee for for a long while and And my passion, of course, is literacy.

[00:13:47] I believe that literacy is the number one thing that we can do, ensuring that every single child can read, is our avenue to educational equity among our students. And then all of the other topics that have come through this committee, I am also very passionate about.

[00:14:02] So I'm excited to be here and to join you. Thank you. So I'm not going to call on each person. I'm just going to let you all go around the room and introduce yourselves. And when it gets back to this table, we'll end with Lottie. - My name is Robin Scott.

[00:14:19] I am the Minority Student Academic Achievement Committee Delegate for Kenneth Colbert. This is my second year on this committee. It is still an honor to serve. My why is evolving. I'm just gonna read off of the Strategic Plan of Excellence for LCPS. Our students are the center of what we do.

[00:14:35] The vision, mission, and core values not only guide our work with students, but they are also the pillars for what we imagine for our students. LCPS vision, every student will reach their full potential and achieve their dreams. Mission, empowering all students to make meaningful contributions to the world.

[00:14:52] Holistic support, every student should have the support to feel safe, happy, and cared for in school. And equity and opportunity, all students and staff should have access to resource, programs, and support that enable a successful future. For myself, for my children, for all children, and for our community, I want to be a part of this.

[00:15:10] We have a lot of work to do. Learning and knowledge gaps, early literacy intervention, equitable learning and opportunity. It is real, it is meaningful, and it is necessary. - Good evening, I'm Ryan. I'm the Director of Research Assessment School Improvement here.

[00:15:27] I've been in Loudoun County Public Schools in the administration function for 10 1/2 years. And my why is progress. There's a lot of phenomenal work being done in this division, a lot of phenomenal outcomes. And my role here is to continue to just push for progress, to highlight our successes, to highlight areas for growth, continue to expand opportunities for all students, and to prepare them for what the world will be 20 and 30 years from now.

[00:15:57] Thank you. - Hi, my name is Neelam Chaudhry, and I am the principal at Freedom High School. And I am on this committee because I was asked by the superintendent to serve on it.

[00:16:14] As an immigrant to this country, I believe in equity for all students, and my focus really is to give every student opportunity and to understand people's cultural backgrounds and how those cultural backgrounds make people act differently and how we should respect those differences.

[00:16:39] So we do a lot of educating about that at our school. I also believe that we need to model what we say in our school improvement plans And therefore, one of my goals is to mirror our student demographic and our staff demographics.

[00:16:58] So I'm honored to be serving on this committee. Hello, my name is Erica Harris, and I apologize because all of you are staring at my back while I talk. But I am the representative for the JCRC.

[00:17:16] It's the Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Washington. I very proudly do that because I also am the president of our synagogue. And I like the fact that I am very active in the Jewish community. But the fact that I'm very active in the Jewish community is not all of why I am here on the equity committee.

[00:17:34] When I was interviewed by the JCRC as to whether or not they wanted to choose me, I think one thing that meant a lot to them when they were trying to decide was the fact that I'm a former elementary school teacher. I have taught in a variety of economic areas.

[00:17:52] I have a child who falls into all kinds of different categories of special needs and special accommodations and diversity. And I think it is important that no matter where a child comes from, what

a child looks like, or how that child is raised, that every child when they're in a classroom has the opportunity for as stellar an education that works best for them that we are able to provide.

[00:18:18] Thank you. Hi, I'm Michelle. I am the principal of Ashford Elementary. My reason and I was asked to participate by the superintendent, I'm very emotional about equity.

[00:18:39] It's close to my heart. And I think for me, it's about asset, looking at everyone for their assets. I believe in the asset-based model. And for our school, it's important to model what that looks like to celebrate each child.

[00:18:55] I've been in the county for over 20 years, and I think this committee in the last four years has done a great deal of good, good work, and I am honored to be part of this committee. My name is Sama Beg. I've been nominated by Haris Mehdevi, who is a school board member. I'm honored to be here today. I am a teacher by profession, and I am also a child of immigrants.

[00:19:30] I can tell you firsthand that I have experienced both negative and positive in terms of schools and how they reflected diversity, reacted to diversity, and having both of those experiences, I would like to add what I have to this committee and hopefully help create an environment for our children that is safe, respectful, and supportive because clearly, even as a teacher, That's what I try to do, and I'm hoping to do that for all the children that we represent here.

[00:20:10] Yeah. Good evening. My name is Sayyad Ashraf, and this is my second year on this committee, so I'm proud of the work we did last year. I represent all Dulles area Muslim society, and we have a large portion of the student body which belongs to my community, so I want to make sure that I bring those unique perspectives and issues to this committee from my community because our students, they spend a large part of their day here, and it impacts the way they conduct themselves in the school system.

[00:20:43] But with that, as Michelle mentioned, I believe that diversity should be celebrated, not just tolerated. So I'm looking forward to work with you all to move the needle on those equity issue by working with this committee. Thank you. Hello, my name is Brian Klippel, and I am the principal at Goshen Post Elementary School and I'm one of the superintendent's appointees.

[00:21:09] My why is advocating for schools to promote culturally diverse instruction opportunities and making sure that we are providing with every child every day with authentic learning experiences. We want to make sure that they are empowered to make change within their community and beyond our four walls of the school and so as a school leader I'm going to continue to advocate for that to ensure that all of our schools have those opportunities for our students. My name is

[00:21:46] Anna Purdy. I am the principal of Meadowland Elementary. I also have taught in the Sterling community. I also am a graduate of Rolling Ridge Elementary, Sterling Middle School, and Parkview High School. I also have two incredible children who have disabilities who are attending Loudoun County Public Schools. I love this county and I am here to amplify the voices of Sterling so that we are seen not as less than due to lack

[00:22:25] of understanding. I'm particularly here to represent my students who have disabilities, my students who have gender identities that may not follow social norms. I'm here to represent the Latino community who is always underrepresented and make sure that they have a voice in our community. Thank you. Good evening. My name is Tiffany Polifko and I am

[00:23:03] the Broad Run District School Board Representative. I was appointed to the committee by Chairman Ian Sorokin on the school board. And I think perhaps I may have the unique opportunity here to share my diversity of thought with you. So first, I hope that we can celebrate diverse thoughts as well.

[00:23:22] But I would like to start by first letting you all know that my background and my passion for what's happening in our school system and school systems all over the country is the fact that I've spent the last 20 plus years of my life working with children with special needs and particularly autism. That's my background. That's my area of expertise. I worked as a special education teacher in Fairfax County and Fauquier County. And I've also worked in a private day treatment center. I did that down in Charlottesville, Virginia, when I was working on my master's degree at the

[00:23:56] University of Virginia. I think it's important for you all to know that I am an advocate. I'm an advocate for every child. I am not an advocate just for my own, and I'm not an advocate for certain groups of children. I'm an advocate for all children, and I may have some diverse opinions.

