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Loudoun County School Board, 4th Tuesday School Board Meeting to include FY2030 CIP & CAPP Public Hearing, Tuesday, December 12, 2023

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Place Loudoun County Public Schools / School Board meeting (see BoardDocs / LCPS-TV)
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- Official meeting video (Vimeo / LCPS-TV): <https://player.vimeo.com/video/893830501?rel=0>
- BoardDocs (School Board): <https://go.boarddocs.com/vsba/loudoun/Board.nsf/Public>

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[00:00:00] Good afternoon. I call to order this Tuesday, December 12th, 2023 fourth Tuesday school board meeting, including a public hearing on the superintendent's recommended FY25 through FY30 capital improvement program and capital asset preservation program. The first item on our agenda is 102 remote participation. I have been notified that Denise Corbo would like to participate remotely in tonight's school board meeting. Ms. Corbo, could you please state your location, whether anyone is present with you at your location, and whether this is a medical or

[00:00:35] personal matter. Thank you. I'm home. I'm alone, and I'm asking for more participation due to an ongoing medical condition and disability. Thank you. At this time, I'll entertain a motion that Ms. Corbo's request for remote participation in tonight's school board meeting for an ongoing medical issue be granted. So moved. Moved by Ms. Polifko. Is there a second? Seeing none, that motion will fail for lack of a second. Ms. Corbo, do you have any other requests related to

[00:01:09] remote participation that you'd like to make tonight? I'd like to ask to participate for a personal exemption. Thank you. At this time, I'll entertain a motion that Ms. Corbo's request to participate remotely for a personal reason be granted. So moved. Moved by Ms. Sheridan. Is there a second? Seconded by Mr. Beatty. Is there any discussion? Seeing none, we will progress to a vote.

[00:01:34] The voting board is open, so board members, please record your votes at this time. And I believe that's everyone who's here. So, clerk, could you please close and display the vote? That motion will pass 3-2-4, with Sorotkin and Mehedoby opposed, and Morse, Ogedegbe, Reeser, and Corbo absent for the vote.

[00:02:02] We'll now move to item 2 on the agenda, which is approval of the consent agenda. Is there a motion, Mr. Mehedoby? Yes, Chair. I move that the school board approved the items posted on the board docs on the consent agenda. Is there a second? Seconded by Ms. Sheridan. Is there any discussion?

[00:02:23] Ms. Polifko. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Unfortunately, I am not able to support item 2.06 on the agenda this evening, and so I will not be supporting the consent agenda as a whole. Thank you. Is there any further discussion?

[00:02:40] Seeing none, we will proceed to a vote. The voting board is open. Board of members, please record your vote. And Ms. Corbo, what is your vote? Yes. Please record a vote of yes for Ms. Corbo.

[00:02:57] And please close and display the vote. That motion will pass 5-1-3 with Polifco opposed, Ogedegbe, Morse, and Reeser absent for the vote. We will now move on to item 301, which is our advisory committee update from the Career and Technical Advisory Committee.

[00:03:42] Good evening, school board members.

[00:04:12] I want to take an opportunity to introduce our school board, our CTAC CTE Advisory Committee Chair, Dr. Basak. For those that don't know me, my name is Lee Smith, and I am the Supervisor of Career and Technical Education and also the Staff Liaison for the CTE Advisory Committee.

[00:04:33] So now we'll turn it over to Dr. Basak. All right. Thank you, Dr. Smith. I'd like to start by thanking the school board to give us the opportunity to make the presentation on the Career and Technical Education Advisory Committee update.

[00:04:56] My name is Debasis Vasek. I'm the current chair. Professionally, I work for Northrop Crumman Corporation, Space Systems Division, as Mission Assurance Manager. So let's get started. So on this slide, so basically the CTAC meets during the school year to discuss assessment, planning, and implementation of career and technical education programs.

[00:05:29] The purposes are several, starting with advising LCPS on needs in career and technical education, participation and development of priorities and strategies for the meeting, in identifying the needs of career and technical education students, further submitting periodic reports and recommendations regarding CTE to the division superintendent for transmission to the school board, reviewing policies and procedures for the provision of career and technical education and related services,

[00:06:06] and finally participating in the review of the Perkins 5 plan, federal program monitoring, and civil rights review. next slide please. CTAC has the following structure. It has a chair which is currently myself, three vice chairs each for membership planning and communications. The secretary position is currently vacant and we have an immediate past chair. The members are several

[00:06:39] and from different career clusters representing business and industry and then several ex-officio members who are LCPS staff. The meetings are held on the third Wednesday of each month from 8.30 to 10. We have a website, which is lcps.org forward slash ctac, which has a lot more information.

[00:07:07] Next slide, please. Bright spots, which are basically accomplishments and positive feedbacks we have received. Next slide, please. And we'd like to take the opportunity to congratulate our wise gold star teachers from briarwoods high school christina oak chris stark broad run high school deanna reynolds martha summers next slide dominion high school jennifer butke freedom high

[00:07:45] school janice decker anthony leone next one independence high school ellen fray katherine Stan Campiano, Mimi Shaw, Loudoun County High School, Andrew Policelli. The next one would be Lightridge High School, Rob DeVito, Potomac Falls High School, Stephen Ladder, Susan Miller, and Lindsay Walls. And then we have from Rockridge High School, Chris Berger, Janet Dewey, Stonebridge

[00:08:20] High School, Barbara Hochstein, and Carolyn Stevens. Next, what we have is basically the CTAC student organization winners who participate in various state leadership conference, and there are several educators rising, one first place, two for second place, FCCLA, one for first place, one for second place. Next slide. TSA, six for first place, four for second, four for third place.

[00:09:00] DECA, 20 for first place, 15 for second place, nine for third. FBLA, Future Business Leaders of America, 46 for first place, 52 for second, 36 for third place. HOSA, five for first place, seven for second place, six for third place. SkillsUSA, 12 for first place, one for second, one for third. And then some quick facts about industry credentials. 45 total industry credential

[00:09:36] tests were offered in 2022-23 school year. 9,862 industry credential tests were attempted in the 2022-23 school year. 24,889 total industry credentials passed since the 2021 school year.

[00:09:58] 8,033 industry credential tests were earned in 2022-23 school year. 648 workplace readiness skills assessments earned in 2022-23 school year. And here are examples and samples of these credentials. The full list can be found at that hyperlink that you see, which has a list of the attempted credentials and the past credentials. Next slide, please. Next, we'll

[00:10:37] talk about BLOOM and a few other initiatives. BLOOM stands for Building Learning Opportunities and Options in Medical Sciences. And for the next few slides, I have some notes that I'd like to let you know about. So for Bloom, on November 21st and 22nd of 2022, the school division created an opportunity where it afforded or it provided experience to students, basically student

[00:11:14] opportunities to learn about many possibilities of career in health and medical sciences. Students had access to real-world stories and information from experts in the field and hands-on activities around what a career in health and medical sciences might look like for them. Next slide is Area 5 Annual Military Inspection. On December 6, 2022, LCPS NJROTC hosted the Area 5 Annual

[00:11:49] military inspection. This process is conducted by the area five manager who rates each unit in terms of exceeds, meets, needs improvement, or fails in the following categories. School system, program, compliance and support, administration of the program, reports and records, cadet performance and involvement, college and career readiness, and special interest items. Our unit

[00:12:21] exceeded expectations on this inspection. Next slide, please. On December 10, 2022, LCPS hosted the DECA District Leadership Conference event at Lightridge High School.

[00:12:42] This event provides a hands-on approach to learning, improves communication and decision-making skills, develops a sense of community, and cultivates social development and awareness in students enrolled in CTE marketing programs across the school division. DECA's competitive events

program directly supports member skills development, contributing to every member being college and career ready upon graduation from high school. Next slide, please. Virginia Cyber Slam

[00:13:21] 2023. Okay, so this was hosted on January 8, 2023, and was a one-day conference for high school students from around the Commonwealth of Virginia who are interested in learning more about cybersecurity. The goals of Cyber Slam are to educate students beyond the classroom, energize students about the cybersecurity field, and engage students with university professors and professionals in the cybersecurity industry.

[00:13:56] CyberSlam provided students with hands-on cybersecurity activities involving real-world topics like cryptography, drones, and penetration testing through workshops that are led by high school and university-led educators, as well as industry experts.

[00:14:16] Students received a giveaway bag, a t-shirt, and lunch. Next one. Let's see. is instruction to industry. On February 13th through 16th, 2023, LCPS partnered with neighboring school divisions to engage in the second annual instruction to industry event. This Northern Virginia regional event provides high school students with opportunities to connect with

[00:14:52] more than 100 local industry professionals from in-demand career fields. Students learned about a wide variety of potential career paths and post-secondary options that can prepare them for the next chapter of their educational journey. Next slide. Teacher cadet ceremony and one LCPS spotlight. So this program is a grow our own initiative offered to students in grades 11 and

[00:15:27] 12 who may be interested in pursuing a career in education. The CTE courses are dual enrolled with the Shenandoah University. All teacher-cadet students complete an internship with a current LCPS teacher and interact with elementary and middle school students during observations.

[00:15:51] Teacher-cadet students who successfully complete the program receive a letter of intent from the Department of Human Resources and Talent Development. Next slide, please. And then finally, a few updates. Successfully concurrently completed the CTE federal program monitoring review and the CTE civil rights review. We underwent phase one of two of the CTE textbook adoption and we included

[00:16:24] expanded options like career and technical student organizations and credentials. Next slide. Next topic is opportunities for growth. Yeah, next one. And here's a summary. So additional funding can definitely be used to support the following. Industry credentials for all high school programs in the academies of Loudoun. Human resources for curriculum and instructional support.

[00:17:00] Upgrading equipment in existing labs in the middle and high schools. Reimagining early childhood education, ECE, exploring career investigations, possibilities in grade 7. Next slide. Finally, future considerations. As a result of the feedback received from CTAC, considerations are being made related to the following items. Evaluate current and existing practices, including courses, to

[00:17:36] ensure that they're aligned with the strategic plan. Identify barriers, and these are mostly student barriers to access courses and programs and then finally invest in staff support to streamline and support schools with curriculum instruction credentials and work-based learning experiences and that brings us to the end of the presentation with the question and answer session

[00:18:11] if you have any questions thank you dr basak for the update it's great to hear about all the great programs going on across the division and the recommendations coming out of the CTAC committee.

Board members, do you have any questions for the team? Mr. Morse. I also wanted to thank you. I'm extremely excited with the number of credentials that the students are earning and the rate that they're earning them at. I guess it's about an 80% just roughly by the numbers of those participating are earning credentials. I do have one question. Do the students identify the

[00:18:48] credentials that they're seeking, or does the division provide a list from which they select? Thank you, Mr. Morris, for that question. So the credential is actually paired to the course. So in the program of studies, we have the name of the course, and then we have the credential that is aligned or integrated with the course. And then once students successfully complete the course towards the end of that course, they will engage and complete and attempt that credential.

[00:19:15] Do they provide any after-course feedback, comments, or surveys as to how we could improve or whether there were additional certifications that they were seeking? Is there a mechanism to get that feedback?

[00:19:32] Absolutely. So when a student graduates from LCPS, we contact them about eight to nine months after they graduate and ask them about their experience. We ask them about their curriculum. We ask them about the credentials, the work-based learning experiences, and then the career and technical organizations. We also ask them if there's additional feedback that they would like to include, and a lot of students do include that qualitative feedback. So we contact every student eight to nine months after they graduate. Very good. Thank you both very much. Mr. Mahedby.

[00:20:05] Thank you, Chair. So, Dr. Bissak, I just want to say thank you for volunteering and serving in the CTAC. I know you've been there last year when I was the liaison, too, and so I appreciate your commitment in helping with the CTE curriculum and I also want to thank Dr.

[00:20:22] Smith for your leadership and in improving the whole CTE program and also leading the CTAC program as a liaison last year I saw the passion not only the staff but also the Advisory Council members to find opportunities to improve the CTE curriculum whether looking for new new programs or re-evaluating existing programs and I think one of the biggest thing we saw was the communication aspect of it so I've definitely seen a lot more improvements in how we communicate about the CTE programs the availability and and so on so forth so I'm you know I was very excited to be

[00:21:01] part of the CTAC and I wish you all the success I think you guys are doing a phenomenal work thank you any additional questions once again thank you for the update and the school board looks forward to our next update and next quarter thank you very much thank you all we'll now move into item for our work session we have one item in our work session today 401 from the specialized programs and centers committee early childhood education school led learning labs miss Sheridan thank you mr. chair as staff comes forward for this

[00:21:40] presentation the special specialized programs and centers committee received a lot of this information during our last committee and I thought it was really important for the board to see it our incoming board members to be aware and to get this update and so the information that staff is going to share is really important for the community at large as well thank you thank you miss Sheridan and board members we're here tonight to provide the full board an update on some work happening around our early childhood education programs in our high schools as well as it is specific specifically in our school-led

[00:22:18] Learning Labs. As Ms. Sheridan shared, this was a presentation shared at the last special programs committee meeting. Since then, we have taken some steps in response to the needs identified, including working with a school-based work group and some leaders in our schools, so we have added some additional content, but we just want to keep you informed of the work happening, especially with some recent public interest and public comment about what's happening with our early childhood education programs.

[00:22:46] So I'm joined tonight by Ms. Dawson and Dr. Lee Smith, who will kick us off. - Thank you all, again, board. Next slide, please. So today we will provide an overview of the early childhood education courses and their associated learning labs.

[00:23:07] We'll explore what the ECE, so if I say ECE, we're referring to early childhood education. We'll explore the school-led learning lab, what they entail, and then review the regulatory guidance for unlicensed daycares. We will touch base on some program benefits and inconsistencies with the school-led learning lab model, and then we will share some stakeholder feedback and provide a concise plan for next steps.

[00:23:35] Next slide. Next slide, please. So within the school division, there are three—I'm sorry. Within the school division, we have early childhood education one and two.

[00:23:53] These courses are high school elective credit courses that mainly are between grades 10 through 12 that students take. They are taught by teachers who are endorsed in Family and Consumer Sciences. These courses either have a school-based enterprise associated or they have an internship associated with it.

[00:24:15] Students who are interested in prepping for careers in early childhood education are going through and taking both courses, ECE 1 and 2. Some of our courses are dual enrolled with Northern Virginia Community College and again are taught by secondary CTE teachers who are licensed in grades 6 through 12. Finally, all of the courses have a learning lab associated with that course. And select high schools either have a school-led learning lab, a STEP preschool, and then a Head Start preschool, which we will talk about on the next slide. So there are three different learning labs for hands-on experience

[00:24:52] that is associated in the ECE courses. These learning labs are school-based enterprise learning labs, also known as school-led learning labs, STEP preschools, and Head Start preschools. The school-based enterprise is community and tuition-based where schools have oversight and autonomy.

[00:25:12] Staff may have access to enroll in their children in this option. Students are admitted and processed at the school level. This initiative is at 10 of our 17 high schools in the county. We also have a partnership where with step where this program is state funded and the LCPS step head start office has oversight and admits preschool students by prescribed state guidelines. This option is available at one high school. Finally, we have a partnership with head start as well which is a federally funded program with oversight from the LCPS Step Head Start office.

[00:25:50] Preschool students are admitted by prescribed federal guidelines, and this partnership is at four of our high schools. Next slide, please. As a reminder, this school-based enterprise learn lab option is at 10 of the high schools and has historically been in place when the schools have opened.

[00:26:10] This preschool lab classroom experiences are part of the educational specifications of high schools, regardless of the ECE model. For the school-based learning lab model, schools determine what

the parent-guardian agreement entails, what the student application process looks like, what the student information on the health side is collected, and what public-facing information is displayed.

[00:26:37] Schools also determine the length of time for each learning lab experience, and the safety and the supervision of the program is determined by each school. Tuition fees, oversight, and support are also determined by each school. School-based enterprise learning lab students must be potty trained and must be between the ages of three to four.

[00:26:58] And the hours vary by school and should be based on when the ECE course is offered. Now I will turn it over to Renee Dawson, who is the Director of Community Connections and Programs. Next slide, please. Next slide.

[00:27:17] Now I'd like to share information regarding the Virginia Code. we gathered feedback from Division Council regarding the Virginia code for instructional programs that are not licensed daycares the next three slides will outline Virginia will outline Virginia code slides 9 and 10 will provide some additional provisions next slide please this additional information is relative to the code that we wanted to share to make sure you had an understanding of the specifics for programs that are not licensed daycares

[00:27:54] according to code next slide please and this last slide concludes the language of the Virginia code specific to non licensed daycares and now I'd like to turn it over to dr. Smith to talk about comparable school division models thank you so much we reached out to several school divisions in surrounding counties and across the state of Virginia, and that goal was to explore how their school divisions were

[00:28:30] providing the hands-on experiences in their ECE courses. From the feedback we received, there are two school divisions, Stafford and Culpepper, who have on-site preschool programs. We know that these school divisions are smaller in size with fewer high schools.

[00:28:48] Next slide, please. In our research, we found that many school divisions are offering the ECE courses at their technical centers. Spotsylvania, Arlington, and Virginia Beach all offer ECE levels 1 and 2 at their tech centers. Spotsylvania offers these courses at the tech center and have partnered with the local daycare centers to provide practical experiences. Students are required to provide their own transportation according to their brochure. Arlington has an on-site career center preschool with a second on-site daycare program. They also have partnered

[00:29:26] with the Montessori Public School of Arlington, where students assist teachers in pre-K through fifth grade. Virginia Beach has a preschool that operates under the supervision of two high school teachers at their technical center. Next slide, please. In our research, we also found that Alexandria and Chesapeake partner with Virginia Preschool Initiative, or VPI, to support hands-on learning lab instruction. VPI is the local name, excuse me, STEP is the local name for VPI in our school division. Fairfax County provides a combination of on-site preschools and off-site

[00:30:05] experiences where students visit local daycare centers to supplement their hands-on learning hours. Other large school divisions partner with Virginia Preschool Initiative or other local agencies to fulfill the work-based learning requirements. Next slide, please. So in our research, we found that there were both benefits and inconsistencies with our school-led learning model. So we gathered feedback from our stakeholders, from the learning lab sites, and from central office. Based upon the feedback that was gathered, we identified some common

[00:30:43] trends and themes. The school-led learning labs offer a range of benefits for both the high school students and the community. This model is community and tuition-based where high school students can participate in authentic and meaningful learning experiences by working directly with preschool students in the school-led learning lab. Our high school students are collaborating with our ECE teachers and preschool students to provide a structured and educational environment that promotes early learning. Preschool children are exposed to age-appropriate activities that enhance cognitive, social, and emotional, and physical development. Finally, LCPS has had a

[00:31:23] long-standing tradition of having these school-led preschools associated with ECE courses. As I have shared earlier, staff has access to these programs. Along with these benefits, there are also inconsistencies with this model. Preschool students are not registered in the student information system, which causes issues with providing preschool students with accurate information in a single service portal on attendance, health services, emergency contact, parental guardian support, and some other concerns. This registration also impacts OSHA and the 20

[00:32:00] student maximum class size for ECE and preschool students. Once preschool students are registered insists schools will have a maximum of 20 high school students and preschool students for that respective class period or block we found that the oversight for this program varies at each school some schools have oversight that rely solely on the ece teacher where other schools have both a school-based admin and teacher oversight the cost varies at each school and that is due in part to when the class is offered and what is posted on their preschool website.

[00:32:36] If the class has one section, then there will be a limited number of hours for the preschool. If there is more than one class offered, then there will be additional preschool hours that are offered. Finally, since there is a division of schools supporting this effort, there is a lack of standardization on the parent-guardian agreement, student application process, student health forms, and public-facing information.

[00:33:01] Next slide, please. So we had an opportunity to gather some stakeholder feedback, and we received their feedback regarding the current state of school-led preschools. We distributed a stakeholder feedback form, met with teacher leaders to gather their feedback, collaborated with staff in various departments, such as the Department of Student Services, DDI, and the Department of HRTD.

[00:33:28] We also have toured the schools with Head Start and Steps staff to visit school-led learner labs to understand the differences in the programs. We held virtual drop-in listening sessions, made phone calls in a group and in a one-to-one setting, and we've had principal meetings with level directors as well.

[00:33:46] Next slide, please. We've also received various stakeholder feedback. Some examples are teacher leaders, principals, teachers, and administrators. That includes affordable tuition in some schools along with real-world experiences.

[00:34:04] Some concerns that have been raised are preschool students are not LCPS students. Oversight varies from school to school. There are liability issues. There's too much risk, and it's not formally operating as a preschool in the state of Virginia and is not licensed as a preschool.

[00:34:21] We know that under the provisions of Virginia Code, school divisions can operate an effective and efficient instructional program that is exempt from daycare licensure as long as we adhere to the

requirements of the Virginia Code. We convened a work group on December the 7th with ECE teachers, assistant principals, principals, level directors, and central office support.

[00:34:45] We allowed the work group to engage in meaningful discussion and dialogue, and we, central office, captured that feedback on their oversight and governance to shore up the current practice and the group asked for additional clarification on a potential STEP partnership.

[00:35:05] The outcomes of the work group was to describe the current practices, engage in effective and efficient communication, identify and create tangible artifacts for the current school year, and to explore opportunities for collaboration in artifact and processes in future years.

[00:35:22] The work group will continue in January and will consider opportunities to expand work-based learning experiences to include Head Start, Step Partnerships, and local preschool programs outside the school division. At this time, I will turn it back over to Renee.

[00:35:41] So this slide, this side houses questions to consider. These are the questions that the ECE workgroup is considering. We will continue to update the board with feedback from this workgroup. Our next work group is scheduled for January 30th, 2024, and it will comprise principals, assistant principals, teachers, level directors, and central office personnel.

[00:36:08] And this concludes our presentation. Thank you. So before I open it up to board members, it seems like what are the implications of the schools in the current model not being licensed as preschools in Virginia?

