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Loudoun County School Board, Specialized Programs & Centers Committee Meeting, Tuesday, March 5, 2024

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[00:00:00] Okay, good afternoon. I'd like to call this March 5th, 2024 meeting of the Special Programs and Center Committee to order. My name is Dr. Samara Rasheed, and I am the chair of this committee, and we appreciate your presence today.

[00:00:15] And the purpose of today's meeting is to discuss a couple things, and one of them is the partnership with the GMU, George Mason University Access Academy Lab School, and early childhood education update, as well as the Hillsborough Charter Academy Charter Renewal Application.

[00:00:34] We also want to make decisions on action items, which are charter school calendars. So before we proceed, we value your input. So if there's anyone from the public who wishes to address the committee, please fill out a speaker card at the registration table. That way we can get your voice out.

[00:00:53] So we'll now open the floor to public comments. and if you wish to speak, please come forward, state your name, and limit your comments to two minutes. I think it's Ms. Heidi Vermette, if I'm saying it right.

[00:01:09] Excuse me if I'm not.

[00:01:31] Thank you, Dr. Rashid, Mr. Estraffy, and Ms. LaBelle. I'm the mother of three HCA students who have also attended Mountain View Elementary and been homeschooled, and I could go on for much

longer than two minutes about how the integration of LCPS standards with creative project-based learning and the forming of ties among students from Leesburg to Lovettsville provide unique benefits to those attending HCA.

[00:01:57] Instead, I'd like you to imagine a day in the nest, the central area that serves as multi-purpose room. At 7.40, the school says pledges and hears news, including good news from any student who wishes to share. An engineering or performing arts activity may happen, often run by the kids.

[00:02:13] For the rest of the morning, the PE teacher will be hosting classes when amazing science or technology events aren't occurring or when reading buddies aren't paired up on cushions on the floor. Donations of food, toys, or animal products facilitated by 4th and 5th graders might clutter up the stage. At 10.50, the principal custodian and up to three parent volunteers race into the nest to put out tables and transform into a cafeteria, which they run until 11.50 and then turn back into the PE and activity center. Afternoons and evenings might see the nest become the Museum of Ancient Artifacts, or a science fair, or other venue

[00:02:51] where parents are invited to see their children's knowledge and skills translated into creative work. On the other hand, parents may come in to teach scholars about weather forecasting or farming, though the honest-to-goodness cow that was brought to school had to stay outside. HCA doesn't have much room, but what it does have it uses to the fullest by employing talented teachers and involved principal and supportive staff, and by actively seeking parental involvement.

[00:03:19] The result is a great community of students that enter the various LCPS middle schools prepared to learn, to lead, and to serve. Please consider enabling the continuation of this wonderful school. Thank you again.

[00:03:35] Thank you. Ms. Ann Vermette followed by Val Egger. I am a student who has been to two schools and homeschooled.

[00:03:53] Of all of my experiences, I have liked and learned best at HCA. Not only does HCA help students learn with hands-on problems and flexible teachers, but they have excellent staff who support students in every way. HCA helped me with problems I had at other schools, and I went from disliking school to loving it.

[00:04:12] At HCA, whether it's teaching another student how to fly a drone, doing math, programming robots to do amazing things, doing fun design challenges, or organizing fundraisers, I know I'll have a great day at school. All right. Thank you.

[00:04:29] Val Egger followed by I can't read this Eris Egger. Thank you. Hi I'm Val Egger and I'm a high school teacher at Loudoun County High School and I'm also the parent of two current HCA scholars and one future HCA scholar. There are certain days that you just remember such as the birth of your child where you were a 9-11. One of those days for me was where I was in the hallway of Loudoun County High School when I got the email from Mr. Vickers that my daughter Eris had gotten in a spot through the HCA Lottery at Hillsborough Charter.

[00:05:03] I was running through the hallways telling anyone who cared or didn't care. I was so excited, I called my parents. The enthusiasm was not unjustified. It's been amazing, there's not enough time today to tell you all the things that they've done, but as you know by their awards and their accolades, it's an amazing school and it's really benefited my kids.

