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Loudoun County School Board, 4th Tuesday School Board Meeting, Tuesday, April 25, 2023

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- BoardDocs (School Board): <https://go.boarddocs.com/vsba/loudoun/Board.nsf/Public>

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[00:00:00] 25th fourth Tuesday school board meeting of the Loudoun County School Board. We'll begin with item 102 on the agenda remote participation. I've been notified that Denise Corbo would like to remotely participate in tonight's school board meeting. Ms. Corbo please state your location whether this is a medical or personal matter and if anyone is present with you at your location. I am home.

[00:00:24] I'm alone. Under policy 2420 I'm asking for remote meeting participation due to an ongoing disability and medical condition, as also recommended by HRTD under ADA disability law. At this time, I will entertain a motion that Ms. Corbo's remote participation tonight be granted for a health or medical matter. So moved. Is there a second? That motion will fail for lack of a second. Ms. Corbo, would you like to request participation for a personal matter tonight?

[00:01:02] Yes, please. I will at this time entertain a motion that Ms. Corbo's remote participation be granted for a personal matter tonight. So moved. Moved by Mr. Morse. Is there a second? Second. Seconded by Ms. Polifko.

[00:01:17] Is there any discussion? Ms. Shardin. Mr. Chair, I just have a question as to if someone is, I know that there are rules about how many you can miss and participate in. I'm just curious. I assume staff is keeping track of that. Yes, I did. I usually confer with the clerk of the school board prior to the meeting.

[00:01:35] My understanding is this would be Ms. Corvo's fourth remote participation during this year. And this, at this point in the year, this would be the last one she could take while remaining under the 25%. - Thank you, I appreciate the update. - Is there any further discussion?

[00:01:53] Seeing none, all those in favor of the motion to approve for a personal matter, please raise your hand and say aye. Those opposed, please raise your hand and say nay. - Nay. - That motion will, any abstentions?

[00:02:14] That motion, can we do that one more time? Those in favor, please raise your hand and say aye. Or those opposed, please raise your hand and say nay. Nay. Okay, so that motion will pass 4-2-2 with Beatty and Sorotkin opposed and Rieser and Mehedevis abstaining from the vote and Ms. Carbo absent from the vote.

[00:02:46] Thank you for the correction. That will bring us to item 2, our disclosures. So we will start with Ms. Sheridan. Thank you, Mr. Chair. As a member of the Loudoun County School Board, I make the following disclosure to the school Board and to the general public in connection with the item on tonight's agenda regarding the budget and/or health insurance and related benefits and any other discussion that may include or affect benefits for LCPS employees.

[00:03:12] Specifically as a school board member, I am eligible to receive health insurance and related benefits as an LCPS employee. These benefits, however, affect thousands of employees while in excess of the statutory three employees whose interests may also be affected, of which I am included. I can and will participate fairly, objectively, and in the public interest.

[00:03:29] This disclosure will be reflected in the public records of the Clerk of the School Board for five years. Thank you. Mr. Morse. Thank you. As a member of the Loudoun County School Board, I make the following disclosure to the School Board and to the general public in connection with the item on tonight's agenda regarding employee salaries, the budget, and/or health insurance, and any other discussion that may include or affect salary and benefits for LCPS employees.

[00:03:52] Specifically my spouse is an LCPS employee who may be affected by any potential changes to employee salaries, the budget, and/or health insurance. subjects include thousands of employees well in excess of the statutory three employees whose interests may be affected of which my wife and I are included I can and will participate fairly objectively and in the public interest this disclosure will be reflected in the public record of the school clerk clerk of the school board for five years thank you thank you mr.

[00:04:19] Mahedby thank you chair as a member of the Loudoun County School Board I make the following disclosure to the school board and to the general public in connection with the item on tonight's agenda regarding employee salaries the budget and or health insurance and any of the discussion that may include or affect salary and benefits for LCPS employees. Specifically, I'm enrolled in LCPS health insurance and may be affected by any potential changes to health insurance. These subjects include thousands of employees, well in excess of statutory three employees whose interests may be affected of which I'm included. I can and will participate fairly objectively and in the public interest. This disclosure will be reflected in the public records of the clerk of the school board for five years.

[00:04:57] Thank you. Ms. Corbo. Thank you. As a member of the Loudoun County School Board, I make the following disclosure to the school board and to the general public in connection with an item on

tonight's agenda regarding employee salaries, the budget, and our health insurance and any other discussion that may include or affect salary and benefits for LCPS employees.

[00:05:21] Specifically, I'm enrolled in LCPS health insurance and may be affected by any potential changes to health insurance. Specifically, my son is an LCPS teacher who does not reside with me and is not dependent on me. These subjects include thousands of employees, while in excess of the statutory three employees whose interests may be affected, of which I am included.

[00:05:40] I can and will participate fairly, objectively, and in the public interest. This disclosure will be reflected in the public records of the Clerk of the School Board for five years. Thank you. Thank you. As a member of the Loudoun County School Board, I make the following disclosure to the School Board and to the general public. In connection with the item on tonight's agenda regarding employee salaries, the budget, and or health insurance, and any other discussion that may include or affect salary and benefits for LCPS employees, specifically, I am enrolled in LCPS health insurance and may be affected by any potential changes to health insurance.

[00:06:11] These subjects include thousands of employees, while in excess of the statutory three employees whose interests may be affected, of which I am included. I can and will participate fairly objectively and in the public interest. This disclosure will be reflected in the public records of the clerk of the school board for five years.

[00:06:28] We'll now move to item three on the agenda, the approval of the consent agenda. Is there a motion? Mr. Madhavi. I move that this board approve the consent agenda is posted in the board docs. Is there a second?

[00:06:45] Seconded by Ms. Okedek-Bey. Any discussion? Seeing none, all those in favor of approving the consent agenda for tonight, please raise your hand and say aye. Aye. That motion will pass unanimously. That will bring us to our work session, starting with 401 from the Department of Student Services regarding chronic absenteeism.

[00:07:09] Dr. Jones.

[00:07:27] Afternoon. We appreciate the opportunity to provide the board an update on our collective efforts to empower all students to make meaningful contributions to the world as it relates to student compulsory attendance and chronic absenteeism.

[00:07:54] As you are aware, Goal 1 of the 1LCPS Strategic Plan for Excellence 2027 includes a metric as it relates to decreasing the percentage of chronic absenteeism. Chronic absenteeism continues to be one of the nine indicators in Virginia's school accreditation model.

[00:08:15] And for the past two years, the State Board of Education adopted special provisions to exclude or suspend the use of chronic absenteeism in the accreditation calculations. Last week, Ms. Evans and one of our supervisors provided an update to the Student Services Committee on chronic absenteeism and noted that on the same day, April 20th, the Virginia Board of Education was conducting its business meeting and the superintendent of public instruction recommended that the Virginia Board of Education

[00:08:48] approve a proposal to adopt special provisions for accreditation year 2023-2024 to again temporarily suspend the use of chronic absenteeism indicator for the determination of accreditation

status. The recommendation was denied and the revised chronic absenteeism accreditation model does not allow a three-year average and is solely based on data from the previous year.

[00:09:13] The adopted chronic absenteeism accreditation model is used to determine a school's accreditation status. And as I mentioned earlier, there continues to be a collective effort among the Department of Instruction, schools, and the Department of Student Services, which includes a chronic absenteeism work group that was established this year to support the ongoing work to implement the 1LCPS aligned action that includes short- and long-term strategies.

[00:09:43] Part of this work includes communication and awareness of the shared responsibility that parents, guardians, and students have with school teams. This data analysis and the implementation of tiered supports for students that we know chronic absentees and percentages do not fully represent a school's effort to engage students actively, as well as individual student achievement.

[00:10:10] So now I'll turn this to Ms. Jen Evans, and her presentation will share more about what chronic absenteeism is and how it is measured, the accreditation model for the 23-24 school year data, and our short and long-term strategies.

[00:10:27] Thank you, Dr. Jones. Good evening. I appreciate this opportunity to provide an update on chronic absenteeism, where LCPS currently stands, and what we as a division are doing to support our schools in addressing the concerns systemically through our mtss module chronic absenteeism is defined as missing 10 or more of the academic year for any reason including excused absences unexcused absences and out of school suspensions based on a 180 day school year this means that 18 days per school

[00:11:02] year or two to three days per month are missed the state requires lcps to differentiate absences based on excused and unexcused and within the unexcused we have truancy and locally defined truancy absences are when the parent is unaware or does not support the absence and unexcused locally defined is when the student's parent provides provides a reason for the absence that is not acceptable to the school administration for example this would be a vacation next slide

[00:11:35] as dr jones indicated our country is facing an attendance crisis prior to the pandemic 8 million students were chronically absent missing 10 percent or more of the school year that number has more than doubled the adverse social emotional and academic impact of missing too much school is highest among students and families most affected by educational inequities regular attendance is significant factor in a student's success chronic absenteeism correlates to not only low academic achievement it's also a powerful predictor of dropout rates and it also

[00:12:12] has been linked to poor outcomes later in life. Next slide. As Dr. Jones mentioned, our goal is to decrease our chronic absenteeism rate from 13%. We are not on track to do that based on this current model, and I will share more about that at a later point.

[00:12:34] Next slide. So before we take a look at our LCPS numbers, I'd like to review the current accreditation model. So a level one rating would be a school with a current year or three-year chronic absenteeism rate of 15 percent or lower that is no more than 15 percent of the students have been missing 10 percent of the school year or schools with the level 2 range that decrease the chronic absenteeism rate by 10 percent or more from the previous year a level 2 would be a school not meeting level 1 performance and with a chronic absenteeism rate of no more than 25 percent or schools within the

[00:13:13] level 3 range that decrease the chronic absenteeism rate by 10% or more from the previous year a level 3 school would be with a current year a cumulative three year chronic absenteeism rate of 25% or higher for schools if the level 2 or level 3 rating from for more than four consecutive years beginning in the 2018 2019 accreditation year as mentioned a special provision was considered which would have suspended the use of this indicator for the determination of

[00:13:49] accreditation status in the 2324 school year unfortunately after a lengthy discussion the motion to approve that special permission provision failed with a vote of two to six prior to this year's revision of the chronic absenteeism accreditation levels in 21-22 LCPS had five schools identified at level 2 and only one school at a level 3 this previous model was based on a three-year attendance average the revised chronic absenteeism accreditation model does not allow for the three-year average and is solely

[00:14:28] based on data from the previous year by this revised model and as it's shown on this graph LCPS would have 20 schools does designated at level 2 and one at level 3 and 21 22 this graph also shows the number of schools at each level for this current school year and this is evolving so it may change but this is determined based on the revised model model guidance so currently for this school year LCPS would have 67 schools at level 2 and 9 at level 3 and to

[00:15:08] further explain what the levels indicate schools at a level 2 require a division level action plan and schools in level 3 require a corrective action plan overseen by the Virginia Department of Education LCPS is prepared to support any school identified at level 2 or 3 with the goal of ensuring that the schools and their students are equipped to address this issue and we will continue to monitor the school data as it evolves next slide so here is a This is a breakdown that I expanded on after our Student Services Committee.

[00:15:46] What you see on the left is the breakdown of race and ethnicity of those students who are chronically absent. And then in the middle graph, you're looking at our specialized learners. So 5.3% of our McKinney-Vento students are chronically absent, EL learners 28.8%, and our students with IEPs at a 15.7%.

[00:16:11] And then I placed other divisions that have comparable populations, just to give you a glimpse of where we stand. The closest would be Prince William, as far as size, and we're doing much better.

[00:16:27] So a lot of these school districts are going to have many, many level two and level three schools. Next slide. So why are students chronically absent?

[00:16:42] Due to the lingering impacts created by the COVID-19 pandemic, schools continue to report increased absences despite programs and procedures put in place to address chronic absenteeism during the 2022 2023 school year absences were exacerbated by contagious illnesses like covid and rsv and the flu in addition student mental health may also be negatively affecting student attendance post pandemic there was a question about the breakdown of our absences and how many were excused versus unexcused so we focused on just the students who were chronically

[00:17:18] absent. And we found that 70% of all of our absence for that group were excused absences. So what this slide shows us is what we are seeing nationwide as some of the reasons why students miss school. One is the myth that parents may have that excused absences don't matter. As long as it's excused, there's no impact. Well, there is an impact academically, social, and emotionally.

[00:17:45] So we're working to educate parents on how this is linked to accreditation. And, of course, the barriers that may exist for students with chronic illness, lack of food or housing, lack of access to health care, and specifically mental health care. We see lots of students with aversions when it comes to mental health.

[00:18:03] School refusal is a big one. Anxiety can manifest in that way. And then other issues such as disengagement due to factors and not having a meaningful relationship in their school building. Some students are working and not able to come full-time to school.

[00:18:20] So lots of barriers and reasons for that disengagement. Next slide. So as Dr. Jones indicated, LCPS established a chronic absenteeism workgroup this year to really look at what we are doing, what we need to be doing moving forward.

[00:18:38] We wanted to provide a summary of the support being provided to students who are chronically absent and to identify short-term and long-term Strategies to address the increasing needs of chronically absent students Initially the workgroup predicted that our chronically absent students would mostly be at the high school level We thought we would see prediction. We had predictions based on school-based experience So we initially thought that the students would have 15 consecutive absences, would be unenrolled, and then would re-enroll, and they might be doing that for travel.

[00:19:12] We thought that we would see students who were chronically absent with more discipline and office referrals, that they would have more absences. In addition, we also thought that students with health conditions or mental health school-based interventions would have more absences.

[00:19:29] We did not see those results in the data. So the initial analysis of chronic absenteeism shifted our focus in two ways. First, these predictions were not identified, as I said, and now we're looking at a subset of students at the high school level as well as the elementary and middle school level who are experiencing low level of academic, social, emotional, and behavioral challenges but are missing 10% to 15% of their school days.

[00:19:56] So they're doing okay academically and missing a significant amount of time. These would be students who were at the Tier 1 level who were approaching the Tier 2 only for attendance reasons. So the next step we took was to conduct the deeper analysis of the elementary school and the middle school with the same indicators, which we'll review on the next slides.

[00:20:19] As I stated before, we broke down the excused versus unexcused for specifically the chronically absent students. And what we saw was that 70% were excused absences. The proportion of absences were highest at elementary schools.

[00:20:39] Next slide. As far as students who were unenrolled and re-enrolled, only about 5% of the chronically absent students were unenrolled and re-enrolled after 15 consecutive days. Elementary schools had a slightly higher rate of being unenrolled and re-enrolled than middle and high school students.

[00:21:03] 91% of our chronically absent students did not have office or disciplinary referrals. The proportion of chronically absent students without discipline referrals varied by school level, with elementary schools at the highest rate, 96%, and middle school at the lowest rate of 81%.

[00:21:27] 92% of the chronically absent students did not have any mental health conferences during the school year, and what that means is that they were receiving services within our school buildings from our unified mental health team members. So that could be group, that could be individual, that could be check-in, check-out.

[00:21:44] The rates varied slightly by school level, 95% for elementary school, 88% for middle, and 92% for high school. As far as medical conditions, 76% of the chronically absent students in elementary did not have any medical conditions, on record, 69% of middle and high school chronically absent students did not have any medical conditions on their record. As far as academics goes, about half of the

[00:22:18] chronically absent high school students did not have any Ds or Fs for a final grade in the 21-22 school year. 72% of the chronically absent middle school students did not have any Ds or Fs, and letter grades are not available at the elementary school level. All right, so LCPS has been implementing various strategies which include regularly monitoring attendance and absenteeism data as part of our school improvement plans, and annual training for all school-based administrators attendance administrative assistants and unified mental health team members

[00:22:57] specific to attendance monitoring and procedures we provide support to students and family through the MTSS module unified mental health teams are now across all levels and we're working to eliminate barriers which promote student and family engagement with efforts including but not limited to presentations advisory lessons specific to attendance tiered support specific to our McKinney-Vento students and attendance circles.

[00:23:25] In addition, this year, VDOE launched Engage Virginia. It's a program that is available to all LCPS students, which provides free academic coaching and tutoring support. And our research team and student services team will be preparing a presentation to principals for May 5th that includes not only an explanation of chronic absenteeism, school-specific data for this school year, An explanation of effective strategies for supporting their students and highlighting best practices at each level and also the alignment within clusters as far as practices.

[00:24:04] In addition, we'll review the requirements for schools who are identified at the level two or level three. Other short-term strategies include a review of policy and regulation 8140, student attendance requirements and procedures, and are there additional changes that we need to make in our system to account for absences do we need to look at an out-of-country travel code and dr.

[00:24:29] Jones may speak to that as well the office of student mental health services and communication and community engagement office will be collaborating to improve our messaging to parents and the community by creating a PSA and an attendance landing page student assistance services is also collaborating collaborating with the family and community engagement office to reach more parents through the PEP program and the family room.

[00:24:56] Some longer-term strategies include examining the role of the attendance officer, as their role has shifted significantly over the last five years. We will also be taking a look at the results from the non-traditional school program work group, which really is focusing on what's missing.

[00:25:13] What programs do we not have to support our students? We have an excellent program, the North Star School. We have another excellent alternative program, Roby, but are there different needs that we're missing? So we do have a work group that's really looking at that and examining the data. I'm going

to turn it over to Dr. Jones because I know she wanted to speak to some possible legislation that we are considering as far as attendance tracking.

[00:25:43] Thank you, Ms. Evans. And each year we have the opportunity to propose legislation for our priorities. And one of those is taking a deeper dive into the attendance codes that are approved and used by the state.

[00:26:00] For those that there are instances where we have families that might travel out of the country, desire to keep their child on roll, using makeup work or something of that nature. But each absence, each day, although that might be considered excused or unexcused, goes against the school's accreditation.

[00:26:21] And so what we want to do is take a deeper dive into what are some strategies for proposal. Perhaps upon notice the child is going to be out of the country for a significant period of time. That that student would be withdrawn through some code.

[00:26:39] Perhaps we would still be able to have a connection with the schools or not. But then that student would be re-enrolled should they come back to Loudoun. So there are a number of different strategies that our work groups along with work groups across the state might be able to come up with other strategies so that the school's accreditation as it relates to performance levels for chronic absenteeism is not negatively affected and that we can continue the good work that's happening in the schools to support students through the tiered approach so that they can achieve and stay on track toward graduation.

[00:27:14] So with that, we welcome any questions you may have. Thank you. Board members, questions regarding the presentation? Mr. Morse. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Extremely concerning, and I have to admit, I'm absolutely shocked that the parents have 70% of the absences are excused.

[00:27:36] That is stunning. Is there any impact upon a student's academic record or anything else, any negative impact for them being chronically absent? I know that Ms. Evans is an expert on reviewing this data, but I would say that it affects students differently.

[00:27:59] There are some students who are academically able to still achieve, do the makeup work, have the various supports in place where they are not achieving Ds or Fs, as mentioned from the data review. And there are other students who are indeed negatively impacted, fall behind, and are at risk of dropping out from not attending school regularly.

[00:28:23] And those students are receiving excused absences as well at the 70%. Because if there is no, there are going to be cases of students, no matter what we do, that are going to be in a position where they're going to receive excused or unexcused.

[00:28:42] It's going to happen. But when you're looking at the numbers and you look at 70 percent of their absences are excused, I don't know that the parents understand the impact of what their excused absence means if there is no indication of that.

[00:28:58] When we were young, there used to be how many days, you know, absent? You know, there used to be 100 percent attendance certificates and things like that trying to encourage the children to attend. But right now, it sounds like they're able to handle the work, a large group of them are able to handle the work, and they're able to miss this many days.

[00:29:21] What is their incentive for them to be in school? So I think that's where our focus really needs to start to be, is explaining to the parents and encouraging the children and focusing on those excused absences. One other thing I would add is that we don't want to minimize the expectations when a child is ill that they are to stay home if they have fever or something of that nature, and our schools work diligently to support them.

[00:29:52] And we do have individuals who have the excused absences, and periodically during different seasons the illnesses occur. So, again, those are things that are taken under consideration, which would be considered excused absences. I agree completely with what you're saying that we do need to focus on the incentive.

[00:30:11] And we do send awareness letters for students who have excused absences as well as unexcused absences. Our focus from our schools has mostly been on the unexcused absences and that truancy track and what we're required to do as far as the state there. But that incorporates the excused absences as well.

[00:30:30] And there are letters that principals do send that communicate the impact this has on their academics. And like Dr. Jones said, some academically can manage if they miss a week, but they're still able to access Schoology and stay on top of that. But I do think parents do not know that this could be affecting accreditation of our schools.

[00:30:49] But we have seen a lot of illnesses, and this is based on the last few years, which there was a lot of illness, and we still have that, as well as the fears of coming back into school on top of that. So, I do think that there are lots of things that we're doing at the Tier 1 level that I wasn't able to speak to.

[00:31:08] Attendance awards and the messaging that does go out to parents. But one of my concerns that I see at the elementary level are more of those excused absences. And that sets the foundation for middle school and then high school. So, we're seeing more at the elementary level than we are at the middle and high school level, especially with the dropout.

[00:31:28] I mean, the unenrolling and re-enrolling. Thank you. Mr. Madhavi, thank you chair, and thank you miss Evans and dr. Jones You know staying on the topic I think what mr. Morris talked about I think that was something we talked in the committee as well The parents the parents are the parents aware that the unexcused and the excuse. How does it play?

[00:31:48] I guess I have a broader question But I think going with the data that we have do you do you also happen to have the numbers? Where the numbers of 13% of LCPS is broken down by elementary middle high school? i don't know if you have that something you can share i do not have that but i can get that available to you we discussed in the committee and it seems like the there was more prevalent the numbers were higher in elementary versus in high school i think that'll be really important

[00:32:22] in going back to um what we're seeing as a challenge um so on slide 10 it does break down by level the excused versus unexcused but it doesn't break down like the number of number of but we can get that they'll be helpful so this is a maybe a broader question you dr. Jones you talked about somehow a legislation for this thing so so in your view I mean again you know what is the motivation for changing the rule that he described I think it used to be three-year average now it just blunt one

[00:32:58] year it is I mean is it to demonstrate that the schools are failing because now suddenly the schools like we saw the number I think on slide so I'm going back to slide number six where 21-22 level

three accreditation I guess we're in level three was one but LCPS has nine I can't imagine Fairfax and other counties what what the numbers could be again going back to demonstrating that even though these are excused unexcused absences and as you mentioned miss Evans that it has no correlations to the academics part of it but from a

[00:33:37] somebody who's not looking in all the data outside looks like well these schools are failing accreditation something must be wrong with these schools I don't know if you can speak to and it's a tougher question to ask like you know what's the reason other than seems like you want to show that the schools are failing and I don't know I can just share that what I've heard from that meeting and I wasn't in attendance but was that they recognize the challenges in general we have a lack of medical lack of mental health services we had the pandemic but there was they needed to show that this is an issue and

[00:34:14] there's an accountability piece so I don't know if that's pointing fingers at the schools but I think they're just trying to raise awareness that this is an issue and then my last question is this since from slides 10 onwards is the data for 21 22 or the data from 22 23 this is from 21 22 at some point maybe we can get it better on numbers on 22 23 because the numbers of again going back to slide six i mean that seems to be definitely a major shift in in absences compared to the last year so again if

[00:34:53] we can get some updated numbers that'll be really helpful too thank you yes i will just also share that as we're doing our updates for one lcps and we're working with our research team these will be included within the updates to the school board when we return to what does this school year look like analyzing that data and then coming back with the state of the schools report with the data that we do on an annual basis given that this is one of our metrics we'll have more specific information for the board thank you dr. Jones so again from a 21 22 is that average of the three

[00:35:29] years or that just a raw 21 22 data it's just the one-year analysis so I know Last year was tough because we were still asking kids to stay home because if they had COVID or diagnosed with COVID or other things too.

[00:35:45] So that could have been somewhat challenging for all parents and for the children too with last year. Okay, thank you. That's all. Thank you, Chair. Thank you. Additional comments or questions? Ms. Okedekpe. Thank you, Chair Sorotkin. And thank you again for this presentation and for the additional information that you brought forward since you brought it to the committee last week.

[00:36:06] During the committee discussion, there was quite a bit of discussion about the intent to look at giving more parameters around what's excused or not excused.

[00:36:22] And I'm wondering if you can speak to that. And then also, I know you can't really, you don't have a magic ball, so you can't really tell, but I'm wondering with more specific guidance where this would be applied more consistently across schools, Do you suspect that if we were to look at the charts in the future, that perhaps more of the absences would be considered not excused?

[00:36:50] Thank you. I don't know if they would be more unexcused. I would imagine they would be, but that won't change our chronic absenteeism because it includes both. And then as far as unexcused, our hands are really tied with our juvenile justice system in not being able to pursue truancy or even hold parents accountable for not bringing their students to school or having their students come to school.

[00:37:21] But I will speak to the policy and regulation that we do have in place. It does list what is excused and what is unexcused, but it does give principal discretion to approve unique special

circumstances. in our conversations with principals, they don't want that discretion.

[00:37:38] So that's what we're gonna work with them to develop and improve, so that this is how we're following it, this is the process, this is the protocol. If there's a unique situation, it needs to go to central office to be approved. - Thank you so much for sharing that.

[00:37:54] I think where I was going with the more being unexcused versus excused is that I would wonder if families would reconsider pulling their child out of school if they knew that the absence would be unexcused? Just back to that point about understanding the impact of students missing a lot of school. I think when we have had situations where a vacation has been unexcused and parents are upset about it, it's because of that unexcused label. We get that comment about tardies quite a bit. When they are driving their kids to school

[00:38:32] and they are late, it is an unexcused tardy. But if it's our bus that happens to be late, then that would be an excused target because it's on us. So we've had that back and forth. For some reason, unexcused has a little bit more teeth than the excuse. So that is a good point.

[00:38:50] Additional questions? Dr. Smith. Yeah, so just wanted to add, I appreciate your attention on this topic. It is a real issue that we continue to work through and try to address, and a lot of it is education with our families and working with them on what the absences really mean.

[00:39:10] I did also just want to share that over the next several months, I know the State Board of Education and the Virginia Department of Education will be looking at accreditation and accountability to really think about what should those two be together as they are now within accreditation and accountability or should we decouple the two in terms of what should be measures of accountability versus measures of accreditation.

[00:39:31] And I recently got to hear Dr. Lisa Coons, our new state superintendent, speak, and she spoke to just that, that over the next several months and going into the summer, they're going to be collecting feedback and talking a lot more around accreditation and accountability and what should be included and maybe what perhaps should not be included or should be included in one area or not the other. So I do think if our board has direction on that and feelings on that, we'd be happy to advocate and encourage you to do so. Thank you, Dr. Smith.

[00:40:02] Any additional questions? Thank you again for the presentation. And with that, we'll move to 402 from the Department of Instruction, Career and Technology, Primary Content Resource Recommendations.