[00:36:28] like how but is that are we exempt from that or is that like it's that a problem that needs to be corrected and if so like what what's the plan for dealing with that so I'll I'll start and then I'll ask dr. Smith or Renee to jump in the the school led and learning labs are not required to be licensed however there are some requirements that we need need to put in place to meet the expectations of code so we are taking some initial steps to shore up some of those some of those requirements such as some posting requirements we're looking

[00:37:07] at how we're doing student record-keeping we're looking at some consistencies that we need to put in place this school year while transitioning to a new model going into into next fall generally schools around this time start recruiting and accepting students into their their school led preschools next year so the intent of this current workgroup is to make some pretty significant changes and that's part of why we're hearing from some of the teachers that we we need to have consistency with this program across the schools there needs to be an increased level of oversight and support from central office and so we're transitioning towards that model while

[00:37:46] making sure we're balancing student safety the needs of the high school students in the class as well as some some supports that we could put in place now. So I don't know if you would add anything to that, Renee or Dr. Smith. Thank you. That's helpful. Board members, Ms. Reaser and then Mr. Mehedby. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you to the staff for the presentation. I'm just trying to, since I'm not on the committee, I was wondering what precipitated this coming up as an item for the committee to look at? This is an example. I

[00:38:25] think we have talked before about bringing potential issues to the board before they become bigger issues. And so hearing feedback, knowing that there was some support needed from our schools, this was something that we recognized we wanted to tackle before it became a bigger issue. That's really

good to hear. But I think I'm trying to go a step deeper and learn what it was that brought it to your attention. To my personal attention? I guess to anyone's attention. I think

[00:39:03] we started to get some questions for example around student fees for example from from who from teachers and schools and programs like is there is there guidance you know what what is the what is there are there opportunities for some consistency there and so when we look at I would say it came from questions from staff and when you start interrogating and you kind of peel back the layers you say okay there are some opportunities here for improvement you know we these programs have been in place for a very long time and they're very dear to the schools that they've been in place and so oftentimes with

[00:39:41] programs like that there are some there are some assumptions made about the underlying supports and so when you peel back saying okay we do need to do a better job of supporting these programs maybe revisiting what the purpose of them are and so that led us to the point where we started looking at different options I appreciate that and I heard you talking about outside opportunities which led me to wonder whether we're talking about then sending our students to outside opportunities instead of having their learning labs be available on campus and did I understand that correctly before I before I go on that's

[00:40:20] one possibility we we have heard loud and clear that we want to find a path to retain the learning labs but we also know that it was going to look different and so we want to work with our schools to give them options but a good example example is Dominion High School. So Dominion High School, do they have Head Start? Head Start.

[00:40:38] So they have a Head Start program at their high school. But in addition, they partner with Meadowland Elementary School. And so they have arranged to go to a step classroom at Meadowland Elementary School and work and get some of the hours that the students need for their practicum hours. So really right now we're looking at internal LCPS step classrooms that could support this learning while we could look at private providers we're not too far down the road on that I heard Montessori mentioned which is why I asked and I I'm making an assumption here that transportation is available if we're looking at kids going from Dominion to students going from Dominion to do this

[00:41:17] learning lab at Meadowland that would continue to be the case if it was a Montessori program if we were if transportation became an issue we would work with, we would work with support services to make sure that was provided. So I know that obviously this is not something that will come back to us, but I felt like these were important questions to kind of illuminate for future board members what we're looking at. I guess my last question along these lines is who would you say is the main, besides our students who get to participate in the learning labs, who is the main beneficiary of the services

[00:41:54] that are provided? Is it our own employees? I would agree that the main beneficiary is our high school students that's why these programs exist and we don't I don't know if we have the data to show exactly the percentages of staff being connected it is a legacy program and there are staff that have utilized this in the past and I do believe that it is mostly centered on the community and that's why there's such strong passions around it but I don't have exact numbers for you and I think it's important to look at all the different facets of who we're serving and whether it makes sense to keep the program in-house instead

[00:42:34] of sending our students somewhere else because there may be additional layers of people we are serving besides the students. So thank you very much. Mr. Mahedby. Thank you, Chair. Thank you for the presentation. So I have a quick question. So I know you mentioned about, I guess Mr. Suratkin

mentioned about the licensing part of this preschool. So are the staff that are supporting, Again, are they trained or the background checks done to those members who are in this program?

[00:43:07] So the teachers supporting our LCPS teachers, they're certified teachers who are in charge of the ECE programs. So they follow the onboarding process. So all the staff are LCPS teachers supporting that? Yes, there's no external staff. In the learning labs?

[00:43:23] Correct. Okay, thank you. Mr. Morse? Thank you, Mr. Chair. I guess I'm kind of taken back that we sat through SBC and had no idea of the churn and of the concern that was going on relative to these labs.

[00:43:41] So I feel like we're kind of in the dark and just getting started on this. And I'm particularly concerned that we, although we have a waiver from the state, because we're an educational institution, I guess, that we are not complying with standards for normal daycare or pre-kindergarten courses.

[00:44:00] Is it our intention to apply those certification programs against all of our learning labs? Is that where we're headed? Because I don't think when we talk about the risk, we have teachers in there that are trained educators.

[00:44:18] They're not trained preschool educators. So there are certain things that I'm quite certain that they would want to learn and would greatly reduce our risk if we were able to provide that training to those employees. So first, we do plan on keeping the Special Programs Committee of the new board regularly updated on this.

[00:44:41] This is a major lift for the CTE office and Ms. Dawson's team. One of the things that Ms. Dawson shared with the work group last week that I think is important to say in a way that Ms. Dawson can say it is things are gonna change.

[00:44:57] Like what we know now in terms of the expectations for teachers and the supports they're getting are gonna shift. And that's gonna feel like a lift for the schools. And so what we are looking for is options for how can we keep the focus centered on our ECE students who are trying to have this learning experience while the school-based learning labs are being supported in an appropriate way.

[00:45:22] Moving closer to the requirements and standards around daycare. There are lessons that we could learn from STEP. That's how those two things got connected early on in the process. And it may be the case where principals and teachers at the high school level will be seeking more support, will be seeking opportunities to partner with STEP, say, hey, let's have a preschool in the building.

[00:45:45] We just don't want to make those decisions without bringing our teachers and principals along with us. Would you add anything? No, I will say that one of the things we've been doing a great deal of investigation and data collection and reaching out to other divisions to see what they're doing.

[00:46:04] And so we did see early on that there were two divisions that did have some models that were similar to ours. We do know that based on some preliminary research that some of our teachers that are ECE teachers are also licensed in early childhood as well.

[00:46:21] So we've kind of been gathering that data in this process. Ms. Corba. Thank you. And I also appreciate the additional information. I find it, again, after listening to your presentation, the inconsistencies that you have listed here, to me, just seem like very simple oversights or very simple things to fix leadership issues.

[00:46:51] These should have been resolved very easily through leadership, coming up with consistent ways to run these labs. We're talking about 10 lab schools. And I appreciate Ms. Reeser's questions, too, digging a little bit deeper, because to me and the way that it has been presented to the board was, indeed, to create spaces to expand the full-day preschool through STEP and Head Start, which to me is the wrong way to do business and the wrong way to send a message to our educators who have had these programs in their schools, who have been running these programs with their

[00:47:30] students for years now. And now all of a sudden we're going into a deep dive on all these things that are wrong. And if things are wrong, definitely they need to be fixed. But I strongly believe that we should not be taking away valuable programs in order to fit in other programs.

[00:47:52] But that should not be. And I know that you have said, oh, one doesn't have to do with the other, but you know what? Every conversation, they do have something to do with the other because you keep talking about it and you keep bringing it up. So they do have something to do with one another. To me, I feel like these lab schools are valuable to our students.

[00:48:11] They provide the only hands-on, beginning-to-end experience for our students. No other situation provides that same opportunity. Our educators who are running these programs feel strongly about this, and also our students.

[00:48:29] We receive many, many emails from students who have gone through the program, and just like with many other programs, once we've meddled with it a little bit, they're not the same. They don't provide the same impact for the students that we're serving in the schools, for the families that we're providing preschool services to.

[00:48:49] And to me, it is so important, and I hope that there are other board members that are incoming that are listening to this. It is so important to keep these programs that are important to our schools and our students and not replace them with other things because we feel like it's a better way.

[00:49:07] We want to push a different program. So I, again, you know, this isn't a problem that we will face or that this board will have any input on, but I will say again, for the record, I very strongly believe in keeping these programs and working with the teachers to ensure that they continue.

[00:49:30] Any additional questions for discussion? Ms. Sheridan. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think, thank you for the presentation. I think some of the things that maybe you didn't touch on tonight that we touched on in committee, or the inconsistencies. Can you speak a little bit more to how students are selected for the preschoolers are selected from one school to the next?

[00:49:55] And then the other thing that is concerning to me that the last time I heard this in committee was about the students not being LCPS students and not being in the database. So what happens during a fire drill? How are we accounting for them? How are we accounting for students when they're sick and they need to go home and who's picking them up so it's those inconsistencies that on a daily basis put students are not being treated the way a step student is is allocated to and and cared for and i'm not criticizing the teachers and doing their best and all of that i'm i'm in support of

[00:50:29] making sure the inconsistencies are made consistent that we are making sure our students are safe when they're in our care and that it is a fair process for who gets into these programs so can we that was a lot but if you could take those that would be great so I'll ask Miss Dawson and Dr. Smith but I do want to acknowledge that we we are prioritizing safety our our ECE teachers are prioritizing safety our high

school principals are they care a lot about this program and the students enrolled in these preschools we just recognize that they need additional support to get those consistencies and this this is actually these are different scenarios

[00:51:06] that the work group went through how are we responding to these different situations so maybe you could talk a little bit about that thank you so much so to answer the question how are students being selected from for the program it depends on the school every school has their own process for how they advertise for students preschool students how they are selected and then which students actually get paired up with high school students and as Mrs.

[00:51:35] Levin stated we did go through some scenarios in our work group and these were scenarios that were shared by principals of things that have happened within the last year and we took all the attendees on a what would you do were you aware that these things were happening and as one principal stated and shared if there was a fire drill he would have no clue who was in his building because there's no way to account for them if there was a student one of the preschool students had an allergic an allergy attack in the middle

[00:52:14] of the day and there was no plan on file to care for that student and just to share one more scenario student had a blood disorder a preschool student had a blood disorder and had an attack in the middle of the day and there was no way to care for that student so we went through various scenarios to share the inconsistencies that are happening within the schools so thank you for sharing that and I mean I remember during our committee when when this information was being presented I was really appalled to find out that there's

[00:52:51] also the one hundred dollars to eight hundred and seventy five dollars for the tuition and that discrepancy alone and the safety issues that you presented in committee as as well as just now and so regardless of where the deep dive originated and the step and head start and looking for that and and taking this into consideration and using one of the partnerships we already have with this program into consideration and still every time you present it you say that one is not related to the other, but one has certainly provided for this deep dive to ensure

[00:53:26] that we are making a safe and secure and good educational opportunity, not just for our high schoolers, but for these preschoolers as well. So I really appreciate the deep dive, regardless of where it came from, because it certainly is something that we need to address. So thank you, and thank you for your continued work since our last committee meeting and presenting that tonight as well. Additional discussion? Ms. Corbeau. Thank you, and thank you for just giving more examples, because to me, again, that's a leadership issue. That's your department's

[00:54:00] leadership issue. These things are simple fixes. If a child comes and is enrolled in the preschool program and they have a medical issue, well, we certainly have nurses on staff and there's ways that we can track students. It's not that hard to do. And the same thing with tuition. I'm glad that you brought that up because there should be some consistencies, there should be some oversights, but that doesn't mean we get rid of a program. That doesn't mean we take away a very, very valuable program. So again, I hope that this department steps up. I hope that they work

[00:54:38] together in collaboration with the educators and we come up with a solution that is truly going to be a win for our students and also, again, and save these labs that have been in our school division four years. They're there for a reason. It doesn't matter what other school divisions are doing. This is what

Loudoun County Public Schools does. And they're very valuable. And I hope that there is collaboration. Mr. Mahedby. Thank you, Chair. So listening to this discussion, and I

[00:55:11] think the way you framed it, I think, Mr. Slovin, that this is a problem that you learned and you're bringing up as we're shifting typically from just providing solutions to actually bringing up as an issue to the committee and to the full board so i appreciate that and i think this is goes back to the culture that hopefully this changes for lcps going forward that when staff finds an issue and they bring the bring the issue forward to the full committee to the full board to the general lcps i think we should instead of just reprimanding or saying it's a this issue that

[00:55:50] issue i think it's just acknowledging that we have an issue and not jumping to a solution i think that's I appreciate that and again this is sort of the culture shift that we as an entire division we're hoping to make is that we give the staff we give not only the administration but also other staff members the opportunity to come back and and share the problem so we as a collectively can find the find the solution to it versus trying to solve it on desk or saying with this issue or that issue I mean the idea is yes that's why the staff is bringing the issue is because they feel like this is an issue.

[00:56:26] And there is no, I mean, again, we're not starting to solve it, but they propose some options on how you can proceed forward with it. So this is my sort of encouragement to the new board that's coming in that we need to acknowledge and we need to appreciate when the staff brings a problem versus just trying to reprimand them.

[00:56:41] Because if we continue reprimanding, then we go back to the same culture where nobody wants to share the problem because we're not being a culture of sort of continuous improvement. And that's what we talked about as our strategic plan and LCPS. So I just want to push back on that.

[00:56:59] And I encourage that you guys are coming back, coming with the problem. And I appreciate that from your committee too, Ms. Sheridan, that we're not trying to solve here, but at least acknowledging that the problem exists and collectively we'll solve that. So I just want to share that with you, the staff, but also to the new coming in board that you embrace this culture of continuous improvement and allow the staff to come back with a problem so we don't just come back with this sort of, you know, this is an issue or that's an issue.

[00:57:27] So thank you. Thank you. Additional discussion? Seeing none, thank you again for the update and for bringing the problem and some potential or long-term solutions to our attention and looking forward to see what the workgroup comes up with for next steps.

[00:57:46] Board, at this time, we're going to move into item five, which is our recess and we will reconvene at 6:30 p.m.

[00:58:20] The board is now in recess.

[01:30:28] In with item seven on the agenda, which is the Pledge of Allegiance and the National Anthem. For the Pledge of Allegiance today, we have some very special kindergartners joining us from Sanders Corner and Potomac Elementary Schools. These amazing students represent the first dual language immersion classes in LCPS and spend approximately half of their instructional day learning in English, and half of their instructional day learning in Spanish.

[01:30:55] Tonight, these linguistically talented students will say the Pledge of Allegiance in both English and Spanish, and are led by their Spanish-language kindergarten teachers, Mr. Jose Angel Cavalier and Ms. Angela Vela.

[01:31:11] After the Pledge of Allegiance, we are going to have the National Anthem, which is going to be performed by the Parafas Saxophone Quartet, which has been Freedom High School's premier Chamber Ensemble for the last two years. Founded in December of 2021, the four senior saxophonists have been in the same band class since the sixth grade. This group is comprised of Brandon Shen, a state music composition winning composer and all-Virginia saxophonist playing soprano saxophone,

[01:31:45] Seth Alexander, an all-Virginia saxophonist playing alto saxophone, Stephen Maduchak, a state music competition-winning composer playing tenor saxophone, and Jake Dominguez, a varsity football captain, playing baritone saxophone.

[01:32:02] They were recently selected to perform at the Virginia Music Educators Association Conference in Richmond, Virginia. Additionally, the group performs frequently in school, for local businesses, and for school fundraisers. So at this time, I will ask everyone to please rise for the National, I'm sorry, the Pledge of Allegiance in both English and Spanish, and then the National Anthem.

[01:34:06] Thank you so much for being with us tonight and for that wonderful performance.

[01:35:21] Now move to item eight on our agenda, which is our student and staff recognitions. And we will begin with 801, one LCPS spotlight on our dual language immersion programs at Sanders Corner and Potomac Elementary Schools.

[01:35:37] Oh, cue turn the microphone on.

[01:35:54] Should be a button in the front. How's that? Okay. Good evening. My name is Mike Jakes. I am the proud principal of Sanders Corner Elementary School. And, of course, this is the first year for our dual language immersion program at both Sanders Corner as well as Potomac Elementary School.

[01:36:13] Just to let you know, we've already begun our program with the students for both of our schools saying the Pledge of Allegiance in both English and in Spanish. They did a great job, and they had great preparation for that. We'll tell you a little bit about the program, what it means to both of our schools, and then we'll have our students sing a couple of songs for you also as well.

[01:36:35] Then we'll go ahead and we'll close it off with just a brief note of thanks. If we can go to the next slide, please. So our dual language immersion program really fits in well with our strategic plan for excellence for our first goal, which is empowered students, preparing students to be knowledgeable, critical thinkers, communicators, collaborators, creators, and contributors, and more specifically, enabling core academic excellence by providing rigorous instruction for all of our students.

[01:37:04] This program will allow us to create new pathways of learning for our students, opportunities for cultural problem solving, also opportunities for multi-language instructional, as well as thinking opportunities. Our programs feature students learning math, science, and Spanish language arts in a Spanish, fully immersed Spanish classroom for 50% of their day, with the remainder of their day being taught in social studies, reading, also in their English classroom.

[01:37:38] Our programs at each one of our schools are made up of 50% native English speakers and 50% native Spanish speakers. And at this point, I'd like to introduce Mr. Hayden. Thanks, Mike. So our dual

language immersion program also supports goal 1.2, expanding opportunities for multiple accessible pathways to success through diverse programming.

[01:38:01] In particular, learning Spanish at such a young age and becoming proficient with the Spanish language sets our students up for the opportunity to pursue a seal of biliteracy on their high school diploma. Next slide, please. Some of the big picture concepts that this program is really all about, we're developing bilingualism, biculturalism, and biliteracy for our students. Next slide. Thank you so much. So we would like to introduce some of the players who helped make this program possible at each of our

[01:38:37] schools. I have two folks on our side who unfortunately cannot be here this evening. That is Melinda Sparacino, who is our kindergarten teacher on the English-speaking side. We also have Jennifer Deming, who is the teacher assistant on the English-speaking side. I'd like to bring up the remaining three folks so they could introduce themselves and their roles.

[01:38:58] My name is Jose Angel Cavalier. I'm the Spanish kindergarten teacher at Sanders Corner Elementary. Hello. My name is Paula Solevilla. I am the language ambassador at Sanders Corner. Hi. My name is Allison Briscoe. I'm the music teacher at Sanders Corner.

[01:39:20] And next slide, please. Okay. My amazing dual language immersion team is here to introduce themselves as well, so come on up. Hi. I'm Angela Vela. I'm the Spanish kindergarten DLI teacher.

[01:39:38] Hello, my name is Rosa Enton. I am the Spanish Language Ambassador at Potomac Elementary School. Good evening. I'm Leslie Akatunde, the English teacher, kindergarten teacher at Potomac Elementary School.

[01:40:00] Hello, my name is Laura Brinsfield. I am the English teaching assistant at Potomac Elementary School. Hello, everyone. My name is Alexis Hedlund, and I am the music teacher at Potomac Elementary.

[01:40:21] And once again, I'm Marc Hayden, principal of Potomac Elementary School. Next slide, please. Okay, so you are about to see some of our amazing dual-language immersion students.

[01:40:38] They are going to make their way up to the front, where they are going to be singing a couple of songs for you that they have been practicing at the respective schools. The first song that they will be singing is Mi Cuerpo, and then they will finish up with Adios, Amigos.

[01:41:11] Okay, hello, everyone. Before we sing for you, I'm going to ask for some audience participation. In this song, we talk about our manos that clap, our pies that stomp, mi boca that sings, and our body that dances.

[01:41:29] So we're going to do mis manos hacen clap, clap, clap. All right, so give it a go. Mis manos hacen. And then you can stomp those feet too. Mis pies hacen. Mi boca hace la, la, la.

[01:41:45] And then our body, you can do a cha-cha in your seat. Mi cuerpo hace cha-cha-cha. So I want to see everybody moving and dancing while we sing this for you, okay? Yes, including school board members. If you could play the backing track for us, that would be awesome.

[01:44:57] Next slide, please. Okay, so this is our final slide, and we would just like to say thank you to our school board. You guys gave us the opportunity to bring dual-language immersion to Loudoun County Public Schools, Sanders Corner Elementary School, and Potomac Elementary School. We would love to extend an invitation to you to come and visit our schools at any time.

[01:45:14] And this concludes our presentation. Thank you so much. Thank you. Thank you so much for... Oh, wait, wait. Don't know. I think we'll do a picture of the students and teachers and staff with the school board.

[01:45:34] But before we do that, I just wanted to thank you so much for bringing the students and their families here and giving this opportunity for us all to enjoy the fruits of the labor of the last couple of months in getting this program up and running. It's been one of the biggest priorities of this board to bring world languages back to elementary schools over our term.

[01:45:53] And it's just wonderful here for the last meeting of the term to really be able to see that come to fruition and see what a difference it's been making in the lives of these young children. So thank you again so much for inviting this into your schools and making it happen. Thank you for the opportunity as well to present before you guys.

[01:47:31] Okay, and now we'll move on to our second student and staff recognitions,

[01:48:57] which is from our specialized programs and centers, the International Baccalaureate World Schools Authorization Recognition. Dr. Slevin. Thank you, Chair Sorokin, school board members, and Dr. Smith.

[01:49:17] We are so excited to continue the celebration tonight with sharing of remarkable news that marks a significant milestone in the journey of Heritage and Loudoun Valley High Schools and Loudoun County Public Schools.

[01:49:32] We are pleased to announce that Heritage High School and Loudoun Valley High School have been officially authorized as International Baccalaureate World Schools offering the diploma program. This achievement is a testament to the dedication and hard work of the school communities, including students, parents, teachers, and staff, and our leaders of the schools present here tonight.

[01:50:01] The IB curriculum encourages critical thinking, creativity, and a deep understanding of the world around us, and it fosters an environment where students are empowered to become lifelong learners and responsible global citizens. We are proud to be part of the esteemed network of schools, and we are excited about the opportunities it will provide for our students.

[01:50:19] The implementation of the IB Diploma Program is aligned with the LCPS strategic plan to expand opportunities for multiple accessible pathways to success through diverse programming. At this time, I'd like to turn it over to Ms. Katie Clark, who will be presenting and recognizing our schools with some additional comments.

[01:50:44] Thank you, Mr. Slevin, and good evening, Chair Sorokin, School Board members, and Dr. Smith. We would like to extend our sincere gratitude for the School Board's unwavering support in bringing the IB Diploma Program to our schools. Your commitment to educational excellence has opened new avenues for our students in LCPS.

[01:51:07] Implementing such a program is no small feat and it wouldn't be possible without the collaborative efforts of all departments in LCPS being involved. We would like to thank all of our colleagues for their support in getting this program up and running for our students in LCPS.

[01:51:27] Lastly and most importantly, our programs wouldn't be successful without supportive and innovative leaders. Tonight we have with us the principals and IB coordinators from both schools. Your

dedication to fostering international mindedness and excellence in education is truly commendable.