[00:05:19] So renewing the charter seems like an obvious decision. What I'd like to ask you to consider in addition is the issue of space. When the charter first started, it was sort of an experiment And it was agreed they're not gonna get many upgrades and things like that. I think it's been several years and they've proven that they have an amazing program.

[00:05:35] They have a wait list, miles long. Children want to move from LCHS students to HCA scholars. So I'm asking you to consider things like they have no dedicated music space. The playground is a little bit outdated. It's not accessible to everyone, maybe upgrading that. As we heard, they have one space that serves as their cafeteria, their gym, their auditorium.

[00:05:55] If there was a way to expand the school, And dare I even be bold enough to ask, maybe expand classrooms so that we can take some of those students off the wait list and have more LCPS students become HCA scholars. And so that's what I'm asking you to consider today. Thank you for your time. Thank you.

[00:06:13] Aris Egger. Hi, I'm Aris, and I like HCA because they teach us like engineers and they give us challenges. I love Flight Fun Day Fest because you get to learn about air, airplanes, science, and engineering.

[00:06:35] Right now, I am currently working on teaching kindergartners about communities using a Google slide. One thing I wish we could add is making our music room bigger. Thank you for keeping our school a charter school.

[00:06:55] In fact, I really love our school. When there was a snow day, I was really sad because I was missing a day of school. Thank you. And thank you to everyone who provided comments, and your input is always valuable to us.

[00:07:17] And moving forward, we will now do the minute approval. So we need to approve the minutes from our last meeting. Has everyone had a chance to review the minutes, and are there any corrections or additions? And if there are no objections or corrections, I entertain a motion to approve the minutes from February 6, 2024.

[00:07:41] Mr. Chair, I'll motion to approve the minutes for the Specialized Programs and Centers Committee from the February 6, 2024 meeting.

[00:07:56] I'll second. Great. All those in favor say aye. Aye. Aye. Any opposed say nay. Okay. So the minutes have been approved for February 6, 2024.

[00:08:15] So let's begin by reviewing the agenda. Are there any adjustments or additions to the agenda? If so, please raise your hand and state your proposed change. Okay.

[00:08:30] Alright, so we'll move forward with introducing the agenda items. So let's move on to our agenda items. The first item is Charter School Calendars 2024-2025. I'll turn it over to Ms. Elaine Layman, who's the Director of Elementary and Charter Schools to present.

[00:08:49] Thank you very much, Dr. Rasheed and committee members. As you recall, at our February meeting, we presented the Charter School Calendars for HCA and MCCC as an information item. There were no questions or concerns, and so it is an action item this evening. Okay.

[00:09:08] I'd like to open the floor for discussion. Members of the committee, do you have any questions or comments? Okay. If there's no further questions, I'll entertain a motion to approve. Do I have a motion?

Okay.

[00:09:24] I move that we accept the calendar from the charter schools, as stated in the notes that we have here. Chair, I second that.

[00:09:41] Okay. Great. All right. Thank you. or comments on this agenda item? I'd like to transition to the next agenda item. Okay.

[00:09:57] So I'll entertain a motion to approve. Okay.

[00:10:15] I'd like to vote for making the calendar move forward. Yay. Okay. It's unanimous from all three of us. Thank you. All right.

[00:10:32] Let's transition to the next agenda item, and that is College Partnership Lab School Access Academy. Yeah, Access Academy. I'll turn it over to Dr. Ashley Ellis, who is the Chief Academic Officer, to present.

[00:10:51] Thank you, Dr. Rasheed. Dr. Smith and I have a few guests with us from George Mason University, and we are excited to present to you some information on a potential opportunity to participate in a lab school.

[00:11:08] And I would like to first allow our guests from George Mason to briefly introduce themselves. And I will preface this by saying there will be no action on your part at this time. This is informational only.

[00:11:26] My name is Kimberly Daly. I work as the Project Manager for Access Academy at George Mason. Good afternoon. Ingrid Guerra-Lopez, Dean of the College of Education and Human Development at George Mason University. I am Kami Singera, Executive Director, Institute for Digital Innovation in the Office of Research, Entrepreneurship, and Innovation at George Mason University.