[00:24:15] I may be the only one in the group, and maybe not because not everyone has spoken yet, but it's possible that I'm the only one in this room, and I will not be afraid to say, who doesn't believe that we should be providing trainings for our staff members that groups people into oppressor and oppressed. And I would hope that all of you, while you may not agree with me, can at least listen to my perspective on that. And the reason that I don't believe that that's a good thing to do for children or for adults is because it actually violates Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. So I think we should be moving forward, and I think we should embrace

[00:24:52] differences. I think we should embrace diversity. But I think that also means that we appreciate diversity of thought and diversity of values and principles and ethics. And so while my personal viewpoints may not match yours, I will listen to each and every single one of you speak. I will listen to all of your perspectives. I will listen to your opinions, and I will do so respectfully.

[00:25:15] And I would just ask that you do the same for me. Thank you. Good evening. My name is Dorothy Roney, and I come as a representative of MSAC. So I am a parent of five children that attend LCPS schools.

[00:25:34] I have one in high school and four that attend the lovely Goshen Post Elementary School with Mr. Klippel. I bring into perspective of I'm an adopted parent. All five of my children are adopted, which brings a whole new value to equity and what that means within the school system as well as I have a multiracial family.

[00:25:53] So I get to see kind of firsthand how some holes and where the differences and where minorities are at, what's the word, where there's just differences in the schools.

[00:26:12] I also have three children that are special, that have IEPs. So I kind of bring a whole broad range of knowledge and perspective. I'm thankful to be here, I'm honored to be here, and I'm excited for the work that we're gonna be doing going forward.

[00:26:35] - Good evening, my name is Mandana Murtazavi, I'm excited to be here. I work for the Head Start program, Head Start and Step Preschool program, part of the Department of Instruction EL programs. I also, besides being a LCPS employee, I'm also a mother of two graduates of LCPS, And I am also a minority.

[00:27:00] I didn't grow up here. I lived in three different continents. I consider myself a citizen of the world. I don't think I belong to any specific race or group.

[00:27:16] I'm for everyone. Working with the Head Start program, I learned to-- because we serve the neediest of neediest in our community. And our families, there are a very diverse population.

[00:27:33] And I learned to be an advocate for those who don't have a voice. And my supervisor and she asked our staff who would like to be a part of the committee.

[00:27:53] Because equity is high on my list, fairness, equity, We're just providing opportunities to everyone, no matter of their, again, race, language, where they come from, what they think.

[00:28:08] So I'm excited to be here. Thank you. Mandala, can you shut your mic off and we'll go to the next table? Hi, I'm Mark Lucero.

[00:28:25] This is my second year on the Equity Committee. Last year I was here representing the Latino community. This year, I was nominated by Ian Sorotkin to be part of the, to represent, I guess, the broad run, I mean, Blue Ridge community.

[00:28:44] So, I don't know, somehow I ended up here again. So why am I here? I think that, I jotted down some notes. I think a big component of equity is for everyone to acknowledge that each student has, you know, a different background and a distinct lived experience.

[00:29:03] and Loudoun County's vision is that every student will reach their full potential. It just seems some students may need a little bit of help to get there, and that's good, and that's right to do. However, I don't believe success is a zero-sum game.

[00:29:21] I don't think that we need to bring anyone down in order to prop anyone up. I think we can do everything without impacting others. So that's really why I'm here, to be part of this equity committee to make recommendations to the school board that will help to raise people up without having to bring others down to do it.

[00:29:42] So glad to be here again, thanks. - My name is Kenya Tremendous. I'm a representative from Riverside High School and this is my first year on the equity committee. My why is because I believe that my life experiences have given me a unique open point of view and I wanna be a voice for those who can't use theirs.

[00:30:08] - Hi everyone, I'll turn around so people can see me. I'm Chandana, Chanta. My why is, so I teach yoga for free in the local public libraries. And I don't own a yoga studio or anything. It's just something I've been doing as a passion.

[00:30:24] And I teach children of all different races, backgrounds, a lot of children with disabilities. My passion is de-stigmatizing mental health and also just dealing with trauma and anxiety. Lots of bullying happening in schools.

[00:30:40] and they come to me to kind of talk to me about it. I try to create a safe space and use yoga as a yoga therapy, basically, to help. And I realized in the course of doing this that there's a lot that needs to be done in schools to embrace diversity.

[00:30:56] And like I said, I get a lot of different kinds of kids that, you know, just have, they're diverse in their own many unique ways, and people are not really accepting them. Their peers are not accepting

them. Their teachers don't know how to address it. So they feel lost. Like, that's the best way I describe them. They're either not exactly overachievers, so there's not much focus, and they're not really struggling, so there's not much focus.

[00:31:17] They're just kind of in the middle, kind of lost, and my goal is to help them find a way to find their voice and their confidence to do well, so that if you don't have any mediocre children, everyone has their creativity, because these are our future doctors, future politicians, future everyone.

[00:31:32] So my passion is really to break down whatever barriers they're facing, de-stigmatize whatever anxiety, mental health, and just celebrate them. And that's really why I'm here. Hi, my name is Haley, and I'm the nominee for Atusa Research.

[00:31:54] This is my second year on the committee, and it's actually part of the reason I'm here. It's my second year living in Loudoun County. I moved from Arizona a couple years ago, and I was a teacher in Arizona before moving there. I worked in public education and for-profit charter schools, and I saw what happens in a community when equity is not available to students in the school system, which is why I ended up leaving teaching and getting involved in policy and educating myself on that background.

[00:32:26] I think holding kids and their futures in this committee and like committees and school boards and districts like having that is such a privilege and an awesome responsibility and I take that responsibility really seriously and I'm grateful for the opportunity to serve on this committee for a second year. Thank you. Hi everyone my name is Jin Jin Ling this is my second year in the equity committee. If some of you remember me, I was so nervous last time when I introduced myself,

[00:33:02] I said, good morning, everyone. So, yeah, I really feel grateful that I can be part of this committee. And I also see the importance of everybody to get together, representing different community, representing different perspective, and bring different energy to this community. So I totally agree with our chair that we should participate as much as we can and not leaving a couple meetings that we cannot start at. So hopefully this year we can have, you know, more participation

[00:33:37] rate so we can complete a lot of tasks that we're supposed to. I want to say because I'm coming from an immigrant, I'm an immigrant, my husband's from Japan, I'm from China, I raised my kids here so they both are in Loudoun County Public School. They had a lot of fun there. What I experienced, like most of the immigrants here, is that we have language barrier. We have culture barrier.

[00:34:01] We struggle with visa status, green cards, getting the status, etc. So you were so busy and you were so afraid that you did something wrong and then you suddenly have to be out of this wonderful country. So when I see that, it makes me feel like there's somebody need to come up and speak up for those kids from the family that they supposed to have the equal opportunity to get all those resources, great resources here at Loudoun County Public School provided.

[00:34:33] So I'm trying, although I'm not particularly, you know, good at education or anything, I'm a professional, but basically pharmaceuticals, but I would love to represent the AAPI community, particularly for those new immigrants, that their kids can utilize all the resources, can speak up their needs so we can hear.