[00:40:17] Dr. Ellis. Good evening, Chair Sorotkin, members of the board. I have a far more standard procedure here for you this evening. As part of our ongoing textbook and resource adoption process that is in alignment with the VDOE's regulations, governing school boards and school divisions, and also in alignment with our own school board policy 5130 we have cte or career and technology education primary

[00:40:54] content resource recommendations for you this evening so as a little bit of background for you we had an rfp seeking resources for all cte courses that was out november 14th through december 30th we received responses from seven providers for less than half of all the cte courses that we offer We also asked for teacher's input and were able to gather additional providers and resources to consider based on the teacher's feedback.

[00:41:22] For a large number of courses, existing resources that we are already using are the only known resources for a particular course and thus became the recommendation, for example, Project Lead the Way. Ultimately, this evening, I'm able to recommend resources for just over half of the CTE courses.

[00:41:41] Many of the courses for which we did not receive resources, we're already using internally developed resources because we haven't had resources in the past. We will use the time between now and the fall to seek additional resources for those courses that we have not yet identified.

[00:41:59] So we plan to do this in two phases. This evening you have phase one recommendations and we plan to hold a phase two adoption in the fall. CTE was originally slated for FY 24 funds as I mentioned a couple of months ago when we were talking about the elementary reading adoption and because we were pausing the elementary reading adoption We were able to move the CTE adoption earlier to utilize FY 23 funds. So this evening in board docs you have phase one recommendations of resources by course you have information on the steering committee and the

[00:42:38] process that we used again in alignment with policy 5130 and And these resources listed in BoardDocs will be available for public review through our LCPS website from starting tomorrow, April 26th through May 22nd.

[00:42:55] And an action item will be brought forward to you on May 23rd that will include any feedback that we receive during the feedback process. A public announcement regarding the final stages and the opportunity for individuals to provide feedback will be sent to all LCPS families and staff.

[00:43:12] So I'm happy to answer any questions or gather that information prior to returning on May 23rd board members Any questions regarding the recommended the textbook or resource recommendations miss Corbell. Um, thank you chair I'm curious. I'm looking at the different phases and I'm wondering at what point do the Educators for each of these areas have an opportunity to review

[00:43:47] The materials. Thanks for that question. Ms. Corbo. So the answer is throughout the process they were initially asked to provide their input on particularly those courses without Current resources or for those courses that an RFP response was not received additionally we ask educators to participate on the committees and They will also have the same opportunity that members of the public and families have This this coming month and we will encourage them to provide that feedback

[00:44:22] Through that forum. So we have it all captured in one location. Um, they thank you and it just a follow-up question so so in somewhere in that process when they provide feedback if they are not In favor of that curriculum that has been selected for them or has been proposed through the RFP What happens if when they provide you?

[00:44:47] feedback to say no this really isn't what um what is best for our program so two things happen the feedback is gathered and it is shared with the committee that is reviewing the resources and then feedback is also shared with the school board before they take action so you will have an opportunity to receive to see that feedback on may 23rd prior to approving so the feedback is seen by the committee making the recommendation to the superintendent and to you and then you'll see it

[00:45:21] as well prior to voting on the final resources. Thank you. I just I have one question regard you mentioned that some or many or some number of the courses that don't have a external recommendation are using homegrown or internally developed resources so do we have a preference for one or the other

i'm just imagining we could have some department or some individual teacher even who's developed a really good curriculum or really good resource so are we necessarily always

[00:45:56] recommending an external resource if we can find one or are we sometimes not if we think the internal the internal resource is better that's another really good question and the answer is that sometimes what is homegrown and developed and put together by our teachers who are the content experts is the better resource and that's why it's really important to get that teacher feedback so in some cases we may we may even have a provider that does submit for the RFP and the committee determines that the resources that we have are better than the new product so we rely on teacher

[00:46:35] feedback in that committee and so no we will not force a new resource if the existing resource whether that's teacher made or or a resource we've used in the past is the better option okay thank you any additional questions okay so this will return as an action item on may 23rd in two meetings okay great so board members that will conclude our work session we have a little bit of extra time before we take our evening recess so we're going to move to at least one of our information items.

[00:47:12] So we will begin with 1301 from the Finance and Operations Committee, School Nutrition Fund Supplemental Request for State Funding for Breakfast Incentive Payments. Mr. Morse. Thank you, Mr. Chair. The Finance and Operations Committee received this request for approval of supplemental funding, which comes from the state in excess of half a million dollars.

[00:47:36] And the intent on this is to bolster our food program, our breakfast program, throughout the schools. The funding is set that there was a base amount that was estimated, I guess, in the year 2004. And based on the number of meals in 2004 and the number of meals that we're now serving, the state is offering 22 cents for each additional meal, and that comes out to be \$500,000.

[00:48:04] So this is a great opportunity for us to accept state funding, which has already been identified, and to apply it specifically to the breakfast program. Ms. Willoughby, did I miss anything, or do you have anything to add?

[00:48:21] You captured it perfectly. Thank you. Okay, thank you. Board members, any questions regarding this supplemental request? Mr. Beatty. Thank you. Is this an extra, do we need this to cover the cost of the breakfast, or is this just money that's available and we're going to ask for it?

[00:48:42] This is additional funding for LCPS to use. So the state has already awarded this funding to us. So this is us recognizing the additional revenue and increasing the budget for it. Okay, so all the extra \$0.22 per meal would then go into the School Nutrition Fund and that we'd then have to spend down at the end of every three months as usual?

[00:49:09] Yes, the \$559,000 has to go into the School Nutrition Services Fund and it has to be used to support those activities. Thank you. And then if we didn't recognize this, would it go back to the state or would it go somewhere else?

[00:49:27] So there's kind of a two-fold question. If we didn't adjust the budget, this revenue is coming to us regardless. So then it just becomes that we have a surplus of revenue when we compare budget to actual.

[00:49:45] So we would have \$559,000 of excess revenue this year. By increasing the budget, it gives us authority to spend that extra money that we are going to receive. So if we don't increase the budget, it just

limits our ability to be able to spend the funds.

[00:50:03] In terms of denying the award, I'm not sure what that would look like if that's an option. Okay, thank you. Any additional questions? Ms. Reeser. Thank you. Do you have plans for the additional funds? At this point in time, they're just going to go in to continue to bolster our efforts to increase meal participation across the board.

[00:50:29] Thank you. Additional questions? Seeing none, interest in placing this on consent for our next board meeting. Looks like we have consensus for consent. So items 1302 and 1303 are based on special grand jury recommendations, at least in part. So we're going to reserve those for our evening session. We'll jump to 1304 from the joint committee of the school board and board of supervisors recommended revisions to the 2023

[00:51:05] work plan so we already approved our the initial version of the work plan there were two additional recommendations from the joint committee during the last meeting to add to the work plan the first is an expansion of the existing information item we approved regarding pickleball courts that would the expansion would also provide information related to the installation of lights at at school tennis courts and information related to policy 6310 facility use to discuss possible revisions that would allow for individual use of lights at school tennis and pickleball courts.

[00:51:43] The other recommended addition is to have an information item to discuss the schedule for the county and LCPS budget process to get more information about why the schedule and timeline is the way it is and also to potentially adjust our schedule in future years to be similar to surrounding counties in when the school board develops, adopt, and adopts our school budget.

[00:52:14] The reason for that primarily is because we go a lot earlier than a lot of other surrounding counties, which has a couple of effects. One, that we are always trying to adopt our budget before the state finalizes their budget, so there's always a lot of uncertainty in the process, whereas a lot of our comparators, by the time they take action, they already know what the finalized state budget is going to be.

[00:52:43] And second, when our comparators see that what we've adopted in our budget, that often gives them comparison information, and they may say, okay, Loudon gave a 3% raise to teachers, We'll give a 4% so that we're doing better or keeping up with them.

[00:53:01] So I think there are a lot of advantages to potentially going later, which is why I happen to recommend this particular item. And I just think it's something that the joint committee should at least take a look at and see if there are any recommendations that we want to make. So I'm happy to do my best to answer questions about either of those additional recommendations.

[00:53:19] Ms. Reeser. Thank you, Mr. Chair. So this is something we've talked about over the years, the fact that we kind of give away our plan before people who are competing with staff that we're trying to hire. So I think for both hiring and retention, this would be a good item to look at.

[00:53:40] I just wanted to suggest that we switch maybe item number seven for item number five in terms of proposed dates. As I said during the joint committee meeting, I think that September is too late if this is something that we want to consider for next budget season.

[00:53:59] I don't think that's something our board necessarily needs to vote on. I believe that's up to you and co-chair Glass. But if you feel differently, of course, we could consider it formally. I just wanted to put

that out there for your consideration and for potential comment by staff as to whether September would be too late for it to be an effective item for the next fiscal cycle.

[00:54:25] Thank you. Thank you. And I would certainly agree with that recommendation. I think that's certainly more time-sensitive than looking at the Joint Committee's rules of order. So I agree. I don't think it's anything we need to take action on tonight. But if that's the board consensus, I'd be happy to discuss that with co-chair Glass and work on trying to schedule it earlier.

[00:54:44] Additional questions or discussion? Mr. Mahedby. I had to comment. I think even if you move number two to September, I think that pickleball also would be fine. Thank you. Additional discussion.

[00:55:02] Interest in placing this item on consent for our next school board meeting. It looks like we have consensus. We'll place 1304 on consent. At this time, I think the next one may be a little bit of a lengthier discussion, so I think that's better left until our evening session.

[00:55:22] So at this time, the board is going to go into recess and we will be back at time certain 6:30

[00:55:29] for our evening session or recess.

[01:30:22] And we will pick our agenda back up with item 7, which is the Pledge of Allegiance and the National Anthem. Our pledge leaders tonight is Team Petilles 71999A, one of Stonehill's four robotics teams that have been preparing for the upcoming world competition in Texas.

[01:30:42] They are very excited and honored to lead us in the pledge today. They have a track record of success and recently competed against 48 of the best robotics teams from around the state. Stonehill Middle School fielded seven of those teams, and Team 71999A came out on top by winning the title of state champions.

[01:31:06] This marks the fourth year in a row that a Stonehill team has won the state championship. The team is very proud of their hard work and the mentorship of Stonehill's robotics teacher, Mr. Kaler, as well as their parent coach, Ms. Kwarishi.

[01:31:23] The team includes Safwan Majid, Amo Sarasam, Pratyee Jakula, Pratik Vady, and Manish Getney. After the Pledge of Allegiance, the national anthem will be sung tonight by the Wildcat Chorus from Willard Middle School in Aldi, Virginia.

[01:31:43] Under the direction of Mr. Eric Jacobs and Ms. Damaris Odebode, the Wildcat Chorus Program has over 400 students spread across six different performing ensembles. The Wildcat Chorus Program is part of the larger Willard Music Department, whose orchestra, band, and choir programs have received consistent superior ratings at district assessment, making Willard Middle School a blue-ribbon school of music excellence since its inception, as recognized by the Virginia Music Educators Association.

[01:32:17] So at this time, I will ask everyone to please rise for the Pledge of Allegiance and remain standing for the national anthem immediately afterwards. 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, For liberty and justice for all.

[01:34:39] A wonderful performance. Thank you all for being here tonight.

[01:34:55] Give them a moment to be able to exit.

[01:35:23] At this time, we're going to move to item eight on our agenda, student staff recognitions. We'll start with 801, the announcement of the 2023 Loudoun County New Teachers of the Year.

[01:35:39] We'll turn it over to Ms. Bowen and Mr. Martin. I'm actually going to turn it over to Mr. Bennett and Mr. Martin. Good evening, Chair Sorokin, school board members, Dr. Smith, and distinguished guests.

[01:36:03] It is my honor this evening to present several recognition items to you, beginning with the two new teachers of the year. I would like to ask that Perry Amadie and Sarah Proper to come and stand next to me.

[01:36:29] Perry Amadie, a fifth grade teacher at Sterling Elementary School, has been selected as the 2022-2023 Elementary New Teacher of the Year. Members of the Sterling Elementary School community submitted the following remarks in support of Ms. Amadee's nomination.

[01:36:47] In addition to maintaining poise, calm, and respect for every child, Ms. Amadee integrates practices that elevate her students. Ms. Amadee offers her students opportunities for student voice and choice. She utilizes playlists geared to their academic level as well as their interests.

[01:37:05] She knows her students in a special way, and this investment in who they are as individuals inspires in her students a further desire to achieve at high levels in her classroom. Sarah Proper, an English teacher at River Bend Middle School, has been selected as the 2022-23 Secondary New Teacher of the Year.

[01:37:28] Members of the River Bend Middle School community submitted these comments in support of Ms. Proper's nomination. Ms. Proper has created amazing lessons that challenge her students to think critically and purposefully when teaching reading and writing skills. Her students are left feeling fulfilled and excited as she brings a newfound enthusiasm to the English content. Trust me, I hear the students talk about her passion, excitement, and kindness throughout the day.

[01:37:55] Congratulations, Perry and Sarah. Thank you both so much. Welcome to LCPS. Thank you for choosing us for the start of your career or for being new to LCPS. And just on behalf of the school board. Thank you for all the work you're doing and making an enriching and rewarding and

[01:38:28] educational environment for our children. Thank you again. And next, we will move right to 802 for the announcement of the 2023 Loudoun County Teacher of the Year. Thank you, Chair. Our next recognition this evening is the LCPS Teacher of the Year and our nominee for the Washington Post

[01:38:58] Teacher of the Year Award. I would like to ask that Steve Hicks come stand next to me. Steve, a social science and global studies teacher at Dominion High School has been selected as Loudoun County's teacher of the year and the LCPS nominee for the Washington Post Teacher of the Year Award in a letter of recommendation Mr. Steve Hicks is encouraging understanding and dedicated he was responsive to the students' needs and curated a space of non-judgment where students felt

[01:39:34] comfortable expressing their concerns along with their desires to do more with history. He generated opportunities outside of the classroom for students to provoke deeper engagement with history and support students' passions and interests. Mr. Hicks' outstanding leadership as a teacher and department chair have fostered collaboration and established a school culture where opportunities for deeper learning have been maximized and achievement gaps have closed significantly over the past

decade. Through his creative instructional efforts and unparalleled ability to rally his colleagues, the Social Science and Global Studies Department at Dominion

[01:40:10] high school established support systems for pupils enrolling in their first advanced placement course. He understands the needs of students, encourages individual growth, while fostering their sense of self-efficacy. Mr. Hicks holds a bachelor's of arts with honors in social science secondary teaching with a minor in English from Michigan State University. He earned his master's in teaching learning disabilities from the University of Maryland. Mr. Hicks is in his 28th year teaching for Loudoun County Public Schools. 20 of those years have been with Dominion. And at this time, I'd like to ask our video for Mr. Hicks to be played.

[01:40:48] In the fall of 2003, Steve Hicks and a group of really talented and passionate individuals had the blessed opportunity to open brand new Dominion High School. And ever since then, 20 years later, Steve has been making a profound impact on the lives of our Titans. We're in the Gilded Age, the Gilded Age causes the muckrakers to rise up. So what's muckraking? I'm passionate about history and political science and I kind of wake up in the morning and I'm thinking about like okay what

[01:41:25] how can I change a lesson or how can I help a kid a little bit more and so I'm very lucky to have found something I'm passionate about that I get to get to get paid for quite honestly. Both my dad and my mom were teachers. I really struggled quite a bit in school and I found that helped me when I started tutoring kids. I just kind of slowly got into it and before I knew it I was in the education program at Michigan State and I loved it ever since and my brother and I were figuring the other night that by the time I retire and he retires my family will have a hundred years teaching between

[01:42:03] the four of us which is kind of cool. One of the things that he's done at Dominion High School and I think it probably has set the pace for all of Loudoun County's high schools is to have a vision that every student ought to have access to the most enriching parts of our curriculum.

[01:42:20] So he's championed the cause of dual enrollment studies at Dominion High School, especially for those students who wouldn't necessarily have easy access to a college education and he's been a big champion of providing a diverse set of honors level elective courses like Latin American studies and African American studies that really appeal to students from a wide variety of backgrounds within our school.

[01:42:43] I think one word I would use to describe Mr. Hicks would be dedicated. He's a teacher who truly enjoys what he's teaching and you can really tell in the way that he displays the information and tries to get the class involved. So one thing that Mr. Hicks always makes sure of is that students are allowed to express their creativity through the different projects that were given and I think it's a really important lesson that has taught me to use my creativity as a way to share important information and let people learn more about important moments while also getting to think outside the box and kind of put my own spin onto things and it really has like been a very fun experience instead of just doing like a normal research paper a normal project he tries to turn it into a way that students can really show themselves and show their own perspective while also sharing an important

[01:43:21] historical moment everything we do in teaching the legacy has to be about the kids and how how well they perform, so, you know, is it like you were positive around a kid, and they push that positivity forward, and you hear about that? That's your legacy. Your legacy is the kid. It's nothing

[01:43:42] tangible. It's actions.

[01:44:11] At this time, I'd like to have Mr. Hicks come to the mic. Well, thank you, guys. I am totally humbled by this award, and I really feel totally blessed. As I've been considering my career over the the last few days since I found out I got this award I've been kind of wondering whether it was just dumb luck that I got to a great public school system like Loudoun County or whether I had a plan and to give you an example of what's been going through my head I was student teaching in Prince George's County in the early 1990s and it was in the winter and I

[01:44:48] was driving to work several days, and I kept on hearing about a school system that didn't have school because of snow. I thought, hey, I like snow, and I like days off, so let me apply to Loudoun County. This is not a joke. I had never been to Leesburg before, but I had the last significant interview of my career about 29 years ago with a great friend and mentor, Dr. Ginger Minshew. And my next door neighbor where I taught at Broad Run High School was Dr. Brewer, who was

[01:45:25] just John Brewer at the time. And he is a wonderful person and such a talented educator. When I left Broad Run, I said, when you become principal, because we all knew he was going to be a principal at some point, I said, I'll follow you, just let me know. So I stayed true to my word. And the reason I did was all the high schools in Loudoun County are very kid-centric and that is so important.

[01:45:48] That's what's kept me at Loudoun County all these years. But I knew Dr. Brewer's school was going to be help kids live a life of significance and it is truly a privilege to work with such talented kids at all the schools but particularly Dominion High School. I get to school really early and some days, I'll just walk down the halls, and I'll think about the amazing things that the kids do.

[01:46:15] And like I said, it's such a privilege to be a part of that. And so I get the award, like people have been congratulating me. I'm not a very out front person, so I'm still kind of getting used to it. But, you know, I keep on telling, look, this is a group award, and it really is. And it goes from all levels of Loudoun County Public Schools but the staff at Dominion High School is absolutely exceptional I learned from the choir teacher the English teachers other teachers as well keeps me young and in really helps me hone my craft of teaching and I so appreciate that the Social Studies

[01:46:53] Department Cheryl Gusman is here is the best department I put them up against anybody it's a privilege to be department chair and why I'm handing out out thanks. I got to thank my family. They play a really fairly significant role in my teaching experience, probably more than most teachers, and I'll explain why in a second, but my wife Gwen is right there. And my son surprised me. I didn't know he was coming tonight, but he's straight from Stanford University, so I'm so pleased you're here. Thank you, buddy. And I know I'm probably not supposed to do this, but my daughter goes to Syracuse University, and she's watching, so let me

[01:47:31] wave to Maggie. So my daughter and my wife are journalism majors, and even though I had that English minor, I am not a grammarian. So they look over my papers and everything else and make me look good. And I just remember my daughter getting so exasperated at me one night, and she said, Dad, commas are not optional in the English language. So thank you, honey, and I'm sorry.

[01:47:57] My son is a very math-oriented kid, and so he helps me understand the minds of math people as Dr. Brewer does from time to time so I can reach all those kids. So thanks for the help with the lesson planning and everything else, buddy.

[01:48:12] So in the end, it is such a privilege, like the movie said, and I'm just going to say it again. I'm one of those few lucky people that's passion. Their passions are actually what they get to do for a living, and that is help people and learn the social studies.

[01:48:28] So let me just swing back to that earlier snow day story. I don't know if I had a plan. I probably didn't. It's probably mostly dumb luck. But what I do know and what I'm emphatic about is Loudoun County Public Schools was ready to embrace me in the 90s and set me up with mentors and resources, and the adults in the community value public education, And the kids are incredibly talented, and they still are.

[01:48:56] So I thank you guys. I thank you, Dr. Smith, and I thank you, Dr. Brewer and Cheryl, everybody else. Thank you. This is really a humbling award. I appreciate it.

[01:49:13] Ms. Reeser. Thank you, Mr. Chair. So as one of the board members that represents Eastern Loudoun, first I'd like to congratulate all of you, because I think all three of the recipients tonight are from Eastern Loudoun. So I had to push that plug out.

[01:49:31] nicely done and congratulations and and to you sir um being that the internet is replete with lots of remarks i was able to hear what students had to say about you directly and in addition to some of the wonderful comments that we heard um you are known for for your clarity in teaching your fairness and assessment in addition to the creativity and the passion that the other students spoke about i thought it was really interesting that you have had a real life experience of working at the Supreme Court I'm sure that your passion together with the experiences you've had translates into motivating our students and and we thank you for

[01:50:09] bringing your talents here to Loudoun and staying here I I think I would be remiss if I didn't mention that if I didn't joke with you about picking the wrong University in Michigan to go to but but that's alright it all turned out okay. So again, with my congratulations on behalf of our entire board and thank you for your service.

[01:50:41] And finally, we will have the announcement of the 2023 Loudoun County Principal of the Year. Thank you, Chair. Our next recognition this evening is the LCPS Principal of the Year and our nominee for the Washington Post Principal of the Year. I would like to ask that Lori Mercer come stand next to me. Lori Mercer, Principal of Hovatter Elementary School, has been selected as

[01:51:21] Loudoun County's Principal of the Year and the LCPS nominee for the Washington Post Principal of the Year Award. Mrs. Mercer has been the principal of Hovatter since its opening in August 2021. She also served as principal of Belmont Station Elementary from 2012 to 2021 and the assistant principal there from 2004 to 2012. Two quotes from the nomination packet truly capture the exemplary work of Mrs. Mercer. Mrs. Mercer is readily accessible to those Hovatter serves, its students and surrounding community. She possesses the uncommon skill of unambiguous

[01:51:57] communication with people of all ages. She exudes passion and enthusiasm for connecting with people. One can find her sitting in a hallway with a student in crisis, providing strategies that calm the student, or meeting with parents through any means necessary to accommodate their busy schedules. Mrs. Mercer has an incredible talent for growing educators. As a lifelong learner herself, she models continuous improvement. You will always find a sticky noted professional book on her desk which she will

pull into conversations for inspiration or the latest research. She connects her staff with the right people at the right time to help them meet their own professional goals.

[01:52:37] Most notable is the coaching she provides especially to her newest teachers. She is a master educator herself and works to provide kind and constructive feedback to teachers which helps them expand their practice. A sign gifted to Mrs. Mercer from her former staff member hangs in her office and reads, great leaders are like master gardeners. They plant seeds, nurture them, and watch them bloom. Mrs. Mercer exemplifies this quote. Mrs. Mercer holds a bachelor's degree in elementary education from the Indiana University of Pennsylvania and a master's degree in elementary

[01:53:12] education from Shenandoah University. She earned her endorsement in administration and supervision from the University of Virginia. Congratulations, Lori. And at this time, I'd ask for her video to play.

[01:53:31] So this is my 29th year in LCPS, and this is my 5th elementary school. Each of those unique experiences helped me prepare for this last step in my journey to open Hove Adder.

[01:53:50] Hi, this is Marcia. Hi, Savannah. There you go. Thank you. I just love our administration, like Ms. Mercer, she's my favorite. I think the school would not do well without her.

[01:54:08] So it was really important for me to set a culture where we are collaborative. You know, we work together to do great things for kids to feel like they come to school, they want to come to school and have a voice and where they feel seen and heard.

[01:54:27] And creating that vision with our staff and our stakeholders to really set the tone for an affirming and welcoming environment for all of our kids and a focus on rich and rigor instruction. So that's really where the vision comes from and how we work each day to support that vision.

[01:54:49] From day one, it was, we're a team, you're a part of this process, we can do this together. And so every opportunity that I could get in the very beginning days, I'd be like, okay, tell me why you made that decision. What were you thinking when you came up with that idea?

[01:55:07] So she just created an opportunity for me to learn and to want to learn and to want to know more about how to do this work and be as well respected as she is. So just really approachable and relatable and willing to help me grow my profession.

[01:55:27] - She's extraordinary in everything she does. She models what she expects and gives of herself 100% of the time to us. - To truly have a thought partner in Lori Mercer from everything in the building, just the level of support and how much she pours into the school unmatched.

[01:55:51] - Something that I kind of am known to do is accept challenges from kids or others to motivate them. So, you know, I have been duct taped to a wall. I, you know, we dressed up as rockers to kind of inspire kids to rock out some of their tests one year.

[01:56:12] And even like back handsprings when I probably should not have been tumbling anymore. Like, I was like, of course, they challenged me to do it, and I accept. - That the principal actually communicates with the kids that she walks around the school and goes into classrooms and watches for a little bit, and she just helps around outside of just her job, to help other people with their job.

[01:56:43] - She runs the school very well. she she is very good at keeping stuff under control and keeping people at the best of the

[01:56:54] best that they can be laurie i did write a few notes so i could stay focused chair sorotkin

[01:57:31] members of the board school board dr smith thank you so much for the selection of loudon county principal of the year i am honored and proud to represent our school division and our principal group, which is composed of so many skilled and dedicated leaders. Helen Keller said, alone we can do so little, together we can do so much. This quote encompasses everything I believe about the work we do in schools and with school communities. My tenure in LCPS exemplifies

[01:58:07] togetherness, 29 years of a togetherness mindset. I have had supportive and influential mentors who modeled the importance of working together to support students. Mary Morris, who was my first principal as a teacher.

[01:58:25] Irene Ellis, who was my first principal as an assistant principal. And Patty McGinley, who encouraged me to pursue administration and ensured I had multiple opportunities to build my leadership capacity. I learned so much about teaching, teaming, leading, and certainly the importance of investing in people, personally and professionally.

[01:58:51] In addition, various superintendents, school board members, all school departments, especially the support of the Office of Elementary Education have their part in fostering a sense of community and togetherness. When Belmont Station opened in 2004, it was my third school opening as a charter staff member.

[01:59:12] And the math is correct, I stayed there for 17 years. Eight years as an assistant principal, nine years as a principal. 17 years of working alongside and together with incredible teachers, staff, families, and students.

[01:59:30] The dedication to school community and excellence was established early and never waned. So much of who I am as a leader can be credited to my time there. I was also raising my own two children as their principal and their mother.