[00:11:50] Good afternoon, Roberto Palmas, Professor of Education Leadership and Director of the Office of Teacher Preparation. Thank you, and we will ask them to jump in periodically during this brief presentation.

[00:12:07] So the lab school application is for the ACCESS Academy, which is Accelerated College and Employability Skills Academy. And it is a partnership between George Mason University, LCPS, and Northern Virginia Community College.

[00:12:22] And we are very fortunate in LCPS to already have strong partnerships with both of those higher ed institutions, which is one of the reasons we are so excited about this opportunity. So the Access Lab School will be a school that provides innovative educational experience to high school students who have not historically had access to opportunities and pathways that meet their needs.

[00:12:45] The experience would lead to high demand and well-compensated job opportunities, and students Students would simultaneously participate in high school courses and work toward two or four-year college degrees and the workforce.

[00:13:01] As I mentioned, the partnership is among George Mason, LCPS, and Northern Virginia Community College. We wanted to provide a brief overview of the academics. So this academy would be an immersive experience for students in LCPS as well as in a location in Northern Virginia Community

College, and would take advantage of the state-of-the-art facility at George Mason, their FUSE location at Mason Square.

[00:13:34] It would also be a training ground of innovative practices for our educators. So not only LCPS teachers and higher education staff, but potentially teacher candidates, in-service teachers and others would participate in professional learning and training around problem-based learning pedagogy, active learning and development of learning strategies, and they would also participate in observations and field experiences.

[00:14:02] So this would not only benefit our students, but would be a positive opportunity for many of our educators as well. As part of the application, George Mason identified short-term, mid-term, and long-term outcomes that you see here on this slide.

[00:14:19] As I mentioned, there would be a focus on problem-based learning. It would begin, and Dr. Smith is going to talk about this in just a minute, with students in 11th and 12th grade. They would have the ability to earn multiple dual enrollment credits working toward that two- or four-year degree, and I will pause here and ask if George Mason would like to jump in on this slide.

[00:14:44] Anything you'd like to add? You good? Okay. I'll turn it over to Dr. Smith to talk a little bit about the governance of the lab school. All right. So, um, you know, today we're here just to provide a high level overview of this process and what's being proposed.

[00:15:00] Uh, the exciting part about this is that we have a year to plan. We would plan for this to, if everything moved forward to open in the fall of 2025. And so this high level overview is just what we are best thinking is at this point. This slide here provides that overview of the governance structure for the proposed lab school and lab schools are required to have an advisory board.

[00:15:21] And so you see that there at the top and that in the far left on the, in the blue box there is the advisory board. And that's a required components of all lab schools and if approved, we would work to ensure that the group includes recommended community leaders, some industry experts and invested staff and parents.

[00:15:40] Many of the roles listed in this slide will also be existing staff, but it also includes a few new positions. And I'll note on the LCPS side, on the right hand side, one of those positions would be the LCPS academy coordinator that would be paid for by the grants.

[00:15:56] And this person would be our staff liaison really on the ground that would be working day in day out on the operational aspects, the logistical pieces on the instructional side, but really that day in day out staff liaison for LCPS.

[00:16:13] It's important to also note that as a part of this work, George Mason would be designated representatives on our school business partnership and our career and technical advisory committee. And so we've asked them to be a part of that. We see those groups as integral parts of the lab school and to connect us with those business and industry partners. And so let me pause here to see if George Mason might have anything to add in terms of the governance or roles.

[00:16:40] Not specifically, just to highlight that under the College of Education and Human Development and more broadly across Mason, we'll have faculty and staff supporting the initiative, both through the funding provided by the state and also in-kind support.

[00:16:56] And that includes fundraising, ongoing fundraising to support the sustainability of the school. - Thank you. So now moving on to operations, I'd like to share a little bit about the student population and some other operational components as the proposed Access Academy.

[00:17:13] Access Academy, if approved, would begin in the fall of 2025 at the Nova Community College Loudoun campus. We would have a total of 60 students in grades 11 and 12 total, so 30 students in each grade. And we've really targeted at-risk students who have historically not had as much access to high demand and well-compensated career opportunities.