[00:34:56] That's why I'm here. So I'm very happy that I can be here again and great to work with everybody. Thank you. Hey there, everyone. I'm Arjun Sethi. I'm a junior at Potomac Falls High School and

the Academies of Loudoun. And I'm excited to serve my second term here as a student representative on the LCPS Equity Committee.

[00:35:17] I know last year on the committee I learned a lot of lessons, but one of them was very important. I think I'm taking that into my kind of why for why I'm on the committee this year. And it's that LCPS would really be nowhere without the voices of its stakeholders. I mean, this includes the tens of thousands of students, teachers, and even our parents that work hard to make sure that everyone in LCPS receives a world-class education.

[00:35:42] And I'm on this committee to make sure that every single one of these students, whether they're marginalized, whether they're privileged, all races, all religions, all genders are being represented and feel that they have a voice in the policies that ultimately affect them because equity starts with everyone. Good evening committee members. I'm Lottie Spurlock, director of equity here in LCPS and have been in this role. This is my fourth year and I've been an employee of Loudoun County Public Schools for 12 and a half years now.

[00:36:20] I had the awesome opportunity of moving here 12 years ago with my family and serving first at Guilford Elementary as assistant principal before moving to Rolling Ridge as principal and then another ridge, Cardinal Ridge, as principal for one year before moving into this role.

[00:36:42] And so for obvious reasons, many of you may say, well, you're the director of equity. Of course, you have to be on the equity committee. But I bring a personal why in this as well, in addition to my professional hat. I've been a mother of students here in LCPS.

[00:36:58] Both of my children have graduated from LCPS. Hard to believe I'm that old. And I appreciate the fact that both of them had unique journeys. I think about their experiences, and I think about what it meant for me, even as a classroom teacher, and how I endeavored to show up for each and every student.

[00:37:18] So a lot of times we use the word all, and I'm not opposed to all. But I really believe deeply that we cannot get to all without touching each and every. And I know there are thoughts on equality versus equity.

[00:37:38] Ultimately, equality is the goal, but we cannot get to equality without equity. Glad to be here and be able to work with you all this year. I'm going to take a moment and ask everyone to look behind me. that's the two lovely ladies sitting over there. Helen is Lottie's admin assistant. Is that an appropriate title? Sorry. And so you might receive emails on behalf of Lottie from Helen, or she'll be copied on an email perhaps. And then Jory is my school board assistant, and you will more than likely also hear from Jory from time to time. If we're collecting data, Jory usually does that for

[00:38:18] us, and we're hoping to collect some data after this meeting as well, so Jory's prepared for that. so you might receive emails from both of them or you'll see them copied on emails that come out of Lottie's office so I just want to make sure you saw their faces we can't do it without them and so I want to make sure you knew who they were and then I also I forgot to say at the beginning of the meeting that due to the fact that the school board has a meeting a closed session this evening that begins at 7 30 we have a hard stop tonight of 7 15 so that they can change the meeting

[00:38:52] over on the feed and the WebEx, so I will have to stop us right at 7.15, regardless of where we are in our agenda. We'll pick it up next month, and normally we stop at 7.30, so I'm going to also plug the fact that I very much respect your time. I ask that you get here on time so we can start.

[00:39:11] Lottie and I plan a pretty full agenda every month, and so we want to be able to get through it all and be able to give all of you an opportunity to participate and speak and get through all the business we plan but i try very hard to end at 7 30 to respect your time so that you can get home to your families or whatever you need to do after this so um i just want you to keep that in the back of your mind as we approach 720 on a regular night you're going to hear from me okay we have about 10 minutes we're gonna start wrapping it up whatever we're doing okay so i just wanted you i

[00:39:44] wanted to give you a heads up before i had to do it um that's that house i have two more housekeeping things in case we in case we run um close at the end if you would please take you were each given an equity binder to this evening with all the documents that you need if there's anything you think could be added to it please speak up don't hesitate to ask if there's something you'd like to see in there but please leave your name tag on the table so that we don't have to produce new ones every month um we'll pick those up at the end of the meeting and put them back out for you

[00:40:20] next month. And again, when you come in, they'll be on the table. Please take your name tag. And we don't assign seats in here. We ask that you sit where you would like to. I will challenge you to not sit with people you know that you're comfortable with. I'm not looking at three principals right now. But I already said something. But, you know, I asked Tiffany to sit on the other side of the room so that the board members aren't all at the same table. We want to produce as much dialogue as we can amongst those that we don't know. So we'll get to know each other. But I ask that, you know, you can even change it up every time. You don't have to sit at the same table

[00:40:57] every month either. Like you can really, that'll excite me. And I'm going to introduce Wes Allen to you, but I'm going to also reiterate something before he starts talking. And then afterwards, if you have a question, or you're not going to be here for a meeting, or you just, you want something shared with the equity committee or you want something on the agenda Wes is going to go over FOIA and meeting requirements you are a body of the school board and therefore we have to

[00:41:31] follow open meeting requirements so your emails those questions should be directed to Lottie and me if there's a third member of the committee in the email we don't want to go down that path Wes is going to explain all of that to you but I'm going to tell you that now that if you're not going to be here it is a requirement in the charter that you notify us just so that we know you're not coming.

[00:41:56] If we knew that you know the flu had struck out a lot of people on the committee we would cancel it and postpone and perhaps reschedule rather than have all the staff come in in here and put this together and we wouldn't want to waste people's time. So just if you let us know ahead of time if you're not able to come we ask that you do that.

[00:42:16] again if you are repeatedly not coming and not letting us know I'm also required to notify the school board and ask for a new nominee from that either group or person okay so now I'm going to turn it over and introduce Wes Allen to you he is one of our division council and he's going to go over item 501 FOIA overview and everybody I hope you didn't have like a heavy snack before

[00:42:44] Akeem because this is riveting stuff. While he's getting a mic, I just wanted the one last thing is this meeting is live broadcast, so you've all been on TV for the last hour and 15 minutes.

[00:43:11] I just wanted you to know. See, you're not nervous anymore. You've already spoken. Everything's fine. Good afternoon or evening, everyone. Again, I'm Wes Allen. I'm the Assistant Division

Counsel.

[00:43:33] I've been with LCPS for about 10 months to the day and have the privilege and honor of sharing this riveting topic of Virginia Freedom of Information Act. Just to give kind of an overview of what we're talking about today, this is the required training for you all as you start your cycle. Some of you heard this last year from Division Counsel Robert Falcone. We're going to

[00:44:06] talk about the meeting requirements, the records requirements, costs, and penalties. So some of you may be familiar with the Federal Freedom of Information Act. That was enacted in 1966.

[00:44:21] It took effect in 1967. That applies to the federal government. Here in Virginia, we have the Virginia Freedom of Information Act, and that shortly followed. It was enacted by the General Assembly in 1968. This quote up here is from a U.S. Supreme Court case in 1978. Specifically with respect to the Virginia Freedom of Information Act, it guarantees citizens of the Commonwealth and representatives of the media access to public records held by public bodies, public officials, and public employees.