[01:59:48] This lens has also been instrumental factor in my work. I anticipate the opening of Hovatter Elementary will top the list of the most challenging and rewarding experiences of my career, certainly the most memorable.

[02:00:05] I am slightly biased, however, this group is the most talented, dedicated, professional, and passionate group of individuals you will meet. They are flexible, determined, resilient, and face each day with a positive attitude.

[02:00:23] I could not be more proud and honored to work and learn alongside this incredible group. Team, Abby, Tim, and him here, thank you. Thank you to our Hovatter community of parents and families and to our amazing honeybees, the reason I show up to school energized and ready to give my all.

[02:00:44] I accept this honor on behalf of my mentors, my many teaching teams, the Hovatter staff and community, and my family. Alone we can do so little, together we can do so much. Thank you. Ms. Mercer, I remember we first met at Lightridge High School, which is an unusual place to meet an elementary school principal, but it was your temporary office while we were watching Hovatter being built outside of your window.

[02:01:21] And I remember noticing that the entire staffing plan for the school was being written on post-it notes on Oaktag, but it very much got fleshed out over time. This is a very well-deserved award, and we

certainly didn't make it easy on you the last few years with Hove Adder being over capacity pretty much as soon as it was opened.

[02:01:41] But I want to thank you for your commitment to our students and to the Loudoun County community, and I am very much looking forward to being able to give you your kindergarteners back next year. And I'm going to recognize Mr. Morse, who I believe also has some remarks. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[02:01:57] Ms. Mercer, our queen bee, when you think that what you've done for the community, a lot of that down in the Dulles South area, starting at Little River and then over at Hutchison where you were AP to some of my children, but I think you're the Pied Piper.

[02:02:12] I think wherever you go, the teachers follow. So when you open up a new school, you take all the teachers from all the other schools because they love to work for you. I remember several different instances. One that comes to mind is you, as the principal, out directing traffic in the parking lot in the mornings.

[02:02:31] Out there, all those cars are stopping, and they're backed all the way up because everybody wants to stop and talk to you on their way in. But there's never any complaining about that. They're just so happy to be there. In fact, they were so happy to be there that when we overbooked you by about 120%, the parents came in just absolutely enraged.

[02:02:51] And Mr. Sorotkin and I were cowering with the parents. They were so angry. They said, we have to stay. You know, we have to stay at Hovater. We don't want to go anywhere else. And you calmed them down. You were the voice of reason. And they couldn't fight with you.

[02:03:07] And so you protected us. I'll never forget that. That was quite a moment. But it takes a lot of courage to stand up in front of the audience and tell them, your children are going to be okay. I think they hear that a lot from you. I think they're pretty used to that. You know, there's a time capsule out in front of Hovatter, and I think when they opened it up in 2046, I hope you're still principal there.

[02:03:31] I know that it's asking a little bit, but I know you have years to go. I saw you do the front flips, so I know that you're ready for that. But, you know, we're looking at all of your history down in the southern part of the district, and I can't help but thinking, board members, that we could solve two problems tonight if we renamed Mercer Middle School after Ms. Mercer.

[02:03:55] I think that would solve a lot of problems. Thank you so much for what you've done for our children, for all of our children, and we look forward to a lot of good years with not so many children in Hobatter. Thank you. Mr. Mahadabee. Thank you, Chair. So, Ms. Mercer, you know, again, I want to thank, I mean, I guess I want to commend you and the Hobatter.

[02:04:15] I know going back 17 years with Belmont Station, you've been principal for my son and my daughter, too. I know Belmont station probably misses you a lot. I think, going back to Mr. Moore's comment, I saw Mrs. Peggy Tiley and Mrs. Reeves, and I'm sure you have Ms. Snyder and a bunch of folks from Belmont station.

[02:04:35] So it's a great, fantastic team you have there. And again, I congratulate you and the Hormata team for awesome and well-deserved recognition, Ms. Mercy. Okay. At this time, I think we're going to do some photos, both with...

[02:04:51] Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes. I have my hand raised as well. Oh, I'm sorry. I did not see you behind my laptop. Go ahead, Ms. Corbo. So I met Lori a long time ago, and all I can say is I am just so proud because just as our Teacher of the Year made remarks about Dr. Brewer, you know a leader, and you know when someone is going to just do great things.

[02:05:16] And, Lori, I'm just so proud of you because I feel like I have watched you all throughout your journey with Loudoun County. And, again, you know, I'm just so proud of you, and I thank you for your leadership and for your service to Loudoun County. Thank you.

[02:05:35] At this time, we're going to do some photos with all of our award winners tonight.

[02:08:53] Yeah, that's fine. You're welcome. Item nine, our student school board representative comments.

[02:09:12] And first on the agenda, we have Ashley Caffo from Heritage High School. She is a senior at Heritage and vice president of the Student Council Association, captain of the varsity volleyball team, and president of the National Honor Society and FCCLA.

[02:09:29] Heritage has a unique community that is very inclusive and diverse. Ashley feels their voices deserve to be heard, and she loves representing the students of Heritage. She wants her fellow students to feel that they are in a safe place to share their opinions freely without being judged.

[02:09:45] Ashley was chosen as a student school board representative and has been looking forward to representing her school at meetings. Ashley says, a unique aspect that I have is that I am in the teacher cadet program. I don't just look at things from a student aspect, I look at it from a future teaching perspective.

[02:10:01] Good evening, everyone. My name is Ashley Caffo, and as you just said, I am vice president of SCA as well as president of the National Honor Society. I would like to start off by thanking my administration, Mr. Adam, Mr. Armstrong, Mr. Powell, and Ms. Turner for giving me the opportunity to speak on behalf of Heritage tonight.

[02:10:21] Secondly, I would like to thank my SCA sponsors, Ms. Dobbs and Mr. York, for first off just being the best, but also for the support they give our student council with all the activities that make Heritage a home for over 1,500 students. When entering Heritage in the morning, the first person you see is our principal.

[02:10:38] Mr. Adam always welcomes you with a friendly good morning and a smile. To the right of him is our auditorium with the words Home of the Pride displayed across the top. Heritage has amazing programs and clubs that make it a home for every student who enters. And I'd like to now share and highlight a few from this school year.

[02:10:57] Our theater department is one-of-a-kind at Heritage. In the fall, the department put on the show Legend of the Sleepy Hollow. And just last week, our spring musical Into the Woods debuted. It's a wonderful production that has two amazing and unique casts. The first cast just finished their weekend of performances, while the second cast is preparing for their debut on May 5th.

[02:11:17] Also in the fall, the Heritage Marching Band placed fifth at the national competition in Allentown, Pennsylvania. And if the performing arts aren't your thing, then there are many more ways to

get involved in the Heritage community. Just last week, the National Honor Society held their INOVA blood drive.

[02:11:33] And right now, there are 12 DECA students competing in the International Career Development Conference in Orlando, Florida. And Heritage is not only a place to get involved, is it a place to be yourself and discover who you are. Yesterday, the SCA launched its annual Awareness Week. This is where we choose an overarching theme for the week to celebrate our students.

[02:11:52] This year's theme is You Matter. So every day at lunch, we have a planned and fun activity for students. And for example, tomorrow is You're Worthy Wednesday. This is when we have a mirror set up at the lunch tables, and we can give our students positive affirmations and cheer on our other students.

[02:12:08] We like to celebrate the positive self-image statements and reward students with colorful beaded necklaces as a reminder that they matter. We try to make sure that everyone knows how important they are and how important the decisions they make are. And with prom around the corner and seniors getting ready for college, the SCA decided to have a guest speaker, Bobby Petrucelli, come to speak on the power of 10-second decisions.

[02:12:30] We hope to get across to the whole school that the decisions that we make impact ourselves and others positively and negatively. In closing, at Heritage, we want to make it feel like the students' home away from home. We are Heritage Pride, and we have pride in our heritage.

[02:12:46] We are each unique and diverse, and in our collective diversity, that makes us strong. And to finalize it, Roar Pride!

[02:13:03] Next, we have Gustavo Torres from the North Star School, where he is currently a senior. In 2023, Gustavo was recognized for his leadership in the community through his work as the president of PAL Youth, the Prevention Alliance of Loudoun at Dominion High School, and as a member of REAL, Raising Education, Achievement, and Leadership. He serves as an equity ambassador representing the North Star School, and recently the Loudoun School Business Partnership Executive Council voted to award Gustavo the Student Innovator Award, and it was my pleasure to give the opening

[02:13:39] comments at the award ceremony last night and to see Gustavo receive his award. His interests include playing chess and basketball and listening to music. Gustavo plans to attend trade school to study HVAC and related trades in the hopes of owning his own business after high school. Good evening, everyone. I would like to thank the school board and the North Star School for the opportunity to share as a student school board representative. This experience has helped me improve my public speaking and prepare for future events. Currently, I am the president of the Prevention Alliance of Loudoun, or known as PAL. I am also a member of RIO, which stands for

[02:14:18] Raising Education Achievement and Leadership. And just last night, I was awarded the Student Innovator Award. The North Star School values its diverse community and encourages students, parents, and community members to get involved. We have some upcoming events we will want you all to know about. On May 19th, our equity team will host a learning festival at the North Star School.

[02:14:39] It will feature coaches represented by students and staff of our school, and it will feature programs offered by our school. Guests can look forward to learning centers featuring student and staff coaches, tables featuring the programs offered at the North Star School, which include t-shirts, snacks,

and great company. Please look for posters in high school counseling offices or check out our website for additional information that is all coming soon. The event will be held from 2 to 4 p.m.

[02:15:06] Over 40 students met the requirements for high school, the Alternative Education Program, and the ISAEP, a proud accomplishment of the North Star School in January. On May 25th, 2023, the North Star School will host an end of year senior ceremony celebrating this year's graduates, including the January grads.

[02:15:25] We expect to have another 40 students meeting graduation requirements in the second semester. This event will feature guest speakers, a student speaker, and our whole school community. Following graduation, many students will attend Trey School or College at Nova, or University at George Mason, and American University in D.C.

[02:15:46] Many students will enter the trades as apprentices. I also want to thank LCPS leadership and the school board for this opportunity to represent the North Star School and its alternative academic program. I am glad to be a part of a school that actually cares about the students. The staff at North Star hope that students prosper and become successful.

[02:16:03] Thank you. And our final student school board representative tonight is Charlotte Farrell from Riverside High School, where she is the Student Council Association president.

[02:16:25] Charlotte is passionate about politics and plans to study political science. In her free time, she volunteers at all the Virginia elections. She also runs a political and current event debate club at her school. Hello and good evening to the members of the school board.

[02:16:42] It's good to see all of you again. I'd first like to thank my principal, Mr. Anderson, the administration, school board, and my teachers for giving me the opportunity to speak here tonight. My name is Charlotte Farrell, and I'm Riverside's School Board Representative and Student Council President. Two weeks ago, I was here, and I spoke about all of Riverside's accomplishments and achievements from this year.

[02:17:04] With graduation being so close, I wanted to take the time today to speak on senior upcoming events, spotlights, and accomplishments. Graduation is only 48 days away, so Riverside's class of 2023 officers and sponsors have so many exciting events coming up.

[02:17:19] On May 16th, we have our Decision Day, where all seniors wear apparel of their college or after high school plans. Then, everyone will go to the football field to be grouped by college or plans and has the opportunity to take photos with everyone and see where all their classmates are going to be going in a few months.

[02:17:36] On May 20th, we have our prom, which will be held at the Hyatt Regency Dulles, and the theme for that is casino. On May 25th, we have our Hershey Park Senior Trip to celebrate the end of the school year. On May 26th, we have our Senior Shindig. This event is where seniors pick up their cap and gown, then go to the field where the class officers have ice cream, music, and social activities planned.

[02:17:59] May 30th, we have an event called Ramp Up. This is an all-day celebration where seniors participate in an awards ceremony and have the opportunity to go back to their elementary school to visit their past teachers. Finally, our graduation ceremony will take place at Fact Field on June 12th.

[02:18:17] Senior nights are beginning to happen for Riverside Spring Sports. Track and crew honored their seniors with balloons and team photos on their Instagram. Some spotlights, senior Sarah Floyd from the track team placed state runner-up in the mile last month. Our basketball teams have four seniors who placed in first and second all district, and our senior swimmer Max Liu finished as a state runner-up in the 400-meter freestyle.

[02:18:42] Riverside senior class has 33 students who have committed to play a sport at the collegiate level. This includes lacrosse, basketball, baseball, track, field hockey, football, swim, soccer, volleyball, and golf. As a senior, I could not be more proud and excited for our graduating class, and I'm sure they will continue to strive for excellence and always go above and beyond.

[02:19:03] Thank you. Thank you. We will now move to item 10 on our agenda, which is public comment. Thank you for engaging with the school board through the public comment process.

[02:19:22] The school board welcomes comments from Loudoun County residents and believes that strong community engagement and outreach are important components of a successful school system. Speakers must limit comments to the time allotted. Based on the number of speakers tonight, which is 85, and the agenda this evening, all speakers have been allotted one minute each for public comment.

[02:19:42] Please be advised that speakers who miss their time slot will not be called at a later time. All audience members shall maintain civility, decorum, and respect for the functioning and dignity of the school board at all times. Please remain seated unless arriving, departing, speaking at the podium, or during a break.

[02:19:59] Violations of civility, decorum, and respect include shouting, heckling, jeering, applause, or other noise which disrupts or delays the meeting. Obstructing speakers from being able to see the school board and vice versa. Interrupting speakers, attempting to speak when not called to do so by the chair.

[02:20:16] And approaching a speaker or otherwise attempting to intimidate, disparage, or distract a speaker, staff member, or other meeting attendees. Speakers should refrain from vulgarity, obscenities, profanity, or other-like breaches of respect, nor may speakers target, criticize, or attack individual students during public comment.

[02:20:37] Speakers should communicate those concerns to their school principal or an appropriate school official. Additionally, complaints regarding division employees should be directed at the school principal or an appropriate school division official. Speakers should face the dais and direct their comments to the school board.

[02:20:53] Per LCPS policy, members of the school board will not answer questions or respond directly to the public during the public comment period. Violations of decorum or civility by any meeting attendee may result in the chair directing staff to remove the attendee from the remainder of the meeting.

[02:21:09] Repeated or persistent violations of decorum or civility by the audience may result in, on the decision of the chair, public comment being tabled until a later point in the meeting's agenda, limiting the number of attendees in the meeting room during public comment for safety reasons, or the public comment period ending for the evening.

[02:21:28] Copies of materials for board members should be given to the public information officer in the media box at the back of the boardroom prior to the start of the meeting. Please provide 12 copies of

materials. Under no circumstances may a speaker approach the dais. The public is reminded that access to school board meetings is available through LCPS TV on Comcast Channel 18 and Verizon Fios Channel 43.

[02:21:51] The live stream of the meeting may also be viewed on the LCPS TV website. Tonight, we begin with our virtual speakers, and the first speaker is Mary McClintock. We ask you tonight to vote yes, make an impact, leave a legacy for our most vulnerable children.

[02:22:17] Support Virtual Loudoun Elementary. Please put yourselves in the shoes of our families and our children who have medical issues, like my youngest, who is medically fragile and monitor 24-7 for a life-threatening disease.

[02:22:32] This program is a godsend. it is fully synchronous. The kids get to interact in an amazing environment. They have created friendships and bonded with their teachers. You will hear tonight, this is just not an essential option for medical children, but for all children. This is a lifeline for those that need it.

[02:22:54] My special ed student also has thrived in this school. Support OT, PT, SLP, and special education teachers and continue virtual loudon elementary thank you bhavna dave probably by that name jenny cho to send them to a good school you start doing your research and compare all the different

[02:23:31] schools in your area you finally pick one and your kid starts going to school then one day your child who thought you were doing so great isn't actually doing so great he was feeling sad and said he no longer wanted to go to school two years ago what we thought was temporary became a better education option. My child are free from bullying and can focus on learning. A few months ago, I was shocked to see an email about the school closing again, and our kids would have to transition into their homeschool. Since that email about February 2013, I worried about where they would be able to go that was an equitable option. Please vote yet to continue the equitable and inclusive learning

[02:24:09] environment and support OTs, PTs, STs, and special education teachers. Thank you. Kieran Dunn. Cuts to the special ed program in Loudoun.

[02:24:28] My son Brady is in the multiple disabilities room at Cardinal Ridge Elementary School. He is nonverbal, visually impaired, and is quadriplegic. He's fully dependent on others for his day-to-day activities. However, this does not diminish his value as a person or the love and joy he brings to our family. Without his special ed team, teachers, therapists, and aides, Brady would not be able to receive the education he deserves or the critical services required for him to thrive.

[02:24:51] And Brady is not alone. The population of children with special needs in Loudoun has grown. since the pandemic and is still growing. These proposed cuts are not justifiable and will only serve to overburden our teachers and lead to negative outcomes for all of our students, not just the special ed community. Special ed team here in Loudoun are heroes. They work with children with varying degrees of physical and emotional needs every day. I am in awe of what

[02:25:14] they do. They should be applauded, not terminated. Thank you. Scott Pacula. Good afternoon. Virtual Distance Elementary offers a diverse group of children a fair shot at an education. Many of these children need this school for their academic success. Some of these children have been bullied in person, have real medical conditions, and require support for their special needs. All children

[02:25:50] should have this option available to them. During the last meeting, there were claims of low attendance and high cost. Let's get all the facts on the table. You did not allow folks to enroll beyond the poorly advertised enrollment pyramid, period. How you fund the thing doesn't change the fact that we need a thing. Support OT, PT, SLP, and special education teachers, and continue Virtual Loudoun Elementary. Thank you.

[02:26:16] T. Pan. The program that provides synchronous learning that is on par with in-person instruction is Virtual Loudoun Distance Learning. Please continue. Virtual Loudoun Elementary. This school is for all children. It affords a safe environment that is free from bullying.

[02:26:43] BDE has been crucial for our children's academic success. Bullying has a horrible impact on children's mental and emotional well-being. Since attending Virtual Loudoun Elementary, they are now thriving. Their math test scores and reports cards are excellent.

[02:27:01] And now they are having a great social life through the many online applications. Please support OT, PT, SLP, and special education teachers and continue virtual Loudoun Elementary for all the children. Sarah Freeman.

[02:27:23] ...teachers because they have a sincere desire to make a positive impact on children's lives. Virtual Loudoun Elementary is that positive impact. Loudoun County does not have the necessary teachers to satisfy the amount needed for homebound students if EDLE closed.

[02:27:40] The cost for homebound teachers is higher than classroom teachers, and it would be a cost per student rather than a class of 20 to 30 students. These kids need a permanent solution, and homebound is a temporary measure that only offers an education in reading, writing, and math while isolating the student.

[02:27:56] Bava K-12 is the only other virtual school option, but it's inaccessible to single-working parents or dual-working homes, as it is basically Virginia-led homeschooling since parents are required to teach the students. If the school board fails to continue BDLE, then LCPS would have discriminated against these children with disabilities, denied their legal rights, and their least restricted environment would have been removed from them.

[02:28:16] Please support OT, PT, SLP, and special education teachers and continue virtual, loud, and elementary. Thank you. L.F. Because we doubted our need to be in homebound. In homebound, they wouldn't teach me fun, and I want to be a girl, and this is my girl.

[02:28:37] I sleep often, but I can attend school while seeing my friends, even though I don't feel well, because we are on a computer. One person has the only choice when I could not go on sick days or when I am recovering. I miss so much school when I tried going in person, when masks were required, because I kept getting sick, even then.

[02:29:01] Now, in virtual, I get sick less, and I can enjoy my life more. Some person kids did not understand why I'm sick often and were very mean to me. Some of them punched me. They would say really mean things to me.

[02:29:17] No one believes me in virtual elementary. Bet-o. ...IEPs or 504s because their parents handled their medical needs and dietary restrictions.

[02:29:37] If the school board chooses to close the least restrictive environment for these medically fragile children and send them into in-person schools, then the in-person schools and teachers will have additional tasks that they do not have the tools, training, or support staff to undertake. Many LCPS elementary schools do not have nurses.

[02:29:56] Those nurses do not have the training in these highly specialized conditions, and the nurses must rely on all other staff without any medical training to be the front line. The fact is that demand for VDLE continues despite a less than two-week registration window and no advertisement it is an essential school. Please support OT, PT, SLP, special education teachers and continue virtual out in elementary. Thank you. Michaela Garrison. Cindy by that name.

[02:30:31] Tim McClintock. After reviewing the conversations at board meetings and the public at large, there are some things that have become abundantly clear. It is a program that many students need to get the support they're entitled to. All alternatives that have been identified for these students do not provide a fair and equitable education that only Virtual Loudon Elementary does.

[02:31:06] It can be managed cost-effectively. The fact that the per-student cost last year was less than half of the in-person student average is proof of this, and several suggestions have already been put forth concerning this. The program is a success, with the test scores to prove it. The LE may have been started because of COVID, but it is no longer about that anymore. Loudoun has stumbled upon a way to make a good on its pledge in equity for all students. It is something to be proud of,

[02:31:40] not tossed away. Please support OT, PT, SLP, and special education teachers and continue Virtual Loudoun Elementary. Heather Hughes.

[02:32:13] Not able to get that caller on right now. Ruth Kiefer. This program is making a difference in the lives of Loudoun County students, their families, and its staff.

[02:32:31] It should be allowed to continue and grow. Please combine the elementary and secondary programs into one K-12 program on a single budget line. Some staff are leaving the program for other positions in the fall. We could make our class ratios more reasonable by maximizing the use of the remaining staff members' time and qualifications.

[02:32:54] We could combine smaller classes, find a way to integrate the homebound program, and allow families from surrounding counties to pay tuition to help with the funding. Please allow us to advertise our existence and accept student enrollment through August.

[02:33:11] Families deserve choices. Also, please fund the speech and language pathologists. I have heard them speaking up at the last couple of meetings, and it's not the time to be diminishing support for those who need and provide these services. Thank you. Kathleen M.

[02:33:34] Elementary this year and all the years after that. The reason I like virtual elementary, the teachers are super, super really nice. My parents can help me if I don't feel good due to my medical issue.

[02:33:50] I have a lot of really good friends in that program. And if you take it away, I will be very sad and I will miss them. and it makes life a whole lot easier and well please just save it. Sharon Trofe. Good evening Chair Soraka and school board members and staff. My name is Sharon Trofe and I am the current special education advisory committee chair. SEAC is requesting the school board align with the

[02:34:29] LCPS strategic plan beginning with empowering our students and providing exemplary staff. With this mindset, SEAC continues to request the school board re-examine the budget and fully staff teachers and related service providers to meet LCPS's robust staffing standards.

[02:34:53] This cannot happen with the current accounting practice of rounding down. SEAC also supports virtual K-12 education, specifically the current elementary program that has provided a continuum of placement for students with disabilities that cannot attend a traditional school.

[02:35:13] Further, Virtual Elementary has not had an honest and forthcoming review. B.H. Caller by that name? Abby Alemu Eticha.

[02:35:29] We do not have a caller by that name. Moira M. Sir, if you're, we're doing virtual. Modern Elementary, the kids need it, such as myself.

[02:35:45] We need it. Sir, are you Abby Alemu Eticha? We can just talk with staff.

[02:36:00] We'll call you during in-person public comment later on. William M. Without any worry about our health concerns, please continue virtual loud in elementary.

[02:36:26] Ahmed Ahmed. We do not have a caller by that name. Katie Thomas. We do not have a caller by that name.

[02:36:53] Jay Sue.

[02:37:21] They're on. School. Thank you. School. Excuse me.

[02:37:37] If you're trying to give public comment, it's very difficult to hear you. Could you move closer to your phone or microphone? We're trying to give public comment to Jay Sue or so. Elementary school can be safe and also not be bullied.

[02:38:00] Save our elementary school. Megan Howard. To highlight the value in what we do and the importance of smaller caseloads to be able to individualize our speech therapy sessions.

[02:38:24] I have an eighth grade student who has been in self-contained autism program for his entire school career. He is nonverbal and was thought to be functioning at a preschool level. I learned about a new option on his AAC device and worked with his amazing parents to try it out with him. What we found out with this new option is he is actually on grade level for all subjects.

[02:38:43] His parents are thrilled to be able to hear their son's thoughts, feelings, and ideas. His IEP team just determined to switch him from VAP track to the SOL track going into high school next year. This will open so many doors for him and change the trajectory of his life. This student epitomizes the LCPS vision and what can be accomplished with effective communication and collaboration.

[02:39:05] He now has a voice, and his goal, he wants to become a teacher. We can continue making these positive changes with more funding and smaller caseloads for our speech pathologists. Skylar Solano.

[02:39:22] I see an attendee by that name. Pam Blackstone. The option for virtual distance learning within Loudoun County Public Schools for all students since kindergarten through 12th grade.

[02:39:45] Please do not shut down this program that is successfully meeting a need for our students. Thank you. Jennifer Solano.

[02:40:48] Michaela Oliver. For students, please keep the virtual distance learning program an option for all students and grades K through 12.

[02:41:09] Please allow this equitable choice for our Loudoun families. Whether Loudoun is prepared or not, online learning is the future. Thank you so much for listening. Monica Lumba. positions, I'm still gravely concerned about the cut of 2.9 SLPs. This means that there will be at least 165 students who will need a service provider. This will likely happen by further

[02:41:43] increasing the student-to-SLP ratio. A lower student-to-teacher ratio results in an increase in student performance. Would you not agree that lowering the student-to-SLP ratio would have a similar positive effect on our students too? Just this year, our supervisor and a consulting teacher had to enter classroom and take a caseload in my 20 years at lcps i've never witnessed a supervisor do so while we should be so grateful to both of them this is a concerning situation we can't plan for next year without seriously considering an increase in slp positions please consider

[02:42:18] collaborating and opening up a dialogue with slps to truly lead lcps towards the vision of highest level of excellence. Thank you. Ben Smith.

[02:42:38] Remind me. Can you hear me? Yes, go ahead. Hi, my name is Ben. I graduated the virtual district for elementary school last year. I went to this school because I have health issues and my doctors say it's a safe way for me to go to school. This virtual school gives kids their childhood chance to make friends and learn together as great teachers. I don't understand how you keep talking about how much you care about the kids, but the truth is you You're not caring about the kids in the school.

[02:43:09] You're showing them that they don't matter. How can you not put the school in your budget? Every kid has a right to go to school in a safe way and be in class with their teachers and classmates, not go to school alone. Please keep the elementary school open. These kids need it and support all OTPT special web and speech teachers.