[00:17:33] As the academy is successful, we intend to develop opportunities to consider pathway courses and experiences for our ninth and 10th grade students that would really prepare them for the success in the academy program. A few other logistics with this services such as transportation, meals, health and medical needs, library access will be provided to students in the academy just as other students.

[00:17:58] And in fact, we're also working to explore how students in the academy may have access to additional services through George Mason and Nova through the resources that they have. Students in the Access Academy will also remain attached and connected to their base school. So this means they'll still have access to participate in clubs, athletics, fine and performing arts, and other activities, including graduating with their base home high school.

[00:18:25] They'll also be provided additional opportunities as being a part of the Access Academy through George Mesa and Nova Partnerships. And that can include clubs, other co-curricular experiences, and a lot of that we plan to work out in the year that we have for planning. And with that, I'll turn things back over to Dr. Ellis.

[00:18:44] So given all the steps that need to happen to launch the program, it may seem a little bit premature to talk about scalability, but we did just want to put that out there as something that all three organizations are thinking about, and that's very important in the planning. So as with any lab school that is funded through the state, the program must be opened up to other students outside of Loudoun County Public Schools.

[00:19:11] So the initial pilot year would be dedicated to working directly with LCPS students and then with the idea that scaling up would include offering seats to students outside of LCPS. The goal would be obviously to gather as much data as possible during that pilot year, learn from that experience, and scale up based on that first year.

[00:19:34] In terms of the timeline and next steps, I will go through some of these and then ask our colleagues from George Mason to jump in with some more details. As you all know, the proposal was shared with the school board in February. We did receive Dr. Spence's support and Chair Mansfield's support.

[00:19:53] They both provided letters of support for submitting the application with LCPS's information in the application. That application was submitted to the Virginia Department of Education for review. The College of Education and Human Development at George Mason will continue to explore other funding opportunities to support access fully or in part that depends on the funding that we do or do not get from the state so that's that is a big unknown that we will look forward to learning more about in the future we will collaborate together to

[00:20:29] review additional information to talk about locations and specific programs program decisions as we build out the access program for Loudoun County students and again based on the funding opportunities we will develop scenarios for possibly focusing on or implementing certain aspects discrete aspects of the access program and with that I'll turn it over to my friends anything else I would highlight that the intent of some of the bulleted items

[00:21:06] here is to demonstrate our desire to partner with Loudoun County and subject the funding that we receive from the state, of course, that'll determine whether we proceed exactly as expected in this pilot year. But if funding is not obtained through the state, we plan to continue to look for other funding sources and continue to nurture the relationship.

[00:21:27] We believe very strongly in the design of Access Academy, and so if we're able to find other funding opportunities that would either fully allow us to implement it or partially implement some components to start testing we'd be very happy to do that so I think that's the main thing is we're really excited about the partnership and we'll continue to work on ensuring that some some aspects of access can really I guess produce the intended benefit for many of our students in our community so with that I assure you that we will continue to keep you updated through

[00:22:05] this committee and written updates to the board as the process plays out and I I will turn it back over to you, Dr. Rasheed, and we're happy to answer any questions. Okay. Thank you, Dr. Ellis. Thank you for that awesome presentation. A lot of information, a lot of details to absorb. Do we have any questions? I know I have some, but I wanted to ask my colleagues before I go ahead and ask any questions.

[00:22:31] Chair, thank you very much for the presentation. I'm very excited about this opportunity. I have a bunch of questions. I think, for me, at least, the lab school model is relatively I think I hadn't really dug into that model prior to receiving the material so I'm just curious about maybe other examples of lab schools in Virginia and seeing how they've played out specific if there are any examples of this in the Commonwealth that we can kind

[00:23:06] of draw from in terms of successes and what what some of the outcomes have been I'm all about tech education that's kind of my background so I really believe in the opportunities that can be created from this I'm also curious about the you know how we're going to determine selecting students for this I know it's going to be a small pool and we've identified that looking at risk students but how are how specifically are we going to be selecting those students and and just maybe some assumptions that you can share as of right now around the

[00:23:43] specific programming that we've been thinking about or that the assumptions that are really driving the result that we're trying to get out of a program like this. Okay, I'll try to remember all those questions. I may have to, that's okay. So the first question was about lab schools generally.