[00:44:53] It essentially allows light to be shed on the operations of a public body. The guiding principle of FOIA is openness. And because you are a branch of the school board, being a committee, it applies to you all. FOIA generally determines how local public bodies must conduct their meetings, And then it also regulates the public's access to local government and public bodies records.

[00:45:25] Again, this is the training for you all as committee members. And a copy of the Virginia Freedom of Information Act was uploaded to board docs. I believe you have a copy or all should have a copy. You should read and familiarize yourself with those.

[00:45:48] And moving over to meeting requirements. All meetings of the public bodies are presumed to be open. unless an exemption is properly invoked we'll talk about some of these exemptions in a bit the purpose again is to promote an increased awareness by all persons of governmental activities and afford an opportunity to citizens to witness the operations of government open meeting requirements apply whenever a public body holds or participates in a meeting so all committees and sub committees such as this are included it doesn't matter if it's a standing or

[00:46:24] ad hoc meeting it's subject to the act so the highlights we'll talk here are notice requirements for meetings virtual meetings emails as the madam chair mentioned tips to avoid the optics or actually holding public meetings unbeknownst or inadvertently agenda requirements and then remote participation so in terms of meetings it's required by the Virginia Freedom of Information Act to have three working days notice for any formal meeting work

[00:46:58] session or retreat when three or more members meet and discuss the transat our transact public business then it's considered a public meeting even if you don't intend to so for those that would also require three working days notice so if you meet after this kind of just informally talking after this meeting there's more than three of you um as you're going out to the parking lot even and you're you're discussing a matter that you discussed in here then that technically is an informal assemblage but it's also considered a

[00:47:34] meeting in terms of emails if you have three more three members or more then that gives the optics of holding a meeting and discussing public business the Virginia Supreme Court does allow some flexibility with emails but if there's rapid fire back and forth and with three or more members of the board then it's considered a public meeting so just to kind of rewind here definition

[00:48:12] of meeting is broadly construed by the Act it intends to capture any meeting where a public business is again transacted or discussed so a work session would be considered a meeting what a meeting is not a gathering does not create a meeting of public business is not discussed or carried out and the gathering was not called for the purpose of doing public business. So think community events or social engagements. It's not a meeting because there's no discussion or transaction of public business and it wasn't prearranged for the purpose of public business. So again you want to be very

[00:48:51] cognizant when you're emailing and again it's best to keep it one-to-one or no more than three folks on on the email because that can be construed as a public meeting. So try to avoid replying all um again keep all communications one to one both written and oral and avoiding before after gatherings of three or more and this isn't meant to necessarily scare you by any means but it's just uh um again we want to at the forefront of your mind because this could be

[00:49:28] considered a public meeting or assemblage uh for that and any any conversation that you would have in that would then be subject to FOIA and, you know, could be requested, any documents that you have could be requested pertaining to that. So please be mindful. In terms of meeting agendas, there's regulations with regard to the timing of posting and the distribution of agenda and materials. At least one copy of the agenda packets, unless it's exempt material,

[00:50:05] must be furnished to the members of the public at the same time that you, as committee members, are getting them as well, and to the extent there's any items that are exempt under Virginia Freedom of Information Act, which would be pertaining to specific students or personnel matters, those would be exempt, so those would not be included with the agenda materials to the public.

[00:50:33] So closed meetings, I don't know how frequently that you all have closed meetings in this committee but just for your general awareness there's a motion to go into a closed meeting and in closed session they're under the virginia law there's 54 reasons that you could have a closed meeting and that's some to throw out or award of a public contract or you're negotiating contracts and there's procurement negotiations negotiations going on if you're consulting with your legal counsel or discussing again personnel matters or individual student matters those are the types of

[00:51:07] purposes that you would go into a closed session and so the motion here what's important to know is that you need to identify that in the open session so the public knows you need to provide the purpose again and cite the specific Virginia code section as to why you're the purpose again why you're going into the closed session. The second part is certification which is when you come out of the session, you need to certify, again, by roll call, each member has to say

[00:51:43] that they followed the act, they didn't discuss any other items or transact any public business other than the reason they cited to go into the closed session. No voting can occur during closed session.

[00:51:59] There's actually a Virginia case law that says no motion or business that's adopted or agreed to in a closed meeting would be effective. as a legal matter it would be ineffective if there's any voting in closed session so when you you can do a straw poll at best but when you come out and after your certification then you can vote as a committee in this case okay in terms of remote participation physical quorum is needed

[00:52:31] and under our policy and in Virginia law there's there's two types and purposes for remote participation first one to specific personal matters uh this is two times per calendar year or 25 of the

meetings held whichever is more so if you meet once a month then that you have you would have be entitled to four specific personal matters and then there's a temporary permanent medical condition disability and that's unlimited juice and per our policy uh that would need to be

[00:53:04] approved by a vote by you all much like you did earlier today moving on to records records aren't just kind of documents and hardcopy papers they include audio recordings they include emails or text messages even from your personal devices if they're used to discuss school board business or committee purposes those are open to disclosure under the Virginia Freedom of Information Act unless an exception or exemption applies again for just your

[00:53:42] general awareness there's not an obligation to create a record and you don't you're not required to provide simply information or answers to questions it's simply a request for records under FOIA for you all you you may get questions you know in FOIA requests from parent other parents or the public and so uh for that we'll talk about how to handle um that uh those requests as they come in and in just a moment but important for your emails that you have you may want to consider

[00:54:17] having a disclaimer that this email is subject to disclosure under the virginia freedom of information act a lot of admin and employees have that in their signature lines or under their signature lines already but it's a consideration when you're emailing with folks with respect to this committee so when you do receive a records request you want to notify daniel adams he's our public information officer or foia officer and his contact information is on the last slide so

[00:54:53] so you have that but you'll want to familiarize yourselves with with that name in terms of request it's a quick turnaround there's five working days from the time the request is processed or received it has to be specific in nature it can't be I want all records from the equity committee that's rather vague and and so the requester would need to specify and that's what Daniel Adams would reach out to them and say you know could you be more specific we need to kind of hone

[00:55:27] this down. And then there's an estimate in terms of Daniel Adams reaches out to access and if it's a request that involves various offices who are kind of the custodian of records, the public information officer would reach out to them and coordinate and ask, you know, how long is this going to take for you to search and to duplicate and to supply it to me and give an estimate. And And then there's a back and forth with the requester saying that there could be a cost associated with that.

[00:56:06] And so if there's more time needed, then there's seven extra working days. So the request could say, yes, here's records, no, there's an exemption that's applicable, or yes, you can have this, but no, because you can't have these records because the applicable exemption applies.