[02:43:30] Thank you and good night. Valerie Smith. dispensable safety net in which any elementary school child can receive an equitable and inclusive education in a way that is safe for them when they are unable to attend school in the building due to serious life-impacting situations. A DL student being able to safely return to the building is a way to measure the success of this school because it gave the child the safe setting to navigate challenging circumstances and to reach a state of improved physical and mental health. Life can change in a heartbeat and this school gives vulnerable

[02:44:08] children who needed a lifeline to the essential childhood experience of learning with a teacher and making friends during what would be a resounding, difficult, and isolating time. The reality of these children having this school being the only one in Loudoun County to close as a way to balance a budget that favors to enhance the exceptional by sacrificing the well-being of the vulnerable is unethical.

[02:44:32] LCPS can prove their active commitment to equity for all children by funding and protecting this school in all otpt special ed and slp positions thank you a sir and i felt miserable until i stopped doing and doing virtual when i did virtual i felt happy because no one was happening and i made friends along the way and to this day and still to this day and this is why you should

[02:45:11] keep virtual for k the fifth pragati mohan as a parent of fourth grader we really feel virtual option should always be available with lcps we highly recommend it benefits which we saw personally that

kids do not miss on studies under any health health circumstances or an unavoidable travel they are also safe from bullying also parents can see complete records how their kids

[02:45:48] are performing every day and provide extra help them if needed they can also contact their teachers whenever it is needed and mrs keeper was really helpful my daughter is like she is always excited about the studies and whenever she had any query she messaged miss keeper and she got instant replies so that was the she's always excited about the class that i had never seen when she went in person because here she is getting more attention extra queries replied and i mean as a parent we

[02:46:22] also felt like virtual is the best option they can have and Isha Srivastava. We do not have a caller by that name. Heather Benson. Distance learning is a revolution.

[02:46:52] That is the title of the promotional video created to expand the applicant pool for the K-12 virtual learning program. It's ready to go as soon as tomorrow morning because we in distance learning are ready for virtually anything. Anything but giving up hope. Hope that the hard-fought goal of success in a virtual synchronous environment will be celebrated and not forgotten. Hope that our community will continue providing education in a least restrictive environment. Hope that LCPS is as forward-thinking as the 21st century skills we impart to our students. Distance learning is a

[02:47:31] revolution for those who choose it. Your vote is the blessing and support LCPS administrative staff to fully advertise the program, extend the application deadline, and be a regional leader in academic accessibility. Vote to give K-12 distance learning a future where virtually anything is possible. That was our final virtual speaker. So at this time, we're going to go start in-person public comment. We'll start with Abby Alemu-Attucha and then go with our speaker

[02:48:08] list with brenda bengston after that go ahead thank you good evening everyone thank you for the entire board members to give us you know this opportunity standing in front of you i am representing my ethiopian orthodox community in the loudun county we have holidays ceremonies

[02:48:43] festivals within a year and all these are highly just you know connected to our life day-to-day life and our eternal life attached to our you know god so we kindly request the major holidays you know to observe in the school calendar you know our as an example we stated everything you know in the later hope you know we'll have it you know all the the letters the fairfax county this year for the first time accepted major holidays you know to observe in the school calendar you know

[02:49:21] Parents can't take, you know, a PTO to be participated in the major holidays in the church, but our students, you know, our kids, they can't be. Thank you. Thank you. Very much appreciated. Brenda Bengston, to be followed by Babita Desai.

[02:49:38] Thank you. Can our students recognize the seductive nature of social media, appreciate satire, identify advertising gimmicks, state how journalism differs from entertainment, Can our students understand editorials and ethics, find reputable sites, identify sanitized versions of history, debate either a pro or con side of an issue?

[02:50:15] Jay Rosen, journalism professor, describes verification in reverse as creating doubt about what's being proven with facts and evidence. Verification in reverse encourages culture wars and absurdity.

[02:50:35] The sole purpose is to inflame rather than inform. A wise student says, we need to teach kids to argue because quite honestly, adults are terrible at it. More critical thinking, less conspiracy theories.

[02:50:51] Thank you. Babita Desai to be followed by Brandon Michon. Brandon Michon to be followed by Sandy Sullivan. Raise your hand in the room if your place of business has communal bathrooms.

[02:51:14] Boys and girls, all in the same room. I don't have it. Why are we proposing or even considering as a Loudoun County school board or school system to put bathrooms that are communal for all genders? Tell me, anyone on the school board, anybody who goes to their business, you're a lawyer, I believe.

[02:51:36] You're going and taking a dump next to the partner? I don't think so. What it is, is we're putting children in an uncomfortable and awkward situation. The proposal to spend \$11 million on an experiment to see how we can have high schoolers, middle schoolers, and elementary schoolers sharing the same bathroom, the risks do not outweigh the positive potential social aspects of it.

[02:52:03] What happens when we have overdoses, sexual contact? What happens when we have bullying in places where it's going to be private? What happens when Sally comes in and Johnny comes out? Figure this out, guys. Thank you. Sandy Sullivan to be followed by Tracy Lane.

[02:52:19] Good evening. I'm Sandy Sullivan, an elementary school teacher who currently serves as a member of the Loudon Education Association as their president. Loudon educators are among the best in the nation.

[02:52:35] This isn't an opinion. It's a well-documented fact. LCPS consistently outperforms its rivals across the board in sports, academics, drama, and robotics. LCPS students consistently rank at the regional, state, and national levels. are schools when selective distinctions on our staff are consistently recognized for excellence in their fields. We celebrated some of those people today. Niche.com is ranked Loudon as the top Virginia county to live in due to its A-plus public school rating. Seven of our schools rank among the top 25 in Virginia. The success of LCPS is due in large part to the dedication and

[02:53:10] devotion of LCPS educators. You officially named 2022-23 the year of the educator. Prove it by guaranteeing them the wage increase proposed in FY24 budget. Educators give their all to LCPS. LCPS owes them the respect of a reliable salary. Thank you. Stacey Lane to be followed by Dave Polanzi. Hello, I'm Tracy Lane. I'm an educator here in Loudoun County and I'm also the secretary of the LEA. More than anything else, students need high quality teachers. You can teach kids

[02:53:50] without internet. You can teach them without paper, pencils, and other supplies. It turns out that once the students' basic needs are met, the only thing you absolutely must have for students to learn is a good teacher. The students in LCPS are very accomplished, and that's due in large part to the high-quality educators that work here.

[02:54:07] Dr. Smith told educators in March that as educators, I believe that our profession remains the most important and most critical profession. Simply put, educators make all other professions possible. For our kids to continue thriving, we need to ensure that we are attracting and retaining the best educators, Paying educators at all levels a highly competitive salary is a good start.

[02:54:30] Making sure that the salary is prioritized is imperative. You know the role a teacher plays in a student's outcome. Don't leverage our salaries in your budget disputes. Thank you. Thank you. Dave Polanzi to be followed by Heather Binkley. You know that educators' salaries matter.

[02:54:54] In this year's budget proposal, it was stated LCPS teachers, administrators, and staff are the most important factors in helping our students after their parents. Seeing that staff are esteemed, exemplary, supported, and accountable is vital to student success. This isn't a new idea.

[02:55:10] From 2018 to 2023, the budget proposal listed among its strategic goals, cultivating a high-performing team of professionals focused on our mission and goals. A key part of this plan was a focus on adopting a competitive salary for both licensed and classified staff at all levels of the salary scale.

[02:55:26] In your fiscal year 19 report, you forecasted challenges in filling teacher vacancies with high-performing teachers and recognizing that the gap between Loudoun and Fairfax in mid-career salaries was something that had to be corrected. Do you think that delaying the adjustments to the education salary scale this year is going to help these goals? I don't think so. Thank you.

[02:55:46] Heather Binkley to be followed by Heather Johnson. In 2014, LCPS recognized that it needed to be more competitive with regards to its teacher salary. By 2023, LCPS had reached its goal of being first of nine districts in starting salary for teachers, regardless of degree. But our mid-career teachers with a master's degree were still ranked just fifth. When comparing steps for teachers with a master's degree with our closest neighbors, Loudoun is actually the lowest from step

[02:56:20] 13 on. Fairfax surpasses us at step 10, and Prince William surpasses us at step 13. A teacher at the end of their career will make \$35,000 more a year in Prince William, while a 30-year veteran teacher in Fairfax will have been making our final salary for six years already.

[02:56:41] I know that previous boards have worked hard to rectify the mid-career SAG, but the truth is you're just not keeping up. Why should any highly qualified staff stay in Loudoun? I love my job, but I also have to feed my family. LEA supports virtual Loudoun Elementary, OT, PT, SLP, and special education.

[02:57:00] Esther Johnson, to be followed by Todd Fielding. Good evening. Teaching has always been a high turnover kind of job.

[02:57:15] Since the pandemic, it's even worse. Up to 30% of new teachers are leaving the profession within the first five years of teaching, and teacher attrition is up in almost all places, regardless of years of experience. To compound the problem, interest in the teaching profession is at its lowest point in the last 50 years.

[02:57:32] There are many factors that contribute to these problems, but one stands out that you have the power to affect. If you want to attract and retain highly qualified educators, make sure that educators have a salary that they can count on and that is high enough to warrant staying in the profession.

[02:57:51] Teachers give and give of their time and their resources. No one who becomes a teacher thinks, I'm going to get rich. But they should be able to support themselves and their families in the districts that they live in. They should be able to count on their salary being adjusted to combat the rising cost of living.

[02:58:09] And if they can't, they're going to move on to jobs with more stability. Thank you. Todd Fielding, to be followed by Shelly Schlieber. Our superintendent had repeatedly sung the praises of our educators and seems to know our value.

[02:58:28] In December, he told us, I'd like you to make a mental list of the gifts of time and talent you have given your students and colleagues. If these acts were actually gifts, they'd be too numerous to count,

and no one could place a price on them. I value your work and am proud beyond measure to be a part of the Loudoun County Public Schools family.

[02:58:48] Loudoun educators appreciate all of the warm sentiments, but we deserve more than just words. We deserve to be respected as professionals, the professionals we are. Our salaries should not be the first thing sacrificed during budget reconciliation, and we shouldn't have to cross our fingers and hope funding comes through to make sure that our salaries keep pace with the growing cost of living.

[02:59:11] The proposed budget solution does not respect LCPS employees, nor does it show them that they are valued. Shelley Sleeper, to be followed by Carrie Michon.

[02:59:34] Yesterday, I read a meme with the Bud Light logo that said, we made a dumb move and lost millions of customers and billions in revenue, followed by Fox News logo that said, hold my beer. In the last 24 hours, we learned CNN fired Don Lemon, Fox News fired Tucker Carlson, and Biden announced he's running for re-election.

[02:59:51] what could be bigger news than this? Wait for it. Loudoun County Public Schools is spending \$11 million beta testing co-ed bathrooms with floor-to-ceiling doors and co-ed locker rooms. But LCPS says they can ensure the safety of our children even though they won't release the report and have just handed future decisions to LEA through collective bargaining. So what could Bud Light, Fox News, and LCPS have in common? Decisions, comments, and cover-ups have consequences.

[03:00:17] As Ziegler, Wade Byard, and Beth Bartz, your ongoing political decisions are losing great teachers and misusing over \$1.5 billion in taxpayer revenue. Maybe you like being on the national news. Hold my beer. Carrie Michonne to be followed by Renee Champaglia.

[03:00:40] Heritage Pride is real. And for a school system that is starved for good news, how on earth did LCPS shut down the good deed done by Grace Taylor of Heritage High School? Title IX Parkview High School soccer has hand-me-down miss bench uniforms, and Grace, from Heritage, sees a need, rolls up her sleeves, raises money to buy new uniforms for Parkview, but no, LCPS can't let a good turn go unpunished.

[03:01:11] So you shut down the ceremony, awarding the raised money, afterwards labeling it a misunderstanding? For real? This is despicable. But yes, please spend \$2.6 million to make vape and rape bathrooms at Parkview, where sewage spills in the science classrooms, half the building has no legitimate air conditioning, all the way down to threadbare sport uniforms.

[03:01:35] Equity inclusion. Yep, sure. Shout out, shout out to Grace Taylor and the Heritage Girls Soccer Team. Renee Champaglia to be followed by Megan Jenkins. I'm a special education teacher with the distance learning program. Please continue to fund the program for kindergarten through fifth grade.

[03:02:00] Not all students learn best in person. All means every, and we know that not every student learns the same. Provide a choice. Our 100% synchronous program is meeting the needs of students that don't or can't attend school in person. No one ever forgets their homework.

[03:02:18] Social anxiety is reduced or non-existent. Students aren't overwhelmed by the school bus or the cafeteria, and there's no bullying. Our students report increased confidence, and they are better able to focus on their learning. Our students are safe at home, and they have reduced absenteeism. Distance learning makes learning accessible to every student.

[03:02:36] It's not everyone's choice, but it's important that it be a choice. Please fund the elementary grades for next year. Thank you. Thank you. Megan Jenkins to be followed by Cheryl Ondurchane. What's worse than single-use lockable bathrooms in schools?

[03:03:03] Installing single-use lockable toilet stalls that are fully enclosed within a unisex bathroom. In LCPS, only 66 out of 82,000 students identify as transgender. If you move ahead with the unisex bathroom idea, you will be making all students unsafe and accommodate to accommodate 0.08% of transgender students.

[03:03:23] This is immoral and lacks so much common sense. Let's call the single-stall locked toilet enclosures inside unisex bathrooms what they are going to be. Drug rooms and sexual assault rooms. What is sure to follow are lawsuits, which will cost taxpayers millions of dollars.

[03:03:40] Those of you on the left that voted for policy 8040 are so focused on worshipping genitals, and identities. You are blind to the fact that children are struggling academically after being shut out of school for almost two years. Put the focus back on education, not bathrooms. Furthermore, the VDOE 2022 model policy from Governor Youngkin states that bathrooms... Thank you. Cheryl Underchain to be followed by Beth Hess. When reading scores and literacy have been the top

[03:04:17] education stories on major media, why are you focused on bathroom renovations? Bathrooms have always been a safe space for girls to go. Even as adults, there are signs in bathrooms to give a code to the bartender and they'll help you escape a bad situation. Now the bad situation is able to come right into the bathroom with you and even push a girl into a small enclosure with a door lock where no one will see what happens. Your hyper focus on the feelings of less than one tenth of a percent of all students completely ignores the 50% that are girls, including my daughters who are being told to ignore their feelings and seek counseling if they aren't okay

[03:04:56] with it. You do not have the right to prioritize students' feelings. When girls and even boys say that they have privacy and safety concerns, you guys need to pay attention. Drop these plans and release the report. Beth Hess, please refrain from applause during public comment. Thank you.

[03:05:16] Beth Hess to be followed by Anne Donahue. This school board is talking about spending \$11 million dollars to outfit bathrooms in a small number of schools as a pilot program to cater to a tiny fraction of our 82,000 students. We currently have 97 schools in LCPS and your plan is to do this to every single school. That amount of money is staggering. This plan won't improve student safety rather it'll make students less safe. The only privacy afforded will be to students who choose

[03:05:52] to break school school rules and all the while our special ed students are suffering, and we still have students who can't read at grade level. Rather than budgeting money for academics, or I don't know, for teacher salaries, as we've heard, you are putting millions of dollars toward what is nothing more than a social contagion. Your shameless bowing to the woke mob is duly noted. Actually, you've all become the woke mob. So that's why we're going to do everything we can to elect non-woke fiscal conservatives to this board. Thank you. And

[03:06:24] Donahue to be followed by Andrew Pihonek. Good evening, Chair Sorotkin, Vice-Chair Mahdavi, and board members. I'm a Loudoun County resident and parent of two children in elementary school in the LCPS system. First, I want to thank you for all of your service for the kids in our community because you have a thankless job standing up here and getting yelled at twice a month for hours on end.

But I mostly want to ask you to support the virtual learning. I believe that it is an obligation of the public school system to make sure that all students have good opportunities

[03:07:03] to learn and to succeed. And part of that is acknowledging that not all children are able to learn in the same way. And because of that, there is no cookie cutter, one size fits all approach to how you provide an education to children. There are children, there are students in our county who genuinely need this accommodation to learn through virtual schooling. And so I would ask you to continue funding the virtual Loudoun Elementary program.

[03:07:27] Also support OT, PT, SLP, and special ed. Thank you. Thank you. Andrew Pihonak, to be followed by Diana Sosa. Good evening. I'd like to take a minute to talk about my best friend and my hero, my mother.

[03:07:44] She was a kindergarten teacher for 20 years. She sadly passed away about eight years ago. And I see teachers that work as hard as my mom did in the county, everywhere. And they deserve to have a competitive wage. We can't afford to lose more teachers. They are the backbone of this society. Thank you.

[03:08:02] Thank you. Diana Sosa, to be followed by Peter Lierny. Peter Lierny, to be followed by Catherine Dowd. Good evening. I've been in this county for over 25 years, and I remember when Dr. Hatchrick was here, and I remember academic excellence. And although we gave a lot of awards today, the truth is, as a consumer, a taxpayer, the rigor is being lost in the school system.

[03:08:40] We can't sugarcoat that. I have a son, and he's in honors classes. He's in academic classes. But the truth is, he's not there. And I'm taking \$21,000 out of my pocket as a taxpayer because I know as a father, okay, that's what it's going to cost me to get him remediated.

[03:08:58] But yet, he's still in the classes, right? Now, these teachers are great teachers, but I know they're also burdened with a lot of stuff other than being able to teach. So what's the outcome? There's a lot of constraints. There's people who have children with special needs. We need to give them dollars. There's people who, like myself, they're taking money to pay.

[03:09:18] And my taxes went up \$2,000. I know you're not the Board of Supervisors for property tax this year. The truth is the rigor's not there. You're not educating the kids the way they should be educated. Catherine Dowd to be followed by Jennifer DiDonato.

[03:09:36] Good evening, members of the board. I am Catherine Dowd. I'm speaking on behalf of my two children that have autism and ADHD. Augie, who is eight and nonverbal, and Emma, who is seven. I want to share a story with you that I encountered last year.

[03:09:53] I went to go visit my daughter's classroom, you know, mainstream. She was half mainstream and half special ed, and so I wanted to see what the next class, you know, her older brother, Augie, was in. I went in there, and the room was completely dark.

[03:10:10] A child was stark, naked, naked, and there was no teacher there. And because the two, there were two of the aides were out. So they got some person who didn't know what she was doing, totally unqualified, didn't have a walkie-talkie, anything, with 12 kids with autism.

[03:10:28] And one kid started getting it, and she was above, beyond, out of, just completely did not know what to do. I stayed in there with her for 15 minutes waiting for the teacher to come back. The teacher left because he had to get their food in the cafeteria. So I thank you for your time.

[03:10:47] Please yield the mic to the next speaker. Thank you. Jennifer DiDonato to be followed by Melissa Wow. I'm Jennifer DiDonato, parent of two elementary students in LCPS, and I'm extremely concerned about our priorities within this budget.

[03:11:06] This year includes additional funding for lawyers, administrators, and directors, while cutting elementary school teachers, SPED teachers, and speech language pathologists, OTs, and PTs. We have rising numbers of students with disabilities in LCPS.

[03:11:24] We should be increasing the number of SPED teachers, SLPs, OTs in order to educate those for the maintenance of effort. Not spending money on lawyers, administration, and directors to hide or protect us after we violate our requirements under a free, appropriate public education.

[03:11:42] We have a record high of 9835 students with disabilities in our school system with another 800 currently in the process. We should be increasing those in order to achieve that maintenance of effort required under the IDAA. Not only are we not maintaining it, but we're cutting those required positions.

[03:11:58] The focus of the budget must be on education. Thank you. Melissa Waugh, to be followed by Abby Platt. My name is Melissa Waugh, parent of two kids with IEPs from the Broad Run District and a special education attorney.

[03:12:17] While SEAC has been raising the alarm for years about understaffing SPED and related services, Each time we're being told we exceed the VDOE staffing standards, well, we have been deceived. My colleagues and I have uncovered at least two means by which LCPS has manipulated the numbers.

[03:12:36] First, SPED staffing standards are based on how many minutes a student spends in a self-contained SPED classroom. But until recently, staff have been told to under-report on students' IEPs the amount of time students are in a self-contained room. Second, LCPS's persistent understaffing has led to a non-compliant policy of not making up related service minutes missed if a student's scheduled therapy falls on a school holiday or if a student is unavailable because of a school assembly or testing.

[03:13:05] For one client, this meant he missed 49% of his speech service minutes in his IEP over the last year. Thank you. Abby Platt, to be followed by Liz Crotty. CNN recently reported a child literacy crisis in America stating that one in three children in the fourth grade cannot read at grade level.

[03:13:32] It is devastating to me that the majority of the school board is focused on flushing millions of dollars down the toilet in unneeded bathrooms. In the name of affirmation and inclusion, \$11 million is slated to go toward the renovation of bathrooms in five schools. According to LCPS's own numbers, there are 66 trans or non-binary students within our student body of 81,000.

[03:13:54] While an appropriate accommodation for any and all students within our student body should be considered, that number is representative of less than one of tenth of one percent of the total enrolled. At that rate, the cost to accommodate the 66 children in those five schools is \$166,000 per kid.

[03:14:13] If implemented throughout the 98 schools throughout LCPS, that number goes up to hundreds of millions of dollars of wasted taxpayer dollars. spend the money on teachers and our children's education. Thank you. Liz Crotty, to be followed by Karen LaBelle.

[03:14:32] Good evening. I'd like to talk about some numbers because there seems to be some confusion with the SPED population. In 2019, before the pandemic, we had 9,636 students. Ms. Richardson just

shared with all of us at the last meeting that we now have 9,835 students in special education with 800 in eligibility.

[03:14:54] our population has not gone down it is growing at a rapid pace my son is in our ECSE preschool program and we received a letter stating that his classroom staffing levels were out of compliance with the state staffing standard in fact most of our ECSE classrooms have hit capacity or have exceeded the state staffing standards we should not be rounding down when it comes to staffing our sped population because it results in not meeting our LCPS robust rich staffing standards. These cuts are not justifiable.

Overburdening our teachers will cause poor outcomes for our students and continued hemorrhaging of

[03:15:31] our teaching staff and the result is discrimination toward our students with disabilities. Restore the positions and bring back Virtual Loudoun Elementary. Thank you. Karen LaBelle to be followed by Dana Lauka. I am a retired special educator from here in Loudoun County Public Schools. I have spent 50 years years working in the field of special education. But relax, I'm not here to talk about toilets tonight. I would like to ask you two questions about the Academies of Loudoun. My understanding

[03:16:09] is that the Academies, the students that go there, follow a compressed curriculum so that they can finish all their core work in two years and spend the remaining time working on their career and vocational studies. My question is, do you still pay those core teachers more money than you pay the rest of the core teachers in the county? And secondly, when are you going to offer the opportunity of a compressed curriculum to all the other high schools? My name is Karen LaBelle,

[03:16:49] Dr. Karen LaBelle, and I'm running for school board. Thank you. Dana Lauka to be followed by Dina Griffiths. Once again, I'm here pleading with you to offer my daughter an equitable education. Every day I send her to school without the ability to speak. Her special education team have worked diligently to help her find her words. The recent pandemic has resulted in massive increase in development and social delays. The proposed cuts to special education will only

[03:17:28] only further handicap this large population. My daughter is still playing catch up from all the time that she has lost when she was expected to learn from a Chromebook at the age of three and with a teacher who is wearing a mask. She has lost so much time and is fighting to catch up.

[03:17:49] Will you fight with her? The children with no voice are counting on you. The growing population is in need of services. Please remember that all children are legally afforded an equitable education. Don't break the law and have a dang heart. Thank you. Dina Griffiths to be followed by Jeremy Wright. Hi. I would like to discuss the remodeling of the bathrooms. Let me get this straight. We had a sexual assault in one of our schools and you spend 11 million dollars on a

[03:18:27] program to renovate bathrooms, why don't you give the money to special education? I just don't understand that. In addition, school safety is the number one issue for parents and teachers and community members. This new design will enable assaults and drug use. It will provide no escape for someone trapped by an assailant. It is also less sanitary where girls will have to share bathrooms with boys. What happened to being pro-women? Where are the parents with daughters?

[03:18:58] How do we get to... Oh, I thought I lost the microphone. Where are the rights of the biological girls? Why are they up for grabs? This is an insane policy being pushed by adults on the school board having no interest in the safety and welfare of girls in Loudoun County.

[03:19:17] Check your legacy and voting record, please. That's what you'll be remembered for. Thank you. Jeremy Wright to be followed by Elizabeth Boyko. Elizabeth Boyko to be followed by Dimas Christofy.

[03:19:40] Okay, policy 8040... was based on the Gavin Grimm case where the 4th Circuit upheld that a trans student can use the restrooms of the sex they identify with or are most comfortable in. So how does building new bathrooms that are for everyone not contradict that? You may think we're the loud minority, but what about the silent majority who don't speak up and follow the latest news, who don't want their kids in a mixed-gender restroom with floor-to-ceiling stalls? There are children in elementary school with such severe occupational therapy issues that they may not even know how

[03:20:19] to open a door and have an escape plan. People who are claustrophobic do not want to feel like they're trapped in a bathroom and can't escape. Girls would be safer in a girl's bathroom and girls had that. Now you're taking away their privacy. Now they have bathrooms that biological males can access, but they've lost their privacy. Thank you. Demis Christofi to be followed by Carla Sola you know I have a proposal for you guys it's gonna it's not gonna cost you anything

[03:20:55] I'll turn this place into a co-ed bathroom for free because nothing but shit comes out of here nothing 11 million dollars who came up with that number did you guys get a contractor to give you that number to that's gonna cost 11 million dollars for four schools what are you guys building a Taj Mahal 11 million dollars you know how much money that is I could build a charter school with that money with very well equipped bathrooms I want to know who came up with the 11 million dollars. How does that work into the budget? Give that money to the teachers. Put it

[03:21:35] into the education. Put curriculum in the schools that teach kids skill work, welding, carpentry, mechanic. 11 million dollars for a bathroom? I bet you anything, anything. All the boys are going to piss all over the stalls and you're going to have to spend another 11 million dollars to build bathrooms for the girls. What are the feminists? Why don't you guys speak up? Why are you guys wasting money. Thank you. Carla Sola to be followed by Tricia Fontanilla. I'm opposed to the drastic

[03:22:14] cuts in staffing that affect special education students, especially with respect to speech therapy. Speech and communication are the most important skills we can teach our students. Speech is a bridge to the world of learning, of employment, of relationships. My son Chris was diagnosed with autism at age three. He was nonverbal when he began school. He's now 20 and will graduate this June. For the past 17 years, at every annual IEP meeting I have attended,

[03:22:47] LCPS has either tried to reduce or remove speech therapy altogether as a related service for my son, and I believe that's because they don't have the resources to staff it. Autism significantly impairs the ability to communicate and interact. There's no aging out with autism. My son needed speech therapy every year of school, and so do many other students. Please fully fund speech therapists. Thank you. Tricia Fontanilla, to be followed by Cara Vesey. At the last meeting,

[03:23:24] it was stated that only 2.9 speech pathologist positions are being cut, that these positions have been vacant for over a year, and that we must return to pre-COVID staffing standards. Let me address the effect of these vacancies on services for students. Prior to the COVID pandemic, not only were positions filled, there were professionals available to contract with LCPS to provide coverage when a therapist was out on temporary disability leave.