[01:51:47] We would like to recognize both schools this evening on this amazing accomplishment by presenting them with an IB World plaque that can be displayed in their schools. First, we would like to recognize Heritage High School. We are joined tonight by the principal, Mr. Jeffrey Adam, and IB coordinator, Mr. Fernando Urabari.

[01:52:16] Next, we would like to recognize Loudoun Valley High School. We are joined tonight by the principal, Dr. Susan Ross, and IB coordinator, Mr. Michael Skavarch.

[01:52:36] Please join me one last time in congratulating these leaders and two school communities on becoming IB World Schools. Thank you so much. And again, we'll do a picture in just a moment, but I'm going to say almost the same thing I said for the last item on how big of a priority this was for the school board over the last few years.

[01:53:05] uh the the steadfastness in trying to get this up and running i know how much of a huge lift it was for both of your schools i really appreciate both of you uh volunteering to be the the first the first two schools in loudon to get the international baccalaureate accreditation and just looking forward to this program continuing to flourish in the years to come

[01:53:27] we'll now move to item nine on our agenda which is our student school board representative comments

[01:54:58] and we have three of our student school board representatives returning with us for their second meeting tonight. And we will begin with Manya Mamidi from the Academies of Loudoun. Good evening, everyone. My name is... Let me pull this closer.

[01:55:16] My name is Manya Mamidi. I'm a senior at the Academies of Loudoun, and my home school is Briarwoods High School. I'd like to begin by thanking my principal, Dr. Pretty, for the opportunity to speak today. I'd also like to thank Ms. Wilser and Ms. Hiltner for their continued support and dedication as our Academy Student Council sponsors, and I'd like to thank my parents and my peers for their support and love.

[01:55:39] So, although the Academies of Loudoun isn't a typical high school, we do make the most of our student life and definitely have no shortage of school pride. The mission of our SEA is to develop and support a unified and accepting community. I'd like to take some time to talk about some of my favorite events at the Academies throughout the year because although the academies isn't our home school our student body goes above and beyond in their service and support. In place of a traditional prom or homecoming we have a spring dance. Our SCA works alongside the graphics communications and computer and digital animation

[01:56:14] classes to create a beautifully decorated dance with huge cardboard displays hanging lights and forest scapes throughout the first floor of their school. Some of our past themes have been a night Under the Stars and Enchanted Forest. Another one of our most popular events is Pi Day, which I personally love because I think it's perfect that nerd school really goes out for Pi Day festivities. Some of our most popular events include the pie eating competition, pie counting competition, and the sticker contest. We also host an annual multicultural fair where we showcase cultures from all of our diverse student body by sharing their culture through hosting

[01:56:52] their own street food stands, compiling a family recipe book, sharing music and dance lessons, doing henna and art. Our students are encouraged to share their traditions and learn more about the world. Just last week, we hosted our annual Hour of Code event, which was a collaborative effort led by our academy's Computer Science Honor Society and the LCPS Propel and Level Up program.

[01:57:15] Approximately 100 academy students hosted over 400 elementary and middle school students and an evening of computer science exploration. Some activities we offered included VEX Robotics, micro bit processors, and pocket lab sensors to solve a variety of challenges.

[01:57:31] At this event, we aim to share our passion for computer science with younger students. I have such a love for these events 'cause when I was little, my dad would take me to STEM fairs and robotics events. And so seeing those projects and technologies really sparked my interest in STEM, Supporting these efforts to bring STEM education to younger students is very important to me now and the rest of the student body.

[01:57:54] Another important event hosted by SCA is our May Wellness Month. As May is one of the most stressful parts of the school year with AP exams, SOL exams, cumulative assessments, it's very easy to get overwhelmed with school. We value the importance of mental health and balance at the academies and our SCA hosts events such as nature walks, yoga, and journaling.

[01:58:14] Our unique advisory lessons aim to build trust between students and their teachers by encouraging communication and openness. Sometimes school can feel like a pressure cooker, and our SCA and faculty value the importance of taking a moment to breathe and prioritizing student mental health.

[01:58:31] At the academies, our students come from all over the county to pursue their passions for research, collaboration, and innovation in all fields, ranging from cosmetology and animation to automotive engineering and radiology. We are given a place to explore and connect with others, and I couldn't be more grateful to be representing the academies today.

[01:58:49] Thank you very much. Next, we have Mara Burns from Stonebridge High School. Thank you. Good evening, everyone.

[01:59:05] My name is Mara Burns, and I am the student representative for Stonebridge High School. Thank you to everyone here tonight for giving their time to make our schools better for our students. I really appreciate all you do. That means hello, everyone, in Latin.

[01:59:21] I took Latin for five years, and it has helped me succeed tremendously in history, psychology, and music classes. It has also given me a leg up on exams like the SAT and the iReady test. Unfortunately, there are no more in-person Latin classes at Stonebridge.

[01:59:36] I was signed up for AP Latin this year when I was notified that my instruction would be asynchronous. No contact with my peers with whom I had built strong relationships with over the past five years. Needless to say, I am not taking Latin online. This is not just a Latin issue.

[01:59:53] The other languages are also rapidly losing numbers, especially ASL, Mandarin, and German, which are being pressured to move their classes online if they haven't been moved online already. The biggest issue is the number of students required to hold the language in fine arts classes.

[02:00:08] Some courses are very important to students, but they may not be able to take the courses that they are interested in because of low enrollment. If they are able to take a course, they may be shoved into a class with multiple levels being taught at the same time. This has happened to me. This leads students not receiving enough individualized instruction to feel comfortable to continue the next year.

[02:00:28] It's a shame that these students are deprived of the opportunity to fully pursue their passions and languages in the fine arts. To save these amazing non-core programs, we need to get students interested in taking them and teachers interested in teaching them. With students, this starts at the elementary school and middle school level.

[02:00:43] As a teacher cadet, I've had the opportunity to shadow both elementary and middle school music teachers. What I observed was that in elementary school, students no longer perform shows during the school year that relate to their curriculum. Instead, they conduct research projects and present slideshows as early as second and third grade.

[02:01:00] There's absolutely nothing wrong with STEM or research. It's so important for students to learn for the future. However, there must be a balance. One solution could be to alternate years with performances and projects so that students are immersed in both the fine arts and STEM.

[02:01:17] Both specials and grade level teachers could work together to guide students through these projects. For example, PE teachers could teach choreography, music teachers could teach songs, and art teachers could help create our projects to aid their presentations. I'm speaking from experience when I say that these performances not only help students comprehend the curriculum, but give them positive memories that they will treasure for years to come.

[02:01:41] At the middle school level, we need to raise interest in the languages. While taking a music class is required for all sixth grade students, World languages are optional electives offered to seventh and eighth graders. There needs to be some sort of incentive for students to take languages and gain a broader understanding of the world and different cultures.

[02:01:58] For example, we could require students to take at least one language in middle school. We could also advertise the languages better to students when considering electives. According to Cambridge, language learning is linked to better academic performance, improved concentration, stronger memory, and increased creativity.

[02:02:15] Learning a language, especially at a young age, help students navigate and communicate with others in an increasingly diverse world. It can even help students in the workforce because knowing a second language is a valuable skill set, just as much as the STEM or CTE skills that students are required to learn.

[02:02:31] Finally, at the high school level, there have been strides made to promote the fine arts, especially within the Stonebridge community that we are very proud of. For example, in addition to an athlete of the month award for each sport, there is a new musician of the month award that includes theater, which is displayed throughout the school.

[02:02:49] There is also a new banner above the Fine Arts Hallway that represents all of the arts departments. This past week, Stonebridge held its winter guitar and choir concerts. For the first time, middle school students were invited to play in the concert to build a community within the music

departments. Sixty guitarists from Trailside came to perform with the Stonebridge Guitar Ensembles for a total of over 120 guitarists on stage.

[02:03:13] These amazing musicians have proven that there is a high interest and demand for the fine arts in Loudoun County. So how do we satisfy this demand? I've talked to my peers within the music departments and something we would love to see happen is an Academies of Loudoun equivalent for theater and the arts. There are so many students interested in technical theater, songwriting, music production, jazz, and advanced art classes who don't have the opportunity to reach their full potential at Stonebridge alone. A theater and arts academy would be beneficial to those students who want to explore their passions deeply and prepare for a career in creative industries. Just like the current academies of Loudoun, the theater and arts

[02:03:50] academies could offer state-of-the-art hands-on learning opportunities, partner with local businesses to provide jobs and internships in the fine arts, and inspire students to express their creativity. Let's give our students the opportunities that will set them up for success. Thank you so much for your time and consideration. And finally we have Elizabeth Bennett from the North Star School. Hello I am Elizabeth Bennett. I am a senior at North Star and I really

[02:04:24] just want to thank everyone for being here I want to thank my principal Miss Minnenberg for choosing me to be the representative for North Star this year and I want to thank North Star for allowing me to graduate high school because I truly do not believe that I could have graduated and gone on to college if I was not at the North Star School.

[02:05:03] So thank you to Ms. Minnenberg and everybody else who works at North Star. You've truly done the most for me. Thank you.

[02:05:29] And thank you once again to all three of our student school board representatives for being here with us through the month of December, November and December. Next, we will have item 10 on our agenda, which is the superintendent's report. And filling in for Dr. Spence tonight is Dr. Smith.

[02:05:47] Good evening, Chair Sorokin, board members. I'm pleased to provide tonight's superintendent's report. Dana Scanlon has been named the director of school administration. Ms. Scanlon comes for LCPS from Prince William County Public Schools, where she served as the Equity and Student Relations Administrator and the Title IX Coordinator. Previously, she was the Administrative Hearing Officer with Fairfax County Public Schools, and she started her career as a Civics and Economic Teacher for FCPS. Ms. Scanlon has a Bachelor's Degree in Political Science from McGill University and a Master's Degree in Education from George Washington University and a Postgraduate Certificate in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies from

[02:06:26] Virginia Tech. We welcome Ms. Scanlon to LCPS. LCPS had an unprecedented four music ensembles invited to perform in Richmond at the Virginia Music Educators Association State Conference on November 17th and 18th. The invitation to perform is a prestigious honor and is extended only to the finest ensemble groups in Virginia. In addition, this is the first year a middle school band or guitar ensemble from LCPS has been invited to perform at the conference, and LCPS had two middle school groups perform. The groups who were invited to perform were Brambleton Middle School

[02:07:03] Symphonic Band under the direction of Martin Blunt, Samantha Cherez Rivera, and Colton Meeks. Freedom High School Saxophone Quartet under the direction of Jonathan Schiffler and Keith

Taylor. J. Michael Lunsford Middle School Guitar Ensemble under the direction of Jared Eastridge.

[02:07:23] And Parkview High School Worldview Music Ensemble under the direction of Dr. Moslav Ayankar. Congratulations to the directors and the students in these groups on this remarkable accomplishment. U.S. News and World Report recently released their rankings of the best K-12 Virginia elementary, middle, and high schools.

[02:07:43] Thirty LCPS schools were ranked in the top 100 schools as categorized by each level. Nine LCPS elementary schools and six middle schools were included in the 100 best Virginia elementary and middle schools. The Virginia elementary and middle school rankings were based on student achievement on Virginia math and reading assessments.

[02:08:03] U.S. News and World Report ranked 1,037 Virginia elementary schools and 1,005 Virginia middle schools. Fifteen LCPS high schools were included in the best 100 Virginia high schools on the U.S. News World Report.

[02:08:19] They ranked 336 Virginia high schools based on college readiness, state assessment proficiency, underserved student performance, college curriculum breadth, and graduation rate. And you can see this list of all of our LCPS honored schools on our website.

[02:08:35] Congratulations. Congratulations is in order to Evelyn Ceballos, a school nutrition manager at Brambleton Middle, on being the November SHINE recipient. Dr. Spence personally congratulated Ms. Ceballos as the first SHINE award winner. SHINE, which stands for Spotlighting Heroes in Education, is a joint LCPS and Loudoun Education Foundation employee recognition program. Members of the LCPS community are invited to nominate LCPS employees who inspire, who are innovative, and who go above and beyond. Loudoun Education Foundation works with community partners to

[02:09:12] provide a gift worth more than \$500. Ms. Ceballos was nominated by Chad O'Brien, the principal of Brambleton, for her positivity and can-do attitude. In his nomination of Ms. Ceballos, Mr. O'Brien shared that she goes the extra mile to ensure that our large school feels welcoming for each and every student. Ms. Ceballos received \$500 in gift certificates to restaurants and businesses and one Loudon. Apple Federal Credit Union sponsored this month's prize. Congratulations again to Ms. Ceballos. The LCPS McKinney-Vento office, Sterling Elementary School, and Good

[02:09:48] Shepherd of Northern Virginia teamed up to make the holidays a little brighter for students in need. On December 4th, 20 Sterling Elementary students and their families enjoyed a personalized holiday shopping experience at the Good Shepherd Alliance thrift store in Sterling. Each family was given a \$100 voucher to use on any items in the store including clothing, toys, furniture, and housewares. Families were paired with an LCPS or Good Shepherd volunteer who served as their personal shopper and guide them through the event. Each student also received a Build-A-Bear kit to take home with them. The event was supported by a grant donation from Whole Foods and snacks and

[02:10:25] drinks were provided by Wegmans. The event served approximately 100 individuals total, students plus siblings and parents with 30-plus volunteers. The McKinney-Vento team is extremely grateful to Good Shepherd for their generosity and partnership in making this event happen.

[02:10:41] The LCPS Blue Ribbon Panel on School Safety, announced by Superintendent Dr. Aaron Spence as part of his Forward Together Entry Plan, held its first meeting on Friday, December 8. The panel brings together LCPS leaders in security, facilities and operations, and school administration and offices with

community subject matter experts from law enforcement, emergency services, health, and mental health providers. Formed to assess safety processes and protocols in LCPS, the panel will tackle physical, technical, cyber security, and mental health needs in schools. As the panel works to identify any gaps in these areas, they'll formulate and present

[02:11:20] recommendations on how to meet those needs. Please look forward to those recommendations in late this spring. In response to concerns about fentanyl and opioids, LCPS has created an Opioid Awareness Task Force. The goal of this task force is to raise awareness about the dangers of opioids and fentanyl and provide students and parents with resources. One of the activities of this task force is to host fentanyl and opioid awareness sessions with community partners who will present key information including information about Narcan, the opioid overdose reversing medication. Middle and high school students already receive information about the dangers of opioid

[02:11:57] and other illicit drugs through health and physical education. LCPS student assistant specialists who have mental health and substance abuse expertise provide targeted presentations and partner with their respective schools to plan additional opportunities including assemblies student-led campaigns and classroom lessons in addition to this information the task force has created and is disseminating posters about the dangers of fentanyl shown here on this slide which will be posted throughout middle and high schools a web page with resources information about fentanyl has been created and the address is shown here as well. We will mount more dates for awareness events in the springs as they become

[02:12:35] available. Finally, you're all invited to attend the LCPS's annual mental health and wellness fair on Saturday, January 27th from 9 30 a.m to 2 p.m at Riverside High School. This year's conference reflects LCPS's focus on supporting all areas of student health. The event will feature 30 presenters including LCPS education and student support specialists and community partners as they share tips and strategies for promoting student mental health, academic and social engagement and overall wellness. This fair will also include information on fentanyl, opioid and substance abuse. The conference will also feature a resource fair with local businesses and

[02:13:15] non-profits offering services and guidance to support your family. There'll be food trucks, live music and so much more. Please plan to attend. And this concludes tonight's update. Thank you, Dr. Smith. Next, we're going to move to item, well, items 11 and 12, 11 being the public hearing on the superintendent's recommended FY25 through FY30 capital improvement program and capital asset preservation program public hearing, and item 12 being public comment.

[02:13:47] So I'm going to read my long script only once, but it applies to both the hearing and for public comment. Thank you for engaging with the school board through the public comment and public hearing process. the school board welcomes comments from loudon county residents and community members 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 in the agenda this evening all speakers have been allotted two minutes each for public comment please be advised that speakers who missed their time slot will not be called at a later time

[02:14:22] all audience members shall maintain civility decorum and respect for the functioning and and dignity of the school board at all times. Please remain seated unless arriving, departing, speaking at the podium, or during a break. Violations of civility, decorum, and respect include shouting, jekling, hearing, 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, and approaching a speaker or otherwise attempting to intimidate, disparage, or distract a speaker,

[02:15:01] 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. Speakers should communicate those concerns to their school principal or an appropriate school official.

[02:15:19] Additionally, complaints regarding division employees should be directed to the school principal or an appropriate school division official. Speakers should face the dais and direct their comments the school board 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 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

[02:15:59] safety reasons, or the public comment period ending for the evening. 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.

[02:16:17] The speaker is reminded that access to school board meetings is available through LCPS TV on comcast channel 18 and verizon fios channel 43 the live stream of the meeting may also be viewed on the lcps website so we will begin with our cip and cap public hearing we have two speakers who are signed up the first speaker will be liz crotty to be followed by shanaz khan good evening the special education advisory committee membership voted last week to recommend

[02:16:54] the consistent build-out of independent living labs in our public schools independent living skills are required by law to be taught to our students with disabilities and currently teachers solicit community donations to outfit their independent living lab classrooms it is incredible to have teachers who are so dedicated to our students but for some of our schools this might not be an option which leads to inconsistency. We are asking LCPS to add to their CAP CIP plan funds to create and maintain standardized dedicated learning spaces so that our students can learn independent living skills in order

[02:17:33] to transition to independent adults. Not all schools are able to pull together donations and not all spaces created are consistent in meeting skill need. We are asking that these spaces be outfitted just like any other lab in our school district and similarly designed across the school district. Thank you. Thank you.

[02:17:54] And our second and final speaker for the CIP and CAP public hearing is Shanaz Khan. Good evening. To follow up on the last public comment, yesterday I had an opportunity to visit an independent living lab during a CAST open house event at Rockridge High School. They have done an incredible job of converting a classroom into an independent living area that focuses on helping students with disabilities build life skills

[02:18:29] needed to meet the challenges of living on their own after they leave high school. The independent living lab I visited looked like a makeshift dorm room which included a bed, a wardrobe, appliances, and other kitchen supplies.

[02:18:46] However, the entire living lab was created and funded by donations from the school community. This means that some schools have the ability to provide these resources and some don't. For many years now, SEAC has asked for proper funding to be allocated to create standardized independent living labs across the district, similar to the FACS classrooms in our secondary schools.

[02:19:12] This will establish consistency and will provide adequate resources for our students with disabilities to develop the necessary life skills to be successful in their adult life. I encourage school board members to visit an independent living lab to truly understand how this benefits our students.

[02:19:29] Thank you. Thank you. That will conclude the public hearing, and we'll now move to item 12, which is public comment. We will begin with our virtual speakers today. And the first speaker is Mary McClintock.

[02:19:45] Please restore a vital program that was cut this year, Virtual Distance Elementary, an innovative, highly successful, impactful program. For the incoming school board, we encourage you to listen to the public speakers on the night of the April 25th vote.

[02:20:08] One third of all the speakers spoke in favor of continuing the program, supported by SEAC, MSAC, and LEA, LEA. Budget constraints, a deficit, forced the program to be cut. For the last two years, families have been advocating for the program.

[02:20:27] Many of the families that spoke in April have since withdrawn their children from the school district. In our case, we were denied simple ADA medical accommodations and assistive technology by our homeschool to keep our child safe. While friends with the same diagnosis at other schools were given some accommodations, we were denied.

[02:20:46] Where is the accountability inconsistency? Our daughter now receives just 80 minutes of math and English combined a week involved at K-12. Her math teacher alone teaches 122 students during a week.

[02:21:04] Our daughter and her friends miss the teachers in virtual distance elementary. The virtual distance elementary program benefited so many children, not just those with health needs. It also benefited children with special ed needs, children who have been bullied, those with anxiety, and those who prefer to learn virtually.

[02:21:24] For the school board members leading, thank you for your service. We appreciate you. To the incoming school board members, thank you for representing us. Please support restoring virtual distance elementary as it helps our most vulnerable students, and it makes a difference, and it gives accessibility.

[02:21:45] Thank you, and season's greetings. Thank you. Scott Pakula. Good evening. I'm here to urge the school board to restore funding to the virtual distance elementary program.

[02:22:06] This program was cut on April 25th, despite the overwhelming amount of support by the community. Due to this program being cut, this left many families with no support, and many families have left LCPS to find alternatives. After all this time, this topic has not been brought back up for discussion by the school board.

[02:22:24] We ask you to listen to the community and help us restore funding to the virtual distance elementary program. Thank you. Thank you. Key Pan. Good evening.

[02:22:42] Virtual distance elementary, or VDE, program was discontinued due to budget cuts last year. VDE was the only program that offered full-day synchronous learning for our students.

[02:22:58] As the budget cycle begins, I would like to remind the school board that the community has expressed its desire for the program to be restored. Due to the closing of VDE, many families had to find other ways to support their children's education and left the school systems.

[02:23:20] I request that the virtual distance learning be brought back for discussion and that LCPS finds a way to fund and restore the program. Thank you. Thank you. Tim McClintock.

[02:23:38] Virtual distance learning program for elementary students. You've heard me talk about this program before, the importance to the students that served and could be serving, how it can be managed at a per student cost less than the county average, and the impact it has had on those who have been forced to find alternatives.

[02:23:59] This has been only one area where we have a disproportionate lack of support of the marginalized, whether it's due to disability, language barriers, the economically disadvantaged, and other factors. Loudoun County Schools has much to be proud of, but it feels difficult to celebrate when basic educational deeds are still lacking for some students.

[02:24:21] The primary focus of any educational institution should always be the education of all its students. Without that basic guaranteed right being fulfilled, we should not be focusing on anything else. The virtual distance learning program for elementary students is just one of the ways that we can provide this need.

[02:24:39] And for some, the only way we can provide this need. Listen to the community, faculty, and staff. They will guide you to the underserved and the solutions to help them. This should be priority one. Thank you for listening. Thank you.

[02:24:56] Johnny Cho. Good evening. I have been speaking before the school board for the last two to three years. The past two years, I have requested the board not to cut the VDLE program.

[02:25:13] Despite my plea and supporting reasons, the VDLE program was discontinued. This year, one of my sons, who is in elementary, was forced to attend Vava K-12 because we did not have another virtual option for him. The Vava K-12 does not have much teacher and student face time and has very little support for his current IEP.