[00:24:02] I will tell you what I do know and then ask Ingrid to jump in because they've been deep in the weeds. So lab schools are relatively new in Virginia. There are only a handful that have been approved by the state. They begin with a university or an institution of higher education in partnership with a K-12 school system.

[00:24:26] I can certainly find more information and point you to very specific lab schools that have already been implemented in Virginia, and that might be useful. So I'll get that information to you. I would add that there's also a lot of uniqueness. So a lab school is just short for a school that tries different things.

[00:24:45] And so their design can be very different. WE HAPPEN TO BE FOCUSING ON STUDENTS WHO HAVE TRADITIONALLY BEEN PERHAPS UNDERREPRESENTED IN SOME OF THESE CAREERS, AND SO THE GOAL FOR US, THE INNOVATION HERE, IS TO HELP STUDENTS PROGRESS TOWARD A TWO OR FOUR YEAR DEGREE WHILE ALSO DEVELOPING THEIR EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS.

[00:25:04] SO STUDENTS WHO MIGHT, FOR EXAMPLE, OPT TO FIND OTHER JOB OPPORTUNITIES AND MAYBE THAT COULD INTERFERE WITH THEIR PROGRESSION THROUGH SCHOOL, BUT IT MIGHT ALSO LEAD INTO TWO very different pathways, so what we're trying to do is integrate the two pathways. So that just happens to be our design, but other labs could look very different. We're happy to provide additional examples. We've also had a site visit at one out of Florida Atlantic University, which is very successful, and that was an example that the state brought in actually to present on, so we've also adopted some ideas from there.

[00:25:42] Your question -- on programming. It is -- first year is going to be focused on IT information technology and digital innovation kind of programs. Thank you. I just had one or two questions. So the transportation would be from the student's home-based school, if I'm not mistaken, which would be an LCPS -- an LCPS school. Am I saying it correctly?

[00:26:14] So I'll ask Mr. Lewis to correct me if I'm wrong, but we would likely use a system similar to the transportation we're providing for IB to our two IB schools. And also, can this be open to other fields in the future? I saw a lot of IT, but it would be great.

[00:26:30] I'm a person of science, so I don't know if this would be open to -- and I know Nova has like a whole medical education campus, so I don't know if there was anything it could be open to. Absolutely. So the idea behind the pilot year is to pilot with IT careers, but really what the state is looking for is scalability as well.

[00:26:50] So if we're able to come up with a process, with an approach that works well, the idea is to expand into other high-demand, highly rewarding careers. So absolutely. All right. Thank you so much. Okay. Ms. LaBelle. I'd like to go back to one of the things that Mr. Streffi had asked about.

[00:27:12] How are we going to decide which students go exactly into this building? I know we're looking at students who haven't had this opportunity before, but are we looking what references are we looking at a test how are we looking at admitting students to this program we don't want to get into the tangle that they got into in Fairfax about admissions I even forgot my question see so I'll start so we have had very very preliminary conversations about that and we are

[00:27:50] certainly open to feedback we have followed our friends in Fairfax very closely and are very aware of their experiences and it's important to us that that it is for students who wouldn't otherwise have this opportunity so I think we're open to more discussions about that I don't have those answers at this time so you're saying at that time we're still open to deciding about an admissions process yes and it's important that we not necessarily I think we don't want to limit ourselves to a competitive admissions process like

[00:28:28] other programs and and if I may add if approved this is something that we certainly will continue in the implementation and the collaboration with LCPS staff on as to how we will select the students but but I do want us to go back and stress the innovation part of the lab school when we wrote this we We really had the intention of making sure that we are providing access to all students,

[00:29:00] but keeping in mind those students who might, because of various steps, have been forgotten in the process and not have been included in the process. And so we want to be very mindful in our planning so that we are making this opportunity available to all students but at the same time focusing on those students who might not have because of other factors that we have learned through the past that we don't want to repeat.

[00:29:35] And so we want to make sure that we are focusing on students and in our proposal we actually plan for the focus and the preparation of those students who did not have opportunities before so that we can actually get them up to speed so that they are prepared to enter what may appear to be a very rigorous program, but we want to make sure that we are leveling the playing field for all students.