[03:23:52] This is no longer the case. The result is that student services are missed, or SLPs are pushed to fill in for their colleagues. We can't invent time, so if we have to cover for another SLP, students have to be seen in larger groups.

[03:24:08] which absolutely affects the quality of services provided. I have been contacted by five recruiters in the last month. The demand for speech-language pathologists is rising, with projected job growth at 21% through 2031.

[03:24:25] Yet there is a shortage of SLPs, both in schools and health care. Thank you. Cara Vessi, to be followed by Sherry Holdridge. Here is part one of background of case guidance for SLPs.

[03:24:42] Currently in the national average, as of 2020, is 47. ASHA recommends a caseload of 40 for school-based SLPs. In 1962, VDOE first offered guidance in the establishment of SLP caseloads. Caseloads were kept within 75 to 100 pupils.

[03:24:58] In 1970, after Virginia mandated special education, caseloads were kept between 50 and 75. After IDEA was introduced, VDOE found that the scope of service delivery for SLPs had expanded following the passage the Education of All Handicapped Children Act in 1975. SLP caseloads at the time averaged 64 students. In 1994, the General Assembly reduced the caseload cap to 70 and included the following in the budget. It is the intent of the General Assembly that the caseloads for SLPs be reduced to the level of the equivalent to the national average by the year 1999. That was 24 years ago.

[03:25:38] Thank you. Sherry Holdridge to be followed by Stacey Pridman. Stacey Pridman to be followed by Suzanne Kidder. So the General Assembly acknowledged 24 years ago that SLP caseloads were too high.

[03:26:07] The General Assembly lowered the cap to 68 in the year 2000. In 2018, the national average caseload was 48. Recalling the General Assembly's intent outlined in 1994, caseloads for SLPs in Virginia have not yet been reduced to a level equivalent to the national average.

[03:26:26] According to ASHA, caseload numbers have remained consistent throughout the past decade despite the significant increase of roles and responsibilities of SLPs. The 2020 national median caseload was 47. The needs of students receiving our services vary greatly, and a specific caseload number does not take this into account.

[03:26:46] A caseload of 40 students with articulation disorders is manageable, whereas a caseload of 40 students with severe disabilities is not likely to support the provision of FAPE. While LCPS is less than the state cap, it is still significantly higher than the national average, due right by the students of LCPS.

[03:27:04] Thank you. Suzanne Kidder, to be followed by Carolyn Flynn. I'm a speech-language pathologist advocating for our positions and compensation.

[03:27:22] I started this academic year with over 70 students on my caseload. SLPs are the only disability category that can be both a standalone disability or a related service. We're the only eligibility member that does our own testing. All other categorical labels have other teams to do their testing.

[03:27:39] We're the only eligibility member that also carries a caseload. Of course, I think we should do our own testing, but then we should also be compensated in line with the other evaluators. The only related service position that can also be a case manager are SLPs. Most case managers have 5 to 10 students on their caseload to independently manage.

[03:27:57] This holds true for SLPs, and sometimes even more than that. But then we are also related service providers for an additional 30, 40, 50-plus students on our caseloads. We also bring in money to the county through our Medicaid billing. We tend to be the sole speech therapist on staff per school.

[03:28:14] We are expertly trained and highly organized professionals in our field. It's time we are recognized, valued, and compensated. Thank you. Carolyn Flynn to be followed by Daniel Brubaker. Good evening.

[03:28:29] I'd like to start with a quote by Oberty versus the Board of Education from 1993. The fact that a child with disabilities will learn differently from her education within a regular classroom does not justify exclusion from that environment. My name is Carolyn Flynn. I'm the mother of Grace, who is a beautiful girl with Down syndrome, who's six.

[03:28:48] She was excluded from her least restrictive environment in kindergarten at Kenneth Colbert last year. She has severe apraxia. She requires ASL for her communication. She was refused ACL support. There are many ways in which Loudoun County Public Schools can support our children with disabilities in a much more robust way that's consistent with the law and the research, and I'm requesting this be re-evaluated, and that we support PT, OT, SLPs, and special education.

[03:29:20] Thank you. Thank you. Daniel Brubaker, to be followed by Linda Killen. Linda Killen, to be followed by Liz Bergstrom. With the number of kids using bathrooms for everything other than their intended use, Do you truly believe spending \$11 million in five schools on co-ed bathrooms is going to help?

[03:29:51] Ask the two unconscious and one OD student in Montgomery County how grateful they were that somebody found them under the stalled door. You are removing student safety, enabling drug and other usage, and not considering all student privacy concerns with the floor-to-ceiling design. Where is the equity for the majority of the student body of girls and boys that want to use their gender's bathroom?

[03:30:08] I can imagine a boy's face when he finds a bloody tampon in a toilet that didn't flush, or a girl that sits on the seat of a urine because the boys no longer have urinals. There is no reason we can't have girls, boys, and all-gender bathroom. Switch out the existing signs and keep the \$11 million and invest in educating the children.

[03:30:25] Kids who suffer the greatest learning loss that haven't caught up. Special education kids that aren't fully supported due to staffing shortages. And the challenging kids that you continue to move from school to school, like the rapist and the kid in Riverside that teachers were told to lock their doors. Spend money wisely. Please do not put it towards these bathrooms.

[03:30:43] Thank you. Thank you. Liz Bergstrom, to be followed by Julie Witkowski. Good evening. At the last school board meeting, many speech-language pathologists and others stood here to advocate against SLP position cuts. We, as a group, were unknowingly misdirected and misinformed, however, not completely.

[03:31:03] Your proposal to eliminate 2.9 SLP positions instead of adding 2.9 SLP positions, or even more, is needed for us to provide effective therapy services and to fulfill our job requirements, which includes billing for Medicaid services, which drives revenue into LCPS.

[03:31:22] I am here to advocate to the board to reinstate and add funding for additional SLP positions for next school year's plan. SLPs are carrying tremendous workloads. We are a devoted bunch, but additional SLPs are needed to make our loads manageable, to facilitate providing the high standard of therapy that we want to deliver, and to create a reasonable work-life balance.

[03:31:45] Please fully fund additional SLP positions. Thank you. Thank you. Julie Witkowski to be followed by Michael Rivera. I'm still unclear about the 2.9 SLP positions.

[03:32:06] In searching my email, I can only find a single SLP position posted last April, which makes me think that we did not post those 2.9 positions. Why is that? How many SLPs do we currently have? How many did we have prior to COVID? Did we hire COVID-specific SLPs?

[03:32:23] Did we really receive a third of the SPED COVID FTEs? What and how much funding was used prior to COVID and now? Do we use any Medicaid money to support our services in any way? Why do we need to pull our supervisor, specialist, and CFATs to sub for us?

[03:32:41] If virtual contract SLPs are available, why aren't we using them? I ask these questions because something isn't adding up for me, not because it's hard to go back to the status quo. I also want to clarify that I have never made an eligibility or IEP decision based upon my availability.

[03:32:59] Services are always based upon student need, though the quality of my services do sometimes suffer. Michael Rivera, to be followed by Rebecca Cook. The board will tell the public that \$11 million for the bathroom project was allocated several years ago and is from a different bucket.

[03:33:22] That's typical government accounting. While that's true, the fact still remains that there are actual issues in LCPS that need to be addressed. including funding for speech-language pathologists, addressing learning loss, and declining enrollment. There is no three-alarm fire to build new bathrooms.

[03:33:39] This board has neglected to produce one iota of evidence of sexual discrimination in bathroom use or the actual population of alleged transgender students driving policies in high-dollar construction. If the board feels that this project is so urgent and important, They owe it to taxpayers to provide the objective data to justify the project.

[03:34:03] Please release the report. Thank you. Rebecca Cook to be followed by Jessica Smith.

[03:34:19] Budget cuts happen and are sometimes necessary. However, cutting these special educators' jobs is not necessary. And actually, it is harmful. LCPS's vision, every student will reach their full potential and achieve their dreams. Do you really mean every student?

[03:34:36] Or do you only mean students without disabilities? If you want all students to be given an equal opportunity to reach their full potential, then you will fully restore these special education positions. My son and all of the children who access special education in this county deserve free, appropriate public education, a.k.a. FAPE.

[03:34:57] By slashing these positions, you are risking FAPE for all SPED students. You'll be harming the children who need the most help and support during their school day. By approving these job cuts, you are preventing equity for all students. Our children need these amazing teachers to help them reach their full potential.

[03:35:14] Thank you. Thank you. Jessica Smith, to be followed by Susan Cox. Renovating bathrooms from stalls to rooms will cause more victims of horrific crimes, overdose, suicide, physical and sexual

assault.

[03:35:37] Who will be alerted to the student who locks themselves in these rooms to use drugs? Who will be alerted to the student who locks themselves in these rooms to self-inflict? Who will be alerted when a student grabs another student and locks themselves in these rooms to commit assault?

[03:35:56] Who will be alerted? From my experience, no one. You all can't keep our students safe with the current stall bathrooms. Page five from the SGJ report. The special education teaching assistant later said she saw two pairs of feet under the stall, but she did nothing about it, allowing the rape to continue.

[03:36:23] Stop playing political games with the safety of our students. Thank you. Susan Cox to be followed by Erin Yao. The USA is a place where people come from all over the world. They come here to escape persecution and communism.

[03:36:41] They come here for the freedoms that we enjoy, yet some of us take those freedoms for granted. It has been found out that our government has recently targeted churches. This is a red flag, a warning that something is not right. Things are amiss.

[03:36:57] Northern Virginia is a place where people come from all over for our excellent education. At least they used to. Now teachers are leaving and parents are pulling their children out of the public education. Student scores are declining. Scandals are abundant. Rapes, bullying, assaults have been mishandled and covered up.

[03:37:15] Taxpayers' money is used irresponsibly. Fentanyl overdoses are happening. Something is not right. No real trust is being restored as the report is still hidden and true transparency is lacking.

[03:37:31] Carrie LaBelle is someone who will ask the tough questions and find the solutions with a focus on transparency. Thank you. Thank you. Erin Yao to be followed by Lisa Williams. At three years old, my son was diagnosed with significant language delay.

[03:37:55] In his first year of speech in Virginia Beach, he saw three different SLPs with the Virginia Beach City Public School System. The instability and consistency brought little to no change in his ability to speak. At four years old, he couldn't even say his own name. When you see that your child is desperately wanting to engage and is falling farther and farther behind the standard, you feel helpless.

[03:38:13] So we moved to Loudoun County, my expectations were low. At four and a half years old, his vocabulary consisted of approximately 10 to 15 words and a series of grunts, squeals, and babbles strung together. Within months, after a lot of time, practice, and patience, his speech began to improve. He had been mostly unintelligible, even of those that knew him well.

[03:38:30] And they were surprised at how quickly his language seemed to be developing. We have been fortunate that he has been with the same SLP for four years now. And although his speech has improved tremendously, he still has a ways to go. When I hear the horror stories of other families and what they've had to go through to try and get the appropriate services for their children, I feel lucky. And that feels a little bit repulsive. Parents shouldn't have to beg for services for the development and growth of their children.

[03:38:48] And we shouldn't have to fight to ensure those services aren't cut when they are clearly needed. Thank you. Lisa Williams to be followed by Suzanne Satterfield. Good evening. Our daughter is in fourth grade and has been in special education for five years.

[03:39:08] She's double deficit dyslexic and Loudoun County does not have the staff trained at the level she requires to learn how to read and write. Unable to read and write past the kindergarten level, moving into fifth grade, she's struggling with studying and her special ed teachers aren't able to help her with the extra work because they don't have time.

[03:39:27] So I do that. In addition, in her last IEP meeting, we didn't add more time because we couldn't quite figure out how to fit it in. Our daughter's education is impacted and is not equitable. Please don't cut the special ed funding. The numbers are growing.

[03:39:46] The kids need to be at the center and they need to be focused on. So please support virtual Loudoun Elementary and support SLP, OT, PT and special ed. Thank you. Suzanne Satterfield, to be followed by Andrea Weiskopf.

[03:40:16] This incident was reported and thankfully no one appeared to be hurt. Imagine if this paper burned out of control and students locked in a floor to ceiling stall could not smell it in time to get out. Would they be left to purge?

[03:40:37] Imagine a child passing out in the same type of stall, and the paper fire burns out of control. They can't respond to save themselves. If they were in an open floor stall, someone could see them and try to get on the floor to help get them out.

[03:40:53] It's time to flush the plans for the new bathrooms and put student safeties first. To all the students that don't feel comfortable with sharing their restrooms with the opposite sex, I see you. You were loved. Listen to your feelings. Your lives matter. Andrea Weiskopf to be followed by Christina Ramirez.

[03:41:17] About five years ago, a boy's bathroom in a Loudoun County middle school had to be locked because one boy was hiding his stash under a ceiling tile above the toilet.

[03:41:41] That student would have done the same in a communal bathroom. A gendered bathroom won't stop a predator. Most students just want to pee. I just want them to wash their hands. Teach your child not to flush a tampon.

[03:42:00] Teach your child to aim. Teach your child to wash their hands. To our lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer students, I support you.

[03:42:16] Cruelty is their point. I see you. Black Lives Matter. Please refrain from applause during public comment. Thank you. Our final speaker tonight is Christina Ramirez.

[03:42:35] Good evening. I'm a member of the Loudoun Education Association Board of Directors, and tonight I would like to express the LEA's official support for the continuation of the virtual distance elementary program.

[03:42:53] LEA stands with the community that has expressed resounding support for the continuation of the virtual distance elementary program. This program has allowed opportunity for the most equitable and inclusive learning environment for our most valuable children and their families.

[03:43:10] We urge you to vote yes for the continuation of this valuable program, and please also support OT, PT, SLP, and special education. Our students are worth it. Thank you.

[03:43:27] Thank you. And that will conclude public comment for this evening. We'll now move to item 11, the acting superintendent's report. Dr. Smith. All right, Chair Sorok and board members, we have several things to share this evening, and we'll start with some good news from around the division.

[03:43:47] Our next listening session is scheduled for this Thursday at Sterling Middle School. We've hosted three sessions thus far with around 40 parents, students, and community members attending each session. The goal of these sessions is to connect with LCPS parents and community members and learn how LCPS can better support students' academic and mental health needs.

[03:44:05] All community members are invited to attend one or more of these events to make their voices heard and participate in this process. I was pleased to attend Emmerich Elementary Deeper Learning Showcase last week. At this event, students shared with their peers information about a topic they had researched.

[03:44:22] Kudos to Ms. Haddock, the principal of Emmerich Elementary School, the entire staff and student body for this remarkable display of learning and teaching. Dr. Ellis and I participated in one of the most pleasant interview sessions ever. We were interviewed by fifth grade students at LCPS's newest elementary school, Elaine E. Thompson Elementary.

[03:44:42] For the past year, 24 fifth graders working with the school's IFT, Julie Kuzma, have been creating podcasts. Together, the students collaborate on the month's theme, write the script, and interview questions. They then interview the subjects and edit and produce the podcast.

[03:44:59] Everything is student-directed, even the podcast's opening theme music and the Shark Network logo you see on this slide is student-produced. As Laney Thompson is a new school, Principal Tim Sparbini directed his staff to create the podcast as he wanted a new and innovative mechanism to share information as well as to spark hands-on learning.

[03:45:19] All the podcast episodes, including the one in which Dr. Ellis and I were interviewed, can be found on the school's website, and I invite you to check them out. Congratulations to Maya Towns, a John Champ high school sophomore who was called up to the 20-player roster of the U16 U.S. Women's Youth National Soccer Team.

[03:45:38] The team won the Mondale Montagu Tournament in Paris, where Maya played the entire game, scoring several goals in the tournament, including one in the semifinals. Congratulations. Virginia State Delegate David Reed presented Loudoun County High School students from the FBLA, or Future Business Leaders of America, the National Honor Society, and a class for students with disabilities with a commendation last week for their volunteer work that benefited the community and helped to build community within LCHS.

[03:46:09] The students came together last December to gather donations to create more than 750 care packages for cancer patients. Reed congratulated the students on touching the lives of individuals living with cancer. Congratulations to Willard Middle School Principal Jeff Roundsley, who was recognized by the Virginia Department of Education for his dedication to staff recruitment and retention.

[03:46:33] Mr. Roundsley was nominated by the LCPS Chief of Schools, Ray Mitchell. In her nomination, Ms. Mitchell describes Mr. Roundsley as strategic and interviewing and intentional about finding candidates that have strengths that benefit and support middle school scholars. Some of Mr. Roundsley's

successful recruitment and retention approaches include encouraging teachers to develop and implement new ideas that spark innovation and address students' critical thinking skills.

[03:46:59] Mr. Roundsley also pairs new teachers with a mentor, creating an environment that allows for their voices to be represented and acknowledged. His efforts have resulted in a school culture that teachers want to join and remain a part of, his WILD vision. And WILD stands for Wonder, Impact, Lead, and Develop.

[03:47:17] Congratulations, Mr. Roundsley. Smarts Middle School and Little River Elementary School congratulations on receiving the Recognized American School Counselor Association Model Program, or RAMP, designation. This designation recognizes the school's commitment to delivering an exemplary school counseling program.

[03:47:37] The RAMP designation ensures that counseling programs are comprehensive in scope, results-oriented in design, and developmental in nature. The model also requires school counselors to be proficient in retrieving school data, analyzing to improve student success, and using it to ensure educational equity for all students.

[03:47:56] Little River and Smarts Mill are the only Virginia schools to receive the RAMP designation this year. These two schools joined six other LCPS schools that have active RAMP designations, which must be renewed every five years. Rockridge High School was awarded the designation of Premier Community for Theater Education by the Educational Theater Association.

[03:48:17] Only 25 schools across the country received this designation this year, and Rockridge was the only school in Virginia to receive it. Congratulations. I, along with several principals and senior staff members, were pleased to attend the April 13th Superintendent Student Advisory Council meeting and hear student solution-oriented presentations.

[03:48:38] Students in this group represent each of our high schools and centers, and I've had the pleasure of meeting with them on a monthly basis over the course of this school year. Students selected the topics to address and improve in LCPS, and then worked in small groups throughout the year with a faculty advisor to develop solutions to the issues.

[03:48:55] Students presented the results of their work on the following topics, communications, mental health, collaboration between schools, and equity. It was a great presentation filled with thoughtful and innovative ideas for making LCPS the very best, and I want to take this opportunity to thank our students again for their voices and leadership in this process.

[03:49:15] Thanks to scholarships from the Loudoun County Parks, Recreation, and Community Services, 45 LCPS students who are experiencing homelessness will have the opportunity to enjoy two weeks of summer camp at no cost. For most of these students, it will be their first experience at summer camp. The students will take part in camps that have an enrichment focus and will have access to the same summer camp opportunities as their peers.

[03:49:35] Many folks don't know that LCPS has approximately 1,700 students who are experiencing homelessness. The Office of Student Services plans to continue to expand this program in the future. The Career and Apprenticeship Fair hosted by the Office of Student Services was held on April 12th at the Academies of Loudoun and featured more than 50 area businesses and partners and attracted more than 300 students plus nearly 300 student guests.

[03:50:02] Students learned about different career paths and were able to speak with business leaders about the education and training necessary to excel in those fields. LCPS staff also provided students with the opportunity to have their resumes reviewed. LCPS proclaimed April to be Autism Acceptance Month.

[03:50:21] Schools across the division engaged in activities to celebrate our students and families with students identified to be on the autism spectrum. LCPS designated April 14th as lighted up red in recognition and celebration of our students. Staff from the Department of Student Services were shining bright in their red attire and in their support of students and families with autism.

[03:50:38] The day was a success across the division and brought positive attention to LCPS's inclusive and welcoming practices. During April, we also celebrate Month of the Military Child and show our support for military-connected families and the resilient children of our military members.

[03:50:56] LCPS is proud to have more than 1,500 military-connected students. On April 19th, student staff and community members were invited to Purple Up for Military Kids Day. Purple indicates the support for all branches of the U.S. Armed Forces. The Office of Communications celebrated Purple Up Day with social media posts, reshared posts from LCPS schools who were also celebrating the day.

[03:51:21] The Office of Human Resources and Talent Development is hosting its first annual mental health fair for employees, retirees, and their families on Saturday, May 13th, from 9 a.m. to noon here in the admin building. To help reach the goal of being an employer of choice in alignment with goal two of the one LCPS strategic plan, this is first of its kind fair invites participants to try a variety of techniques aimed at reducing stress and improving mental health.

[03:51:49] Staff can explore seminars addressing key mental health topics and participate in activities like laugh therapy, chocolate tastings, and meditation sessions. All staff are invited to attend and no registration is required. We'd like to give a special shout out to the LCPS staff members who went above and beyond the call of duty to help turn a tricky situation into a good news story.

[03:52:15] On Friday, April 14th, students from Sterling Elementary School became stranded when their charter bus broke down on a trip to Jamestown. Department of Instruction leadership coordinated with LCPS Transportation to plan and execute a successful solution to the problem.

[03:52:32] Within the Department of Transportation, Transportation Assistant Director Tisha Austin and Field Trip Supervisor Victoria Watson orchestrated a team of LCPS drivers and Williamsburg-James City County Schools transportation staff. LCPS driver Denise Wilkinson volunteered to drive to Williamsburg to retrieve the students who had been transported by Williamsburg-James City County drivers Amy Hutchins and Lois Delk, a portion of the distance home.

[03:52:58] Fellow LCPS driver John Gantt stepped up to substitute for Denise's regular bus route responsibilities while she drove to Williamsburg. Thank you so much for this teamwork, coordination, and dedication. Everyone made it home safely. Graduation season starts in less than a month.

[03:53:16] The Academies of Loudoun holds LCPS's first graduation of the 22-23 school year on May 24th, with all other LCPS high schools holding graduation through June 12th. Please check out the LCPS website for the full list of graduation dates.

[03:53:33] And now for a few operational updates. Last week, the Virginia Board of Education approved the 2023 History and Social Science Standards of Learning. Now that the standards have been approved,

curriculum frameworks and assessments will be built, And starting with the 25-26 school year, all history and social science instruction and state assessments will be based on these new 2023 standards.

[03:53:55] In a press release last week, the VDOE stated the standards place an increased emphasis on civics and all grades have significantly increased the content knowledge for Virginia history and have a broader focus on the contributions of all Americans, in particular African Americans, indigenous peoples, and Asian Americans.

[03:54:11] I'd like to take a few moments here to address some confusion and potential misinformation about the status of our restroom privacy and safety pilot project. Currently, the division has single-use, gender-neutral restrooms in place and is developing a pilot program for a small number of schools for renovations and technology solutions to further meet the safety and privacy needs of all students and staff.

[03:54:35] I want to be clear that LCPS is not doing away with the standard configuration of multi-fixture restrooms assigned specifically to boys or girls in any of our schools. All students can use the multi-fixture gender-specific restrooms in all LCPS facilities.

[03:54:53] We are, however, increasing the number of and access to gender-neutral single-use restrooms that offer more privacy. To accomplish this, beginning in 2021, a number of staff restrooms were repurposed to gender-neutral, single-use restroom for students.

[03:55:09] This reduced restroom access for staff while providing private spaces for students. Our Strategic Plan Goal 3.3 calls for a safe and productive learning environment. Part of being comfortable and safe at school is reliable use of restrooms for all. We know that the experience of some students choose individual or private restrooms due to concerns related to activities by other students in the restrooms.

[03:55:30] While the vast majority of LCPS students are mindful and respectful of the individuality of other students, we know that smoking, vaping, drugs, vandalism, fighting, bullying, and other type of conflicts and activity between students deter others from entering the space. As a principal for many years, I can attest that these issues continue to arise across schools and school divisions and are not isolated to LCPS.

[03:55:54] In LCPS, we're committed to continuous improvement and we want to work with our stakeholders to solve these behavioral issues. In order to make improvements in LCPS facilities, we rely on dedicated funding through the division's Capital Improvement Plan, or CIP. The CIP outlines allocated funding for improving the privacy and safety of our school bathrooms.

[03:56:15] Privacy space projects are included in the school board's approved FY24 through FY29 Capital Improvement Program and Capital Asset Preservation Program. And it's important to note that these budgets are separate from the annual budget development and review. Over the last 18 months, LCPS has collected information related to the use and access of these spaces from school administrators to develop methods to maintain the necessary access of single-use restrooms and address the security and safety aspects of all restrooms.

[03:56:45] Feedback was solicited and received from the Support Services Principal Advisory, Superintendent's Principal Advisory, Superintendent's Student Advisory, Superintendent's Teacher Advisory, Support Services Principal Advisory, Loudoun Education Alliance of Families, or LEAF, Support Services Capital Budget Community Meetings, and the Superintendent's Listening Tour.

[03:57:06] Feedback on the pilot projects from school-based administrators and student advisory groups will be collected as the facilities come online, and adjustments will be made and as appropriate and warranted before similar projects take place throughout the rest of the division. We anticipate discussions with the school board in 2023 and the fall of 2023 will coincide with the development of the 25 through 30 CIP. Finally, I think it's important to note that behaviors such as vaping, smoking, fighting, vandalism, etc. have been taking place in secondary best restrooms in schools across our state and country. LCPS is taking action to solve

[03:57:42] these issues and is using a pilot approach that will include multiple layers of stakeholder feedback along the way. We will communicate with students, staff, and parents as we begin this process and along the way. Finally, I'd like to take a few moments to address some of the questions and comments regarding the FY24 operating budget specifically around special education. It's important to note that not a single current LCPS staff member is losing their job and the focus of our operating budget is on exemplary staff. Regardless of the funding stream, we are taking care of our current LCPS employees and finding other ways to keep positions that are currently

[03:58:19] filled even if those positions are above our approved current staffing standard. LCPS budget adjustments for special education funding are being made in alignment with student enrollment and service requirements. We continue to monitor eligibilities and have compared our current number to past years. The number of students recently identified for special education services is comparable past years and is somewhat predictable for a division our sides.

[03:58:47] We continue to monitor student enrollment, eligibilities, and service requirements and will make adjustments accordingly. All school locations in LCPS are staffed with special education teachers and teacher assistants to support the specialized needs of students with disabilities as per their IEP.

[03:59:05] We are committed to ensuring individual needs of students are met. And our current special education educator-to-student ratio for cross-categorical students is 1 to 10. compared to our neighbors in Arlington and Fairfax, who have the state ratios of 1 to 24.