[00:56:31] And what's important is that all public bodies make a reasonable effort to reach an agreement with the requester concerning the production of the records that have been requested. So in terms of exemption and redactions, if there's scholastic information pertaining to a student, anything that's personally identifiable to a particular student, that is, pursuant to the code, one of the exemptions for redactions such that you wouldn't disclose that information same goes with personnel information any kind of attorney work product or

[00:57:10] anything that would speak to kind of the safety and security plans of a school because that would then jeopardize the integrity of the security and and that would not be public so an exemption would apply there are instances where entire records are covered such as you know again personnel

records if it's not the actual employee who's requesting that same goes for student a parent can ask for records of another student who's not their own so again your role is you'll want to notify our public information

[00:57:49] officer immediately of the request again we there's only five working days so and it's a quick turnaround so even if you have a question is this a four-year request um err on the side of letting our public information officer know um and then he's equipped to to handle that appropriately and let you know if there's any next steps again all emails and messages on your personal devices are public records if the committee business is discussed and just i mentioned this before but

[00:58:25] there are charges that are permissible under the virginia freedom of information act for LCPS to for what it incurs pass along to the requester for searching accessing supplying duplicating and that includes exemption review and redaction there are penalties for failure to comply with the act there's you can petition request or competition to the court for Virginia Freedom of Information Act so usually in the rid of mandamus or injunctive relief and the burden would then be on LCPS

[00:59:04] P.S. to say this is why either we haven't complied with the act or it wasn't specific enough or these are the exemptions that we've asserted and they're permissible and we would go to court to resolve that.

[00:59:20] And then there are personal liability. You could have personal liability if the court finds that one person knowingly and willfully acted and caused a failure to comply with the act.

[00:59:41] And so that's often not the case, but the law does provide that there could be personal liability there. And generally, the courts look to opinions of the attorney general and court cases that have resolved some of these FOIA debates that go on.

[01:00:01] And there's also Virginia Freedom of Information Advisory Council that is an office that publishes opinions to resolve issues that arise under the Virginia Freedom of Information Act. And so to the extent, you know, I don't anticipate that any of you would reach out to the Virginia FOIA Advisory Council, but, you know, you can certainly reach out to our public information officer who would loop Division Council's office in to do so.

[01:00:32] And then, again, most importantly, on the bottom of the slide there is Daniel Adams' contact information, should you ever receive a FOIA request or request for documents. So, yes, it's kind of dry.

[01:00:51] But in terms of a high-level takeaway, just avoid conducting, holding inadvertent meetings and really understanding that e-mails about committee business are potentially subject to disclosure. in response to a Virginia FOIA request.

[01:01:09] So that's all I have for you. Is anybody lost? Anybody have a question? Okay, Erica. Just a quick question. As a representative of an organization, sometimes there are issues that will come up on an agenda or there may be something that's brought up during a meeting.

[01:01:28] And I often may speak to the person who's my connection with the organization to talk about what their thoughts are regarding the issue. because I do, though I represent my own brain when I'm in here, I do have a purpose to represent their perspective as well. So is that the same kind of situation? So do I have to make sure that if I'm communicating with the JCRC, it's only two of us? Would it be recommended that it would only be two of us? So I'm not quite following in terms of, are you discussing

[01:02:03] public business from the equity committee and those email transactions? So usually not in email, We usually speak over the phone, and it's only happened a couple of times, but I can't promise it won't happen in the future. So something may come up that they see is going to be on the agenda because they see it at the same time I do, and they may want to kind of suggest I ask something or suggest I bring something up.

[01:02:28] So we have that conversation, and then sometimes after, if I have, then we discuss how it went. But that's the extent of it. I don't fill them in on all the minute details of the meeting. Right and but they're not committee members of this they are not okay that that's that's the distinction That's what I wanted to make sure of okay perfect. Thank you. Yes this table. Thanks Um so in here it says notify FOIA officer immediately of requests are you are you Suggesting that we on the committee may be

[01:03:04] Approached by someone asking for FOIA a FOIA request. Yeah that's not out of the realm of possibility if a member of the public reaches out to you and says, I know you're on the equity committee. I'm interested in having access to these records or copies to these records, and then you would pass that along to our public information officer.

[01:03:27] Thank you so much. I don't know if this question is more for Lottie and Brenda, but so I know in last year you would occasionally email us and say, hey, if you have views about a particular document, send it here. In our email, I remember, two or three times there were stuff sent to the board.

[01:03:54] I assume, I guess I'm trying to figure out, so that's allowed because it's not a meeting between two people and it's going, it's becoming public, right? Is that the confines of why that's allowed?

[01:04:11] Yes. So the document that you might fill out or contribute to either during the meeting or outside of the meeting becomes part of the public record of this meeting, so it is made available to the public. And it isn't a discussion back and forth. It's just you're adding your input.

[01:04:28] Okay. Well, something I've been thinking about since I was also on the committee last year, I mean, I know we meet once a month, and it's like two or three hours. And I know we tried to see if there was appetite for meeting twice a month just to keep things moving, and I know there was an appetite. trying to think creatively about how we can do more work outside of the meetings is it is it possible where we at least do information sharing that's also available to the public like for example if I say hey I came across a county in California that addressed equity in such an interesting way that is might be something like best practices but it's not like I'm having a

[01:05:06] discussion I just want to share it with committee members can I share it to some mailbox that becomes open to public so that I'm not like I just want to share like I'm trying to be productive in a way that also meets all the rules and also try to move the needle along on some of the issues in that case I would if you come across an article you want to share with the rest of the committee or you know you see something in a video or anything like that some broadcast that's live streamed my recommendation would be free to send it to Lottie and just email a link or the article itself to Lottie and ask that Lottie share it with the committee oh okay and I won't I wouldn't

[01:05:43] block anything as chair like I if somebody wants to share something I would never say oh don't do that um you know and Lottie can send the email and say on behalf of whoever sent it um they'd like to share this with the committee rather than you sending a link to the whole committee and then people start going back and forth about what they like or don't like about it um that that's what we're trying to avoid

because the public would not be privy to that conversation if it is something that a member would like to be brought to if a member of the committee has an idea for what they'd like something discussed on the agenda send it to Lottie Lottie will share it with me

[01:06:20] and then the committee will discuss it as a whole in in public and you can have one-on-one discussion with anyone in the room a one-on-one is fine what Wes was was talking about was that you know Michelle Anna and I aren't going to leave here and continue to talk about what we talked about in the committee because that would be a violation okay does everybody understand that but you could meet I mean the and maybe I'll put this challenge out the first year that we met we were all new to this and the first homework I'm going to sign the first homework this is very exciting the first

[01:06:55] homework was get with a committee member you don't know and go have coffee or whatever you want and and get to know them one-on-one one-on-one so if you're not familiar with somebody in the room make a new friend and it helps develop that easier dialogue the next time we're in the room so if you're interested in doing that before you leave today grab somebody's phone number and set up a time before we meet again in March and and just sit and get to know each other it doesn't have to be about equity it can just be sit and get to know each other and it at what we found particularly in the beginning before we were having you know regular difficult conversations

[01:07:32] and just getting to know each other it was a really great way for people to be more comfortable when they came back to the room I've shared this many times that that first meeting people came in that had been nominated to the committee and said I've never been in this room before or I don't even know why I'm here and so there's a there was a level of really strong advocates that had been asking for this type of dialogue and committee for years and people who had no idea and had never been in the building before. So we had to come together and figure out how to talk to each other and level the playing field for everybody to feel comfortable in the room. And that was one of the methods we used. And then the second meeting we came and people swapped the phone number with

[01:08:10] somebody else. So it really is a great way if you're interested in doing that. Any other questions for Wes? We certainly thank you for being here. And of course, if any questions come up, I'll do my best to answer them, but I'll always turn it to legal if it's a really difficult one to make sure it's answered 100% correctly. Sometimes you guys try to trick me and trip me up. So with your questions, I just want to make sure you get the proper guidance. So both Bob and Wes are available to answer our questions throughout the time.