[00:30:05] I'll just share one last thing just to kind of express some, like, excitement on this. I know that we can go forever, but, you know, in terms of IT, I've been involved in the private post-secondary context, but I really do believe that higher education should be leading the charge and innovating here. And in technology, we talk about the T and the inverted T of how we learn. And it was always the T, right? It was giving everybody a systems background for four years. And then when you start working, you would narrow into your specialization. But because IT has really broadened so much, that T has been inverted.

[00:30:44] And we are now starting to put folks into a specialized area where when they finish, They can actually do the job, and then later on they broaden in their experience and their exposure in the field, and they choose other areas. So this is ripe for innovation. I think higher ed, together with our public schools, I think could really make an impact.

[00:31:11] Dr. Smith? So just one last point, and I'll ask our friends from George Mason to elaborate, but just wanted to clarify in terms of next steps. I think we were hoping to be on the lab school committee agenda yesterday. They had a meeting yesterday. I think that agenda was too full. So we do anticipate being on the lab school committee agenda for April, and then if that proceeds from there, then we would look forward to be on the State Board of Ed's agenda for lab school.

[00:31:37] I don't know if it's May or June, but to move forward, if that's correct. Okay, thank you. So if there are no further comments, we'll move on to the next agenda item, which is early childhood education update, which would be presented by Dr. Smith, the Supervisor of Career and Technical Education.

[00:32:02] Um, Renee Dawson, director of teaching and learning community connections and programs.

[00:32:13] Just do a little shuffling here.

[00:32:43] Thank you so much, Dr. Rashid and school board members for the opportunity to provide an early childhood education update. My name is Lee Smith. I am the supervisor of career and technical education, and I'm joined with Renee Dawson, who is our director of teaching and learning for community connections.

[00:33:02] So today's presentation is an information item, so no action is needed for today. So our agenda for this afternoon will include an overall purpose of why we are here today and to provide background information related to early childhood education.

[00:33:21] I will share learning lab updates, which are school-based enterprises that provide early childhood education high school students with hands-on activities. Then we will review an update from the Virginia Department of Education related to how the course is scheduled.

[00:33:38] And then finally, we will provide a few next steps for the committee. So the purpose of this presentation is to provide the following updates to the Specialized Programs and Centers Committee on Learning Labs and how these courses will need to be scheduled starting in the 25-26 school year.

[00:34:00] A few items on the background. Early Childhood Education, or ECE courses, are high school courses that are designed to provide high school students with the knowledge and skills necessary to work with young children. These courses aim to prepare students who strive to be either educators, caregivers, and/or professionals to create developmentally appropriate and stimulating learning environments for our high school students.

[00:34:26] These courses are double-blocked high school elective courses where students can earn two credits in one year for one course. The school division offers a combination of the academic and dual enrollment, also known as DE, ECE courses, and these are taught by family and consumer science teachers who are licensed in career and technical education in grades 6 through 12.

[00:34:52] The school-led initiative has various inconsistencies across the 10 high schools that offer this option. Some examples that we want to highlight today are the misalignment with Virginia Code, that the learning lab child selection process differs from school to school.

[00:35:12] We want to highlight how learning lab children are not enrolled in Phoenix, which is our student information system. There are a great deal of differences of public-facing information, whether it's posted on their websites or in promotional printed materials.

[00:35:28] How the fees are collected and how they're used do vary by school. And then finally, the maximum physical occupancy of classroom space is exceeded at many of our high schools. So we put together some items that we have either completed or that are currently ongoing.

[00:35:48] So we are ongoing. We've collaborated with external offices from the Virginia Department of Education, Virginia Department of Social Services. We've worked with our internal partners with enterprise solutions, student services, school administration, high school education, facilities and transportation.

[00:36:08] We have structured cadence meetings. We meet bi-weekly to discuss how we might be able to shore up the school-led learning lab process that is currently in 10 of our high schools and what support might we be able to give high school principals and their teachers if this was to come through fruition.