[02:25:35] I am requesting for the board to review the budget to bring back the VDLE program for the elementary students who have benefited. VDLE provided free and public education, education equity, a bully-free environment, and a live synchronous class with personalized IEP support.

[02:25:53] Again, I am speaking to request to bring back the VDLE program for elementary. Thank you. Thank you. And that was our final virtual speaker, so we'll now move to our in-person speakers. Our first in-person speaker is Brenda Bengston, to be followed by Sandy Sullivan.

[02:26:16] Thanks to the student reps for your poignant perspectives. Your speeches shine a light on successes and highlight critical needs.

[02:26:32] Once I heard a woman gripe about a student walkout saying students can't think for themselves. She did not trust youth to be enlightened. I found it insulting, contrary to my beliefs and experiences.

[02:26:50] So I shared that students take civics and government and understand freedom of speech and expression. At meetings lately, we hear talking points about the color red being Marxist or communist. I bet the cardinal, our state bird, would have something to sing about that.

[02:27:10] And it targets tomatoes, strawberries, poinsettias, Santa outfits, Valentine's Day cards, little red Corvettes, and the Swedish style of horse, and yes, blood. Wearing red shirts is freedom of expression, as is donning red caps.

[02:27:30] So why are we resurrecting a red scare? Then I saw a comment that said, hugs are bad. Shel Silverstein wrote, "I will not play it tug-o-war. I'd rather play hug-o-war, where everyone hugs instead of tugs, where everyone giggles and rolls on the rug." The author's purpose of expressing non-violence to the world resonated with a blogger who wrote, "To love, support, and cooperate rather than to fight, harm, or hurt represents his values as a human being. Just think."

[02:28:10] Hugs of peace versus harms of war. Teach peace. Share light. Tomorrow, glad Santa Lucia dog in Sverrier. Thank you.

[02:28:26] Sandy Sullivan to be followed by Brandon Kerr. Good evening. School board, it's time. The current status of the draft resolution had some meaningful revisions, and discussions during your last school board meeting showed traction to make the changes needed to provide for meaningful and respectable collective bargaining.

[02:28:53] which will benefit your students, educators, and the community. Let's get to it. You've heard from L.E.A. before that your resolution created by an anti-worker law firm has a long list of problems. So what can be done now? What must be done tonight? Remove the expiration on our authorization cards.

[02:29:10] Artificial limitations do nothing to support your educators, just like artificial limitations do not support our students. This resolution, in whatever form it is passed tonight, sets forth the terms of a union election. Adopting this resolution is not the finish line of the process.

[02:29:25] Clearly, this has not been a sprint, but an arduous and protracted foot race that has been full of hurdles. But here we are. Let's get to it. Next, expand the scope of working conditions to allow for the voices and needs of your employees to be heard, considered, and addressed.

[02:29:41] You've hired your educators for our experience and expertise, but the resolution limits just that. Show this critical support for your educators. School board, it's time. Further, your draft has cut out a large swath of confidential employees. Every single person who works in HRTD, business and finance, and digital innovation are prohibited from unionizing and bargaining.

[02:30:03] There are a great deal of support staff in those departments who are underpaid and undervalued. They deserve the opportunity to engage in collective bargaining. This evening, fix the collective bargaining resolution language. Listen to our expertise, the expertise and skills we were hired for. No decisions about us without us.

[02:30:21] Let's get to it. And school board members, thank you for your service to Loudoun County Public Schools. Thank you. Brandon Kerr, to be followed by Patricia Caldwell-Wilson.

[02:30:40] Patricia Caldwell-Wilson, to be followed by Corey Brunet. Good evening, school board members.

[02:30:57] My name is Patricia Caldwell-Wilson. I'm a retired math specialist in this county and also a classroom teacher, grades 2 through 8. I'm here tonight to speak on collective bargaining. When I came to Virginia 40 years ago, I did not teach for 19 years because there was no union in Fairfax or Loudoun County.

[02:31:21] I've been a strong union supporter and an education advocate for years. One of the things that bothered me the most about what's been going on in Loudoun County lately is keeping the union out of the schools.

[02:31:38] When I came here and started working in Loudoun County, that's how I met the people in LEA, through a school visit. They never interfered in the classrooms. They've been doing this for decades. And yet now, in this past year, since we've been trying to get collective bargaining, you've decided that the union can no longer represent the people that pay their dues.

[02:32:01] I also believe that saying that the cards that people sign, saying that they wanted collective bargaining, there's no way those cards should expire. If they're not working, maybe I could understand that. But people that are working and have signed cards saying that they want collective bargaining, in order to break a union, you are willing to say that they expire.

[02:32:22] I also feel that teachers need to be empowered. I see on signs everywhere about empowering students. Students are empowered when their teachers are empowered. I hope you people understand that collective bargaining is very important, and union busting and your hiring of an attorney that is all about union busting isn't doing you any good and it's not doing this county any good we're bleeding teachers and we're going to be bleeding teachers a long time please take that into consideration thank you thank you

[02:32:59] cory brunet to be followed by kyle nathanson good evening my name is cory brunet and i'm an english learner teacher at broad run high school i will talk about the collective bargaining resolution the collection of authorized authorization cards for collective bargaining started over two years ago in the spring of 2021. To set an arbitrary expiration date of 24 months is to silence the voices of all the employees who signed their cards at the beginning of the campaign. This is unequitable. Remove the expiration date of authorization cards that were duly signed by

[02:33:36] employees. In section 4a clause 10 you must add that for matters within the scope of collective bargaining board rules regulations and policies are negotiable. Without this added language the resolution is worthless because employees won't be able to bargain anything meaningful. Educator working conditions are under the board's purview and must be negotiable. If employees can't bargain their working conditions, what can we bargain? Classroom paint color? The current resolution is hollow, useless, and not worth the paper it will be written on, let alone the thousands of dollars

[02:34:12] you have already paid the anti-worker out-of-state law firm hired to help craft it, unless that was the point in the first place. About five years ago, I and a small group of community members tried to change proposed policy language that had to do with how long EL students could stay in Loudoun County. For months, we attended committee and school board meetings, every time speaking during public comment. We were passionate, committed, and did our homework. I will never forget what one board member said in defense of our proposed language to the rest of the board the night they were to take the

final vote on the proposed language. She said that we had been persistent in coming to the meetings and speaking on behalf of current and future EL students.

[02:34:52] In the months that we worked on this issue, how many people came in opposition, she said. None. Employees have been telling you for years that we want collective bargaining. The results are overwhelming. Look at the crowd here tonight. It's time. LCPS will never outperform its educators.

[02:35:10] Thank you. Kyle Nathanson to be followed by Jory Gellnett. Hello and good evening.

[02:35:26] I've spoken here about my commitment to LCPS before. I was born here. I was raised here. I went to school here. I've lived my entire life here. I love this county. I love my home. And even in the face of this collective bargaining disagreement, I stand here and reaffirm my commitment to this county, to this school board that I love.

[02:35:46] I've come here to express my concerns about the existing bargaining agreement. The restrictions on topics, the expiration dates, the segregation of confidential and non-confidential staff foster an atmosphere of division and conflict. That's all it does. We are here in the spirit of compromise to work together to do what's best for our students, for our teachers.

[02:36:07] One moment. Whoever is making that noise, please stop from that during public comment. Thank you. For our staff, for our students, we are here to do the best. And the current bargaining agreement is a good step, but it's not far enough. I urge the school board to let LEA, to let the union, have a voice at the table to find an equitable and effective solution.

[02:36:29] I don't want to spend every two weeks coming here. I will for as long as I need to. But I don't think you want us here. I don't think we want to be here. We want something good. We want something effective. And we want it now. I thank the board for the time. And I genuinely hope that we can work together to make LCPS a better place.

[02:36:48] Thank you for your time. Thank you. Jory Gellnett to be followed by Todd Fielding. Brenda, it has been an honor and a privilege to serve as your school board assistant over the past four years. You have more courage, class, and calm than anyone I know.

[02:37:06] Thank you for giving me a front-row seat to learn from you. Unless you are sitting in this audience as a former school board member, you have no idea what it is like to sit on the dais. Brenda is one of nine people who have spent countless hours in meetings, on the phone, in video calls, and reading slash sending emails.

[02:37:23] Brenda has been in that seat since June 14, 2011. As of today, that would be 4,564 days. Some days have been short and some days have been long. However, she has made a long-lasting impact in this county. I first met Brenda on July 12, 2012, when she was president-elect for the Virginia PTA.

[02:37:42] I was expecting it to be a one-and-done meeting where she would never remember me. Yet Brenda did remember me, graciously took me under her wing, and the rest is history. Brenda has faithfully served the Commonwealth of Virginia, Loudoun County, and the Sterling community. To be honest, the past four years have probably been the hardest.

[02:37:57] The nasty emails, letters, and phone messages during the COVID years were soul-crushing. However, during the past few years when Brenda would make visits to the schools, she was met with hugs smiles and appreciative words from which took some of the sting out of the hard years Brenda please

remember the positive years and the thousands of lives that you have unequivocally touched Brenda and her husband raised their family in the Sterling Park community her heart is in this community and she has given 100 of herself to making it a better place before her time as a school board member comes to an end on December 31st 2023 at 11 59 p.m but who's counting

[02:38:33] Thank you again Brenda for your friendship and for showing us what true courage class and calm should look like in this world Thank you Todd Fielding to be followed by Chris Countryman first of all Thank you for your service to the board is truly appreciated My name is Todd Fielding I am an LCPS parent employee and member of the board of directors of the Loudoun Education Association I'm asking the board tonight to not only approve the collective bargaining resolution

[02:39:11] resolution, but also to make several changes to the existing proposal. Make no mistake about it, this is still a proposal that I want to see approved tonight. My first suggestion is that you take the expiration date off of the collective bargaining cards that were signed by LCPS employees who had no intention of having their voice limited just because an expiration date was put into place. Another change that is needed in the proposal is to also include confidential employees amongst those who should have the right to bargain. There is no reason why their voices

[02:39:47] should not be heard as well. It is also important that you expand the scope of bargaining to include as many topics as possible as soon as possible. LEA building reps need renewed access to school buildings during work hours. This is essential to LEA's mission to help the employees of this district. There should also be no voting threshold for elections for a new union to count.

[02:40:11] There are not election thresholds for the school board, and there should not be election thresholds for union elections if they are approved by the school board. Impasse language should also be amended in this proposed agreement. Please take these changes into consideration when you conduct your final deliberations and hopeful passage of the measure tonight.

[02:40:31] I also, one last note, please during further deliberations, limit executive sessions to only personnel decisions and pending litigation for resolutions that should be in public. Again, thank you so much for your service. Thank you. Chris Countryman to be followed by Mittal Gandhi.

[02:40:57] I want to mirror Todd's comments and thank you all. I know it has been a rough ride for all of you. And tonight is your last chance. It's your last meeting. What will your legacy be? Are you going to be the school board member that voted to squash your employees' voices? Or are you going to be the school member that made it possible for your employees to engage, be empowered, and use their knowledge and experience to not only enrich the education experience for students, but also

[02:41:35] enrich the work experience for staff. Mr. Sorokin has made it very clear that he wants to put the collective bargaining policy to a vote tonight. I appreciate that you don't want to delay this important policy any further, but please indulge me as I ask you this last question. Have you done your homework. Are you ready for this test? Have you taken the time to learn from the information that has been provided to you by LEA and VEA working on behalf of your employees? Or do you plan to copy the test answers from the lawyers whose main goal is to fund their own paychecks?

[02:42:14] Tonight is an open book test. I implore you, take notes. One, remove the expiration dates. Count all the cards for current employees. Two, expand the scope of bargaining. The law is clear. The board has the final word in all negotiations. Why would you need to limit what can be discussed after one

year? Think of it this way. Could you decide which of your own children is more important? Which of your kids do you want to have a good job that they enjoy? Which of your kids would you pick to have

[02:42:50] to work multiple jobs just to make their rent? Which one do you want to be undervalued? I have no doubt that you value all of your children, but I'm telling you, you need to value all of your employees. Make these changes. Show that your employees matter. Thank you. Mittal Gandhi to be followed by Stephen Meyer. Thank you, and good evening. I apologize for my dress. It just came from basketball practice. Today, I stand here to say thank you. Whether I agreed with you or whether

[02:43:25] I didn't agree with you, you all ran for the school board. You all were elected, and we appreciate your service to the community. So from the bottom of my heart, thank you for your service to the community. You all are our neighbors, and you will continue to be our neighbors, so we appreciate you.

[02:43:41] I also appreciate Dr. Spence's service to the county so far. One of the biggest actions Dr. Spence took was to reorganize who reports to who. Now schools report to him. As Dr. Smith will remember at a LEAF meeting, I asked him to do that when he was the acting superintendent, And I'm really happy that our current superintendent is doing that.

[02:44:04] I'm also happy that now MAP data is also publicly available and transparency is sort of increasing. And what I mean by sort of is I only got involved because my little kid couldn't take algebra in sixth grade. That's all. I was trusting people.

[02:44:20] And then when I FOIA'd emails, I saw that, in fact, there was a much deeper issue about my kid not taking algebra in sixth grade. And now we have these two beautiful programs, the IB program and the HAMSI program that are coming to the county. I think it's a fantastic, fantastic program.

[02:44:38] And so when I asked the administrators why there's no application, not even a statement of interest to be a part of the program, they came back to me and said, well, it's a lottery. I said, okay, well, let me find out more about the lottery. And so all I did, just like I did with algebra, I FOIA'd communications from Neil Slevin with the word lottery in the body or subject of the communication and what I got back from LCPS is that communications are being withheld under section 2.237051 attorney-client privilege just

[02:45:15] for the word lottery. Thank you again. Thank you. Appreciate your service. Stephen Meyer to be followed by Jill Nelson. Good evening Chair Sorotkin, members of the board. I'm Stephen Meyer.

[02:45:35] I'm a retired LCPS special education teacher. I'm a member of LEA. I served on the LEA Board of Directors, and I'm a resident of Loudoun. And I want you to know I stand tonight with my LEA colleagues who ask for a fair collective bargaining resolution.

[02:45:53] I also want to speak for myself and on behalf of LCPS educators and others in our community that I know well, And I want to say thank you. I want to say thank you for working tirelessly to make sure that every student is safety and that you've considered their well-being.

[02:46:20] I want to thank you tirelessly, as Dr. Spith has said, for working tirelessly. 30 of our schools are rated in the top 100 schools in Virginia, and 7 of our high schools are in the top 25. These are impressive accomplishments.

[02:46:39] I must also commend you for working tirelessly despite the death threats that some of you received, the vitriol, and the public shaming that many of you received from a minority of our citizens who broke the honor rule that effective government requires civil discourse and compromise.

[02:47:04] Your efforts to preserve, as you did, took courage and determination. So on behalf of myself, many in this room tonight, and many more in our community, I want to thank you all for your years of service.

[02:47:23] Thank you. Thank you. Jill Nelson, to be followed by Esther Johnson. Good evening, Chairman Sorotkin and school board members.

[02:47:39] My name is Jill Nelson, and I'm one of your thousands of employees here in Loudoun County. First, I would like to also say thank you for your service. I appreciate your willingness to open yourselves up to the public scrutiny that inevitably comes with public service.

[02:47:58] It's not an easy job, and most of us would not do it. So thank you. As a teacher with 35 years of service, 15 here in Loudoun and 20 elsewhere in a Virginia school district, I've seen almost everything in public education, except collective bargaining.

[02:48:22] It's near. It's here. And I am really excited. I would like to think that we have enough knowledge and history behind us to understand what a good relationship between employer and employee entails.

[02:48:40] I'd like to also think that the phrase acting in good faith is a common one that most of us know what it means. We're kind of in this mess we're in because the law allowing collective bargaining did not give enough guidance to what you needed to do as school board members.

[02:49:00] And I'm sorry for that, but we have a chance to make this resolution what it needs to be. You had the chance to get help in your proposal, and you paid thousands of dollars to a union-busting law firm and chose to exclude a union that was right here in your backyard.

[02:49:28] Neither does leaving the Education Association and all the progress count as good faith. I'd like you to do what has been asked of you tonight and amend the solution and pass it. Thank you. Thank you. Esther Johnson to be followed by Tracy Lane.

[02:49:44] I'd like to start my talk tonight by thanking you all for your service. You've worked tirelessly for years in really hostile conditions.

[02:50:09] And I want to thank you for persevering because we have an incredible community. We have an incredible school system. And if you look at our student representatives, we have some incredible students that are growing up and making really big differences in the world.

[02:50:25] And that's because of you guys. And that's because of those guys. As you're wrapping up this time of service and considering this resolution for collective bargaining, I'd like to ask you guys to consider the following things.

[02:50:42] All right. So first, I urge you guys to reconsider the imposition of expiration dates on the cards. I think it's just one of those things we really would appreciate if we didn't have to keep signing them every couple of years just because of an arbitrary deadline. Secondly, I'd like to advocate for you to expand the bargaining scope beyond the first year.

[02:51:03] We must not limit the topics that can be discussed. The diverse composition of our bargaining units demands a comprehensive approach. Silencing voices on certain topics creates an imbalance. For instance, how can we fairly address bus driver issues versus custodian issues?

[02:51:20] or prioritize nurse concerns over sped concerns. These are all things that need to have equal voices and equal representation and a platform for us to speak. When it comes to the, sorry, my brain just stopped.

[02:51:39] When it comes to the, I just lost it, sorry, I lost my spot. With the confidentials, if we can find a way to come up with some parameters to protect confidential information while allowing those vulnerable employees to be able to be represented, that would be good.

[02:51:56] Thank you, guys. Thank you. Tracy Lane, to be followed by Nancy Vollmer. Hello, I'm Tracy Lane. I'm a Loudoun County educator. It was the week before winter break, and educators are in the house.

[02:52:16] The bargaining units are stirring, hoping this agreement will be deloused. Collective bargaining has been worked for with care, and hopes that the school board will be fair. With enthusiasm for bright futures in our heads, and visions of the seat at that table have us wearing red.

[02:52:37] Me and my festive cap, I realize this is not the time to nap. This agreement has made a clatter, so I'm here to tell you, students and educators matter. Toss the expiration dates in the trash.

[02:52:53] Don't make collective bargaining about cash. This agreement, it's a shame. I'm here to call you by name. Now, Sorotkin, Mahadavi, Corbo, and Reser, on Polifco, Beatty, and Ogadaba, and Sheridan, United, we're not here for a brawl.

[02:53:14] Stand with us. Don't make us crawl. On this chilly night, don't let collective bargaining go awry. Together, let's aspire for the sky. Make space for educators to sit with your crew. Don't limit working conditions to a mere two-by-two.

[02:53:34] Educator challenges at the work site, for students, they lead to a learning blight. Our schools and educators are hard put. Don't tarnish LCPS with more ashes and soot. Let's have a consolation and get to work.

[02:53:53] Include educators. It is our life work. I implore you, put aside this blight, collect the bargaining for all, and let's have a great night. And I would also like to thank all of you for your service. I've sat in this audience many, many times and seen the abuse you went through.

[02:54:10] Thank you. Thank you. Nancy Vollmer, to be followed by Susan Cox. Good evening, Dr. Smith, Chairman Sorotkin, and members of the school board, and especially the student representatives.

[02:54:31] My name is Nancy Vollmer. I am a retired educator. I was the library media specialist at Sterling Elementary School from August of 1974 until June of 2004, and had a few more years for retirement.

[02:54:47] I am a retired member of the Loudoun Education Association, having served as local president during the 1995-96 and 1996-97 school terms. I am speaking as an individual, and I support collective bargaining.

[02:55:08] Loudoun County has grown and changed over all these years, and change is good. Loudoun County employees have given authorization for the bargaining unit to act on their behalf. Collection of the authorization cards is an ongoing effort.

[02:55:25] There should not be an expiration date on the valid signatures that have been collected and certified. The scope of the bargaining needs to be expanded. Bargaining units are comprised of a wide array of job titles. All issues for bargaining should not be limited to an arbitrary number.

[02:55:45] If only a few issues can be brought to the table, then not every group of employees can be assured that they have voice on issues that may be unique to their assigned duties. It would be best if the expansion recognizes the support staff in the HRTD office, Business Office and Digital Innovation Office.

[02:56:10] All Loudoun County School employees need representation. Please pass the resolution tonight so that Loudoun County Public School employees can be assured that each and every voice has been heard. Thank you.

[02:56:26] Thank you. Susan Cox, to be followed by Anita Najarajan. I asked Superintendent Spence if he agreed with the law of Virginia that a parent has the fundamental right to make decisions concerning the upbringing and education of their child.

[02:56:44] He said he agreed. I hope he's sincere. I thought great. He, like myself, along with the current Governor Yunkin and many others believe in parental rights. There is hope. We need the school board to listen to the parents. That means we don't co-parent with the government to quote Moms for Liberty's slogan.

[02:57:01] We don't want trends of politics, fads of ideologies, and narratives of indoctrination pushed on our children. We don't want forced activism. We want education of essential subjects. As one woman stated at a prior meeting, "We don't co-parent with Moms for Liberty."

[02:57:18] Exactly, that is Moms for Liberty's point. No one should be forcing someone else's values, religion, or lack of onto your child. This upbringing is fundamental responsibility of the parent. Encouraging the child to keep secrets from their parents is disturbing and interferes with the law.

[02:57:36] Keeping parents in the dark about sexual assaults and overdoses is disturbing. We the people have a right to voice our concerns, demand accountability, and govern ourselves. We are not giving up. We are a much needed check and balance. The superintendent works for the school board.

[02:57:51] The school board should be working to ensure that the students get a quality education and are safe. Literacy should be the focus. Current events are proving there is a rot in our education system. Please return to merit and academic excellence over the DEI that has brought division and lowered literacy rates.

[02:58:08] Place value on content of character. How much have we spent on inclusion only to have nearly one at the last meeting complain of not being included? I can't understand how after being left out the conversation that anyone would want collective bargaining. With more leaders obtuse, we don't need more government-like leaders making poor decisions that aren't in the best interest of the children. To quote President Ronald Reagan, the government is not the solution to our problem, government is the problem. Don't let collective bargaining become our problem and another expensive scandal. Our children matter. Thank you. Please yield the microphone.

[02:58:42] Anita Nagarajan to be followed by Abby Platt. Good evening everyone. My name is Ani Nagarajan. I'm the parent of a LCPS student and a public education community organizer at New Virginia Majority. My colleagues and I have talked to hundreds of parents about the issues impacting our children

at Loudoun County Public Schools. An overwhelming majority of the parents are concerned about the plight of teachers and staff at our schools. Parents recognize that the

[02:59:19] LCPS teachers are its biggest strength and are worried about teachers leaving the field. Teachers are the backbone of our schools and educator working conditions are student learning conditions. Denying teacher rights impacts everyone associated with the schools, most importantly our children.