[01:08:43] So thanks, Wes. All right. I am going to remind everybody that we have the hard stop. and so what we get through tonight we're going to pick up immediately in March and we had already planned for our last item to overflow into March so don't worry that is going to be a topic that we know is going to take a couple at least two meetings so I'll turn it over to Lottie for 502 the background information on the work of last year's committee and I'll just introduce as Lottie gets ready here the committee at the end of last year was concerned that we would just start from scratch and this committee would roll forward with its own thoughts and so we

[01:09:21] promised the outgoing members who weren't returning and those who are returning to the committee that we would pick up where we left off and not waste any time of course this committee will now guide the dialogue and it is yours just it is your ship to steer but we're not going to start from scratch we're going to keep keep rolling so I'll turn it right over to Lottie to get everybody up to speed all right good

evening again committee members I am I'm trying to multitask when I have this ready because we're gonna roll right into this, I believe, afterwards.

[01:09:54] So you all have received your binders and you may or may not have been a curious committee member and have already started to look through the contents of the binder. I'm just gonna quickly bring your attention to a couple of things.

[01:10:09] So right after the first tab, you'll notice the minutes that we've already approved. So we'll start each meeting with a copy of the draft minutes from the previous meeting. So you'll have that hard copy. There's also a page that is entitled The Seven Norms of Collaborative Work.

[01:10:28] This is something that we put inside of the binder year one when Brenda was talking about having coffee and making connections with others. We also realize that the time that we are together really sets up a real opportunity, an authentic one, for us to come together.

[01:10:48] And we have different lived experiences and perspectives. And so it really does require us to put into place sometimes pausing or paraphrasing or putting some ideas on the table or really embracing different perspectives. So that's there.

[01:11:04] You won't be asked to memorize these, so don't worry. But they're there just for your reference. After that listing of the seven norms, there's also the equity committee presentation that you just saw on Freedom of Information Act.

[01:11:19] So you have a hard copy of that for your reference. And the one that I really want to center for just a couple of seconds here is the last presentation that's inside the binder. Actually, it's not the last thing, but it's the next one. It has the black cover, and it is a hard copy of the presentation that was shared in December.

[01:11:38] it was our last meeting so as you know the appointments to the committee are annual appointments and because there's usually an organizational meeting of the school board in January looks like we're going to be starting always in February as our first meeting of the year so you'll go February through December for this term and so this whole presentation with the black cover really captures the summary that I share with the committee it was really a good refresh and a good review of what we had done. Sometimes you don't really think about all that

[01:12:14] has been accomplished. And so I'll just highlight a couple of things. One of them was that the committee had an opportunity, as did several stakeholder groups, to weigh in on the development of the division-wide equity statement, the commitment to equity. And right after that page, there is a list of policies that were reviewed by this committee and so if you'll remember the charge that Brenda mentioned earlier you know we have a responsibility to amongst other things look at our practices but really it does come down to when when and if we're hoping to enact change it

[01:12:50] would be through policy so this this committee has had a wonderful opportunity last year we ended really looking at this all the policies you can see by month that they were linked and I will say that this presentation is also on board docs, but I'll follow up with an email so you'll have everything in that one email for your quick reference. I won't go through each of the policies, but they're there for your quick reference and easy access. We also ended the year and the meeting with an opportunity for praise and some recommendations, sort of a praise and a polish.

[01:13:28] And so we found that to be a really good strategy to really hear everyone's voice, something that they were grateful for and something that they felt that we could do better as a committee and naturally some of what came up with people in the room came up with was we need to be consistent with the meetings and so we've talked about the importance of attending regularly and just being in the room for this important work we really appreciate your diverse perspectives and going forward we'll fast forward to December and we'll have a similar presentation of all the things that we've been able to capture for this year.

[01:14:04] So you'll also find a reference to the student discrimination and harassment policy. I just wanted you to have a copy of that, as well as the regulation, because I'm going to be referencing that in the presentation that's coming up.

[01:14:21] And then the last document that is inside, I believe it's the last one, yes, the binder is the protocol for responding to racial slurs and hate speech in schools. And so I'm going to pause here to see if we have any questions. Anybody have any questions or comments?

[01:14:40] We'll start with Mark and then Arjun. Thank you. Lottie, not to put you on the spot, but I think that commenting to the policies, the potential policy changes is really important to the group.

[01:14:57] And sometimes, you know, we check email to see which policies we're going to be reviewing next. And sometimes we can get kind of caught off guard by the volume of policies that are to review is would it be possible to up front give kind of a forecast of which policies we're going to be reviewing which month and when those due dates will be or is that kind of just an organic thing that kind of comes about thank you so it isn't really organic but it is based on the work of all of the school board committees that is going on so we we can say what we know is coming up for those who don't know virginia code requires a

[01:15:36] policy review of every policy every five years it goes through a cycle the school board since i've been on has always tried to complete that in the four-year term but policies can get caught up in a committee they can get referred to another committee so we could try to forecast based on what is due this year and that outlook but i can't guarantee that we can tell you when something's coming because we when we sit down to prepare the agenda which is usually about two weeks before the committee we're asking the staff liaisons from the other committees what's what's in the queue so that we can prepare and when there's a lot we try to send those that are a little

[01:16:15] we'll say less controversial or not we still want the equity committee's input on it but not necessarily requiring a discussion in the room and ask you to give input on those but I'm not sure we could forecast even what's coming in March because the other committees really steer the ship as to what comes not what comes to us but the time frame of how they get to us because they could stay in committee for two months and they could look very different by the time they get to us based on committee work the other school board committees does that make sense

[01:16:50] okay and I think our June had a question we'll do our best I just can't promise it's gonna be accurate does that make sense okay Arjun yeah so I know like in the last session of the equity committee like a lot of committees are a lot of subcommittees are doing a lot of work regarding like new policies and new initiatives that the county can implement in order to be more culturally responsive does the equity committee have the power to initiate a policy review or to propose a policy to the school board or is that out of the scope of this committee we absolutely could do that and I believe we have there's I'm not going to be able to say the exact name of I'm not

[01:17:30] going to name them off the top of my head but yes we have done that absolutely so if there's a that's where I say if there's an interest here let Lottie know so that we can prepare for it because it might not be something that when a policy is developed particularly from scratch it isn't something that we would start here in the committee we would ask the the expert staff to start that it would go through legal counsel it would go through cabinet and then we would bring it here with a formulated policy that of course we could change but it would come structured as a policy it would with all of the things that might be needed or required by Virginia code as well so it would go through a process before it came to us but if you have an idea of something you wanted to target