[00:36:28] we've held multiple virtual drop-ins and listening sessions all the way dating back from november through february we've presented updates on this to the special programs committee in october november and then we did a full school board update in december of last year we've also convened two work groups where we brought in our early childhood education teachers we've invited our principals who have these school-led learning labs we've invited assistant principals the executive principal attended both sessions our directors

[00:37:08] from high school to director of teaching and learning a supervisor a specialist where we all came together to create a centralized process through a standard operating procedure on what it could look like we also collaborated with school-based stakeholders to create templates how to collect emergency contact information because currently our kids are not in CIS. We've also collaborated with them to create templates on the injury report log, how frequent that needs to be reported, and then signage. We've also presented various

[00:37:43] updates at the high school principal forum to grab their high school principals feedback. So we are going to present two options. We've presented two options to our learning lab principals we've been presenting these options for the last couple of weeks and as option A and option B so option 8 please note is highly recommended this is where the high school is going to discontinue their current school-led learning lab model and they will form a partnership with either our step program which is housed in the division of English

[00:38:22] learners. They could form a partnership with our elementary schools and or our local daycares to ensure that that work-based learning component of early childhood education is seen in the upcoming school year. So what it would mean is that we would, CTE would collaborate with the school-based team to facilitate this partnership and to offer any related and associated professional development to support this program. The next option is option B and this is where schools can select to align

[00:39:01] their learning lab with the standard operating procedure guidance that is currently being worked on. So the current model would go away and high school principals and leadership teams will have increased responsibility. CTE will support their school-led learning labs, which are the school-based enterprises, by ensuring they are compliant through program monitoring to maintain alignment with the Virginia Code, in addition to providing PD to support the program. But this option is pending

[00:39:36] because we do have, again, as we shared before, we're still in conversation with other offices on what this might need to be, what it needs to be to be shored up. So here is just a side-by-side of the two to compare what option A will look like and what option B will look like, noting that option A is highly recommended.

[00:40:05] So we also have some tasks that are in process. So if you might recall, I shared earlier that we have structured cadence bi-weekly meetings, and those cadence meetings look at a lot of tasks. So the first one is establishing a procedure for enrolling learner lab children into Phoenix.

[00:40:22] So we're working with DDI, we're working with the registrar, and we're going through the process of what it takes for a kindergartner to enroll in school. And then we're scaling it back to be appropriate for children ages 3 and 4.

[00:40:39] We're also developing a centralized and a unified standard admissions application. And we are relying heavily on the Office of Student Services and the LCPS registrar. So currently, the admissions application is different at every single high school.

[00:40:57] So to go and make it more equitable and make it more centralized, we are working to create one standard application. We're also looking to implement a uniform tuition fee, and that is going to be consistent across all of the high schools that select this option that fee the tuition fee will be called a fee it will no longer have the word tuition associated with it and that will be consistent across the ten schools on the next thing is there has to be a preschool age curriculum that is not only approved by

[00:41:35] the Virginia Department of Education but it is the centralized curriculum that we will use for that learning lab. And then finally, as it aligns with the Virginia Code, there is an end-of-the-year superintendents report that we are working with our teachers to develop. What are some items that might need to be highlighted in that report? And what are some areas of opportunity?

[00:41:58] So we are working with our teachers on that as well. So the next thing that we're going to dive deep into is how this course is scheduled in the 25-26 school year. So if you might recall, LCPS CTE

underwent two federal reviews last school year. In those federal reviews, there are corrective action plans that we're working as we speak to fix. We've had a conversation at the end of January with the Virginia Department of Education, something unrelated to early

[00:42:35] childhood education and the question came up about how early childhood education is scheduled within the school division on February 9th 2024 which was the lunar holiday we actually got a corrective action addendum which outlined that the current way that early childhood education courses level 1 and level 2 are scheduled which is in a hybrid model can no longer be scheduled that way. So what will happen starting in the 25-26 school year is that schools will be required

[00:43:12] to schedule students in person 90 minutes each day, A day and B day, every single day of the school year. Or they would have to schedule students for 180 minutes each day and that would be A day or B-Day every other day for the entire school year. This will allow us to have a transition in the 24-25 school year, which is next school year, and to collaborate with schools to provide full