[03:59:22] LCPS staffing levels benefited from one-time federal relief funds in response to the pandemic. More specifically, the division used funds to add staffing in a number of student services and special education areas to support intensified student needs. For fiscal year 2024, FY24, LCPS identified 36 full-time positions that will no longer be supported with federal relief funds.

[03:59:46] 8.3 of those 36 positions are vacant and will not be funded by the division. The remaining 27.7 positions will be funded using other resources for FY24. And of those 8.3, 2.9 are speech-language pathologist positions. I'd also like to note that as positions come available through attrition, we will evaluate our staffing standards and make a final determination on the position based on real-time data.

[04:00:13] A couple other points I'd like to make. That currently, or finally, I'd like to acknowledge that our educators continue to feel stretched and thin while doing their best to serve our students. We're hearing from staff they're concerned about any increases in caseloads. And we're seeing that while eligibility is rising, we are balancing the needs of the division in the budget process and continue to invest in special education staffing.

[04:00:38] Overall, though COVID-19 relief funds have ceased, we are not cutting our overall spending for special education. In FY24, the budget for special education is \$229 million, which represents an increase

of \$10 million in local funding for special education since last year and an increase of approximately \$40 million since FY2020.

[04:01:02] In the end, we are committed to collaboratively working with our exemplary staff to meet the needs of each of our students. This includes our students with or without disabilities, our gifted students, our English language learners, our students who want to take college courses, those who want to explore relevant pathways, and every single student in our school system.

[04:01:22] Unfortunately, our budget can only go so far, and we do have to make tough choices, but we remain committed to meeting the needs of every single one of our students. That concludes my report. Thank you. Thank you, Dr. Smith. At this time, we're going to take a short break.

[04:01:39] Board members, please be back on the dais at 9.15. The board is now in recess.

[04:14:46] All right. The board is coming out of recess, and we will start with our action items, starting with 12.01 from the Department of Business and Financial Services, temporary FY24 salary scales.

[04:15:05] Before I make a motion, Ms. Willoughby, do you have any new information or just any updates regarding this item that you'd want the board to be aware of? No, I do not. Okay. I will move that the Loudoun County School Board temporarily adopt the current FY23 universal auxiliary and licensed salary scales for FY24.

[04:15:27] Seconded by Mr. Mejedevi. Just, I'll briefly speak to my motion. We've been here before in previous years and obviously we never want to do this, But given the uncertainty with the state budget, as in some previous years, we have to have a way of getting job offers out the door as we get further into the spring and leaving ourselves room to then adjust the salary scales once we know what the state budget is going to finalize at and what reconciliation is going to look like.

[04:16:04] So in past years, we've been able to make good on our promise to restore to what we had previously adopted. I'm hopeful that we will be able to do so again this year. And we know one way or another what we're adopting tonight will be temporary and we'll be able, even in the worst case scenario from the state, we'll be able to adjust upward some amount, hopefully the full amount that we adopted back in February.

[04:16:33] Further discussion? Thank you, Chair Saratkin. I just want to echo what you said in terms of understanding this as a temporary measure. I know we are all eagerly awaiting updates from the state in terms of understanding what the final impact will be on the budget.

[04:16:56] And also just wanted to indicate, while we all hope that we're made whole by budgeting decisions at the state level, If we aren't, I do think that we will need to, as a board, take a hard look at other items so that we're not balancing the budget solely based on adjustments to compensation.

[04:17:24] I know that that's the biggest part of our operational budget. And again, there are separate budgets for CIB and operational budgets, but just wanted to say that. Thank you. Further discussion? Ms. Reeser.

[04:17:43] - Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just have a question for maybe for Dr. Smith. How are we communicating with our staff so that they understand what's happening? - So thanks for the question. So we are waiting for tonight and tonight's action.

[04:18:00] And then we have staff newsletters that'll be going out in ways that we'll communicate and share with staff about the temporary plan. And then also that we're waiting on the state budget. And then that, you know, we'll work with language to make sure that folks know that the intent of the board is to come back and take another look at that after we have more information from the state.

[04:18:20] And do you have an indication of when the state might get their affairs in order? It's our understanding that if they're called back for a special session, that it is going to be the later part of June. We're hearing June 21st, the 30th.

[04:18:36] So at the very end of June. And so that's why we wanted to go ahead and do something now and get something in place. And then we can come back and do that. And if it does happen after July 1, Our recommendation if anything we did on on salaries would to make that retroactive back to July 1 if we're able to Okay, thank you further discussion. Mr. Mahedby and then mr. Morse. Thank you chair. And thank you. Ms. Reza I think it's I think excellent point. I would echo that I wouldn't you know try to explain what you just asked but I'll just echo that and I would say I think Dr. Smith, Mrs. Smith that I think we do a

[04:19:15] Comprehensive communication and not just a newsletter. So I just want to add that to that. Thank you, Mr. Morse. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Dr. Smith, could you speak to the average increase based solely on the step increase?

[04:19:35] Yeah, I believe it's 2.5%, but I'm going to look to Ms. Willoughby to confirm. Further discussion? Seeing none, all those in favor of the motion, please raise your hand and say aye. Aye.

[04:19:51] That motion will pass unanimously. We'll now move to 1202 from the Specialized Programs and Centers Committee recommendation regarding Middleburg Community Charter Schools. So, board members, last meeting we had a tie vote with a board member absent.

[04:20:12] And per our policy, which is based on Virginia code, when that happens, we have to bring the matter that was under consideration back at the following meeting for a re-vote. Now, the tie vote was actually on a substitute motion. So this is treated essentially as if we were picking the entire item back up from the table again. So we're going to reopen debate on the substitute motion, which was to refer this back to committee.

[04:20:42] If that passes, then we're done, and it gets referred back to committee. If the motion were to fail, then we would go back to the base motion, which was made by Ms. Sheridan, which was to place MCCS on probation.

[04:20:59] So I just wanted to summarize where we were and where we're picking back up. So at this point, I will reopen the substitute motion to refer back up for debate. Mr. Mahedmoud. Thank you, Chair. I guess I just want to share that I did follow unfortunately I wasn't able to join last time around but I did follow I did watch the video and and the debate that occurred last time around and I guess if it helps I think we could I could call it I'm calling the the motion to question so we can vote on it is there a second for calling the question second there's a motion to call the question

[04:21:39] which was seconded by miss Rieser this is not debatable and it requires a two thirds vote in order to pass. All of those in favor of calling the question and proceeding to a vote on the motion to refer, please raise your hands and say aye. Those opposed, please raise your hand and say nay. Ms. Corbo, what's your vote? Yes. So the motion to call the question, it passes

[04:22:12] on a vote of six to three with Morse, Sorotkin, and Polifco opposed. So we're now going to proceed to an immediate vote on the motion to refer to committee all of those in favor please raise your hands and say aye aye this is a motion to refer to committee those opposed please raise your hand and say nay that motion is going to fail 4-5 with Reeser, Sheridan, Mehedivi, Sorotkin, and

[04:22:50] Ogadeg be opposed. So we are now back to the base motion made by Ms. Sheridan to place MCCS on probation due to the ongoing financial irregularities or findings in the audits. Is there further discussion on the motion? Mr. Morse. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Earlier this week, I received word that the second audit had been performed. I was somewhat shocked about that because we're right in the middle of the process of voting over the probation and now we have an outstanding audit and

[04:23:27] we don't have the results tonight so we don't know where that audit came in and yet we're being expected to move forward with a proposal to place them on probation whereas I believe if they were to pass the second audit we would remove them from probation. So I'm somewhat concerned that the information that we have to make this decision tonight is not available. We don't have the results of the second audit we don't know if they've passed and I think it would be very embarrassing for this school board and for the mcs for them to be placed on probation to find out in at our

[04:24:03] next school board meeting that they passed the audit and have us turn around and change that and for that reason I move to table the motion second so a motion to table where like we'd bring it back up at the end of the night like you can make a motion to postpone if you like but that's a different motion. Okay, I move to postpone indefinitely and that's waiting the outcome of the audit. So is there a second? So there's a motion to postpone indefinitely. Mr. Morse, do you want to speak to your motion? Yes, I just think that we're making a premature decision when there's more information

[04:24:43] available to us. We don't know the results of that second audit. I was rather surprised that the second audit occurred in the middle of our vote, which is extremely disruptive not only for us but also for the charter school. So for that reason I think it's important for us to allow the process to be completed, allow the second audit to be completed, have the results brought to, we can have the results brought directly to the board instead of the committee. I think that would be appropriate and then we could immediately make a decision based on whether they pass or fail that second audit. Ms. Sheridan. I'm gonna oppose the

[04:25:20] motion to postpone. I think we are, my colleague Mr. Morse is making a conclusion that the second audit if they were to pass that that would automatically remove them from probation I think that we would want to continue to monitor and I don't think one passed probation after five years and six audits of of not passing the audit would that one turnaround would automatically remove them from probation that would be a vote of this of this board to be taken after we hear the results of a second audit it or perhaps

[04:25:56] consecutive audits after that so I'm not going to make an assumption first of all that they will pass this second audit or that the board would then immediately remove them from probation and then that would be cause for that I think that there is there is cause to continue to monitor the charter school for some time to ensure that they not just pass one but that perhaps they pass several audits

[04:26:26] and years of being monitored. Further discussion? Ms. Polifko. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I believe at the last meeting we spoke about the progress that Middleburg Charter had made since the first audit

earlier this year and that it was, if I'm not mistaken, two of the seven corrections were made is that correct miss Willoughby well my materials yes two of the seven

[04:27:05] have been remedied one was related to opening up bank accounts which was a relatively easy action and the other was providing timely financial information so these were out of the seven you may recall my recommendation or my concerns that I was bringing forward and my duty as the CFO to advise the school board that those two are also really the lower level risks.

[04:27:32] Okay, thank you. So two of the seven have been remedied. In that corrective action plan that was given to the charter school, did it say specifically how many of those action items needed to be completed before the board could put them on probation or was it just whenever we feel like doing so?

[04:27:52] I'm just wondering if that was clearly outlined in the plan that they received. So for an example, if by the first audit less than four action items have been completed, then the board could place community charter school on probation.

[04:28:09] I just want to clarify that according to the terms of the charter, the school board can always place the charter school on probation regardless of whether there's a correction action plan or not. So having a correction action plan wouldn't be a necessary step in order to place the school on probation, nor would meeting or not meeting the terms of the correction action plan.

[04:28:39] Okay. Okay. Thank you for clarifying that. So at this point, we've given them until June, correct, under this current action plan that they have. We've stated that by June, they will receive those two audits.

[04:28:56] Right now, we have information from one audit that was conducted earlier in the year, but we don't, as Mr. Morse said, we don't have information as a full board based on the second audit that was just completed. Yes, but I would also like to provide some clarification to that.

[04:29:13] The audit is not just a one and done. You go out and pull a sample. It's a lengthy process that involves field work. It involves analysis. It also involves office work in terms of, you know, we have access to their online system, their online financial system so the first so I also want to back up a little bit so the corrective action plan was it you know was signed off by the school board in January and my team was tasked with performing to site unannounced audits before June 30th we strategically was looking at the calendar because also recognizing that we need to bring information not only to the committee

[04:29:53] but possibly to the school board in a timely manner recognizing that that this all needed to be complete before June as well because as the school board is aware you don't meet during the month of July so the first unannounced audit was on February 8th and then in terms of looking forward we were very well aware of the actions and the school board actions but we were also being cognizant of the fact that in a worst-case scenario if there was continued to be concerns with the second audit we were expecting the same path from before where

[04:30:30] We would need to take info to committee, action to committee, info to school board, action to school board. That's a two-month process to go through that chain. So that's why we targeted the April, which was also a little more than two months from the first audit, to perform the second audit.

[04:30:52] Mr. Morse is correct that our internal audit team was out there on site last week, and they began to do the field work. They are still in the process of performing the analysis and finalizing the audit

process. And we hope to have a report here in the next week or two so that we can bring it to the next SPC committee meeting.

[04:31:16] It is unfortunate with the timing of them being on site versus the vote. But again, we're trying to balance, you know, not having back-to-back audits, but also giving us enough time so that we can bring information to the school board.

[04:31:33] Thank you. Thank you for that explanation. So I'm just going to reiterate that without, and I understand, Mr. Sorak, and I understand your point in that the board can take action anytime they wish in terms of putting the school on probation.

[04:31:50] It's very difficult for me to make a judgment call on this when I don't have objective information in front of me. I'm one board member but I don't have the information in the action plan is not particularly objective when it comes to the specific items that needed to be met there there's no there's no timeline for that other than that we knew that this could go out until June so to my understanding the school has taken care of two of those seven items to date and again there's really no objective criteria within that action plan other than that the board can just decide whenever

[04:32:30] they want that they can put the school on probation. So I'll end my comments there. Thank you. Additional discussion, Ms. Reeser and then Ms. Sheridan. Thank you, Mr. Chair. So I think the approach, there are two different ways to approach this. One is, has Middleburg Charter done enough?

[04:32:52] The other is, have we done enough to prove that they should be on probation? And I believe that latter approach is the wrong one. The onus is not on the school board to prove that they've done enough to give Middleburg Charter an opportunity to fix these egregious financial issues. They've had many, many years, and I think there is a lot of objective evidence. Imagine someone coming into public comment and telling us that this is what has happened at one of our LCPS schools, which

[04:33:26] this is, by the way, we are tasked with overseeing taxpayer funds. That's why the charter situation at LCPS is different than sending taxpayer funds to a private school. We are responsible. It is our job to oversee them, not to give them or ourselves a floor where we have to prove that we've done enough to allow them to correct themselves. So imagine someone comes into public comment and says to us, the bookkeeper at this school is paying themselves before getting approval.

[04:34:05] There are no bank reconciliations. There is a lack of internal controls. The school is not recording fair market value of rental space. The cash disbursements lack proper approval and documentation. There is failure to obtain proper approval of bank reconciliations. If someone came in and said that about one of our schools, we wouldn't have had hours of debate about whether we need to take corrective action it is our job to oversee them we have given them ample opportunities only two of seven things have been corrected so I

[04:34:44] think we need to change how we're looking at this and stop putting the responsibility on the board to justify doing its job thank you miss Sheridan and then Mr. Morris thank you chair so I'm just going to add on to some of the things miss research pointed out too and I would say that we have five years of data to make this decision and that I confident is the correct one to make I would also when we talk about they've made two of seven corrections a different sampling miss will be could result in more or different findings is

[04:35:21] that correct that is correct and it is just my opinion that after five years if we were to do a different sampling that we would find more because the ones if I'm correct, the ones that you've gone back to, to be fair, were sampling the same items so that your team could indicate whether or not they had been corrected.

[04:35:43] Is that right? Correct. The scope was in line with the external audit findings, and that was, again, the scope of the review. And part of the reason you brought this to us is because after five audits, they didn't correct the same things year after year.

[04:36:01] Correct. Thank you. And I have one last question, following up on what Ms. Reeser was speaking to, but going a little deeper. If a traditional LCPS school where the principal and the bookkeeper were LCPS employees, which is not the case at a charter school, had similar audit findings for five consecutive years, what possible repercussions would there be for those school employees that are responsible for this?

[04:36:27] What I would describe is that as you indicated they would be LCF at LCPS employees my team would have had conversations before we reached this level with Dr. Ellis and was Boland regarding employee performance because this would be a significant concern and I would like to take this opportunity to again just kind of share the stat from our findings are from our other schools audits that for the same time frame last fiscal year we only had 11 of our

[04:37:03] 98 schools receive what we call our level one which is our low risk letter and three level two level three schools receive level two letters and zero schools receive the level three letter which I think helps indicate that we would not have allowed something to have carried on this long would it be fair for me to conclude that there would be punitive repercussions whoever

[04:37:29] Dr. Ellis if you want to take that. Thanks. Thanks. I'll just build on what Ms. Willoughby said. As she said we would she would have consulted with HRTD and the level director and myself. I assume that the first step would have been a memo of expectations for both the principal and the bookkeeper. If if things continued there would be a letter of reprimand a plan of improvement and as Ms. Willoughby mentioned it would definitely not have got

[04:37:59] to this point. Thank you. Mr. Morse. So, Ms. Sheridan, you mentioned if they were to do another audit, it might be a different sampling and we might get different results. I completely agree with that. As a matter of fact, we just did a second audit. It was a different audit.

[04:38:22] There are going to be different results. We set this process up with two points to reflect on their performance. We told them that we're going to evaluate them twice. We didn't tell them we were going to throw them on probation after the first time when we already have, or I don't know if it's completed yet, but it's at least in progress, the second audit. As this board voted

[04:38:54] on that plan of action, I think the intent on this board was to provide two audits and based on those two audits to make a determination, which I still support. If they fail the second audit, I think we should put them on probation. But we're right in the middle of the two audits.

[04:39:16] And so we've set up this path to success for them and said, follow this, and then we're halfway through and we're going to pull the carpet out from underneath them. I don't think that's, I don't think that's equitable. I think that we provided them a way ahead and we provided them some guidance, we should stick to what we provided, be consistent with our message to them, and then take action after the

second audit comes in. If the first audit had come back clean, I still would have wanted that second audit because a random sampling can come up with different things. So let's take advantage of the fact that we've had another random sampling,

[04:39:56] and we can either confirm or reject the premise that they are either complete or well down that road or they have failed and they deserve to be on probation that was the intent of this board it's not fair for us to go back on that at this point i i just i want to i just want to mention that i don't want to reiterate all the points that i've made when this has previously been up to debate but like i i suggested the corrective action plan when in spc when i was on it and like my my understanding of the plan is that if at any point during the execution of that plan

[04:40:36] the board didn't feel that adequate progress was being made towards remediating the findings that we could consider we consider uh we could consider probation so i under i understand the point about doing it before the second audit but i have not seen sufficient progress at this point uh i would there was a comment earlier made that if it if we place them on probation tonight and then it comes, we get the second audit results and it comes back and it's, there were no findings that that would be embarrassing. I actually, I think that would be great. I think it would be a sign

[04:41:13] that the, uh, after five years, the charter school is finally taking these audit findings seriously and taking appropriate steps to remediate them because the board has been taking their governing actions seriously and placed or at the very least was seriously debating, putting them on probation as a result. So I think where it seems like the charter school is taking this seriously now, I am glad they are. But at this point, I haven't seen sufficient evidence of the audit findings being remediated to deviate from the course of action that we're considering.

[04:41:51] Ms. Sheridan. Thank you. I just would like to reiterate the fact that in December of 2022, the chair of the committee I indicated my support to put the charter on probation at that time and my committee members which happened to have been Mr.

[04:42:07] Sorokin and Mr. Morse at that time went for the corrective action plan instead so for them to not know that probation was something that could happen we discussed it in committee in front of them and then they haven't failed one audit or two audits they have failed six audits five years and then the unannounced one and all of this during this entire time that we've been following them for five years of audits there was additional support provided by LCPS additional training that we made sure was happening in committee and making sure that the principal was invited to the principal meetings and

[04:42:44] all of the training that is available to them this this should not be a surprise and it's beyond my understanding how we cannot take action at this time and and that we've even delayed it as long as we have. Ms. Polifko, and then Ms. Reeser.

[04:43:03] Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm going to go back one more time to the corrective action plan on item number six, which says failure to take corrective action steps. That's the title of that specific section. It doesn't say failure to take a specific number of corrective action steps.

[04:43:18] It says failure to take corrective action steps. And directly underneath, it says the school board may take further steps that include placing MCCS on probation, suspending payments owed to MCCS until such deficiencies are cured and or revoking the charter. There is no objective language that tells them how many corrective action steps they needed to take by a specific time before the school board takes further

steps to put them on probation. And this language actually doesn't even tell me that the school board could take action at any time. It just says that if the charter school does not take corrective action, but it doesn't say how much corrective action they need to take. It says if they don't

[04:43:57] take corrective action, then the board may place them on probation or other such suspensions. So again, I spoke about this last meeting. The language in the corrective action plan is not particularly objective when it comes to what the expectations were for the school to complete by a certain time period. Ms. Sheridan, I agree with you. If these deficiencies were occurring for the past five years, there's a problem, yes.

[04:44:25] Absolutely, there's a problem. As a new board member, I guess my question is, why is this the first time that that school ever received a corrective action plan? I mean, this is the first corrective action plan that they've ever received. That should have happened a long time ago.

[04:44:40] I fully agree with you. Again, the language on item number six about their failure to take corrective action steps is not clear, so I agree with Mr. Morris also that we are pulling the rug out from under their feet without providing, I mean, we cannot as a board say that they haven't taken any corrective action at this point.

[04:45:01] They have. Have they taken as much as we wanna see? Maybe not, but you can't say that they haven't done anything. And furthermore, there may be some board members may be privy to what happened in the second audit. I don't know if they are.

[04:45:17] I certainly am not. And if the remainder of the board is not privy to what happened in the second audit at this point. To me, it doesn't make sense to take a vote right now. - Ms. Reeser, then Mr. Mehedive. - Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[04:45:32] So I wanna comment on a few things that we've been discussing. I think that the reason that the corrective action plan doesn't have certain parameters is because it was not the intention of the board to limit itself to exercising its discretion in oversight.

[04:45:51] So we've heard from two of the committee members that probation was discussed last year. The corrective action plan was not required of the board. It's something that the committee created as an alternative to putting them on probation.

[04:46:06] So whatever is in that document was a gift to begin with and perhaps shouldn't have been given to them, but the board is not limited. That was a favor, that was an extra chance. Just going back to what the intent of the board was, I don't believe what my colleague stated was the intent of the board.

[04:46:29] I know it was not my intent that we had to give them a minimum of opportunities to take corrective action. It was my intent, and from the two committee members that I've heard, I think it's in keeping with what their intent was, that there would be multiple checkpoints.

[04:46:47] These were milestones, as another way to put it, where progress would be checked upon, and at any point, if it was deficient in the opinion of the board, in the discretion of the overseeing body, we would exercise that judgment to take action, which is what we're doing now.

[04:47:10] No one is owed multiple chances. It was just a notice that there would be at least two. And if sufficient progress isn't being made, I believe we are accountable to the public taxpayer because these are taxpayer dollars that are being played loosely with, for lack of a better way to put it.

[04:47:31] That is the entire reason we have the structure of allowing charter schools because we exercise oversight of how the money, the taxpayer dollars are spent. These aren't vouchers that went to a school that they can do whatever they want with.

[04:47:49] And if there have been five to six years and six failed audits, I'm not sure what we're talking about at this point. It is, if you stand for transparency and accountability, there's no way that you can vote in favor of giving Middleburg Charter School more opportunities to make financial mistakes.

[04:48:12] If you stand for transparency and accountability, it's time to hold them accountable for the last five years of bad accounting practices. Thank you. Mr. Mahatvi. Thank you, Chair. Again, thank you for the board members for sharing all their perspectives.

[04:48:31] So I'm not going to go into that, but I think I do want to kind of bring it back to the CFO and the Budget and Finance Department of LCPS. I think this is, from all the understanding that I've gathered, I mean, our department, Budget and Finance, is an award-winning department.

[04:48:47] I think we should acknowledge that, that recommendations coming out of our LCPS Budget and Finance Department has to have weight. When they have been asking for, I mean, they're sharing the data for the last few years. Unfortunately, I don't think they can make the decision whether they continue with the charter school or not.

[04:49:07] It always comes back to the board. And the board has always from, you know, I think collectively, many times we agree or not agree, we've always have a very compassionate view on many things. Whether it comes to student boundaries or any of those sorts, We have always taken a very empathetic and a compassionate view when it comes to that.

[04:49:29] And I think this was no different when it comes to Middlebrook Charter School. So when the staff comes back and shares a recommendation that we should put them on probation, if we were not to make a decision tonight and the next board were to come in next year, they would be like, why didn't the previous board take any actions and let's go through an audit again?

[04:49:52] It seems like a deja vu over and over again.

[04:50:17] I think we, you know, the way I'm thinking, the way I like to see that we should put them on probation and hopefully this particular one thing is just one other audit, but hopefully it puts them on a corrective action and I look forward and I really hope that they take this action of the board very seriously and do come back and fix their books and fix the items that need to be fixed and continue to be a thriving school. That's my personal hope. But I think not giving them or not putting them on probation, I think we'll be back in the same story, same thing next year.

[04:50:37] And the staff will come back and say, well, we've been telling you not five years, but now six years. So I don't think we want to make that again another year pass by and don't take a corrective action tonight. That's all. Thank you. Ms. Corbo. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[04:50:54] I don't agree with my colleagues that say that my vote is what I stand for, but I don't agree with that at all. I will vote with compassion because we gave Middleburg a plan. We told them what we were going to do, and then we said, if you don't do that, then we're going to be taking action. And like Mr. Morris said, we're midway. We haven't gotten that information. And I don't agree with another colleague who said, how many years is it going to be before we take action?

[04:51:30] I don't think anybody's talking years. I think we're talking until we receive those results from the audit, just as we said. Just as we said to Middleburg Charter, that was our plan. That's what we told them. And I think that with integrity, we need to stick with that. And therefore, I will um not be supporting um a putting them on probation because i feel like we need to have the rest of the information follow the plan do what's right do what we said we were going to do

[04:52:00] and not change it midway thank you additional discussion miss reaser i guess i'd like to ask the committees or ask you since you this was your plan um did we tell middleburg charter school that they would have at least until June and multiple opportunities before any corrective action could be taken? I don't think the committee said that, but I'd like to ask Ms. Willoughby exactly what was communicated to the charter school with regards to the corrective action plan. Yes,

[04:52:38] Ms. Willoughby, was it communicated to them that they would have at a minimum until June and two audits, and that if the first one, if they failed the first one, they would still have the ability to continue with the relationship as it stood until a second one was completed and or June.

[04:53:02] In terms of the corrective action plan, what I recall being discussed during the committee meetings, which I think indicates that it wasn't necessarily a minimum of two, was that there was also discussion regarding the scope of the audit and that it wasn't we weren't there to try to be a gotcha meaning we weren't going to be looking at other things we were going to be focused on the findings from the

[04:53:37] external audit from fiscal 22 but in this course of the sampling if another deficiency was identified they would report on that and so I think because of that and because that could be a minor deficiency it could have been it could be something more significant that to me lends towards it not necessarily being a minimum in addition to that in terms of the expectation while I do agree with miss political that it does not say that the expectation is to have all seven

[04:54:15] completed I would just say I you know maybe that was a fault on us in terms of the development because I would just think that any financial operation would strive to have zero deficiencies so and the fact that again my role I have not made a recommendation on what the school board should do regarding probation or what the next steps would be my role as a CFO again in advising the school board who has the oversight of the charter school is to bring the concerns that I have forward in terms of the risk.