[01:18:08] and and have a policy developed on absolutely this is a place for that we might also come back and staff might recommend that it actually start in a different committee if it's the instruction heavy so it'll just depend what it is but bring your ideas forward absolutely and those can be sent right to Lottie okay any other questions on this piece all right thanks great questions we're going to move now rather quickly to 503 this is why I did my housekeeping first right to 503 and the information on school

[01:18:44] based incidents I asked I'm just going to introduce it really quick as a school board member and tiffany can vouch for me here as well as denise we get emails almost daily about incidents that happen in our schools and the tick the upward tick that i'm seeing over the last year certainly if not even longer is the increase in in hate speech and racial slurs and just the derogatory nature of some of the things that are happening in our school buildings i'm sure our principals

[01:19:17] could weigh in on that and with I just not even taking a tally but just looking at the emails that the notifications that we get it's becoming disturbing to me to see that even with all the things we've put in place that we're still having an issue so Lottie pointed to policy she pointed to how we deal with the protocol that's in place but I said Lottie we got to do more we we have to address it at a different level perhaps we need some different ideas about how to talk about it and how to how to address these incidents that are increasing rather than decreasing and I know

[01:19:55] it's not fair from a I'm not even going to look at Ryan who is a data person but we're reporting them right so maybe we have an increase in report maybe we don't really have an increase in occurrence but we're we're actually reporting them and we're encouraging the reporting of them so is it that or is there a real increase and so you know even in our not just in our schools but in our communities we're seeing anti-semitism and we're seeing racial slurs and we're seeing a lot of hate out there so as the foundation of our community and what brings us all together our

[01:20:29] kids I asked Lottie to prepare and and show you what is happening in our schools and I want I want to have a discussion I hope we all want to have a discussion about how can we better address it what other ideas are out there that we can promote and put in our buildings so we're starting off night one really tough I said Lottie we're going to go right for it we're going for it and we're not gonna I love the introductions and I want to know why you're here and all of that but we're going to hit a pretty hard topic first night and I know not just because of the time that we have left tonight Lottie and I we want to start the discussion tonight and then we're going to continue

[01:21:08] it at our march meeting okay so i'm going to turn it over to lottie to present the information that we were able to collect thank you thank you so much brenda for queuing this up and so in addition to brenda as committee chair also requesting this information our vice chair of the school board mr mehedovie also specifically reached out because he like miss jaredon was very curious about what was

happening by way of the notifications he was receiving so we're going to unpack this a little tonight. I did have a couple of pause points for us to have some quick table

[01:21:44] dialogue. We'll see if we can still get it in there because it's very, I recognize it is very challenging to look at this and not be able to talk it through. And so we'll see if we can make this work. I do want to pause right at the beginning here to really kind of center equity and just the importance of it. And so I kind of think of it as the promise. And so if I could kind of frame this next slide is really it's our promise it's our commitment it's basically what we're saying we are going to do for each and every child in

[01:22:18] LCPS and so while I just said I hope we have time to process I do want to pause and be very intentional about bringing this statement into the room so I'm going to ask for a couple of volunteers to just read one sentence each in the order we can start wherever wherever the first volunteer is then we'll just go around people can just quickly popcorn thank you for our committee equity means being committed to providing a safe supportive inclusive affirming and respectful environment for each student and staff member that fosters success

[01:22:51] growth and academic rigor thank you anyone else keep going please the cultivation of this environment requires us to reject and condemn the use of hate speech racial slurs anti-semitism and any action or behavior that discriminates based on race, ethnicity, national origin, gender, orientation, gender expression, socioeconomic status, religion, ability, or

[01:23:25] other cultural identities or expression. Such non-inclusive speech, behavior, and actions do not reflect who we are as a learning community. We embrace and value the unique identities, backgrounds, experiences, perspectives, and needs of each student and employee. Celebrating our diversity is important and helps define us as a school division demonstrating the courage to address any inequities and remove

[01:24:04] barriers represents an integral part of our collective effort towards excellence and education equity is the vehicle that leads to greater access opportunity and equality so that each student is in power sorry sorry so each student is in power to make meaningful contributions

[01:24:37] to the word. Thank you. I could have easily read it, and you all could have just read it silently, but I really wanted to be intentional about an opportunity for us to own this statement. I just shared that in our wrapping up month in December, we talked about how we landed as a committee. This was one of the bigger aspects of the work. This committee had an opportunity to weigh in and offered input into the development of a statement that's very different than being handed a statement and being asked to provide feedback on something that was already written

[01:25:11] so I wanted us to be able to have that opportunity so as much as we have this promise here we've already named that there is a problem and I'm going the opposite way here we've already named that there is a problem and Brenda has already framed that she's already mentioned that as a school board member the notifications are there about our racial incidents and we do have a protocol in place. So I want to just take a step backward for a moment and take us back to last

[01:25:45] spring. And Dr. Ellis and I, our deputy superintendent, stood in front of the board and we shared this slide here that showed a total number of incidents and then it was broken down by elementary, middle, and high. And while it did not show all the way up until the end of the school year it was a pretty pretty powerful moment very defining moment for us a school division to see these things

and so I do remember being asked why what do we think attributes to this and so it could be what we mentioned earlier is it

[01:26:24] that these incidents are really happening at a more frequent rate or is it that we've become very good at reporting and I really propose that both are happening and I feel that when there is awareness we do naturally see an uptick and I want to name the fact I don't want to diminish the fact that things are happening and so I want to quickly reference this year up until the end of the second semester which was right at the end of January this is our

[01:26:58] picture of where we are so again the blue represents the total number of incidents and so if you'll remember it's not necessarily comparing apples to apples but if you look back on the previous slide look where we were for september for last year 2021 and here's where we were for august september and here's where we are up until january and incidents continue to come in so when incidents are reported they are reported by a principal or an assistant principal or a dean

[01:27:35] and a form is filled out, multiple offices receive the notification simultaneously, my office being one of them, and then we get to work. There is an action plan in place, and principals know, any of you can speak to it, that we are to follow to make sure that we are addressing it, denouncing it, repairing harm, and then also working to prevent it from happening.

[01:28:02] So I do want to pause. I think we can still make it work if we, quickly at your tables, if you'll just share amongst yourselves, what do you notice and what do you wonder? I have a question, Lottie.

[01:28:18] Is this student-to-student incidences? This is student-to-student. Yes.

[01:28:35] Excuse me.

[01:28:54] I have a question. So actually, based upon the data that I'm observing, I see there's a spike towards the end, especially from the last year. If you go to the previous slide. So do we have any insight what may be driving it?

[01:29:11] Is it a news cycle, something happening in our community? Any additional correlation to just interpret this data that how come this is spiked so much? Or maybe our reporting system changed? Nothing changed with the reporting system. And so that's part of it.

[01:29:26] Some of it is definitely we have to recognize that schools are part of our community and our society. So things that are said student to student, a lot of times whether they hear it on the playground or pick it up from other students, those things are being said.