[02:59:36] For over two years, educators across Loudoun County Public Schools have been working in good faith for a meaningful collective bargaining resolution, but the LCPS has let them down by presenting a resolution drafted by an anti-union law firm.

[02:59:52] This resolution disrespects educators and hurts their rights. I'm deeply worried about this resolution and I urge the LCPS to work with our teachers and not against them. I'm asking the LCPS to collaborate with our educators and come up with a meaningful agreement.

[03:00:07] All of us here know in the heart of our hearts that our teachers and staff deserve better. I hope the LCPS will do better and have our teachers backs. Thank you everyone for your time and service. - Thank you. Abby Platt to be followed by Brian Davison.

[03:00:29] - First of all, thank you so much for your service to our school. it is clearly not an easy thing and obviously a sacrifice. I want to refer to a recent op-ed that was published by our friend Tom Marshall. He says, after two full terms representing the Leesburg school board or the Leesburg district on the school board, he was appointed by the existing school board to fill a vacated seat in December of 2021 for the 2022 school year.

[03:01:02] When the issue of collective bargaining was brought to the school board in 2022, Tom asked the Loudoun Education Association, which seeks to be the union rep for LCPS, if they could ensure him that Loudoun County Public Schools students would not be held hostage to binding arbitration.

[03:01:20] They declined to give him that assurance. His decision to not support considering the LEA's collective bargaining proposal was based on this failure. He goes on to say it is the duty of the school board to ensure that LCPS students are being educated.

[03:01:37] He felt that supporting a process that has the potential to jeopardize education time is contrary to the school board's mandate. However, local political leaders are unwilling to tolerate even a hint of deviation from national party goals, which seem determined to ignore the nuance of local issues in favor of party-line dogma.

[03:02:02] This is an issue that needs time for further financial and educational consideration. Vote no to collective bargaining. Thank you. Thank you. Brian Davison to be followed by Carrie Michon. Tonight, I'll read a not top 10 for this school board over the last four years and going back to 2014.

[03:02:27] Number 10, LCPS teachers admit they incorporate CRT into their lessons, and LCPS includes CRT in its equity statements. Despite this radical indoctrination, academic growth for black students in LCPS is less than the national average, and racial incidents, according to your own data, have exploded by over 100%.

[03:02:43] Nine, students were raped in classrooms by teachers and in bathrooms by non-binary students. a teacher was repeatedly sexually groped. In each case, you didn't help the victim. You suspended the

middle student who spoke out about her assault, prosecuted the father of the high school rape victim, and fired the teacher who exercised their Title IX rights. Eight, surveyed LCPS students that teachers noted that teachers don't care about their well-being. In fact, two students assigned to the same counselor committed suicide. What did y'all do? You took down the suicide policy. Seven, you censor staff and the community and then retaliate against anyone who criticized you. You even tried to fire teachers who spoke out on sexual harassment and biology of gender.

[03:03:21] Your own unspudsman noted this. Six, you locked out students out of class for nearly a year, even while you asked the county to provide in-person daycare for your students. Then you cut the school year to 170 days despite massive learning loss. Five, your top employee, Superintendent Ziegler, was convicted of a crime even though you covered up the report and sued the attorney general to not have that information come out. Four, you ended all final exams so students can forget everything they learned after the first test. Even in honors courses, three, per pupil spending has skyrocketed from \$11,900 in 2014 to \$20,300 this year,

[03:04:00] despite the academic trends. Even Jeff Morris admitted \$40 million is wasted. Two, test scores fell from 2019 to 2023 by 26 points in fourth grade math. They fell even further from 2014 on down. Number one, despite offering a, quote, free \$25,000 per year education in government schools, your enrollment has fallen for the last four years. Even your clients say, screw you.

[03:04:25] Thank you. Carrie Michonne, to be followed by Yolanda Lemon. This is America, the United States of America, a democracy. And as such, public service is required.

[03:04:45] I want to thank all of you, even those of you, some of whom I disagree vehemently on many issues. I want to thank you for your service to the Loudoun County public schools and to the children and to thank your families for their great sacrifice, of which I understand and know has been great.

[03:05:05] And I hope that you have a happy Hanukkah and a Merry Christmas. Dr. Smith, I wish it was you that was hired, but you weren't. Dr. Spence was hired as superintendent, who then hired a comms person at a salary greater than Secretary Cordova of the Department of Education.

[03:05:26] I repeat, that's a mind-blowing, and my family and all the citizens of Loudoun County now pay those exorbitant salaries. No need for collective bargaining to further tax the Loudoun County citizens. How about we give the 2.5 for collective bargaining to the teachers instead of more \$200,000 salaries?

[03:05:48] That \$200,000 comms overage of over what should have been being paid for this person could fund theater that's been begged for. The independent living that SPED is requesting. Safety in our schools, a thousand things other than a handler for a superintendent who runs to the principal's office to hide from talking to parents.

[03:06:12] That's unbelievable. Finally, here we are later, equity, sewage and fentanyl in Parkview, nothing's changed. The Parkview admin is begging for help. Please, please, there's so much to be done. Our literacy and math scores are still languishing.

[03:06:29] our children aren't safe in the locker rooms and hallways bring watchdog back to the high school and i hope you all the new board can take on these challenges and thank you thank you yolanda lemon to be followed by suzanne satterfield good evening my name is yolanda lemon i am an lcps educator tonight i represent the teachers who know nothing about collective bargaining and the educators

[03:07:04] unaware that discussions are taking place, compelling them to join a union without the chance to vote. Out of curiosity, I asked several teachers what they knew about collective bargaining. None were informed. They were also unfamiliar with the ongoing collective bargaining process, unaware of the potential impact of their livelihoods with representatives who may not share their values.

[03:07:33] If you're considering the unionization of LCPS, kindly provide your hardworking teachers with the option to decide if they want representation. Many share my sentiment.

[03:07:48] Unionization is like a power of attorney, and I don't want anyone speaking for me. Personally, one of the main talking points they use with educators is salary increases, and I believe we are on a good path to meeting that request without the LEA. Please consider the thousands of members who know nothing about what's going on. Perhaps include a recertification clause in the resolution. If membership falls below 50%, let teachers decide if they want to keep the union. Alternatively, consider

[03:08:25] sending out a survey to all teachers explaining what collective bargaining is, find out what your teachers truly want. The number of cards represented by the LEA is not the majority of educators in Loudoun County. Please hear me tonight. There are other alternatives which you all already have a blueprint for. There are many other things you could do to make the process more democratic handing over the reins from the LEA. Thank you all. Suzanne Satterfield

[03:09:01] to be followed by Zach Spangler. You took away the highlights of my son's junior and senior years with school closures. My son met a boy for the first time at his graduation rehearsal that was new to LCPS the beginning of their senior year. That poor boy was standing amongst strangers at his graduation because of you. Your policies and actions destroyed children's mental health and dignity by telling them that their skin color determines their abilities and makes them oppressed or an oppressor. You lied by telling them they were born in the wrong body and can

[03:09:38] become the opposite sex instead of teaching them that they are each unique. But bullying and drug abuse continues to increase because of your soft undisciplined policies. You lied about your knowledge of the rape. You covered up 159 Title IXs. You tried to stop a special grand jury instead of firing Ziegler. You played games under oath. You stood to protect the institution over students.

[03:10:00] Ziegler could get jail time and expenses on a wild spending spree, giving unapproved days off to staff and continuing admin bloat and DEI, but wants to cut the pay. A cafeteria monitors and dares to ask parents to donate to cover other students' lunch debts when there is government assistance for families with financial hardships. He ignores parents and students that come to meetings but wants them to take his communication survey seriously. Please. Brenda, Atusa, Denise, Ian were part of the group that targeted parents and then treated them like criminals. Tiffany Polifco is the only member that tried to hold admin and fellow board members accountable,

[03:10:37] appreciated public speakers, and was transparent. To the incoming school board, be like Tiffany. Keep Anne Donoghue out of any chair or committee leadership roles. To the students and parents, they are your customers. Your job is to improve student outcomes, communication, build trust, and hold the administration accountable for any shortcomings.

[03:10:59] Teachers lose their individual voice under teacher unions. Say no to collective bargaining. Students lose. Happy Hanukkah and Merry Christmas. Thank you. Zach Spangler to be followed by Andrea Weiskopf. Andrea Weiskopf is our final speaker.

[03:11:39] There is no reason this board could not have addressed collective bargaining earlier this year. If the LNP committee was unable to address both the legislative program and collective bargaining, they should have set more additional meetings. If there are two priorities and only time for one, educators are expected to get both done.

[03:12:00] This 11th hour mess is on you. We need to revisit something from the superintendent's report. I can't continue speaking about collective bargaining. There was an event for children from Sterling who are McKinney-Vento.

[03:12:16] Many people smiled at the happy event. But for those who are not well-versed in edu-speak, McKinney-Vento refers to children who do not have physical homes. Did Dr. Smith say there were 20 children from Sterling at that event?

[03:12:35] McKinney-Vento is not on the agenda tonight. but I ask all school board members and incoming school board members to consider each and every child, whether a child is lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer, whether a child is from a traditionally marginalized community, whether a child is without home. Each and every child

[03:13:03] belongs in lcps and each and every child deserves an advocate black lives matter thank you that was our final speaker and we'll conclude public comment for this evening so we'll now move to item 13 which is our action items and we'll start with 1301 from the department of support services dulles area elementary school attendance zones including the establishment of an attendance zone

[03:13:38] for Henrietta Lacks elementary school. So I will go ahead and make a base motion and then I will have one amendment afterwards. I move that the Loudoun County School Board adopt the staff plan establishing an attendance zone for Henrietta Lacks elementary school slash Hovatter elementary school and including changes as identified by the plan to existing Dulles area elementary school attendance zones. The attendance zone changes will take effect in fall 2024 with the start of the

[03:14:09] 2024-25 academic year is there a second second seconded by mr morse and i will make one i will make one amendment i move that in addition to the rising fifth graders that are covered by policy that rising fourth graders also be automatic automatically afforded the opportunity to stay at their current school for the affected bound for the affected attendance zones if they so choose. Is there a second? Seconded by Ms. Reeser. And the, I'll speak to my amendment. The

[03:14:47] reason I'm going to support that is, as many public speakers on this topic have noted, these children, particularly the older ones, have been moved around to multiple schools over the last few years. I know we did get a number of requests to extend that all the way down to second grade.

[03:15:08] I've really taken a look at that and taken a look at the numbers, and it would really cause a capacity problem at a Layton-Thompson Elementary for an extended period of time.

[03:15:23] So I don't think I can support going down that far, but I think going to fourth graders in addition to fifth graders is something we've done in the past with other attendance zone redistrictings and I think makes sense in this case. Is there any discussion on the amendment?

[03:15:44] Seeing none, we'll place the amendment to a vote. The voting board is open, so board members, please go ahead and record your votes at this time. And Ms. Corbo, what is your vote on the amendment? Yes. Please record a vote of yes for Ms. Corbo.

[03:16:03] And go ahead and close and display the vote. That motion will pass unanimously with board members present with Mr. Mejedevi absent for the vote. So we're now back to the base motion to adopt the staff plan.

[03:16:22] for the Henrietta Lacks Elementary School and Hovater Elementary School attendance zone as amended. Is there any additional discussion or amendments? Mr. Morse. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just wanted to thank staff for, again, providing us a realistic plan.

[03:16:40] It seems that through the years, they've really become experts at balancing all the factors. And this is the second time now, I think, that the board has supported one of the staff's plans. So thank you very much. Is there any additional discussion?

[03:16:57] Ms. Polifko. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I will not be supporting staff's plan this evening, even with your amendment. And that is because we listen to parents come to public comment and talk to us about how much change their kids have had to go through over the last few years.

[03:17:14] Some of these kids have not had any continuity in their elementary school experience. And I cannot support this. Thank you. Is there any additional discussion? Seeing none, the voting board is open.

[03:17:32] Board members, please go ahead and record your vote. And Ms. Corbo, what is your vote? Yes. Please record a vote of yes for Ms. Corbo. And please go ahead and close and display the vote.

[03:17:51] That motion will pass 8-1 with Polifco opposed. Board members, at this time we're going to take a short break. Please be back in your seats ready to go at 8-30 and we'll continue on with our action items at that time. The board is now in recess.

[03:18:09] And we will continue on with our next action item, 1302, from the Legislative and Policy Committee, Collective Bargaining Resolution.

[03:30:11] Ms. Reeser. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Since there's no presentation this evening, I'd like to start with some background before I make the motion, if you don't object. Thank you. So in 2020, the General Assembly of Virginia amended the Virginia Code to repeal the prohibition against collective bargaining for school board employees beginning May 1st, 2021.

[03:30:36] This change in the law did not require that school boards extend collective bargaining rights to employees. The code section did, however, provide that if a school board receives certification from a majority of public employees in a self-identified bargaining unit, that the board would then be required to take a vote to adopt or not adopt collective bargaining.

[03:30:59] If a school board does authorize collective bargaining, there is not much further guidance from the code, and Virginia does not have a state labor relations board. I'm sorry I didn't give you all a chance to get settled before I started.

[03:31:15] For example, you will recall that there was no guidance or a procedural framework for verifying the employee's support for certification when we began this process.

[03:31:32] So when our employees and staff needed help coming to an agreement on a method for that verification, the school board members became involved and a procedure was adopted in June of 2022.

[03:32:07] When our employees came back to us and they brought to our attention that a vast majority of their signatures would be excluded under that process, a consequence that was not contemplated and

therefore I believe not intended by the board, I made a motion to amend and the majority of the board supported the motion, allowing those signatures that had been collected prior to the date to remain valid and be good for an additional 180 day period. That was done in good faith, and I believe that everything that the board has worked towards has been in good faith, beginning with that action through tonight. On January 31st of this year, the LEA filed correspondence stating that a majority of LCPS's certified employees signed authorization cards supporting collective bargaining, authorizing LEA to represent them, and confirming their request for the school board to adopt a resolution for collective bargaining.

[03:32:40] On March 28th of this year, the board adopted a resolution authorizing collective bargaining and directed the LMP committee to draft a collective bargaining resolution, which the school board was to vote to adopt or reject by the end of 2023, December 31st of 2023.

[03:32:59] The self-imposed deadline was a goal that we set, again, in good faith, and one that we've worked very hard to meet. The LMP committee's very first step was to invite LEA to the table to present desired terms in a resolution, or for a resolution, rather.

[03:33:18] The LEA's counsel spoke at our meeting, LEA leaders spoke at that meeting, and committee members engaged with questions and remarks.

[03:33:37] Subsequently, school board members were advised that the VEA Council believed further negotiations were premature and should occur after the adoption of a resolution. I'll come back to this point to update you on some clarification that we received around that at some point later in my remarks.

[03:33:56] But to be clear, school board members have considered LEA's input in several regards, and such input has been incorporated in the current proposed draft resolution. You will remember that there was a provision that I'm going to call undemocratic that provided that employees who do not show up to vote would have their lack of voting count as a no vote.

[03:34:21] I stated unequivocally at that time that I would never support an undemocratic provision and that none of us would have been able to win our elections under this maneuver. And Mr. Sorokin supported striking it. So we did that in committee. This was another action that was taken in good faith.

[03:34:36] The LMP committee, sometimes with board members from outside the committee, held numerous meetings. We scheduled extra hours for some of those meetings, and we even specially scheduled additional meetings to afford an opportunity for members to understand the legal consequences of various options in order to well execute our fiduciary duty.

[03:35:00] At a specially scheduled additional meeting of the committee, members narrowed down remaining options and made a recommendation to this board. Since the item was presented to the full board at our last meeting, the board received additional input for consideration on at least eight items from LEA.

[03:35:19] And here's where I said I would come back to a point. The board has received information that the VEA council, the information that the VEA council, the concern about negotiations being too early, was only intended to apply to the definition of working conditions.

[03:35:36] I think that clarification is important. At this juncture, I believe that we have the following two options. We can move that the board adopt the proposed resolution, at which time I believe there would be

multiple board members asking for multiple amendments to discuss at least the eight potential changes to the resolution.

[03:36:00] we have the option to move that the board refer the item to committee to discuss the potential amendments with a potential creation of a subcommittee that could mirror the working group that we already included in the resolution to work together to define working conditions.

[03:36:19] This would allow for those deliberations to happen off the dais and with input from employee interest groups and others. So at this time, I am going to move to amend the board's March 28, 2023 resolution to remove the self-imposed deadline of December 31st, 2023 indefinitely for making a determination to adopt or reject a collective bargaining resolution and to refer the proposed LCPS collective bargaining resolution to the LNP committee with the recommendation that it establish a joint committee to consider the eight items LEA raised in

[03:36:55] its communication to the board last week, wherein such joint committee would be composed of two designated board members, representatives from LCPS's HRTD and LCPS's Department of Business and Financial Services, and representatives from the LEA. Second. Seconded by Ms. Sheridan.

[03:37:16] Ms. Reeser, would you like to speak to your motion? Yes, thank you. So while our board makes amendments to policies from the dais, the board also refers to committee when we see a large amount of work needs to occur. Because of the amount of discussion and debate needed to thoroughly consider each of the potential amendments and because we have our employee organizations we because we could have our employee organization at the table instead of in the audience i believe we should refer this to a committee while the board has made a good faith effort to complete the task

[03:37:50] with evolving information it's become apparent to me that there is more work remaining than than we were aware when we had this as an information item at our last meeting i believe we've done the work without delay and I won't claim that we can do as many things as teachers can do at one time but I think there was a good-faith effort made to complete this task by the goal that we set forth for ourselves and I think that the changing board composition has been an annual fact for our entire term and really should not be determinative of how we decide this motion the length of

[03:38:26] discussion on each item for example just the one on confidential employees alone could take an entire committee meeting signature cards working conditions how those provisions should be redrafted could benefit from the input of our employee organization at a minimum that would provide for an opportunity for misunderstandings to be clarified and potentially more it could provide for more meaningful collaboration besides just clarifying misunderstandings I I believe that these discussions should occur with interested employee organizations at the table

[03:39:02] rather than in the audience, and I believe that extending the self-imposed deadline would allow for the opportunity to support contemplative discussions and further collaboration. Thank you. Additional discussion on the motion to refer? Mr. Morse.

[03:39:18] Just for clarification, so the membership of the entire committee, what is the voting structure of that membership? Ms. Reiser, would you like to respond? I would defer to, to division council. I did confer with division council, um, to ensure that both this, this motion was proper and, um, and that the proposed way of going forward would be an appropriate, um, alternative. I don't believe that there needs

to be, uh, a voting structure that's decided at this meeting. I believe that the, the LNP committee would take the charge in

[03:39:58] determining next steps, but again, I would like to ask Mr. Allen to weigh in. Thank you, Mr. Ezer. In terms of a voting structure, that wasn't contemplated at this time, and I think it provides flexibility for the LNP committee to determine how that might look in tandem with the joint committee. Thank you. I share concerns with some of the members of the audience with the uh just the ability to for the school board to make a decision for which

[03:40:37] uh we were elected so you know as far as the opportunity for inputs i fully support that structure i think that's an important engagement with uh for us but uh as as a portion of a non-elected body that may or may not be the representative of the employees uh i would be challenge to have a voting position for LEA members. Thank you. Additional discussion?

[03:41:07] Ms. Ogedekbe. Thank you, Chair. I appreciate this alternate proposal and will support it. I think, again, the clarification that we can have a more substantive conversation with input at the table, i think is an important one my hope is that this process starts on amicable terms and right now

[03:41:43] i don't think we're there um there's a lot to this and just thinking about the eight points there's a lot to that and what seems very simple is not simple and so i think it's important that adequate time be spent on those things, that input is received and considered, and I think to Mr. Morse's point, it's a recommendation, not a stipulation, and ultimately referring it back

[03:42:17] to LMP puts it back to the next board, and then they can decide how to go from there in terms of how that process is structured. Thank you. Ms. Reeser, I got a request for you, if you could read your motion one more time. I move to amend the board's March 28, 2023 resolution to remove the self-imposed deadline of December 31, 2023, indefinitely for making a determination to adopt or reject a collective bargaining resolution and to refer the proposed LCPS collective bargaining resolution to the LNP committee with a recommendation that it establish a joint

[03:42:56] committee to consider the eight items LEA raised in its communication to the board last week, wherein such joint committee would be composed of two designated board members, representatives from LCPS's HRTD and LCPS's Department of Business and Financial Services, and representatives from LEA.

[03:43:16] Thank you. Additional discussion? Mr. Beatty. Thank you, Joe. I firmly support sending this back to the LNP committee. This is what I was going to make a motion for at the beginning of this. But again, I don't think LEA should be part of that body that determines the rules.

[03:43:32] I think their input is important, but they're not the collective bargaining body. and that was made very clear during the process. They are one of many potential collective bargaining units that could come forward, and I think that it's important that that be open to anyone if the board decides to go forward with collective bargaining.

[03:43:50] Thank you. Ms. Reeser, did I understand your motion correctly, that it's a recommendation that the LMP form a subcommittee, but the next board or next LMP committee could do what they choose with it if it were to be referred? I guess is that the language of your motion?

[03:44:07] That is the language of the motion, and I did email the language of the motion in case you want to pull that up in front of you, but it would be referred to the LMP committee with a recommendation that followed. Thank you.

[03:44:23] Additional discussion, Ms. Corbo? Thank you. First off, I just want to thank Ms. Oga Dugby. She really spent a lot of time diving into the resolution and providing information to to board members. And I appreciate that's a lot of hard work. And, and I know that you put a lot of time into that. I am truly disappointed that our LMP committee and our board couldn't reach this

[03:44:56] tonight, reach an agreement tonight, that we've been at this for a very long time. And unfortunately, we were given misinformation. And again, the LEA and our educators, the whole process is dragging on, which is unfortunate. But at the same time, I think that having new information and being allowed to have a voice now where before they were shut out, I think that that's important. And I think that will lead to hopefully better collaboration and a better resolution in

[03:45:34] the end. I do believe, though, if we are going to pass this this evening and make changes this evening, then what we do need to do immediately is reinstate building access. Our LEA and any other organization should have access to our building and our employees. There is no reason why that change happened unless it was a way to prevent, again, this process, which to me is just wrong. I know that there has been several emails back and forth about an MOU, and I think that if

[03:46:10] we can't pass a resolution, then we need to bring forward the MOU and pass that immediately. Thank you. Thank you. Additional discussion? Well, I have a number of concerns, but my main concern is the same as I expressed during our meeting two weeks ago, that postponing this to the next board, I know it's a motion to refer, but it's a postponement, is going to cause a significant delay in enacting collective bargaining especially if there is a subcommittee formed and we're talking about engaging a education association in the process so it's

[03:46:49] i think different groups want to perhaps delay this for for different reasons um i my perspective is that we have a draft resolution that is remarkably similar to what has been adopted in several other virginia school divisions and while it may take an hour or two i think the board could take action on this tonight and they just don't want to. And for me, that's not an adequate reason to delay. So I will not be supporting the motion. Additional discussion, Ms. Reaser.