[04:54:50] And so at the end of the day, this also really kind of boils down to the risk that the school board is willing to assume related to the concerns of the charter school. Okay, so if I've understood correctly, no, they were not promised the minimum. And the things that were checked were only the things they already knew were wrong.

[04:55:09] Correct. Okay, thank you. Is there additional discussion? Ms. Okadegbe. I don't know that I'll say anything that hasn't been said already, but after five years of demonstrating deficiencies in their practices, I would have expected that there would have been better results from the first audit.

[04:55:43] Even given the fact that it was a short period of time after the corrective action plan was signed, there were discussions in December about the formation of a corrective action plan, and certainly with the scope of the unannounced audit being the same as the external audit, there were opportunities to make corrective actions.

[04:56:06] When a corrective action plan is put into place or even when a probation occurs, the hope of those actions and that activity is that we want them to succeed in being able to put systems and processes and mitigation things in place so that they can get the books right and succeed and we can bring them out of probation.

[04:56:35] I've talked to families who've had great experiences at Middleburg Charter School, and so the hope is that they will be able to get beyond these issues and be in a place where they can operate using better fiscal controls.

[04:56:51] We all heard from leadership from the school at the last board meeting, and there are things in place that should have a positive impact. But that said, I will be supporting putting them on probation at this time, again, with the hopes and some level of confidence that they will be able to work through the issues, make the corrective actions, and prove to the board that they are able to operate with

[04:57:24] established fiscal controls. Thank you. Additional discussion? Seeing none, just a reminder, we are on the motion to postpone indefinitely, and then if that fails, then we'll go back to the base motion. All in favor of the motion to postpone indefinitely, please raise your hands and say aye. Those opposed, please raise your hands and say nay. That motion will fail 4-5 with Sheridan, Reeser, Mehedavi, Sorotkin, and Ogadegbe opposed.

[04:58:00] We are now back to the base motion to place Middleburg Charter Community School on probation. Is there any further discussion? Seeing none, those in favor of the motion to place the school on probation, please raise your hands and say aye.

[04:58:17] Aye. Those opposed, please raise your hands and say nay. That motion will pass 5-4 with Morse, Beatty, Corbo, and Polifco opposed. We will now move to item 1203 from the Department of Student Services, the 2023-24 Annual Plan for Special Education and Application for Federal Funds.

[04:58:52] Is there a motion, Mr. Mahedby?

[04:59:03] I move that the Loudoun County School Board approve the 2023 Annual Plan for Special Education and Application for Federal Funds. Mr. Mahedby, did you mean to say the 2023-24 Annual Plan? Sorry, 2023-2024 annual plan for special education application for federal funds.

[04:59:22] Thank you. I will second the motion. Mr. Mahedby, would you like to speak to your motion? I believe that this is going to go to Dr. Jones. Dr. Jones, anything to add or information regarding the motion? No, sir. Thank you.

[04:59:39] Is there any further discussion on the motion? Ms. Polivko. Thank you, Chair. I would like to briefly discuss the concerns that I have been hearing specifically as the liaison from the Special Education Advisory Committee regarding this federal plan for the 2023-2024 school year. Specifically, we have outlined coordinators, supervisors, a financial analyst. I believe there are a few other administrative positions within this federal funding. And CX concern is that these funds really should be going to

[05:00:19] specifically fund students and the individuals that are tasked with meeting their individual education plan minutes so teachers and students we're looking at just with two coordinators two supervisors and one financial analyst we're looking at almost a million dollars right there and my proposal is that we take those funds that are allocated for those administrative positions and move them into our operating budget while reserving that money specifically to fund our students and our teachers.

[05:00:58] So I would like to amend that motion and move that the school board direct staff to fund all special education administrative positions under the operating budget and reserve that federal grant money for direct student services only, meaning special education teachers and teacher assistants.

[05:01:18] Is there a second? Second. Seconded by Ms. Corbo. Ms. Polifko, would you like to speak to your motion? I think I've already covered it. I've said time and again, the money needs to go to the students and the people that are working most closely with them.

[05:01:37] You've heard me talk about boots on the ground, ad nauseum for the last several months. And we have the opportunity as a board to do that. we have an opportunity to allocate those funds to the people that truly are going to be benefiting from them who are our children who are the ones that are the recipients of these services you hear people who work in our school system teachers specialists whether we meet staffing standards or not on paper

[05:02:12] an individual student is an individual student and their needs vary greatly so So a teacher may have a classroom of eight students, an autism classroom, for example, and those eight students may have extremely high needs versus another teacher in a special education classroom setting where maybe only half of those students have extremely high needs.

[05:02:37] My point is that numbers are not just numbers. And so as much as we can fund our students and the services that they need and our teachers who are working directly with them is really only going to go to benefit that population, to benefit our students, and that's what we're here for.

[05:02:53] So that's all I will say about that, and thank you very much. Further discussion? I'd like to understand, I'll direct this to Dr. Jones. My understanding is some, but certainly not all of our special ed positions are covered by the federal grant money, and others are covered by the, just funded in our operating fund.

[05:03:16] So does it matter which positions are funded where? Like is there some advantage to having certain positions funded by the grant as opposed to just funded by the operating budget? I'm trying to understand whether it makes a difference which positions are funded where. Thank you, Mr. Sirach.

[05:03:34] And I appreciate the question, and I will say that every FTE that supports special education, whether it's the classroom teacher or teacher assistant, is for the benefit of all students. And we're very appreciative of that. But I will also say that this federal application is for just under \$14 million, which is a very small portion of the over \$200-some-odd million that funds our budget.

[05:04:01] The annual plan positions, other than special education teachers, has been included in the annual plan for previous years as well. There is nothing in the guidelines, the federal-state guidelines, that prohibits that. And this is certainly in line with the use of funds, whether it is from the federal application or the local budget, they are aligned with established staffing standards, if we have those, as well as the needs of the division in support of our 1LCPS strategic plan.

[05:04:41] So from your perspective, it doesn't matter which, does it matter which positions are funded by the grant as opposed to the operating fund? We do not see which funding stream would make a difference as long as those positions are indeed supported and funded as requested.

[05:05:04] Okay, thank you. Additional discussion or questions? Mr. Mahedby? Thank you, Chair. I'll be brief. You know, I think that's one of the questions I ask the staff, I think to Mrs. Sirach and what Dr. Jones

has answered, that I guess it doesn't really matter if they were to do a budget again, they would appropriately move that.

[05:05:23] But then it got me thinking, too. I think for everything that we hear every night and some of the board members that keep beating up on this notion that we somehow have too many administrators and not boots on the ground. I mean, I don't know which places these folks work at.

[05:05:39] Every place has a manager, has somebody to lead the organization, has a supervisor. I just can't imagine a single organization where there is no supervisor of anything. So they keep coming back and beating us. In fact, I mean all the board members, that we are administrative heavy staff.

[05:05:58] Now imagine we move these positions, the administrative positions from here to the operation budget. Now your operation budget is going to be administrative heavy because now you have all the administration that was required to manage these positions are moving to operation budget and suddenly it becomes heavy that now.

[05:06:14] And the same folks that are asking to move the positions from this to that will come back and say, oh, your operations are heavy again and they want to cut those positions again. So this is a never-ending cycle of just, I mean, again, there are certain groups, there are advisory councils, not necessarily, I mean, ultimately the decision has to be of the board based on the best understanding of how we manage the administration.

[05:06:37] So I just, I'm sorry, but it just feels like it comes back to the same notion about administration. You require administration to manage things, for crying out loud. I mean, even LEA has a precedent. It's not just made up of just teachers hanging out by themselves in a room.

[05:06:54] So this whole notion about just coming back and saying, well, we don't need administration, we need boots on the ground. Of course we do. I mean, this board has last four years have demonstrated that for crying out loud. But again, I'm just getting hung up on this notion like we need boots on the ground and we don't need the administration staff.

[05:07:09] This is completely nonsense. Sir, further discussion on the motion? Ms. Corbo. Thank you, Mr. Chair. So, yes, we do need administration, but sometimes administrators can handle more people beneath them, and so I don't feel like this is nonsense.

[05:07:32] I feel like this is an important issue that we're talking about here, and I feel like with our taking these administrative positions, putting them in the regular budget, using our educators in place of those administrators, What it would do is during budget reconciliation, it would allow us to possibly eliminate those administrative positions if necessary, rather than eliminating positions in the schools working with children.

[05:08:07] And I believe that that, for me, is enough to allow me to support Ms. Polifko in her motion. Thank you. Further discussion? Seeing none, all in favor of the motion.

[05:08:23] Ms. Polifko, would you mind reading the language one more time? I move that the Loudoun County School Board direct staff to fund all special education administrative positions under the operating budget and reserve federal grant money for direct services only, special education teachers and teacher assistants.

[05:08:43] Thank you. All in favor of that motion, please raise your hands and say aye. Aye. Those opposed, please raise your hand and say nay. That motion is going to fail 3-6 with Sheridan, Reeser, Mahedavy, Morse, Sorotkin, and Ogadeg Bay opposed.

[05:09:08] So we are now back to the base motion that the Loudoun County School Board approved the 2023-24 Annual Plan for Special Education and Application for Federal Funds. Is there any further discussion? Seeing none, all those in favor, please raise your hand and say aye.

[05:09:28] Aye. Those opposed, please raise your hand and say nay. That motion will pass 7-2 with Corbo and Polifko opposed. We're now moving to 12-04 from requested by Ms. Corbo regarding virtual Loudoun Elementary. Ms. Corbo.

[05:09:54] Thank you, Mr. Chair. I move to the Loudoun County School Board in conjunction with LCPS staff explore the option of continuing virtual Loudoun Elementary for FY24 by gathering pertinent information as stated in the recommendations of this agenda item for review at the LCPS board meeting on Tuesday, May 24th.

[05:10:20] Sir, second? Second. Seconded by Ms. Polifko. Ms. Corbo, would you like to speak to your motion? Yes, thank you. The virtual learning elementary program has been highly successful since its inception. Prior to COVID, this learning model had not been explored.

[05:10:38] Now that we know it's possible to provide quality education through virtual means, and we also have data which proves significant academic achievement in the virtual learning environment. Last fall, early in our FY24 budget process, the topic of discontinuing virtual elementary was discussed.

[05:10:56] central office recommended to close the program based on low enrollment stakeholder engagement and also the belief that in-person learning is best for elementary students virtual elementary teachers and parents and students were caught off guard by the discussion the decision to close the program and they've been reaching out in droves via public comment and at board meetings as well as by individually contacting board members to passionately plead the case for the continuation of virtual elementary. As I met with some of those stakeholders, it became clear to me that there was

[05:11:31] no other virtual learning option on par with what we have created here in Loudoun. That's something we can be very proud of. Loudoun's virtual elementary program is truly unique. It's the only full synchronous program with specials such as PE, art, and music, therefore closely mirroring the full-day classroom experience. The online program offers children social interaction, which is, again, a unique feature, utilizing interactive learning with teams and small groups, which not only helps support academics, but also creates opportunities for friendship, team building, and team learning.

[05:12:08] I fully believe this program is vital for some of our most vulnerable students. The chairs of both SEAC and MSAC have also reached out to the board to express support for each of their respective groups for the continuation of the Virtual Loudon Elementary program.

[05:12:25] Sharon Trough, the Chair of LCPS Federal Education Advisory Committee, stated that offering virtual education K-12 is the best way to ensure a continuum of options for our students with disabilities. Erica Kunkel, the Acting Chair of MSAC, stated, MSAC believes the virtual elementary program is vital and a needed program for families within this community.

[05:12:50] Both of these groups expressed concern that adequate data and stakeholder input had not been gathered prior to the decision being made to close the program. They also connected the continuation of virtual out in elementary to meeting the goals laid out in the strategic plan, specifically goal one, empowering students, and goal four, engaging the community.

[05:13:13] The specifics of these connections were shared through an email that was sent to the board from MSAC. And I can address these specifically if necessary, but I assume that we've all read them. Finally, I think it's clear from tonight's public comment that virtual elementary is a valuable and necessary program.

[05:13:33] In the words of one of the youngest students, please just save it. It's for these reasons that I'm asking that the board support my motion to reconsider the plan closing of virtual Loudon Elementary and request that the administration compile the necessary data as mentioned in my recommendations attached to this agenda item to allow the board to make an informed decision on the continuation of this unique and successful program. I realize it will take some time to gather this data, but I think the public request and the support of CEC and MSAC should not be ignored. And we

[05:14:11] Should do all we can do to fairly evaluate the need for and the viability of continuing virtual law The virtual lab and program elementary program I'm suggesting that we review the newly collected data at our May 24th meeting and then conduct an Inform vote on continue and the continuation of the program. Thank you. Thank you. Is there?

[05:14:38] discussion on the motion. Mr. Morse. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate Ms. Corvo's comments. I was particularly struck with the students that have the medical fragility concerns and what options were available. What I'm very concerned about is trying to open this up to the general student population because I think that we discovered through COVID that it was essential for children to have that face-to-face connection with teachers whenever possible.

[05:15:14] I don't want this to become a second branch that LCPS becomes responsible for supporting fully any child who's interested in virtual learning, any subject matter at any time. I don't think we can afford to duplicate the services that our children are getting so well in the classrooms with face-to-face teachers.

[05:15:37] But I think that we're at a point now where not only would it be cost-effective to enable us to have virtual classrooms for those that are medically challenged to be in a classroom every day.

[05:15:56] They mentioned the distractions that go on and the additional training and everything else that needs to go on. I have to believe that there's a model out there that makes this an efficient discussion and a cost-benefit analysis would show that it would make sense to try to support this.

[05:16:13] So I am eager to hear more about that. I don't know if our time frame is going to enable us to get the information and make a decision knowing that we have to close down enrollments and we have to plan for the staff.

[05:16:33] I'm just very concerned that we're not going to be able to get there in the time frame that we need to. So I'd value other school board members' thoughts. Ms. Okadugbe. Thank you, Chair Srotkin. Although the virtual Loudon Elementary was initiated as a mitigation strategy when LCPS returned to in-person instruction, it has evolved into a unique program that has allowed some of our most vulnerable

students access to a robust academic learning environment, along with opportunities for social connection previously not available for students

[05:17:12] who were either frequently missing school or were receiving homebound instruction services. Since the board has already approved the proposed budget for the upcoming academic year and we are already facing a shortfall, I'd hope that the motion would include specific recommendations for an adjustment to priorities.

[05:17:32] Considering we're facing an undetermined deficit from the state and based on budget errors at the state level, adding another cost at this point will be challenging. It's also important to note that the CIP and operating budgets are separate, so we're unable to allocate funds from capital improvements to cover the cost of the program.

[05:17:52] That said, I've also heard loud and clear from families and community members who've both been vocal in public comment and through families that I've met with outside of the boardroom and to hear their stories, to hear the benefit that this has brought to them and their children is quite moving.

[05:18:16] I do want to say if this motion passes and as staff reviews this ask, I want to share that I'm not supportive of reducing teacher and staff salaries to fund the virtual Loudoun Elementary program or balance the budget shortfalls. As I mentioned earlier on the topic related to the temporary measure related to salary scales.

[05:18:39] All of that said, I will support the motion asking staff to identify the needs, understanding that they are different from what had been planned for for this prior academic year and to bring forward potential solutions to allow us to continue offering this impactful program.

[05:18:58] Thank you. - Additional discussion, Ms. Polifko. - Thank you, Mr. Chair. I will be supporting Ms. Corbo's motion, and I think we owe it to this community to at least take another look and see what could possibly be moved around in the budget.

[05:19:17] We have a very large budget here in Loudoun County, and I would be supportive of eliminating any necessary administrative positions if that needs to be done in order to meet the needs of the students. Thank you. - Mr. Mahedvi.

[05:19:33] - Thank you, Chair. Here we go again on the administrative position. Sorry, I had to kind of bring it back to that. But can staff kind of speak to this? I mean, what are the options available for a family? Again, because we didn't have virtual schools before COVID.

[05:19:49] So I don't know if staff can sort of address what are the families, some of the families, what options do they have? Because I agree with my board members, all of them, even though I may disagree with them, that even I feel and I can hear and I see their concerns.

[05:20:07] And, you know, again, this virtual out and again, I don't think I supported it last time also. And again, it was just an extension so that we were coming out of the COVID just to have one more year to sort of gradually ease off from the COVID to come back into schools.

[05:20:24] I, you know, again, going back to Mr. Morris and again, it's well documented. This closing of the schools was a bad idea, period. So now we are asking the students to come back in person so that we can create a great, again, the learning is best in the schools, done by teachers in person.

[05:20:43] So what are the options available to families in different capacities? Can you please share that? So, Mr. Merhede, I'm going to ask Dr. Ellis to start us off, talk a little bit about some of the options that are available. Because we have already started working, based on the feedback we receive and through the budget process, we have already started working with families one-on-one.

[05:21:02] We've started with transition plans. We've started with doing tours of the building 'cause some of these students have not been in the buildings before, so meeting with administrators, counselors, we've already started a lot of that process, but I'm gonna ask Dr. Ellis to share about some of the options and then also what some of our surrounding school divisions are doing.

[05:21:21] - Thank you, Dr. Smith. So, Mr. Mahedmi, thank you for that question. The families that are currently in Virtual Loudoun Elementary have a couple of options but each student situation is unique I do want to acknowledge that as you mentioned we do believe that in-person instruction is best particularly for our youngest learners there are many research studies that illustrate the challenges that students particularly young students

[05:21:54] face during distance learning social isolation rise in anxiety poor ability to manage their emotions I'll also add that a lot of this research was done coming out of the pandemic so just being aware that there are other factors involved as as you mentioned that it was good for nobody for many reasons so that being said currently students can return to their home school and as dr.

[05:22:25] Smith mentioned we are already in the process of working with families on a transition plan so they feel comfortable transitioning back to in-person learning other options include virtual Virginia they do have an elementary option that the school division would cover the cost of that option if that were to be the best situation for that particular student the virtual Virginia program does require our LCPS staff to manage any IEPs or 504s so they would work closely with the students homeschool on that other

[05:23:02] options would include home-based instruction or homebound instruction if the student is medically fragile and in-person learning is not appropriate I think that I think that covers the options but I will say that that one size does not fit all and I do recognize that there are some students for which in-person learning is not appropriate that being said we are reaching out working with those families to date only two families have requested other virtual options and we continue to work to provide them the best situation for

[05:23:41] them in terms of dr. Smith asked about or mentioned other surrounding districts we have tried to gather that information from districts across Virginia there are so currently this year from the from the districts that we that responded to us there are three that have no k5 distance learning options there are four that use virtual Virginia when applicable and appropriate for the student and five

[05:24:16] have unique programs of their own I'm not sure if those are fully synchronous like ours are but they do do their own type virtual learning for students who need it next year some of those school divisions are moving away from distance learning or are using virtual Virginia and a couple are continuing their unique programs so I hope that answers your question I'm happy to provide any additional information I can thank you dr. Ellis I mean that that helps that I think I'm not trying to I mean reiterate that that that staff is working with

[05:24:53] their families to find options I guess because we heard from a lot of families tonight I mean I think that's you know we all heard that so I guess the other question is how many how many students or

how many how many students do we have this year versus last year or you know how many are requesting do we have some numbers for that sure so in the 21 22 school year we had 325 students enrolled in August of 2022 by the end of the school year 261 total enrollments for

[05:25:28] elementary distance learning the average class size was 20 to 22 students per teacher we did capture the reasons that they transitioned out of elementary distance learning and the majority preferred in-person learning so that was for 21 22 for this current school year we started with 122 enrollments in August for grades K through 5 and we currently have 81 currently enrolled again of the data that we captured as students transitioned out of virtual distance learning the majority preferred in-person learning and there

[05:26:07] were a couple of families that we were actually withdrawn due to residency concerns they were not living in Loudoun County they were no longer residents Does that answer your question? Oh, and then, as I mentioned, there are two specific families who have requested virtual for next year.

[05:26:28] So I guess the interesting, so out of 120, we only have 80 students now, approximately 80 numbers you mentioned, so that initially enrollments started with 120-some numbers, and now we have left with 80 students? That's correct. So the average class size is now about 6 to 8 students per teacher.

[05:26:47] 16? 6 to 8. 6 to 8. Yes, sir. Thank you. Ms. Reeser. So I'm going to move to divide this into five separate parts, five questions.

[05:27:04] Some of these items... Is there a second? I'm sorry. I'll second. Thank you. All in favor of dividing the... Can I speak to the motion first? I believe Ms. Reeser intends to divide it into the five recommendations that are listed in board docs.

[05:27:23] to vote on each of the recommendations separately. Is that your intent Ms. Reeser? My intent was to be able to evaluate them each one at a time because of the level of cumbersomeness each of them includes. So it's to divide it into five and vote on each request individually.

[05:27:43] Is there any debate on the motion to divide? May I speak to it further? Speak to your motion. Sure, certainly. Just looking at number five, it's actually I believe that's the board's job. The superintendent proposed his budget and it included what it included.

[05:28:04] If a board member wants to make amendments to the budget, it's the board member's responsibility to make additions and make subtractions. At this point, we're not in budget season anymore.

[05:28:21] It's not an appropriate time to task the staff with going back. You can't pick one item without looking at the entire budget again it's not appropriate to ask the staff to come back with a recommendation for where to reallocate funds during the month of May so that's one example another example is asking staff to make personal contact with each family typically we don't give

[05:28:52] operational direction to this level to our to our staff or the superintendent I I think there's some things in these recommendations that could have board support, but I think all of them as a whole are both outside of our purview and the staff's responsibilities.

[05:29:18] And furthermore, I would invite staff, if they're able to weigh in on a time estimate for how each or all of these together might take, I think that could be useful. Further discussion on, do you want a response from staff on that before we further, were you asking for a response from staff on that?

[05:29:43] I mean, I don't know if staff's really prepared to speak to it, but if we're going to take them one at a time, maybe as we're going one at a time, if they want to. I don't want to put them on the spot to be trying to estimate something from the dais. Okay, further discussion on the motion to divide.

[05:29:59] Mr. Mejedevi. Thank you, Chair. I would like to understand from staff I think we're just taking it I mean I think the motion itself was again we could speak to the motion but not dividing it and kind of going through this this cycle I mean this is at this particular hour I'm gonna say our not in the timely of tonight but just where we are in the budget process and to go back to breaking it down to where it is I I'm just baffled so I don't know if staff wants to speak to this at at least help me.

[05:30:33] Thank you. - So I'm happy to try to speak to that. I don't know that I'm prepared to speak to the recommendations. I think I saw those this afternoon the same time as they were posted to board docs.

[05:30:48] And so they are new to me. So I don't know that I can speak to that in terms of the timeline. I've not gotten a chance to speak with staff about those. I will say that, you know, I along with staff felt like that we came to this question as a part of the budget development process.

[05:31:07] We met one-on-one with board members to talk about priorities. We also had work sessions to talk about it. And so we felt like that's where we were headed through the budget proposal process and the adoption process. We have been moving forward, communicating with families with that in mind.

[05:31:24] And so, you know, some of the pieces in here, I would be concerned about going back at this point and what we're doing to our families back and forth. I've observed some of the classes there. I do get concerned about the the wide variety of students in one particular class, as you've seen the sizes, but then the variety of abilities in some of those classes.

[05:31:45] So. So, yeah, I don't know that I could speak to the timeline on each of these just because of it's so new to us and having a chance to see what that could take take place. Further discussion on the motion to divide Miss Corbo. Thank you, Mr. Chair. So. So I am not going to support that because the recommendations are suggestions.

[05:32:09] We really want to see what information that the staff can bring back so that we can have a proper evaluation. This program was never properly evaluated as we were told, and as ZIAC and MSAC also referenced, and our families.

[05:32:29] It was a surprise to them. They weren't told until it was actually closing, so there wasn't a true evaluation. And so I see this as an opportunity for us to look at the benefits for the population that we are serving.

[05:32:46] We're not talking about traditional students here. We're talking about specific students with specific needs. And this program is truly unique. You cannot compare it to homebound. You cannot compare it to virtual out.

[05:33:01] And it's just impossible. It's not the same by any means. And also, you can't dispute the academic progress that these students have actually made. And I think that when you look at the validity of this program, if there's no value in virtual elementary, then how can there be value in middle school and high school virtual programs?

[05:33:23] There is value here, and there is truly a need. And what we're saying, or what I'm asking for, and what the community is asking for, is for the staff to do its due diligence, go back, look at the program,

look at the needs, and see if there is a possibility of continuing this program.

[05:33:42] Dr. Ellis said that there are six students in some of the classrooms. Well, then let's do some combination classes. There are ways to make this work, and there's ways to make it so that it might not impact the budget. And Dr. Smith, you and I did talk about this early on, and this was a concern that I brought to you early on, and you said that you, in an email, you said this should come before the board because you didn't want to do the work that I suggested to do the due diligence, and that's why this is here now, and it has taken this long for us to discuss it.

[05:34:18] Our parents and our educators have been talking about this for a long time, and unfortunately, it has taken us a long time to get to this point, but I do feel we owe this to our families who are enrolled in the program already and possibly to our families who need this program throughout our county and beyond. So I know that enrollment did decline, but I also know that the enrollment timeline was very short as well. And so again, I'm just asking for us to do our due diligence make sure that that we have thoroughly investigated the learning

[05:34:56] opportunity here before we we shut it down this razor thank you mr. chair so just to clarify there was nothing in my motion that said the program doesn't have value I just want to be really clear on the record I have heard loud and clear the value that it's had to families and the comments were very moving my motion just centered around it seemed as if the motion was to direct LCPS staff to gather pertinent information as stated in the recommendations that doesn't sound like a suggestion that sounds like direction

[05:35:35] to do what is in those recommendations so since Miss Corbeau has clarified that her motion is not directing staff to do those items those are just suggestions I will withdraw my motion to divide the question. Without objection the motion will be withdrawn so we're now back to the base motion additional discussion. Ms. Ogadegbe and then Mr.

[05:35:59] Mehedaby. So I know again in the spirit of these being recommendations and not direction I also just I think in support of what Mr. Morse had said earlier I think we need to be very careful about the idea of a large increase to this program. I think that there is great value for this program for some students but the recommendation to think about

[05:36:38] expanding the program making it available to students outside of the district I would not be in support of that type of expansion of the program. Thank you. Mr. Mahanmi. Thank you Chair. So I don't know what conversation I think just for and again I think I again I want to come this reason again I think that the program is special of what we created as a board and I think it has a lot of value and nothing takes away from that however we went through a process I

[05:37:16] think I don't know how many public hearing meetings we had during the budget we talked about it I remember having the workshop session up here in this particular hall and we discussed about virtual Loudoun and and the support behind it or what direction we want to give to to the superintendent on that particular topic we all had the opportunity to provide the input and we all did I'm sure we all did and I think that was an opportunity for making sure that that those programs were had feedback or or didn't have feedback if

[05:37:53] you remember I fought for my math intervention program pretty hard because that's what I knew what the community wanted that it was only half a million dollars but you saw how I fought with all

of you to make sure that we have five hundred thousand dollars available for math intervention because the community and the teachers asked for that and that was a time and that was a point to do those things again this is nothing about family but it's about this creating this frenzy now in terms of you know again putting the community against the board and this school division that's what we come back to I

[05:38:30] I mean, we use this opportunity to keep beating up on LCPS every opportunity we get. This was not the place, not the program, not the time for doing that. Yet we're back at this again. We created a frenzy and we created some false expectations of the families and the parents and put them in this spotlight to kind of create this one more, I guess, body of parents who are against LCPS.