[01:29:47] And so we are gonna actually continue to look at this. I wanna dive a little deeper, but I wanted to pause here just so that you could have a snapshot. I do want to keep going because there is additional data to see what we've looked at on these slides really represents the total number of incidents.

[01:30:04] And I wondered if any wonderings at the table already have been, well, like, what is actually making up these incidents? What constitutes the incidents? And so, I really wanna share the next couple of slides. I'll start off with a big picture, a total incidents.

[01:30:21] I'll frame it, because at first glance, it could be a little confusing when you look at it, and so I'll explain that, and then we'll look at it quickly by level. So on this next slide here, we see the total number of incidents that are in reference to the previous slide.

[01:30:40] And so that first bar there, when we look at 133, that's the number of, that's not the total number of all incidents. That's really representing a category of what we look at as sort of broad racial incidents and or offensive language.

[01:30:59] And then everything else that is listed underneath that is in addition to the 133. So starting with the N-word and ending with ableism, those represent the specific categories.

[01:31:15] And so really this was in response to the board members asking, well, what is it? Like who's being targeted and what are the categories? And so I do want to just give a little context. I didn't have, I don't have all of these categories around my office. We looked at the incidents and the context of what was being reported and one incident represents the development of a category so this is where we got the categories all overall for all three levels and then I'm going to quickly go to elementary and so again that first bar is

[01:31:51] representing 45 incidents so again to explain what that looks like it could be something written in the stall of the restroom. It could be something yelled on the playground. It's not necessarily targeting one particular person. Everything else beneath that, N-word, all the way down, really spoke to a specific slur or trope or comment that was made really going against that aspect of that person's identity or race or ethnicity. Does that make sense? Yes.

[01:32:28] Under the homophobic category, was that also transphobic? Is that lumped in together? Yes, it was. Thank you. So that's elementary. Here is middle school. So again, we talk about broad categories, things happening.

[01:32:47] Maybe someone blurts out something in the cafeteria or something's found in the restroom or a note just randomly appears in a classroom. It's not targeting a specific student, but it could have racist or offensive language. And then each of these things listed here are specific instances and the number of times that something, that the N-word was used, that homophobic and or transphobic slur or offensive language was used.

[01:33:19] And I do want to say, I think it could be a little confusing. Someone looked at it and said, well, what does it mean when you say, would an N-word and African-American, could they be lumped in together? And those are different. N-word has been used in multiple ways.

[01:33:36] Sometimes students of the same race say the N-word. Nobody gets to say the N-word, is our position on that. And so that's probably a little less than a third of the times. The other times the n-word has been targeted and specific to students of color I will say that conversely sometimes caught up in one incident could also be a student of color responding to a student who's white and saying an offensive word to them and so that's why it's captured here we're looking at who has been targeted by these specific categories and we tried to capture it

[01:34:12] the best way we could so if you look at middle school we have a total number of 56 for just general incidents and overall and then we're pretty busy with our middle schoolers Lottie what time period does this cover this is the beginning the first two quarters of this year of this school year so this is so far yep thanks and then this is high school so when we look at overall, again, that general category, that broad category, we have 32 incidents. And then you can

[01:34:50] see, I know I've talked at nauseam what it means for those categories, but you can see. And so you'll even notice that not all the categories are the same. So for middle school, we have almost every, it's a

pretty exhaustive list here. And elementary and high school are not quite as exhaustive. And we know we have fewer incidents. So I'm going to keep on going. You will have access to this presentation it is on board docs and i will email it to the committee for your future reference and so you may be wondering where these incidents are occurring and so what we've seen

[01:35:26] based on the data that's reported is this i listed here the top three areas where we are seeing these incidents happening what do you quickly notice so classroom and so dr ellis and i had a conversation about that i was even saying you know this is not a proud moment to save classroom that we're not looking to give a prize for that but what we know to be true is this really speaks to the need for our work around culturally responsive instruction and while the state

[01:36:03] came out with a performance evaluation standard around that for all teachers across the commonwealth LCPS had started work and cultural responsiveness well before that. In fact, it's part of our charge as a committee to develop a culturally competent school division.

[01:36:20] So this does not really say teachers aren't doing their job. It points to the fact that we all have to hold this work to make it better. Yes. Since classrooms are on the top, would that potentially mean that this is happening way more in other areas and there's an adult authority figure, they're reporting these cases and that a lot of them just aren't being reported.

[01:36:48] Could be. So I'm going to just remind everybody that this meeting is being live streamed and broadcast. So if you're going to speak, I'm going to, number one, ask for you to wait to be called on and that you put your mic on so that the public is able to hear you that isn't in the room.

[01:37:11] So it's just housekeeping and you'll get used to it. I'm just not calling out anybody in particular, but please wait to be called on because we need you on the mics, okay? I don't know who was next. A lot of you were... I think Arjun. So I was just curious, is there a data set aggregated by school?

[01:37:29] As in, are certain schools seeing higher rates of racially offensive language or not even just racially, like offensive language in general? Is there a data set aggregated by school? Yes, we do have that information and that information is available to the principals and the administrative team and the equity teams and we're working with specific schools to try to make that better.

[01:37:53] Okay, is this data set publicly available or is it kept private for security reasons? It hasn't been made public at this time.

[01:38:09] Do we know for those incidents reported mostly from the teachers or the students or will the students directly speak up about that or the parents speak up about that? Do we know? Who's reporting? Students are reporting and sometimes parents are notifying the administrator as well.

[01:38:31] And we do have those records in the data as well, so who's reporting the incidents? Yes, each school also has that as they're reporting it. I'm curious why social media is up there under high school.

[01:38:48] Can you explain why that's included? Social media, it could have been something that was posted perhaps even on the weekend or outside of school hours, but it has infiltrated the school and has had a negative impact on the learning environment and once students start talking about it and or are aware they will notify their administrator and it's reported so at this time I am going to ask Lottie to pause here in the presentation but you have more homework you I

[01:39:26] would ask that you go through everyone has this it's in board docs did you already email it to everyone I will we're going to email the presentation I'd like for you also to read the policy that you were given i would like you to go through the protocol and i would like you to absorb this information bring your questions comments ideas all of it next time we're going to dig deep and we're going to have some conversation so i warned you i was going to have to adjourn at 7 15 you can see the clerk of the school board has come in and we need to make sure that they can close this meeting out and get the other ones started up in time for the school

[01:40:00] board so we're going to end here I greatly appreciate all of you being here I look forward to seeing all of you next month as well and hopefully the rest of our committee Erica next meeting to confirm is the first Thursday of the month March 2nd it is and I believe all of the committees are already on the LCPS calendar so you should be able to go through they've already that three-day notice it's already done for the whole year it's the first Thursday of the month where we've had an issue we've already addressed it so you can go and look at the LCPS calendar and please populate it on your own calendar so you don't have conflicts thank you again for being here

[01:40:37] I'm truly grateful I look forward to getting to know those of you that I don't know very well better and we will see you next month and we are now adjourned thank you all



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