[03:47:18] Thank you, Chair Sorokin. I appreciate what you're saying and I'm fully prepared to spend all the time that we need. I'm intimately familiar with what's been drafted and have studied carefully all the feedback from other board members, from other interested parties. And I believe that we could do that as well. But again, the people sitting in the audience would not be able to participate. And so for that reason, I think that it should go to committee. Additional

[03:47:49] discussion? Seeing none, we'll place the motion to refer with the recommendation to a vote. The voting board is open. Board members, please record your vote at this time. And Ms. Corbo, what is your vote? No. Please record a vote of no for Ms. Corbo. And please close and display the vote. The motion to refer is going to pass 6-3 with Polifco, Sorotkin, and Corbo opposed.

[03:48:27] We'll now move on to our next action item, which is 1303 from the Finance and Operations Committee, the LCPS Electric Bus Pilot Program and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Clean School Bus Grant Program, round three. Mr. Morse. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I move that the school

Board approve the submission of the U.S. EPA Clean School Bus Grant Program application and, if the grant is awarded, appropriate the funds to the transportation program and the operating fund of Loudoun County Public Schools to purchase 10 new electric and 15 new propane

[03:49:06] school buses. Further, that the School Board endorse the purchase of two fully electric cargo vans and six fully electric SUVs as part of the expansion of the pilot program. Second. Seconded by Mr. Mejedevi. Mr. Morris, would you like to speak to motion? Just briefly, this grant funding is based on reimbursement of costs above an equivalent to diesel buses. So LCPS would need to pay all the costs up front associated and receive reimbursement once the diesel buses have been retired. We've continued down this path now. I

[03:49:39] think this is our third iteration of procuring electric buses, and we have not yet committed to a single type of electric bus. However, this set of electric buses aligns with some of our previously purchased. I'm going to turn it over to Mr. Lewis to talk a little bit about the current state of electric buses and how this one fits in. Thank you, Mr. Morris. So we currently have six buses that have been in service for a year and a half, maybe two by now, and then we have

[03:50:18] The next iteration of those that are coming in, 15 more have just arrived. We have some more, I think five more in service at Cardinal Ridge. And to Mr. Morris' point, we're still gathering information and are not ready yet as a staff to make a recommendation to the board to move forward with a fully electric fleet.

[03:50:37] You'll see in here that we're also proposing to expand into some light vehicles as well as some propane to make sure that we get a good and full study of the different options that are available to us. And this will, if we are able to get this grant, it will equalize the different manufacturers of buses that we have so we have a good representative sample of each manufacturer.

[03:51:00] So that's all the, to Mr. Morse's point also, is we are not spending more than what we normally would be because the premium for the electric bus is being paid for out of the grant, and therefore the taxpayers aren't paying any more for the buses we have, and we are able to evaluate these buses and their performance.

[03:51:24] Thank you. Mr. Morris. And lastly, I'm just pulling up a statistic here. It says based on the fuel consumption for the propane bus, we talk about the propane bus. We have driven the propane bus 2,395 miles with no downtime, And the fuel cost per mile is 33 cents.

[03:51:46] Fuel cost per mile for a comparable diesel bus is 48 cents or 15 cents per mile more than propane. So we're moving into the electric and the propane. But the discussions on the efficiencies that we're encompassing are encouraging for us to continue down this path.

[03:52:04] Thank you. Additional discussion? Mr. Baby. Thank you, Chair. Going not just the buses, but the vans and the SUVs, what's our current plan for a charging infrastructure for those vehicles?

[03:52:19] Because my understanding is all the stations we've added are just for buses. And I don't know if we've added any spots around LCPS where we can actually do the level two charging. If you could help me with that, I'd appreciate it. Yes, sir. So we you are correct. We don't have any in place at this time, but we are planning those in the facilities area to be able to have those in a place where we could have access to them.

[03:52:40] Although we do have the six electric driver's ed vehicles, and we are putting chargers at each of the hospitals that they are deployed at. One at Woodgrove is already in place. Tuscarora and Heritage are underway, and so they will be in place soon.

[03:52:56] So we will be adding the chargers as we go. Thank you. And is that charging expansion in the CIP, or is that added to just whatever the cap? They are part of the capital budget, yes, sir.

[03:53:11] Thank you.

[03:53:41] Additional discussion? Seeing none, we'll place the motion to a vote. Please open the voting board and board members, please record your vote at this time. And Ms. Corbo, what is your vote? Yes. Please record a vote of yes for Ms. Corbo. And please close and display the vote. That motion will pass 8-1 with Polifco opposed. We'll now move on to item 1304 from the Department of Support Services. Superintendents recommended FY25 through FY30 Capital Improvement Program and Capital Asset Preservation Program budgets.

[03:54:02] I will move that the Loudoun County School Board adopt an FY25 through FY30 Capital Improvement Program and Capital Asset Preservation Program, including the capital facility planning guidelines as amended through December 6th, 2023, and submit the same to the Loudoun County Board of Supervisors for their action.

[03:54:24] Is there a second? Seconded by Ms. Ogadegve. I do not have any comments or amendments that I am planning to provide. Mr. Lewis, anything since our last work session that you would want the board to know or any changes since that time?

[03:54:43] The only thing I'll point out is in the items that were included with the item, you'll see a spreadsheet in there that reflects the changes to, and I'm pulling up here, the line for the ERP replacement with the computer system where the Board of Supervisors has funded that separately.

[03:54:59] So we've removed that from the FY25, 26, 27, and 28 years, and added them into the previously funded FY24 year, which is how the budget, they were funded as a capital budget from the supervisors.

[03:55:14] And that spreadsheet's in there, and you'll see those changes in red. But that's the only change that we have from our last work session. Okay, thank you. Actually, I do have one question that was brought up during, just from the topic that was brought up during the public hearing today. the independent living labs that are in our schools, are they funded as part of the CIP, or are they funded, like, what, if anything, is causing a disparity in how those look between different schools, and is this a concern that's been heard in the past regarding those independent living labs? So, I can't give you a full description of what we have in the system. I do

[03:55:52] know that we've developed a, what we call an educational spec, or the specifications around those spaces, and we've started building those into Watson Mountain, and they will also be designed into Parkview and to HS14, and we've started the conversation with the student services to talk about those things moving forward. So I do know that they have been done in different ways across the county and different schools, but I don't know the whole history of that.

[03:56:19] So are those specifications in policy or regulation anywhere? I'm thinking of a number of years ago when the, what is it, the lactation support policy was amended to include standards for what that

should look like, at least for newly constructed schools, so are there any guidelines or kind of centralized equivalents in this case?

[03:56:39] Yes, sir, they are in our, what we call our educational specifications, which are the instructions we give our designers to design our facilities. They are not in policy or in regulation, but they would be comparable to our CTE classes or our gym classes or any of those things that have special features or functions in a particular classroom so they are identified in there of what our expectations were and they may change each year when we design a new building we meet with each of the departments and and ask for any updates or changes to their program that we can incorporate in the new buildings thank you board members any questions

[03:57:16] or discussion regarding the motion to adopt the the cip and cap miss polifco thank you mr chair So, in addition to the answer that you provided, Mr. Sorotkin, what are we doing in the meantime for students who are not able to access learning labs that are adequate?

[03:57:38] And so, we listened to the public comment this evening. Both speakers came up and addressed their concerns with what's currently in place. I understand that we may have plans to have these included in our new structures, but that's going to take time, obviously, for those to come to completion so what can we what kind of information can we convey in the immediate term on how we're going to be meeting those students needs so i was going to defer to miss richardson but i see she's not sitting there that that's an instructional process that i'm not

[03:58:14] able to answer right now but certainly we can get back to you on that and be able to share what what programs are in place at this point if she's going to be back in just another minute or so can we, oh no, she will not be back. So we can't get an answer to that this evening?

[03:58:36] I'm afraid not, no. Thank you. Mr. Mahedby and then Ms. Reeser. Thank you, Chair. So Mr. Lewis, to stay on this particular topic, would that be part of the CIP, CAP, or would you be part of the operations budget if board members want to make? So I go back to I don't know what the cost or what the effort could look like, but I go back to the LED signs, we allocated some budget that I believe it we allocated about half a million

[03:59:12] dollars so any elementary school any school that currently had the non LED sign outside on the road they could use the dollars to perhaps improve that so I don't know I mean I know we're doing this on the fly and I think this is just came about this evening so I I am NOT expecting that you you and your staff are also prepared but given you know the best sort of course for us as board that we'd like to do something what would be some thoughts you can share with us in terms of that we could do something tonight or there's something that needs to be addressed out of the operations budget going forward thank you mr.

[03:59:49] Mehevy I think the the best way to address that is as an assessment to see what we have and what we need and where those places need to be and that's a conversation that I can certainly have and we've started that conversation with miss Richardson and her staff and so you are correct I don't have any information to give you or any estimate for that I do will remind you that the capital renewal and alteration section of the of the the CIP provides us with some flexibility so I think it's a conversation we can have over the next several months in at a minimum we can have this conversation in the next year CIP or we can and you know work for some of those things with other funding

[04:00:29] sources we we do have some limited sources or funding in our operating budget for what we call room conversions that we may be able to do that if they become a priority I will say that we have an ongoing list from all of our schools of deferred projects in that category but if these were to be a priority for the instructional folks we can certainly do that so I think it really needs to start with the conversation and for me to try to to estimate a number right now that there's just no way I could put a value to that Chair, I mean, again, I don't want, I mean, this is CIP and CIP budget, but I guess, I don't know how you feel about the board giving, obviously, I think there's a, I mean, you're

[04:01:09] in agreement, but if this board were to give some direction to say, to do a study, what could be, would there be an amendment to this motion to say, just add the line to study going forward for the next CIP budget to just to make sure that it's documented?

[04:01:24] I think that could be, that could be, that could be one approach to amend the motion to study it, another could be just to refer the issue to, I guess, FNO to study it over the next couple months, which basically the same effect, but I think that would certainly be in order if a board member wanted to make that motion.

[04:01:45] So I'll make an amendment that the next FNO committee, in addition to the motion you made, so I'll add on to it, that the FNO committee studies the independent living labs for the future CIP and CIP budget. I'll second. Would you like to speak to any further in your motion? No, I think thank you for this. I mean, opportunity to discuss that.

[04:02:09] I think hopefully we can at least direct. I know this year perhaps is a challenging. We're already at the budget level, but hopefully it gives staff to work with Ms. Richardson and other folks to figure out what the best course of action would be, what the cost could be, and then we could take actions going forward in the next budget cycle. Thank you. Ms. Reeser. So since the motion's been made my question was going to be on this topic as well and um just for edification of what the committee may work on if i may ask my question relevant to that topic okay um and i heard you mention parkview high school and i think i heard you say that's something that's going to

[04:02:49] happen in the future that there does not exist um a lab like that at parkview now am i correct about that before i go on i i can't answer that i don't know what's in parkview right now my comment was based on the fact that we have established these spaces as a requirement for all new buildings okay and so the new replacement because of the rebuild it would be okay i i understand now so as part of what goes to committee i think it would be helpful if there was some base information included about what exists at each school currently so that we could look at where

[04:03:24] the gaps are. Thank you. Any additional discussion on the amendment? Mr. Morris? Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'll support the amendment. One thing I would like staff to consider, and we don't need to make it part of the amendment, is that end-of-year operating funds, because some of this materials used in the lab is likely to be replaceable annually, we could certainly look at end-of-year operating funds as a potential source as well. But that will come after the estimates from finance and operations. Any additional discussion on the amendment? Seeing none, we'll place the

[04:04:00] motion to a vote and this is just for the amendment to direct or essentially refer to the LMP committee the issue of the independent living labs for further study. And Ms. Corbo, what is your vote?

[04:04:16] Yes. Please record a vote of yes for Ms. Corbo and please close and display the vote. That motion will pass unanimously and we are now back to the base motion for adoption of the CIP and capital asset preservation program amended to refer the issue of the independent living labs to the F&O committee. Further discussion, Mr. Mahedby. Thank you, Chair. I want to highlight one aspect of the CIP. I know there's many elements of it. I know I've talked about the music and the arts. I mean,

[04:04:56] that's already in the CIP, but I also see that we have the elementary school inclusive playgrounds now be part of that too. So again, I want to commend the student who brought up the initiative and the board to sort of supporting that to make sure that it's and the staff to work with the student to come come back with the idea to make the policy change and then and then we are putting the money where where where our mouth is I guess to make sure that it gets done too so I I want to I want to commend you and the staff for for bringing that up too so thank you and I also want to point out just how much the CIP has changed over the last four or five years where

[04:05:33] you know we used to have new schools falling from the sky every you know once a year sometimes two or three in the same year and we just didn't have the money or really the money for anything else whereas now we're able to be more measured in that regard and really fill in all of the surrounding infrastructure to take a look at replacement or renovation of some of our older schools as we did last year with Parkview, Banneker, and this year Waterford, and to take a look at more of those projects in the future. So I know many of us were really concerned about

[04:06:10] overcrowding and how fast growth was when we came on the board, and to be able to turn the corner on that, where except in very targeted circumstances like Hovatter and Pinebrook and a couple of other places there's far less overcrowding and and far less overcrowded classrooms than there were a couple of years ago and I think that's that's that's a good thing all around any additional discussion mr. Morse thank you mr. I just want to point out that some of the older schools that we're talking about refurbishing were new schools when mr. Sheridan joined the school board so just

[04:06:48] wanted to point that out and the the CIP has come a long way when we first came on board it was on the back of a cocktail napkin so we appreciate all the work that's done. Thank you. Now it's on the front and the back of that cocktail. Any additional discussion? Seeing none, we'll place the motion as amended to a vote, and the voting board is open.

[04:07:10] And Ms. Corbo, what is your vote? Yes. Please record a vote of yes for Ms. Corbo, and please close and display the vote. That motion will pass unanimously. We'll now move on to our final action item from the Department of Teaching and Learning, Elementary K-2 Literacy Core Resource Adoption.

[04:07:39] Mr. Mahedby. Thank you, Chair. I'm excited to make this motion. I move that the school board adopt the Hewton-Mifflin-Harcourt Interreading Literacy Core Resource. Is there a second?

[04:07:56] Seconded by Ms. Okedegbe. Mr. Mahedby, would you like to speak to your motion? I do have some thoughts, but I guess I'll pass it on to Mr. Slevin and to speak on this thing. Thank you. Thank you for the opportunity to share a few thoughts. We did want to just give a recap of the information item from last week where we are we're tasked with bringing a recommendation to the board for our k2 literacy adoption the top three three resources were benchmark advance hmh into reading and mcgraw-hill wonders we looked at the review committee which

[04:08:32] favored benchmark advance the lcps community feedback which favored hmh into reading and interface reviews that favored McGraw-Hill Wonders. Considerations that we gave were that Wonders was not approved or anticipated for approval for grades three. Benchmark advance and HMH into reading are approved K3 and are anticipated for 4-5. Why did we ultimately choose to recommend HMH into reading? It was the top choice for the LCPS community once we put the resources out into the schools. It provides plans for small group instruction, provides data that

[04:09:08] drive instruction comprehensive skills instruction for foundational reading skills there are varied professional learning opportunities to meet the needs of our teachers and it's the most preferred in a variety of our virginia school divisions and we feel that there is a balance of support for novice and veteran teachers miss neil is here tonight to respond to a few questions that have been asked last week responding to how we will be supporting professional learning and some next steps once we are go forward with the k2 adoption so support will be ongoing for

[04:09:43] principals and for reading specialists around navigating the implementation and also how to provide support to teachers with this multi-year transition we definitely realize that it's going to be an ongoing plan the English SOLs are currently undergoing revisions and at a recent meeting it was shared with English supervisors that full implementation of these revised standards is expected for next school year the 24 25 school year and so there will not be a crosswalk year with these new standards so in thinking about that

[04:10:17] and with our new core resource adoption in early 2024 we are looking at forming a workgroup to focus on aligning the new English SOLs with the new core resources so that's going to be a pretty important task for this work group and it will consist of elementary teachers reading specialists and administrators our team of instructional facilitators for ela will be deployed to help support the rollout of the new resource and

[04:10:51] really prioritizing those schools those schools with the highest need we're looking at a high level introductory kickoff to be held for teachers on march 5th which is our countywide PD day and then additional professional learning opportunities will be available for teachers throughout the summer and then considering the beginning of school knowing that we'll have new teachers all teachers will be provided with additional training and support in August during those in-service days at a school-based level I think it's important to note that with HMH into reading students will primarily utilize the physical print materials during

[04:11:29] instruction direct student instruction can occur face-to-face in a variety of groupings whole group small group one-on-one there are also a variety of digital resources to help support teachers and the majority of those digital resources are teacher facing and are intended to provide and support teachers with differentiated supports for planning for assessment and for instruction so we're happy to offer any answers to any questions the board may have thank you miss Neal and mr. Slevin mr. Mahedvy did you have anything to add

[04:12:06] on to that thank you chair so I think this just to kind of add to this has been a long journey I know myself and many of the board members came in I guess one of the priorities was to do the early literacy assessment and to review the program and then to come back with the recommendation and tonight I feel like it's almost like it's coming it's a good night tonight to end this is the last of the motions of

action item from the school board to sort of complete that back in I think you know 2020 I think I was Miss Sheridan appointed me as the chair

[04:12:44] of the curriculum instruction committee and that's when we started the assessment of the early literacy and then I think back in November last 2022 I think we I want to thank Miss Corbo for her support in making sure the board didn't rush into I think it was a program the Wonders program and you wait for the VDOE guidance and get more sort of feedback from the community.

[04:13:08] So I'm kind of glad everything has come to fruition. Again, I support, and thanks for being patient, and thanks for your support, Ms. Neal and Ms. Slavin. I just wanted to share that part of it. Thank you. Additional discussion, Ms. Corbo. Thank you.

[04:13:27] I think, as all of you know, and I'm sure the community knows, this has definitely been a passion of mine from day one, just knowing when I first was going to run for school board, educators came swarming at me and said, Denise, you've got to do something about our literacy program.

[04:13:44] Our kids are not learning how to read. And I asked, and I was also part of the curriculum committee at that time, and this is one of the items that I brought forward. We had an overview that was presented, which was fine, and the recommendation was, oh, let's look at our curriculum.

[04:14:03] Maybe it's our curriculum that's the problem. Well, easy to Google, Lucy Calkins, of course it's going to be a problem. And that's exactly what we found out. We found out that our curriculum was not effective and children weren't learning to read. And so I then asked for literacy data and literacy scores with a little bit of pushback.

[04:14:24] And thank goodness support from my colleagues, it was finally presented. And when it was provided, one of the cabinet members said, oh, that was a fun activity. Make no mistake, ensuring that all students can read and overseeing student data for the school district should not be a fun project. This is someone's job, and it's up to the superintendent to demand this type of oversight from his staff in our most critical areas. I want to thank this board and the board members for holding the administration accountable, for going back to

[04:15:01] the table having them go back to the table to reassess the curriculum that has led to bringing forward a reading program tonight that has been properly reviewed and and that is recommended for our k2 literacy core resource adoption so thank you board members and and thank you also for the staff for for going back and doing the right thing thank you mrs. okay thank you chair it was actually one year ago tomorrow that the board took the action to refer this back to um for

[04:15:41] further consideration once the approved upon list was available from the state and as a brand new school board member there this was a big decision i felt like i needed to talk to a lot of people to learn what i needed to learn in order to weigh in on that and i talked to board members who Um, multiple people have said, this is, this was a priority for the board that came in in 2019.

[04:16:12] Um, and so I wanted to learn from them, their thoughts. I didn't, you know, I've, I felt uncomfortable because I felt like we just didn't have enough information and the timing seemed wrong, but I wanted that input and feedback before I weighed in. I also talked to teachers and parents, specifically parents who'd been advocating for years, um, around literacy and, um, supporting specifically students with dyslexia. So I appreciate all of those conversations had, um, I think multiple conversations with staff

as well. Just walk me through this, help me understand. So appreciate all of the time. And I think in the end we made

[04:16:50] the right choice. It was hard because I know staff had spent so much time coming to the decision that had been reached last fall. I imagine it was disappointing because again, we had spent so much time but i think in the end it was the right choice it was a hard choice but it was a choice for our students and i'm very excited to support staff's recommendation this evening and also just really appreciate the process appreciate the fact that as board members we were able to have representatives be on this committee that met with you and they had apparently great long and

[04:17:28] fruitful conversations as a group to talk about the pros and cons of the various materials that were being offered so thank you for your work on this and i'm excited to see the results of this over the coming years so thank you so much additional discussion ms polifko thank you mr chair miss neil you mentioned earlier in your recap of this new program that we're looking at adopting this evening that the majority of the digital resources are teacher-facing but i would like to know what portion of those materials are not teacher-facing and could be used for student

[04:18:06] access outside of the one-on-one or small group direct instruction that they will be receiving from their teachers if you could please provide some information on that so I know with the digital materials that a lot of what the students see in print are also available digitally so for example part of the resources that we could review online you could see that the decodable text that a student would use in the classroom could also be available digitally that they could read possibly with a parent or something at home or

[04:18:43] someone else at home those materials can also be printed out and be used as additional supplemental materials so it's really because they're teacher facing its teacher choice as to what's going to help to support the students at those times but really what's going to help to support their instruction thank you thank you miss Neal is there any kind of parameter that that LCPS plans on putting into place to ensure that there isn't just a blanket, hey, it's easy to have the child use the computer, so we're just going to use the computer. Or my concern is that if we're talking

[04:19:22] about differentiated instruction, then it really does need to be differentiated. And I know that there's no way to make that prediction right here in this room at this moment before we've even adopted the program. I would just state from my own perspective as a board member here that my one concern would be a reliance on digital materials and I certainly would hope that that would not be the case and that teachers would truly be providing that differentiated instruction to do what's best for each individual student in their classroom thank you additional discussion

[04:19:57] seeing none we will place the motion on we'll place the motion to a vote that the school board adopt the Houghton Mifflin Harcourt interreading literacy core resource the voting board is open board members, please record your vote at this time. And Ms. Corbo, your vote? Yes. Please record a vote of yes for Ms. Corbo, and then close and display the vote. That motion will pass unanimously.