[05:38:58] I mean, we heard a lot tonight about LCPS cutting back on special ed positions. I mean, I didn't see any special ed positions being cut in this budget cycle whatsoever. In fact, based on the staffing standards of SLPs, we have seven more positions that we added based on what our staffing standards already has, based on what the board has passed.

[05:39:20] The 2.9 positions removed were the ones we didn't staff. They didn't cut positions. They didn't remove anybody. yet we got beaten up tonight, and for the last month we've been getting beaten up because somehow we just cannot communicate all the good things we're doing. We're adding seven additional positions on top of the staffing centers.

[05:39:41] I mean, think about this. We're doing better and above and beyond, yet we're getting beaten up by everybody. This is nonsense. And again, some of the board members are creating this frenzy up here by speaking incorrectly about what the actions of the staff and the board is.

[05:39:57] This has gone ridiculous now. I can see the parents who were coming back and talking to us about opening schools, the mask. I can completely understand. I have a lot of empathy for that. I could understand that there was, you know, that's what the parents wanted. But now it's gone to a ridiculous height of level of, I'm not sure why, but where are we going with all of this?

[05:40:17] You know, tonight was really, really sad for me to just get beat enough for things we're doing above and beyond. We're trying to do the best. The staff is trying to do the best. The board is trying to do best with the budget. We're increasing the teacher's salary. We added seven additional positions in SLP beyond the staffing standard.

[05:40:34] I don't know what else can I speak on. And that's a fact. We didn't cut any positions for crying out loud, yet we kept beating up on. No, we added seven additional positions of SLP above the staffing standard. That's a fact.

[05:40:50] And we back up in here in the virtual elementary again. We see the reductions happening from 120 to 80. We see that the kids will wanna go back into school. We know there's a learning loss that happened because of kids not being in school. And we back into this, for whatever reason, I'm not sure what the agenda is here, and we back into this now after the fact that we've gone through the budget cycle, we have debated over this over and over again.

[05:41:14] We have ample opportunity for everybody to come back and provide feedback. Board members to collect feedback from their constituency about this particular issue. And now we back up making the motion and just saying directing the recommendation to the superintendent. The superintendent's recommendation was to cut it.

[05:41:30] Now you're asking him to go evaluate that again? doesn't make any sense what the motion is also. So anyway, I will not be supporting this motion tonight, but this is just, I mean, tonight has been just, you know, again, incorrect fallacies being said time and time again. It just, you know, tires me. Thank you. Additional discussion.

[05:41:53] Ms. Corbo. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I will have to say that I completely disagree with my colleague. We were misinformed. That's what caused the frenzy. We were misinformed. The stakeholders were not involved in this decision. We were told they were, and they weren't. We were misinformed.

[05:42:15] And when the parents were told that the program was being shut down, that's when they started reaching out to the board. That's when we learned that we were misinformed. That's why I have taken this opportunity to support every single family that has shared their concern. And the reason that that many of them aren't transitioning and they have spoken up is because they're not happy about this transition. It is not meeting their students' needs. We've heard that over and over.

[05:42:53] So I don't believe it's the board getting beat up. I believe it's parents and families in the community asking us to support a vital program for their children, an equitable, valuable program for their children and I believe it can be done and I know that um with minimal impact maybe even no impact to the budget but we won't know unless the superintendent and his staff do their due diligence do their investigation and and bring back to the board what they have found

[05:43:31] so so I don't believe that this is a frenzy and yes we do have ample time to to bring things forward but it's really hard to do if you have misinformation and that's why um it's bringing it's being discussed now thank you Mr. Dr. Smith I would like to go before Dr. Smith if you I would like to go first if you may share it thank you Dr. Smith for yielding to me I just want to be clear that the board made the decision to discontinue virtual elementary we were asked to identify

[05:44:11] budget priorities and we removed virtual elementary from the budget and then we passed our budget without it. The decision was made back when we passed the budget. The decision to remove it and not have it brought forth in the budget was made when we were asked in this boardroom during a work session to prioritize what should be in the budget so that the superintendent could move forward with creating our budget. And then we ratified that when we passed the budget.

[05:44:37] I personally think it is cruel to continue this discussion. For the amount of money that it will take to fund this? Where are we pulling it from when we are already \$16 million in the hole if we are not made right by the state? Where are we taking it from? None of that has been discussed.

[05:44:54] So what's going to happen is we're going to make staff do all of this work. If this budget, if this motion passes, staff will have to go through and do all of this work. And then we're getting the hopes of these families up and we're still not going to be able to fund it in the end.

[05:45:11] It's cruel. It is cruel to continue to bring this back for discussion when we know at the very end we're not going to be able to fund it. It was not a budget priority. It didn't make it into the budget during the amendment process. And adding that much money during reconciliation when we have \$16 million to cut, it just doesn't make any sense to me.

[05:45:34] Additional discussion? Dr. Smith. I'll be brief. I just did want to correct the record that, you know, we staff feel like, I feel like staff, we've done everything to be above board on this. We provided answers to every single question along the way.

[05:45:52] We've never provided misinformation. Anything we've been asked for, we provided the exception that Ms. Corbo references is after the board took action on the budget, I was asked to go back and get information about bringing this program back.

[05:46:07] And after consulting with the chair, it was that that would be, we have direction from the full board and I had direction from the full board And it would be inappropriate for me to do that based on the request of one board member. So, you know, I appreciate the comments brought me to share it in terms of this, because we have just continued to try to follow that direction, provide accurate information all along.

[05:46:27] This was intended to be a one-year program. We got that direction in the fall and continue to communicate with families to communicate such. So I just wanted to try to correct that. Thank you. Additional discussion? Ms. Reeser. I do have one quick question before everyone makes up their mind about whether they're going to task the staff with doing this.

[05:46:50] It would require something to be removed from the budget, so I'd like to know what would be removed from the budget for anyone who's supporting this motion. I mean, actually, or from the maker of the motion. Yes, I would like to know. From the maker of the motion, I would like to know what she plans to remove from the budget.

[05:47:09] If we're doing this work to add something, something's going to have to come out. We already have a \$16 million shortfall. So I think in considering whether I can support doing the work and it has to be something we can implement and we can't implement it unless we can pay for it and we can't pay for it unless we remove something.

[05:47:29] So I'm wondering what's going to be removed. Ms. Corbo, is that something you want to respond to? Yes, thank you. So yes, in this motion, what I'm asking is for there to be an evaluation. We know that each educator is contracted for a certain number of hours, but we also know that a lot of our educators don't have a full schedule.

[05:47:55] There are ways to make it work. We also know that a lot of our virtual teachers are certified on multiple levels. We also know that some of our classes in the secondary may only have two students in them. So there are ways to manipulate the staff in order to possibly cover these positions without there being any budget impact.

[05:48:15] But that's something that we'd have to direct the staff to do and to investigate so that they could come to us with a valid dollar amount. Okay, I appreciate that. So my understanding is that, is it all right if I address her?

[05:48:33] Thank you. So you would want the existing teachers to take on the extra work, and there would be potentially no cost? That's one way. I'm sure, you know, we have heard from public comment, and we have also received emails on other ways and other solutions to make this work.

[05:48:52] For example, you could have combination classes. There are other ways that the administration could look at virtual elementary, look at the amount of students that we're servicing, and then how we can most effectively and efficiently serve them. But again, that is something that we need to direct the staff to do.

[05:49:12] We can't put a dollar amount on it unless they've taken the time to actually do that due diligence and do some of that research. Okay, so you're looking for a zero-sum change, but I do think there

is a dollar amount. We know what it costs in the past. So if there was a cost, do you have something in mind to cut, or would you then not support it?

[05:49:33] Well, it depends because we will have to come back to budget reconciliation. And if there is a cost associated, perhaps there is something that we could remove and add this. It's a possibility.

[05:49:48] Without having a dollar amount, it's hard to know. Dr. Smith, what was the cost this past year? I believe we projected the cost at \$2.9 million, but I want to look to, I'm not sure if we have that. Is that right, Ms. Willoughby? Very close, \$2.8.

[05:50:05] Thank you. Further discussion? Seeing none, all in favor of the motion, please raise your hands and say aye. Aye.

[05:50:22] Those opposed, please raise your hands and say nay. Nay. That motion is going to pass, I'm sorry, that motion is going to fail 6-3 with Reaser, Sheridan, Morse, Beatty, Mehedeve, and Surat can impose.

[05:50:43] 6-3. We will now move to 1205 from the Department of Student Services, Mental Health Awareness Month proclamation. Mr. Mahedby. Thank you, Chair.

[05:50:58] I move to the Loudoun County School Board adapts the proclamation recognizing May 2023 as the Mental Health Awareness Month. Mental health. No, sorry. You're right. Go ahead. Sorry. The proclamation.

[05:51:34] Whereas mental health is essential to everyone's overall health and well-being, and whereas mental disorders that affect one in five children during the school years, yet many children with mental disorders do not receive appropriate treatment, and whereas children's mental health is directly linked to their learning and development, and the school and the classroom environment provide an optimal context to promote positive mental and behavioral health, and to build skills that influence mental health outcomes. And whereas mental health awareness and prevention education serve to counter stigma, misunderstanding, fear, and barriers to accessing services and treatment.

[05:51:56] And whereas strong partnership with community agencies, families, and private providers help to overcome these public health challenges and promote greater support for those affected. And whereas the Office of Student Mental Health Services was formed to advance mental health support to students so that they are healthy, ready to learn, and may positively contribute within their school and community.

[05:52:19] And whereas school counselors and social workers, psychologists, and student assistance specialists are specifically trained to provide a continuum of mental health and behavioral health services in schools that support and strengthen learning and development.

[05:52:37] And now therefore be resolved that Loudoun County School Board hereby proclaims May 2023 as Mental Health Awareness Month in Loudoun County, Virginia. Sir, a second? Seconded by Ms. Sheridan. and Mr. Mahedvi, would you like to speak to your motion?

[05:52:53] - Thank you, Chair. I think the last time when we had the proclamation, we spoke of the task force that this board, I championed and then this board was instrumental in making it happen.

[05:53:08] And I think I take a lot of pride and at least it's a step forward. I know we're not there and I've said this many times, but I think we are taking good positive step including creating the office of student

mental health services I think this is something that collectively we as a board have worked hard towards you know recognizing mental health is a challenge not only within our schools for our students but also you know in from a staff and and so on so forth so I you know again I just want to commend my school board members and continuing to

[05:53:45] ask continuing to support that and continue to champion for that so I hope that the board members can also support this proclamation as well. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Mahedavy. Is there any discussion? Seeing none, all those in favor of adopting May 2023 as Mental Health Awareness Month by the proclamation that Mr. Mahedavy read, please raise your hand and say aye. That motion will pass unanimously. That will bring us to our information items. Item 1301 was

[05:54:24] heard earlier today during our our earlier session so that will bring us to 1302 from the Student Services Committee revisions to policy 8640 disclosure of student personally identifiable information and other educational records mr. Mahedvi thank you chair so this policy is coming out of recommendation or at least response to the special grand jury report we I think we as a board discussed it back in December and then it was sent back to the committee.

[05:54:58] And again, most of the changes that we see redlined in the current board docs have been in context to the response to the special grand jury report in terms of what's considered PII information, how do we share the PII information, and so on and so forth of that.

[05:55:20] So, we as a committee, I think we passed it, well, we passed it on April 20th, 3-0, to send it back to the full board as an information item, and I'll also pass it to Dr. Jones, if she'd like to add anything, if I missed anything for this particular policy.

[05:55:38] No, Mr. Mejedevi, I believe you've shared all of the information. Thank you. Board members, any discussion or questions? I just, I see a lot of changes here. So I just, were all of the changes related to the same recommendations from the special grand jury, or were there also just unrelated changes or changes the committee made along the way?

[05:56:03] I think most of them came from the response from the legal department, Dr. Jones, or I don't know, Mr. Falco, anyone to address that? Oh, Mr. Smith. I'm sorry. I could just speak to the amount of changes. The policy was reviewed September of 2022 and approved by the board at that point and came up for review.

[05:56:24] We actually received significant feedback from SEAC and MSAC to help clarify the policy. So there's a lot of additional definitions, capitalization of letters, those type of things to kind of make it a more clear policy and a more consistent policy. So that's a lot of the changes that are in there.

[05:56:40] It came directly from that feedback from our advisory groups. Thank you. Any additional discussion? Okay, so we will place this on action for our next board meeting. That will take us to 1303 from the Communications and Outreach Committee, revisions to policy 3070, safety and emergency related communications.

[05:57:06] Ms. Polivko. Thank you, Chair Sorokin. Yes, so the Communications and Outreach Committee just went into review not long ago for policy 3070. we actually just finalized and obviously brought it forward to the board to review for the safety and emergency related communications from recommendation number one in the grand jury report and i will state from the report to increase transparency and foster better communication lcp's should include as much information as reasonably

possible when information when when informing parents staff students in the community about significant events occurring on

[05:57:40] school property on a school bus or at a school sponsored event and directly under that statement from the report was that critical information was omitted from the may 28 2021 email from stonebridge high related to the sexual assault so in this policy not too many changes were made but specifically regarding the recommendations from the grand jury report there is some redlined information beginning on line 95 again to the extent permitted by law LCPS shall provide as much relevant information as permissible to community

[05:58:18] members regarding safety and security incidents that take place on LCPS property or LCPS school sponsored events activities or events and then further down on line 119 again relating to student privacy that will consult we shall consult division counsel to ensure that any confidential or otherwise private information is withheld in accordance with that applicable law and that about sums up the changes that were made to this policy specifically related to the recommendations in the grand jury report board members any questions or

[05:58:56] discussion regarding the changes to the policy hey seeing none we will place this on action for our next board meeting 1304 was discussed during our earlier work session so that will take us to 1305 from the joint committee of the school board and board of supervisors requests for changes during the review of the school resource officer memorandum of understanding so when we had our joint committee meeting I think it was last week there was a

[05:59:35] recommendation from the joint committee to recommend a couple of changes to the The MOU, recognizing that the changes still need to be mutually agreed upon between LCPS and our law enforcement organizations.

[05:59:52] So the first recommended change is to remove the word, the terms, wherever feasible under the required training on page two of the MOU regarding training on trauma informed policing tactics and interview techniques.

[06:00:08] And the second recommendation is for staff to review the language that's on page six of the MOU that allows SROs to stop, question, interview, and take law enforcement action without prior authorization of the school administrator or contacting parents and legal guardians and potentially replace it with other language that would require the language.

[06:00:40] the law enforcement officers to notify parents or legal guardians under certain conditions or contingencies. So those are the two recommendations from the joint committee, and I'm happy to answer any questions that the board may have. Ms. Okadeke? So I know this will come back for action next time. Is that the intent? Action or consent. Okay. I just say I appreciate the recommended

[06:01:16] changes and i'm supportive of them so thank you any additional questions or discussion seeing none interest in placing this on consent for our next board meeting that's a no so we will place this on action for our uh for our first may board meeting we're now on 1306 requested by miss polifco regarding information on releasing test scores miss polifco thank you mr chair i'm going

[06:01:52] to pull that information up right now essentially what I'm hoping to do this evening is to have a brief discussion as the board and with council to more accurately and maybe concisely explain why when individuals FOIA to obtain student scores they are told that they cannot obtain those scores because of

personally identifiable information attached to those scores so I've I've included 2.2.3705.4 as well as 2.2.3705.1 as attachments regarding educational records

[06:02:31] and exclusion to general application to public bodies in this, in my rationale recommendation for this evening's discussion. But in addition to that, 2.2-3704.01 records containing both excluded and non-excluded information and the duty to redact.

[06:02:51] So my confusion is, in terms of individuals who are requesting specific scores alone, with regards to this section of Virginia law stating that we can't withhold a public record in its entirety just because some portion of that record is excluded, only the portions containing information subject to exclusion can be withheld.

[06:03:15] So I'm hoping that we can just get a little bit of brief understanding as to why it is that we cannot release just those test scores. Thank you. Mr. Palcone. Thank you, Mr. Sorotkin. Ms. Polifco, I'm happy to answer your question.

[06:03:33] I unfortunately cannot guarantee that it will be brief, but I will do my best. So just in terms of, and I do want to, excuse me, I do want to get into a little bit of the background here. Just for clarity, the Virginia Freedom of Information Act generally provides access to records that are created or maintained in the transaction of public business.

[06:03:54] and so unless there is a statute or lawful court order that provides that a public record cannot or may not be produced in response to a request under the Virginia Freedom of Information Act, that record has to be produced. And FOIA does include a number of exceptions to that requirement, and there are several other exceptions that are scattered throughout both the Code of Virginia and federal law.

[06:04:15] And one of those exceptions relates to scholastic or education records, and specifically, the Virginia Freedom of Information Act provides that scholastic records are excluded mandatory disclosure when such information therein concerns identifiable individuals.

[06:04:30] That exemption is also in line with the Federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1984, also known as FERPA, which governs confidentiality of student records. Under FERPA, LCPS is responsible for protecting personally identifiable information when releasing data from education records.

[06:04:49] And FERPA's definition of personally identifiable information includes, quote, other information that alone or in combination is linked or linkable to a specific student such that it could identify the student with reasonable certainty. Virginia law elsewhere outside of FOIA provides limitations on access to students' scholastic records as well.

[06:05:12] Virginia Code section 22.1-287 specifically includes achievement and test data in that category and sets forth that no school board member or employee shall permit access to any records concerning any particular pupil enrolled in a school in any class to any person except under judicial process unless otherwise expressly permitted.

[06:05:35] Of course, parents are almost always entitled to the education records of their own children, but neither they nor anyone else would generally have access to the records of students other than their own, even if those records were de-identified. And for additional background on that particular issue, the

General Assembly in Virginia authorized the creation of a Virginia Freedom of Information Act Advisory Council.

[06:05:59] One of the purposes of that council is to provide advisory opinions on the interpretation of the FOIA exemptions like the one I mentioned earlier and when those exemptions are applicable. And this precise issue has actually come up before where a requester had asked for individual test scores for a particular set of students while redacting the names of those students and any other identifiable information.

[06:06:25] And the council advised in a 2019 opinion, AO-03-19, that, quote, even if student names and other personal information were to be redacted, the fact still remains that scholastic records themselves contain specific information about identifiable individuals, and thus the scholastic record and all information contained therein would still be exempt from mandatory disclosure under the provisions of FOIA.

[06:06:51] And consequently, it's my understanding that LCPS and just about every other school division in the state withholds individual non-aggregated student test scores in response to such record requests, even if the names are removed as they are still education records regarding individually identifiable students.

[06:07:12] Thank you, Mr. Falcone, for that explanation. Just a follow-up question for you. How frequently would you say, I mean, in Loudoun County and also maybe in other surrounding districts, how frequently would you say that the public requests those types of records? Meaning, how frequently are people asking for scores? Is that something that we typically receive in a FOIA request multiple times throughout the year?

[06:07:44] And the reason I bring that up is because in the Communications and Outreach Committee last meeting, we discussed potentially providing more information around FOIA for our community because it is difficult to navigate the law. It is, I mean, not everybody's a lawyer.

[06:08:00] Not everybody speaks legalese. And people, however, are, you know, creating FOIAs and looking for information. We've gotten a record number of FOIAs here in Loudoun County for the last few years. So how often is it that people are looking for those scores?

[06:08:17] If you could just give me some kind of an estimate. I don't have the database in front of me. I'm fairly certain it's something we would get maybe one time per year, I would estimate, or something along those lines.

[06:08:38] It's fairly rare. It's not an uncommon request in the sense that I've seen it before. and there's analysis from the Freedom of Information Act Advisory Council, so it obviously has come up in the past, but I don't think it's a regular request.

[06:08:55] Okay, thank you. Any additional discussion or questions? Seeing none, we'll move to 1307, requested by Ms. Ogadegbe about a National Fentanyl Awareness and Prevention Day proclamation.

[06:09:13] Ms. Ogadegbe. Thank you, Chair Suratkin. So as the item would suggest, I am planning to bring forward at the next board meeting a proclamation recognizing May 9th as National Fentanyl Awareness and Prevention Day.

[06:09:33] On March 23rd, I attended the opioid and fentanyl awareness presentation event that was held at Broad Run High School. It was a great event, very informative, collaborative event that included presentations from LCPS staff, members of law enforcement and health care professionals, and provided important information to the community about opioids and more specifically fentanyl.

[06:09:59] At that meeting, staff shared that May 9th is the second annual National Fentanyl Awareness and Prevention Day, which happens to be our next scheduled board meeting. So I, again, will be bringing this back as an action item and we'll be working with Dr. Jones and identifying staff and also community partners to invite and help us mark this day.

[06:10:23] Thank you. Any board members, any questions or discussion regarding the sign-in? Mr. Mahedby. Thank you, Chair. So is this VSBA, I guess, is this a VSBA proclamation?

[06:10:43] Dr. Jones, I'm going to ask you, because I know Ms. Evans helped to put the language together. Thank you. It is. I do not believe that it is. It was something that we created based on our research through this particular concern.

[06:11:07] Let me respectfully. So staff just works on one board member's direction. Is that how? I mean, I know in the past we've got a lot of pushback that it needs to be a collection of four board members requesting a certain action to be done. I get a lot of pushback from a lot of groups.

[06:11:25] So, I just want to know what is the protocol for the staff to just go and draft a rep proclamation? Is that any board member can request it and you will draft a proclamation for the board member? If I could, go ahead, Dr. Smith. The process that we've used is when we get board inquiries is if they can be addressed.

[06:11:48] I believe it's within an hour or two. Then we will address those individual board members. If it is something that takes longer than that, then we'll ask the chair to see if there's other board support. I think it's three or four board members that would support that as well, and then we would act on it.

[06:12:05] So it's really about the amount of time that it takes usually from staff in terms of some of the requests that we get. And I would just add our process, at least for the last few years with proclamations, is that the ones that are recommended by VSBA or BDOE we put on by default.

[06:12:21] but that if an individual board member wants to request a proclamation be added as an information item and then action item for discussion that they can do that. So I think that's what Ms. Ogedegbe has done here. - Thank you, Mrs. Smith, and thank you, Mrs. Sorokin. I know that anybody can request it, but I was just trying to understand that this was put together in perhaps less than two hours.

[06:12:42] So that's what I was doing. Thank you. - Any additional discussion or questions? - Okay, seeing none, we will bring this back as an action item for the next meeting, assuming that's Ms. Okadek-based intent.

[06:13:00] And that will bring us to our last information item, 1308, from the Student Services Committee, new policy, 8440 Student Athletes Sudden Cardiac Arrest. Mr. Mahedvi. - Thank you, Chair. So this is a brand new policy that's being added to, 8440 that's being added, or at least being brought forward by the staff based on the new Virginia code requirement, And I guess it's a small and straightforward policy, but I guess I'll let Dr. Jones kind of speak to the policy a little bit, thank you.

[06:13:35] - Thank you, Mr. Mehedeve. And the only thing that I will add is that the Division for Athletics, our LCPS Athletics teams, has a current guideline for parents, athletes, and staff regarding sudden cardiac arrest to ensure that our families are notified, as well as student athletes, of this code of Virginia requirement regarding procedures for removal from play and return to play and the risk of not reporting such symptoms.

[06:14:10] So given this important concern we have developed this policy which as you mentioned is directly aligned with the code and it's also communicated with our coaches who are also aware of the process related to this policy.

[06:14:32] board members any questions or discussion regarding the new policy? Seeing none interest in placing this on consent for our next board meeting. Ms. Reiser, consent?

[06:14:47] Thank you. So it looks like we have consensus for that so I'll place this on the consent agenda for our next board meeting. That will bring us to item 14, our closed meeting. Is there a motion, Mr. Mehedeve? Thank you, Chair. Yes. I move that the Loudoun County School Board convene this closed meeting. Sorry, I move that the Loudoun County School Board resets this public meeting and enter into a closed meeting pursuant to section 2.2-3712 of the Code of Virginia for the following purposes. One, consultation with legal counsel employed or retained by a public body pertaining to Loudoun County

[06:15:24] Circuit Court matter CR 37536 and requiring the provisions of legal advice by such counsel as authorized by section 2.2-3711-A7 and section 2.2-3711-A8 of the code of Virginia and number two consultation with legal counsel regarding actual litigation involving a public nuisance and requiring the provisions of legal advice by such counselor where such consultation in an open meeting would adversely affect the negotiation negotiating or litigating

[06:15:55] posture of the public body pursuant to Virginia code section 2.2 3711 a 7 is there a second seconded by miss Ogedek Bay any discussion seeing none all those in favor of the motion please raise your hand and say aye. Aye. That motion will

[06:16:16] pass unanimously. We are now in closed session.

[07:03:47] The board is coming out of closed session. Is there a motion, Mr. Mehedeve? Yes, chair. I move that the closed meeting be adjourned. The Loudoun County School Board reconvene its public meeting and the minutes of the public meeting reflect that no formal action was taken in the closed meeting. I also move that the Loudoun County, I also move that the following resolution certifying the closed meeting be adopted and reflected in the minutes of the public meeting the resolution 33 - 22 / 23 whereas Loudoun County School Board has convened a closed meeting on the state pursuant to the

[07:04:24] affirmative recorded board and in accordance with the provisions of Virginia Freedom Information Act and whereas section 2.2 - 2.2 - 3712 D of Florida Virginia requires a certification by the school board that such closed meeting was conducted in conformity with Virginia law now therefore be resolved that the Loudoun County School Board hereby certifies at the best of each member's knowledge only public business matters lawfully exempted from open meeting requirements by Virginia law were discussed in the closed meeting to which the certification applies and only such public business matters as were identified in the motion convening the

[07:05:00] closed meeting were heard discussed or considered by the Loudoun County School Board. Second. Any discussion? Seeing none all those in favor of the motion please raise your hand and say aye.

Aye. That motion will pass unanimously of board members present with Rieser, with Ms. Rieser absent for the vote. That will bring us to, well, without objection, given the lateness of the hour, we're going to skip board member comments and committee reports.

[07:05:32] That brings us to item 16, new business. Is there any new business tonight? Seeing none, we are adjourned. Thank you.



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