[04:20:33] Board members, we have one, I've been led to believe that it's brief, one brief information item tonight, 1401 from the Finance and Operations Committee, revised state cost per pupil for tuition purposes. Mr. Morse. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm going to pass this over to Ms. Willoughby. Thank Each year, once the budget is adopted, the school division sets the tuition rates for students who attend LCPS that either live outside of the county or outside of the state as well.

[04:21:06] The tuition rates were initially set when the budget was adopted late for FY24 back in September. At that time, we had signaled that we may be back, depending on what was going to happen with the state budget. Since then, we did receive the additional funding from the state that the county appropriated to us.

[04:21:27] So that \$12 million did increase the budget. So based on a revised budget, we have recalculated the tuition costs. The revised tuition costs would be \$14,482 for the out-of-county students and then \$21,015 for the students who are attending that live outside of the state.

[04:21:55] Unless otherwise directed or if there are questions, our intention is to bring this back as an action item to the school board at the next meeting in January. Thank you, Ms. Willoughby.

[04:22:14] I was under the impression that this was information only and that it didn't need to be brought back for action. Is action by the school board required on this? Yes. Okay. In that case, I'm going to, well, it'll be up to the next board.

[04:22:30] I would recommend the next board hear this first again as an information item, but that'll be up to them. and we tried to avoid hearing items as information that would be action for the next board. Mr. Morse. I just want to check, is there a time criticality on this?

[04:22:47] No. Thank you. Any additional discussion on this item? Seeing none, we will move on to item number 15 on our agenda, which is new business. Is there any new business tonight?

[04:23:04] Seeing none. Oh, Ms. Korba. Thank you.

[04:23:17] So since we did not pass our resolution for collective bargaining, I would like to make the recommendation that the board direct Dr. Spence to enter into an MOU with LEA for building access by next Wednesday, December 20th.

[04:23:34] Ms. Corbo, that's going to require a suspension of the rules to make a motion, unless that's just a personal recommendation on your part. wasn't clear on what you were trying to do. I'd like to suspend the rules. There's been a motion to suspend the rules. Is there a second? That motion will fail for lack of a second. So since this is an information item, can I make a recommendation that this would be an information item at the next board meeting? I suppose you could put that in writing to whoever the chair

[04:24:14] is going to be in January. I don't know how else to disposition that at this point, given that this our last meeting and if you're requesting that the board take action that would again that would require a board action which the suspension of the rules has already failed for so so the action would be the action that you're taught that you're referencing is putting this as an information item that would take that that would need action is that what you're saying just to be clear i'm not i don't understand what your question is if you want to request an information item of the next

[04:24:49] board you could email them or contact them and request that they do so but i don't given the board has not suspended the rules and we cannot take action at this point i don't i don't see what's left for us to be able to do thank you okay is there any additional new business miss polifko mr chair i'm sorry you didn't see my hand up i was just going to say that i would second the motion so that we could take action on this item oh all right i did you make that before i apologize if i didn't hear you it went by and it just went by so i just wanted to go back and raise my hand say that i would second that motion so that the board could take action this evening that's fine

[04:25:26] the motion to suspend the rules has been seconded it does not require it does not allow for debate and requires a two-third motion to pass so we'll go ahead and place that for to a vote at this time if we can open the voting board voting board is now open please record your vote and miss corbo

[04:26:06] what is your vote yes please record a vote of yes for miss corbo and then please close and display the vote. That motion is going to fail 1-8 with Polifco, Ogadegbe, Sorotkin, Mehedivi, Beatty, Morris, Sheridan, and Reeser opposed. Is there any additional new business? Seeing none, we'll move on to item number 16 on our agenda, which is board member comments and committee reports,

[04:26:39] and we will begin with Ms. Corbo. You're on mute, Ms. Corbo. There we go. Thank you so much. I just wanted to provide a summary, as I anticipate most of us will be doing tonight, since it's our very last meeting.

[04:27:04] So a few weeks ago, I read a local news article about the school board members elect. Aside from being grateful to all those who stepped up to room for office, what left me unsettled was the description of the current board. Loudoun is closing a tumultuous chapter for the school district.

[04:27:23] I will agree it's been a rough road, perhaps tumultuous at times. However, that word does not reflect this board's legacy. There's been a lot of good, some much needed changes and things that, if possible, would be better if they could be forgotten, maybe forever.

[04:27:40] But we are leaving our terms with a video history archive of our meetings, hundreds of news articles, some done well, and others one-sided to tell a story, all of which can never be undone. I typically say when things are hard, that's when we learn the most.

[04:27:56] And as God is my witness, I have learned more than my capacity about politics, the board, this community, and so much more. And because of this board's inability to work together and provide oversight and leadership, we ourselves are the reason for much of the negative storylines.

[04:28:14] Somewhere along the line, we forgot that we serve the people, the voters, the community, the ones who elected us into office. and it's our job to provide that oversight to the superintendent and the school district. This board has often allowed the superintendent and his cabinet to lead the way rather than taking the lead and providing the direction.

[04:28:35] When I took office four years ago, I vowed to provide transparency, a voice for all, and in addition to address falling literacy scores and the millions of dollars that was invested in faulty technology. And as I began my term meeting with cabinet members and the superintendent, I asked a lot of questions, and as many of you know, I've never stopped asking questions.

[04:28:56] I was curious about the needs-based assessments, the data for projects, pilot program reports, and information to provide investments that we're making and to have those results and the impact and the overall positive educational outcomes. What I didn't expect was that information to be non-existent. And I was often told the information wasn't available, leading me to conclude that it was non-existent. So I began to talk openly about it on the dais. And surprisingly, I was shocked that only a few board members shared my concerns. And soon after, policy was brought

[04:29:35] forward designed to silence school board members from seeking information and from sharing information with the public. I've been asked over and over, what do you think the problem is? Why

is Loudoun County such a mess? And it really is simple. It goes to a great school district, starts with hiring a passionate superintendent with a vested interest and vision for our county.

[04:29:57] And if you aren't sure what that looks like, I encourage all of you to Google videos of Dr. Hattrick. You will see and feel his passion for Loudoun County Public Schools. I worked under Dr. Hattrick for the majority of my career, and I can tell you firsthand under his leadership, These were some of the best times for our students and educators.

[04:30:18] He was able to bring all stakeholders together to create a strong community and rally together for education. And Dr. Hattrick, if you are listening, I just want to personally thank you for your service. The superintendent and the cabinet, they are the key decision makers for almost all things.

[04:30:37] And if they're not passionate about education, and if they're not held at the highest standards, And if they're not held to be accountable for decisions, the school district will never be the best that it can be. I'd like to close with a letter that was written to me from a constituent that I feel summarizes probably my greatest accomplishment during my term.

[04:31:00] Dear Denise, I really admire the way you stood your ground through all of this. I know it would have been easier to cut and run, especially after Mr. Sorokin and other board members tried to get you to resign by making public statements and going to the press, making it look like you lied about your disability and medical condition.

[04:31:18] How arrogant for Mr. Sorokin to ask for your resignation when only the citizens have that right. The vast majority of this county voted for you because we believe in you, your reputation as an educator, and your passion for our children. Never forget that. You chose to ignore these select board members' attempts to silence you, and you continue to do the work you set out to do. You have done what you have always done, stood for the children and the teachers and everyone. Today, your last board meeting, the fact that Loudoun County School System will now have an appropriate literacy curriculum

[04:31:56] and children will really learn to read is your legacy. When the reading curriculum adoption is approved we can all say you did it. A crown jewel for your legacy to have a true guaranteed and visible reading curriculum for LCPS students. You can be proud of this forever and so many children will read because of you. I just wanted to thank the person who wrote this just knowing how grateful I am for their words and I'll truly treasure them. I also want to thank the almighty for providing me the strength and the sense of balance because without him there truly is nothing. Thank you to

[04:32:32] my friends and family for providing me with the support throughout this entire journey. And most importantly, I want to thank each and every one of our school-based educators, our cafeteria workers, custodians, bus drivers, assistants, teachers, principals, all of you for providing your service to our wonderful children and families every single day.

[04:32:52] You truly are the heartbeat of what makes up this school district. To the new board, thank you for stepping up to serve. As you take your role, remember to be selfless. Listen to the community. Listen to the educators. Often when they send you emails or speak to you during public comment, it's because there was a failure to communicate or decisions were made without their input. Don't be afraid to ask questions. Hold the administration accountable to provide you information, transparency, accountability, because that's the biggest part of our job. That's what we have been elected to do. As I leave this office, I will continue

[04:33:32] to provide an incredible literacy enrichment program to children and families through the Storybook Treasures Program, and I will also focus on my health and healing. I just want to thank everyone who has supported me and everyone on this board and also the staff for all of your work and also for allowing me to serve this community.

[04:33:56] God bless Loudoun County Public Schools. Thank you. Thank you. Ms. Polipco. I would like to congratulate the board members elect. You are elected to carry out the will of the citizens in Loudoun County.

[04:34:16] In January, you'll take an oath to uphold the U.S. Constitution and the Virginia Constitution. I hope that you will fully realize your position as duty bearers for the public. Parents and caregivers have God-given rights over the children they put on loan to the school system each day when they send them to school.

[04:34:36] You are to carry out the will of the people while also maintaining responsibility for the actions of the superintendent. His failures are your failures, and likewise, his successes are yours. I hope that one of the first things you will do when you're officially seated is work together to amend policies that restrict board member access to information and prohibit full participation in their duties as elected officials.

[04:35:06] Direct the superintendent to make available to you in writing a detailed analysis, including salary and rationale for any individual he wishes to appoint to his cabinet. Further, amending the consent agenda to include line item vetoes would expand transparency.

[04:35:28] Board members should have the ability to reject certain items on the consent agenda while accepting others and not have to throw the baby out with the bathwater. To the new board chair, please appoint qualified, capable board members to committees that have the most impact on students, staff, and families.

[04:35:49] Rather than cutting your nose off to spite your face by placing them on throwaway committees because you feel threatened by their ability to shed light on systemic problems in LCPS. Do not use poorly written policies as shields to avoid conflict.

[04:36:04] Clinical psychologist Jordan Peterson says conflict delayed is conflict multiplied. And we've seen that play out over the last four years on this school board. Never be afraid to be the lone voice covering a contentious topic.

[04:36:21] Speak the truth, remain principled, and never lie to yourself by compromising to achieve a unanimous vote for optics. Maintain composure, be polite but pointed, be measured, concise, be bold, be courageous. Never ever apologize for your position or beliefs.

[04:36:40] When you bend once, you will do it again, and soon it will become a habit. Don't ever be afraid to eat alone, because you hold the sole opposing viewpoint. Remember that schools exist to educate children. Children are the number one priority, not ironclad six-figure salaries for bureaucrats.

[04:36:59] Children are our future, and at \$20,000 per year per pupil, taxpayers of Loudoun County should get a good return on their investment from day one I have represented those who deliver sharp criticism of LCPS I did not run for school board to use it as a springboard for climbing the political ladder I did this because I love my children and I care deeply for the children and families whom I work with in my

profession I won my election but I'm not special I'm you I'm a mother who wants to see my kids thrive I want my children to be safe when

[04:37:38] I send my kids to school each day, I want to see them come home unscathed just like you. I'm the professional who advocates for children with IEPs to receive a free appropriate public education, like many of you. I'm the mom who speaks out against social-emotional learning, being the job of the parents and not the school system. I'm the parent who sees the results of neo-Marxism spreading through our educational institutions for decades and has the courage to call it out, like many of you. I'm the board member who repeatedly calls for truth and transparency

[04:38:15] for the safety of all children in LCPS and has the courage to call out inaction and its detrimental effect on kids and parents. The common denominator in all of this is children. Children are why I'm here and they will continue to be my reason, passion, and impetus for what I do long after I leave this position. To the board members elect, please place children at the center of your work. They are why we have schools to begin with. Remember that you work for the people who fund

[04:38:54] LCPS and not those who draw income from it. The buck stops with you. Thank you. Thank you. Erica. Thank you, Chair. It has been an honor and pleasure to serve this past year as the Leesburg district representative. While I had thought for years about ways I could serve the community, running for an elected seat was never on my list of things to do. I distinctly remember the moment

[04:39:28] I decided I needed to step up. I was reading the weekly paper and enjoying my Saturday morning coffee in the early of fall 2021 and read that our current school board member was stepping down after being harassed and threatened. We have elections for a reason. We get to choose by majority vote who will represent us. Bullies don't get to push people out of office effectively defying the will of the people. I knew then and now that we are better than that. Deciding to run was a family decision and discussion based on on the circumstances. I felt compelled to step up with inclusive

[04:40:06] values because as a public school system we have the responsibility not only to teach all of our students but create foster and support a learning community that is welcoming and affirming. Nationally and locally we are challenged with those working to take books off shelves, remove protections for marginalized and vulnerable students, and limit what is taught and discussed in our classrooms. These debates will continue and as they do I am hopeful that we remember that students need to feel safe, seen, and welcome in order to learn and thrive. We need books and curriculum that reflect the diversity of our

[04:40:42] students, our community, nation, and world. While I am proud of what we accomplished and my collaborative work on the board, I am most appreciative of the people I've met and found community with. I'm especially thankful to my husband and children for their support. I could not have done this without them, their support, and encouragement, and I am very much looking forward to having more time with them. Who would have thought that spending time looking at homework with your middle schooler would be something to look forward to, but I very much do. We have an

[04:41:17] incredible school system, talented and passionate teachers and staff, and over 80,000 students coming to learn every day. Everything we do, every decision that is made, needs to keep students at the center. Thank you. John? Thank you, Chair. I'd like to begin with lots of gratitude. Thank you to

[04:41:53] my wife who's watching, who was with me through thick and thin, and provided great guidance as we navigated these past four years. I want to thank my children who grew from four the day I was

elected to seven today. There were very good sports, about 430 dinners that lasted about 10 minutes, so that I could sprint here for a committee meeting. I want to thank my parents and my in-laws for their support throughout the term, and for their help watching the children when we need a babysitter, and just for being there when we needed them. I also want to thank my mentors and friends, those I started with like Dr. Mann, and those I met along the way like Jeff

[04:42:32] Mayhew. I also want to thank the citizens of the Catoctin District for your trust in me as your representative for these past four years. Thank you to all those who care to come to public comment or write an email or both. At my campaign kickoff for this term in 2019, I chose this quote by the English poet and statesman Thomas Moore to guide me. He said, you must not abandon the ship in a storm because you cannot control the winds. What you cannot turn to good, you must at least make as little bad as you can. Now, at the time, I was thinking more in terms of some policy changes like

[04:43:10] 1040, but I'd say we got to run for our money in this term. We couldn't control the winds. I couldn't control the winds. And I would say there was a lot of bad during the school board term. And I would like to think that I tried to make it as little bad as possible. And I think my crowning, quote, little bad as possible, unquote, achievement, has to be the amendment to the public comment policy.

[04:43:34] It was going to exclude all bad language. Now, profanity doesn't have a place in school board meetings, or schools for that matter. So even though I couldn't get the books out of the classrooms or libraries, at least I could have the students, parents, and teachers read them to the people who are keeping them there. Now, there were many times I had tried to forewarn my colleagues that the path we were heading on was for disaster. Shutting down schools, defending the old superintendent when the evidence indicated otherwise, or rushing through a new superintendent instead of letting the incoming board pick someone. These are just a few of those opportunities.

[04:44:10] But I tried to resist the rising time, and being in the minority, time and time again, I was outvoted. And as I quoted at my swearing-in ceremony, calamitas occasio virtutis est, or in English, disaster is virtue's opportunity. This is a quote from Seneca who had the fortune, or you might say misfortune of being a tutor to a young Nero. Those seemingly prophetic words describe this term to a T. There were many disasters, but when they come, all you can do is the honorable thing. Sometimes it's going along, sometimes it's voting no, but it's often being the counsel to others and hoping

[04:44:49] to show them the correct path. And what is the correct path, especially for Loudoun County Public Schools? And I think it's not just our county that suffers in this one. I think every public school system seems to suffer from the problems of not enough teachers, not enough space, not enough this, not enough of that. But I think we have to think about this. Hasn't society progressed so far without all those bells and whistles of our educational experience? And so my advice to the incoming board is that you need to refocus. The current college system is broken given that it is burdensome and expensive, vocationally narrow, and a waste of time and resources for

[04:45:26] so many students. So this means that we have to step back. We need to prepare our students to be ready for the real world at high school graduation. And then we have to step back further from that. In order to do that, we have to go back to the basics and focus on reading, writing, and math for the first decades of a child's life.

[04:45:42] Lead them out into the natural world and let them experience wonder through all their senses. And then in middle school, we can add reason, logic, and importantly, theology guided by the parents. Our

republic requires virtue, and virtue is only cultivated by thinking deeply about our place in the world and time.

[04:46:00] And now by the time our students have gone through high school, they should know all the sciences, economics, and how the world works. I mean, if you can vote and go off to war, you can be a young professional. And as I sit here, I'm going to add a little, just as we're thinking about this. So it's a mostly empty boardroom.

[04:46:16] It was crowded during public comment, as it often has, but it always empties out very quickly before the main work of the board is even done. One of my favorite books ever, really, is *Les Misérables*. And there's a beautiful musical that's based off this book.

[04:46:32] And there's a song there, *Empty Chairs and Empty Tables*. Now, obviously, it's not the same because that's a French revolution. This is just a school board meeting but you know I just sit here kind of thinking about it like where is that parents revolution that was supposed to bring in sweeping change was it a failed revolution or do we just get distracted by the next problems in our lives and forget about the current fight just something to think about empty chairs and empty tables here they sang about tomorrow and tomorrow never came now I think that everything that could go wrong went wrong during these past four years but it was an opportunity for growth I'd like to thank my colleagues for

[04:47:09] their time and sacrifice, even if we didn't see eye to eye on one issue or another. At least for us, the storm has finally passed. The disastrous channels have been navigated, even if we did get roughed up a lot along the way. And now we can rest, ready for life on land, knowing that the ship of state will sail on with someone else at the helm. It is my hope that the next board takes these words to heart and follows them. Because after all, at the end of the day, education should be about the children, not ideologies. And I hope you take my advice, because I think I've been right most this time. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair. If I didn't have any other impact,

[04:47:48] at least all my co-board members are using Navy parlance, and I will continue that trend. I've rewritten these comments several times, and I've added a few other literary references for those that are so cultured. It was the best of times. It was the worst of times. It was the age of wisdom. It was the age of foolishness. Clearly, Dickens served on a school board.

[04:48:13] The success of Loudoun County Public Schools remains an untold story. Through the last four years, the news headlines have woven together stories of incredible conspiracies, peddled by some reporters who resemble injury attorneys more so than journalists.

[04:48:30] *Lost in the Noise* is the incredible work performed by our educators, counselors, staff, and administrators who cared for every student. I hope messages of support from the community vastly outweigh the attacks by social media warriors who seem intent on only garnering personal attention and seeking disruption to our educators.

[04:48:51] And we have a few left in the room. Your focus belongs in the classroom, not the boardroom. We should be providing you guardrails, not blinders and tools, not traps. The new school board will need to hear from you directly.

[04:49:07] Don't acquiesce your voice to a union, but use the union if you need it. You are heard and you are valued. And don't shoulder the burden that is most appropriately placed on the school board. For administrators and staff, thank you for your unwavering support for our children.

[04:49:28] School leaders need to focus on supporting their educators. They trust that when you use the word occasionally, you mean occasionally. And we all know what occasionally means. Parents, you are always welcome in LCPS.

[04:49:44] You are the most important influence on your children and their personal growth. Share your concerns with your teachers first, then the administrators, and then bring it to the school board. We care deeply for those parents who take the time to come in to the board with a specific concern.

[04:50:05] However, there are those who, at every meeting, with pithy sayings, unhinged attacks, or universal victimization, not so much. Fellow board members, at times I felt like we were rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic.

[04:50:22] But as an esteemed playwright, Monty Python said, this is supposed to be a happy occasion. Let's not bicker and argue about who killed who. Indeed, let us refrain from petty squabbles and instead revel in the absurdity of it all.

[04:50:39] It has been an absurd four years. The board has responded to our failures with determination to fix that which needs fixing, to leave alone that which is working, and to pass the division into the capable hands of our successors. Responsibility and authority of a school board representative is similar in some respects to that of a ship captain without the bling or the pomp and circumstance.

[04:51:05] And there's no brig, which would have been useful. At my Navy retirement many years ago, my guest speaker, Admiral Frick, asked the audience, what do you call a Navy commander who's retired after 20 years? His answer, a quitter. So I am not a quitter, but I decided early last year that I would step down at the end of my third term.

[04:51:27] Today's seniors were in kindergarten when Ms. Sheridan and I first started serving on this board. She has six months more than I do. She'll tell you about that. And my fondest memories will be handing my son and daughters their diplomas as each of them headed to Virginia Tech or sneaking into my wife's classroom while she was teaching.

[04:51:52] Clearly, the division leadership lost public confidence in our ability to govern. Following COVID and the assaults, I took over as the chair last year, trying to pull LCPS ship off the rocks. I was not successful. It didn't matter whether I feel personally complicit in mistakes or poor decisions made by the board. It doesn't matter how I voted. We hold the ultimate responsibility for public education in Loudoun. And as a board, we need to be held accountable, not to political parties, not to mobs, not to unions, not to the LCPS administration,

[04:52:31] but to Loudoun families. LCPS is finally at a point where the division can be refloated and regain its mantle as one of the top divisions in the nation. There will be a new set of captains, and to all of them I offer my assistance, and I wish them fair winds and following seas.

[04:52:52] Melinda, the Dulles District is lucky to have you. Thank you. Thank you. Brenda? Thank you. I've been thinking for quite some time what I would say tonight during the final board member comments.

[04:53:07] What I'm not going to do is be as witty and poetic as Jeff has been, as savvy and profound as Atusa usually is. I didn't research an obscure fact to share its history like Ian might. I couldn't be as thoughtful and sincere as Erica, and I promised not to be as verbose as Harris can be.

[04:53:27] So I decided to leave the dais with an expression of my gratitude. No one gets here alone, and no one can be successful without support and collaboration. A little arm twisting and compromise. I'll start with the Sterling District.

[04:53:44] Thank you for trusting me to serve as your school board rep for 12 ½ years. It has been my honor and privilege. To my colleagues, I have served with 27 different school board members. I'd like to take a moment to remember Leslie King. She passed during this term.

[04:54:01] She became my friend and was a bright light. I carry her with me daily. I have learned something from each of you, and I share some unsolicited advice to the new board members. Find common ground on any topic and always remain civil and respectful.

[04:54:19] For example, Tiffany and I talk about our dogs. John and I are gluten-free. And Denise and I share a love for giving books to children. When there isn't common ground, debate, vote, and move to the next item with a clean slate.

[04:54:38] LCPS staff, so many of you have impacted me during my time here. Cabinet members, school administrators, teachers, support staff. You serve our students and families with integrity. The relationships we forged are based on honesty and trust.

[04:54:56] I thank you for the immense amounts of information provided, the tough conversations and reality checks. All of it enabled me to advocate for the needs of the park, highlight underrepresented and marginalized students, and push for policy changes.

[04:55:12] I am truly grateful. Parents and students, thank you for raising your voices and providing honest feedback. The most important part of this job is listening. I have learned from all of you, and you continue to inspire me. I know from my own background, speaking up is intimidating.

[04:55:31] I hope you feel heard and feel the impact of the equity initiatives now and in the future. To my friends, I am extremely fortunate to have and feel the force and power of true friendship. In comparison, the first eight years were easy.

[04:55:51] It is no secret this last term was a challenge almost every day. So thank you to my friends. You stood by me and never flinched in your support, kindness, safe spaces, and laughter. Because of you, I was able to face the next headline, social media post, and public comment with grace.

[04:56:11] I'm extremely lucky to have a list of friends too long to read, and I look forward to more time with you now that my weeknights are open. Jory, my assistant extraordinaire, there are no sufficient words to thank you.

[04:56:28] You never strayed from my priorities, remained focused, and unquivering loyalty got us to the finish line. Thank you. And as they say, I know we'll be friends forever. You know too much. Family. First, my kids.

[04:56:45] I'm proud to be the mom of two LCPS grads. I'm sure there were times that were challenging to be Brenda Sheridan's kids. I hope the benefits of an LCPS education outweighed any embarrassing moments. I would be remiss if I did not apologize for the impact of my being on the board the last four years.

[04:57:06] The death threats and fear imparted on our family are inexcusable and unforgivable. I could have easily cowered and resigned, but as we all know, Sheridans don't quit. I look forward to being more

present and relaxed during family time. I love you.

[04:57:23] Finally, my husband, thank you for the support you have provided the last 12 and a half years as I stretched myself outside our comfort zone and lived as a public official. Looking back, the first few years were pretty mild and you single-parented our children through many evenings, weekends, and definitely late Tuesday nights.

[04:57:43] During COVID, the school board meetings invaded our home and you supported me during my tenure as chair. There's no describing how unfair of an ask that was. Thank you. As we look to our future, it's so close. Living as private citizens once more, I'm proud of all the obstacles you helped me overcome, the discussions we've had on policy, my venting, or just finding something completely unrelated to politics, education, and Robert's Rules of Order on TV.

[04:58:12] No more distractions. I might even cook dinner this weekend, or at least order. I love you, and I'll be home soon. To the greater LCPS community, thank you for the support offered during my tenure. Every kind word, offer of support, and hugs are greatly appreciated.

[04:58:30] I hope my legacy includes the establishment of Roby High School, full-day kindergarten, differentiated staffing, differentiated school allotments, diverse books, policy 1040 and 8040, and a multitude of equity initiatives. We leave LCPS in good hands, and the future is bright.

[04:58:50] Thank you, Loudon. Thank you. Atuza. Thanks, Ian. I hope you all won't be disappointed. My remarks are super short. Thank you to my fellow board members for doing all the heavy lifting.

[04:59:05] You've covered almost everything. I think there's a couple people left. So basically, my final board member comments are just a great big old thank you note to my family and friends for supporting me, like you all have said. To the kids and the parents in the community that I deeply care about, it's why I ran.

[04:59:24] It's why I continue to run. To the teachers and the staff who take care of those kids, to the staff here in Central Admin, and to my colleagues on the board, I think we all work to try to create opportunity for our kids through public education.

[04:59:40] During my school board member, every interaction with all of the folks I just listed has been a learning experience for me. I'm both grateful and humbled by that. Thank you for choosing me to be the person who represented you on the journey of the last four years.

[04:59:56] I believe that the power of public education is that it provides a path through which every child can truly reach their full potential and give back to their community. This opportunity is not a limited resource, so I hope we continue to give it abundantly to all of our kids.

[05:00:12] Thanks. Thank you. Delegate-elect Harris. Thank you, Chair. So I'm going to take Ms. Sheridan's comment to heart, and I'm going to be verbose tonight. Thank you.

[05:00:29] So I want to begin with something. Again, I've said this many times according to niche.com rating. For the last two years, LCPS has been rated the number one division with 25 students or more. Tonight, we learned, or at least was shared, that 30 of our LCPS schools were among the top 100 schools in Virginia.

[05:00:51] That is a legacy I'm really proud of. With that said, I'd like to begin with some thanks first. First of all, I've never mentioned, but I'm really thankful to my wife, my son, senior this year, my daughter in

LCPS. Without the support, I would never have been able to start the journey, let alone complete this journey. So all those, again, I'm sure you're watching or maybe watch back. Thank you for supporting that. Second, I'd like to thank the residents of Ashman District

[05:01:25] who gave me, as an immigrant, I wasn't born here, but they gave me a chance, an opportunity to represent them, and many more who supported me this year as well. I'm truly humbled by their support and the chance of giving this opportunity. Third, all the volunteers who for no reason other than to have their voices be represented work hard to help me elect. Fourth, I do want to mention my school board colleagues. I'm really thankful to be part of this with you guys up here as a board.

[05:02:04] Regardless of all the challenges, you know, your dedication to public service and the children of I want to thank you for working together. Together, we've accomplished a number of initiatives, regardless of all the noise. Last but not the least, I want to thank the LCPS staff here, the leadership, sometimes who have been bearing the brunt in many regards.

[05:02:29] I have a few names to call out, I think, again, which I truly appreciate. Dr. Smith, Dr. Ellis, Mrs. Smith, who had to deal with it and being patient with many of our school board members. Ms. Richardson, Ms. Villaby, on both from the nutrition side and the financial side, thank you.

[05:02:49] Mrs. Sloven, Dr. Laysmith is not here from the CTE. I think Ms. Dawson, Ms. Tate, Ms. Sherry, thank you for everything you have been doing. Ms. Michelle Walker, she's not here, but again, I thank you.

[05:03:05] Ms. Hope, she's up here. Again, I thank you for being and supporting the school board. And many more I miss from the admissions staff who has been helping, and I couldn't be more thankful for that. Besides the staff, I can't be, again, my gratitude goes to all the staff, all the administration within the schools, the principal, the vice principal, the deans, the teachers, the nutrition workers, the bus drivers, who are passionate and committed to make our school division the best, not only in Virginia, but in the country.

[05:03:40] So with those thanks, I'm filled with, I guess, a little bit of, I'm an emotional person, so I'm filled with a lot of emotions tonight as I reflect this incredible journey. It's almost a, you know, something you couldn't imagine that the journey that I've gone through in the last five years, but it's not been alone.

[05:04:02] It's been collectively taken by all of us together for the last four years, and it's been my distinct honor and privilege to serve as a representative on the Loudoun County School Board and I'm truly grateful for this opportunity that I'll cherish for the rest of my life. When I first took on the responsibility of representing Ashman, I knew that I had a duty to amplify the voices of the community and address the unique challenges we face in education. Today I'm proud that we have made significant strides towards improving academic excellence, creating more learning pathways, and creating a more inclusive and

[05:04:40] and equitable learning environment for our students. I firmly believe that every student deserves to feel seen, heard, and valued, regardless of their background. Through our collaborative efforts, we've implemented initiatives, policies, not only to celebrate a community's rich diversity, but to also promote understanding among all students, which I think we all should be proud of.

[05:05:04] In the pursuit of excellence, I've advocated for innovative educational programs that prepare our students for the world awaits them. Whether we're championing investments in the accelerating the computer science program or improving the art stipend, removing the AP fees or removing the athletic fees, we have in you know in some ways position our schools to be preparing us for the next 21st century.

[05:05:34] A topic that's been close to my heart has been the promotion of mental health resources in our school division. Recognizing the challenges our students face I believe we have all worked to collectively support support the mental health of our students and our staff excuse me so last but not least I mean I think there was a I think all of us came within but with some ideas to to run I know this has not been said I think we gave a lot of feedback to the

[05:06:11] new board but I'll just run through some of the accomplishments that I'm proud of with this board so first creation of the strategic plan not just a strategic but I think this board put together the strategic plan with the KPI so that we have metrics that we can not only we can track them and measure them and and share them with our community from an academic excellence perspective I think we talked about tonight we passed the early literacy sort of program which we started back in 2020 we introduced some math intervention pilot we today tonight We also saw the international baccalaureate program being added.

[05:06:51] We have the HAMSAI academies. We also got to see language emergence, elementary school program. I spoke about the computer science acceleration of that. So those are just very small number of lists that we as a board are proud to be part of.

[05:07:08] From mental health, we've reduced the number of council ratios from high school to elementary. We set up the mental health task force to do an assessment across LCPS. From a transparency communication perspective, setting up the Auditor General's office.

[05:07:26] And I can't wait to see their report when it comes to the special education program. From a staff perspective, I think we, again, there's more to be done. I know the collective bargaining would be something that the next board takes on. But I think from a raised perspective, I think we have been, all of the board members here have been consistently really making sure that we can provide the best amount of raise that we can provide to our staff.

[05:07:51] Lastly, from making, you know, again, something I've not talked about much, but changing Columbus Day to Indigenous Peoples Day, I think that was something we as a board, you may not realize it, but we took the first initiative. Then I think two months later it was done by the county, and then next year by the governor.

[05:08:11] So I think this is something we should be all proud of. LCPS also added the diverse holidays, And then something I'm truly proud of is that LCPS also leads in the diverse meals, I shouldn't say task force, but providing diverse meals to all students.

[05:08:27] This has not only been acknowledged by us, but it's also been acknowledged by the VDOE in terms of how pioneering we are in making sure for that. Lastly, I want to congratulate the new board elect. You are, in spite of what you hear about LCPS or continue to hear all the negative, you are inheriting an awesome school division with awesome, awesome staff.

[05:08:52] So my only feedback to you is that you are here to govern and not to be an activist. If you want to be an activist, this is not the place to be. Be here to make positive changes for our children and staff versus just making noise. If you're here to make noise, then this is not the place.

[05:09:11] Do not rush into major decisions, take your time, receive input from everyone, and make decisions with heart and compassion. So once again, to my fellow Ashburn district residents, thank you

for entrusting me with the privilege of representing you. It's been an honor to serve and I'm filled with optimism.

[05:09:28] As I, you know, again, as I see the new board elect and I see the potential in that. Again, I leave the school board with heart full of gratitude and deep appreciation of the incredible work we've accomplished together. Lastly, I think for many of you here on the board and the staff, I've not only been colleagues, but I've developed a lot of friends here.

[05:09:52] So again, I hope, I know some of you might be moving out of the county, but for many, I continue to nurture this friendship with all of you here. So thank you for that. God bless LCPS, God bless Loudoun, and God bless USA. Thank you.

[05:10:09] Thank you. I will start with one last fencing story, because why not? So back when I used to compete, I was a pretty good fencer. And on my best day, like literally my best day of competition, I just barely broke into a top 100 finish at a national tournament.

[05:10:30] And on the one hand, that sounds pretty good, top 100 in the country. Well, four fencers make the Olympic team. And the difference between like top 100 and top four, I was privileged enough to fence against Olympians from time to time.

[05:10:45] And I would be lucky if I got two points before they won the match by getting 15. And the general rule of thumb in any sport is that you have to double the effort you put in to see an additional round in the tournament. So if you want to go from top 128 to top 64, double your training time.

[05:11:04] If you want to go to top 32, double it again, and so on. So the difference between a barely top 100 fencer and top 4 fencer is enormous. And a gap I personally knew I'd never overcome without quitting my job and training full-time, which, of course, I couldn't afford to do.

[05:11:22] So the reason I'm telling this story is this. Loudoun County Public Schools is a very good school system. I would go so far as calling it an excellent school system. Certainly, some of the school rankings like Niche or the U.S. News and World Reports that we heard information about tonight bear that out.

[05:11:42] 30 schools in Virginia's top 100, that doesn't happen by accident. It doesn't happen despite the school board or despite central administration. That's just an impossibility. Many of us have talked about wanting LCPS to be the best school system in the country.

[05:12:00] But when you look at the top five, top 10 nationally ranked school districts, look at the cost per pupil those communities invest in their students. It is around double what ours is. We've had fights with the county government some years about a choice between cutting the tax rate by seven cents and fully funding the school budget or cutting the tax rate by nine cents and causing a shortfall.

[05:12:28] And when that's the conversation and that's how it's framed, we will never get to where you want to go if you're talking, truly talking about being one of the best school districts in the country. It's an enormous investment difference that's required to make that happen.

[05:12:44] I often lamented during my campaign five years ago, why won't anyone pay attention to the school board? Well, it turns out that a monkey paw somewhere, granted my wish, no one else has been through what we've been through.

[05:13:02] Like, no one else. The seven of us that have been up here since 2020. It was a novel strategy, politicizing a local school board to a national level and trying to use it to influence election results

statewide. And it turns out that's a trick that works exactly once.

[05:13:21] We had millions of dollars try to influence what happened in our boardroom in 2021, and it was effective in influencing the gubernatorial election that year. But those same efforts completely failed in 2022 and failed again in 2023 because the people who live here in Loudoun County and around the Commonwealth were smart enough to see those efforts for what they were.

[05:13:43] And the end result here, after everything, is that we're going to see the exact same partisan split on the next board as we have on the current one. And I am hoping, for the next board's sake, that that is the nail in the coffin for the national hyper-politicization of the Loudoun County School Board, but time will tell.

[05:14:06] We've had a lot of press in our meetings over the past four years from all over the world. We've had, my God, we've had Al Jazeera, we've had Swedish TV, The Washington Post, Fox News. I've seen a lot of good reporters and a lot of really bad ones.

[05:14:23] But I did want, I don't think they get thanked enough, but I wanted to thank our local media who is here with us every single meeting for doing a truly admirable job of covering LCPS over the past few years. Evan Goodenow from the Times Mirror, Alexis Gustin from Loudon Now, and I would add Neil Augenstein from WTOP to that list for really trying to look past the talking points and figure out what truth is and reporting on that. I will echo Harris's remarks about, you know, thanking staff, all staff from the superintendent and cabinet down to every teacher and teacher's

[05:14:59] assistant and bus driver that we have for the work that they do every day in making sure that our kids get an absolutely world-class education. I'll go around the horn. I know this four years ago, they went around the horn a lot. It was less tonight, but I'll do it. So I got asked a lot this year, you know, what's it like working with Tiffany? And what I said every time was that Tiffany is a smart professional board member who I happen to disagree with a lot. And you and I have spoken in the past about not doubting each other's sincerity and believing that everyone comes to the table trying to do what's best for our students, even if we have completely opposite

[05:15:39] ideas on how to accomplish that. And then we go back in the back for dinner and talk about our dogs or what we did over our vacations, and then we move on with our lives because that's what professionals do. And the thing I'll remember most is that one appeal committee earlier this year where you, me, and John were unanimous on all 30, like we had 30 appeals and were unanimous on every single one of them.

[05:16:03] And I thought that was a wonderful example of all trying to do what was best for our students in the schools and what we tried to do every day, even if we disagreed on the approach. Erica, it has been such a pleasure to work with you over the last year. You are thoughtful, measured, kind, smart, all the best qualities of a school board member.

[05:16:24] You were a needed breath of fresh air to help give the board some energy and direction when most of the rest of us were all really, really tired. And I want to thank you for stepping up and deciding to jump directly into the firing line and to do this job with us for a year and change.

[05:16:43] Harris, you and I really started off on the wrong foot. It took around two years for us to figure out how to work well together. But I'm really glad we did because we've gotten a whole lot accomplished by working together for the second half of our term.

[05:17:00] You, more than any other board member, had perspectives on issues that I hadn't considered or even thought about, which is why I think we made such a good team this year as chair and vice chair. And if that one dinner at the Aberdeen Barn is any indication, you have a second career waiting for you as a stand-up impressionist.

[05:17:22] John, you remember. John, one of the best pieces of advice I remember when we all came on the board is that you'll never agree with someone 100% of the time and to keep disagreements professional because the person you disagreed with completely on one motion could be your closest ally on the next one.

[05:17:42] And while we've certainly been on the opposite sides of some big issues, on others, it's been the two of us allied on issues facing Western Loudoun, such as broadband access or access to recreational and aquatic facilities. and that was really important because we're the only two district seats who represented half of the landmass of the county, and that's going to be even more difficult next term when there's going to be only one member, one district member, who's representing pretty much everything west of Route 15. I've also appreciated that you're a student of history, and I've always

[05:18:18] learned to look forward to an unexpected quote from Cicero or other historical leaders in your remarks as you did tonight. Jeff, I don't think I've, I don't actually think I've ever shared this with you before, but one of my favorite constituent emails I ever received was a really angry note saying that the Jeff and Ian bromance had gone too far and that I had to smarten up and remember that you were the enemy. And it became a running joke in my house, like, oh, you're meeting Jeff for lunch? The bromance is alive and well. But the reason I think why we've always gotten along

[05:18:56] other than about Veterans Day is because our general governing philosophy is largely the same, that you can get a lot more done by working together and by finding common ground than the alternative, and you have done so much good for the students of LCPS across your 12 years on the board by doing that. Brenda, you got it the worst out of many of us. Being chair during the brunt of COVID, 80-40, board member reprimands and censures, recall attempts, and everything else

[05:19:30] that happened during our first two years on the board, you weathered it with a poise that I don't think I could have mustered under the same conditions. One of my happiest days on the board was being present in court when the prosecutor, defense, and judge all agreed that the removal petitions against you and Etuza were utter nonsense and were dismissed. Etuza, you've thrown hot tea at me. I pointed at laughed when your shoe disintegrated at the academics of loud and ribbon cutting. And you once aggravated me so much during one of our endless COVID debates

[05:20:05] that I threw my phone against the wall. All this to say you've been a great friend and I don't think I could have made it through the last four years without having you here with me. And I want to also include my school board assistant, Kristen. I'm reminded of an old quote from the West Wing that when something like, you know, have you got a best friend? Are they smarter with you? Would you trust them with your life? That's your chief of staff. That's what, Kristen, that's what you were to me. I could not have done this without you and your infinite patience, and you became a true

[05:20:41] friend not only to me, but to my entire family. Despite the challenges working together, we were able to accomplish the vast majority of the goals that I set for myself and for the board four years ago to ensure that our students get a world-class education. I wanted to make programs like sports and AP classes more accessible by cutting or eliminating fees and other barriers to participation. We've

eliminated athletic fees, waived AP test fees, and eliminated student parking fees. I wanted to bring sports programs to our middle schools. It took a few tries and about

[05:21:18] three and a half years, but that finally came to fruition this fall in a very successful pilot intramural program at four schools and i'm hopeful that per the staff recommendation this is going to be expanded to all middle schools next year i wanted to bring the international baccalaureate program and all of its opportunities to lcps as we saw earlier tonight the ib program is now up and running at loudon valley and heritage high schools similarly i wanted to bring world languages back to our elementary schools and we now have dual language immersion programs up and running at two elementary schools. I wanted to raise teacher and staff pay

[05:21:55] to recruit and retain the best talent for our schools. We've increased average employee pay by about 15% over the past four years, and we've also implemented new benefit programs like paid parental leave for staff and yearly stipends for classroom supplies for teachers.

[05:22:13] We wanted to expand our energy efficiency programs to reduce energy costs. We now have solar panels embedded into the infrastructure of many of our schools as well as other innovative programs like electric buses and geothermal wells. We wanted to lower class sizes and reduce overcrowding and we did that as well. Other accomplishments weren't things that I planned going in but were things brought to my attention by parents, students, or other board members along the way. These included things like modernizing the student dress code, revamping our early literacy curriculum which we took a great unanimous step to doing earlier tonight, increasing our school counselor staffing

[05:22:52] standards and even smaller things like providing beginning music workbooks free of charge. I just wish the cost hadn't been so high. The countless nights that my wife and I spent trying to figure out if the death threats we were receiving were credible and if it was safe to stay in the house that night. The nights when it wasn't and we had a police cruiser at the end of block. The credible threats that the sheriff's office hit dead ends investigating because they originated from the dark web or from an untraceable cell tower source. I received a very kind email

[05:23:31] from a constituent last week thanking me for my service and for having what she called a spine of steel in the face of everything over the past few years. Maybe spine of steel is what it looked like from the outside, but the truth is that I very nearly resigned on more than one occasion when this part-time underpaid public service wasn't worth what it was physically, mentally, and emotionally doing to me and my family. Most of us made it through, and at the end of the day, I'm glad we did, but I know the unconscionable toll that this took on every single one of us.

[05:24:09] That toll included hospital stays for several board members, including one who didn't make it out. Like Brenda, I've been thinking a lot recently about Leslie King, who served on the board with us and represented the Broad Run District until she passed away in 2021.

[05:24:28] She was one of the kindest people I knew, and I wish that she was still here with us to finish our terms out together. I hope that she would have been proud of what we were able to accomplish. To my colleagues up here with me on the dais, thank you for trusting me to serve as your chair this year.

[05:24:49] It was a tremendous honor. To the residents of Purcellville, Roundhill, Mechanicsville, Hillsborough, Middleburg, Philomont, Blumont, Aldi, Willowsford, Brambleton, and everywhere else in

the Blue Ridge District, thank you for allowing me to represent you on the school board for the past four years.

[05:25:10] It has been an honor and a privilege and one that I never took lightly. To my family, thank you for supporting me through everything over the past six years of campaigning and serving. Caitlin, Allison, Jack, Mom, Dad, I love you.

[05:25:27] As we have no further business, this Loudoun County School Board stands adjourned.



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