[00:43:44] implementation for 25-26. So the next steps that we have are to, we currently have a survey out to our high school principals and to get their feedback on which choice they would prefer, option A or option B after we have their feedback we are still concurrently continue to collaborate with other offices both internal external to make sure that this process is streamlined from admissions from how learning lab children are selected to the preschool curriculum to the fees and then we are

[00:44:24] always ensuring that we are working collaboratively with both our building principals and with our teachers. So we will turn it back over to you, Dr. Rasheed, and are happy to answer any questions. Okay, thank you, Dr. Smith. I'd like to open the floor for discussion. Members of the committee, do you have any questions or comments? Yes, Mr. Estreffi. Thank you, Chair.

[00:44:58] I know that we're still gathering feedback and there'll be additional discussions, so I'll just kind of state where I, you know, I know all the inconsistencies and I know some of the challenges with learning labs. One thing I just, I know you know, but just in talking with community members, right, and seeing how happy, you know, they are to have their, you know, children access this type of an opportunity, and just hearing some of the positive feedback from many community members, I know that there are some inequities related to some of those inconsistencies, so I'm aware of that, but I also just want to kind of just note that it would be a hit to some of our community

[00:45:37] members who maybe won't be able to access STEP because of the income requirements or however that is set up and maybe the private kind of daycare pre-k option wouldn't be available to some of those families as well and so be kind of they'd be stuck in the middle for some of these families so just wanted to state that thank you any other final thoughts or comments or questions yes miss LaBelle as we look at these programs I noticed that in one place you're asking to collaborate with outside agencies such as child care

[00:46:15] centers who is going to be in charge of making sure or developing the curriculum or giving them the curriculum I believe you said it would be a state curriculum and if we are working with these outside agencies who's going to be ensuring that they follow them with how would that work so thank you so much Ms. LaBelle for that question. So under option B, that is where the high school principals could select to use the Shored Up Learning Lab, Shored Up

[00:46:55] Standards Operating Procedure Guidance. In that option there is a VDOE approved preschool curriculum, I believe it is called Core Knowledge, and it requires teachers to be trained every two years. It is a three-day, eight-hour training, and we would have the facilitators come into the school division to train our teachers every two years. Option A is that partnership with STEP, with the elementary schools and or the daycares. STEP has a prescribed

[00:47:30] buttoned up tight air knit curriculum and our teachers that are currently step teachers within the county receive that PD that professional development in that training from this step office thank you thank you all right so if there's no further comments we'll move on to the next agenda item which is Hillsborough Charter Academy renewal application presented by is it presented

[00:48:09] Ms. Elaine Lehman so thank you again so I know that there are few minutes left in our in our session today so we have some options that I will defer to the committee to determine how we our next steps so I have some background information about the work that's been done up to this point to bring you what we what we have brought you this evening and also Hillsborough also has a PowerPoint and video that they would like to share and then we have the actual redlined agreement and there are several areas of the agreement that we need to

[00:48:46] discuss so how would you like us to proceed and I will just add that if we do run out of time this is not you do not have to take excuse me have to take action at the next meeting we can have another extended information item if me and what is the length of the I didn't I didn't know the length of the these the material that wanted to be presented that you had a PowerPoint yes I will ask you all. We can do it in 10 minutes. 10 minutes. That's about how much time we have. So we could do that and solely that today and get into the agreement next time or we can

[00:49:24] do whatever you'd like to do. And that would be inclusive of the five minute video. That would be inclusive of the five minute video. Okay. All right. He says it's a link. All right. Link in the PowerPoint. And I will turn it over to you. All right. Well, if we do have the PowerPoint somewhere. Sure. And actually, I'll give you one of these

[00:49:42] so that way I don't have to keep yelling next slide at you. Well, if it doesn't work, it's because you had the lawyer figure this one out.

[00:50:12] Well, while we're getting it up, I'll just do a quick introduction of ourselves. My name is Joe Lupino Esposito. I'm the board president of the Hillsborough Charter Academy. I also am a parent. My daughter is in third grade at Hillsborough Charter. And I'm Paul Vickers.

[00:50:28] I'm the principal of HCA. I've been a principal there for four years. I came to the county about 30-some years ago as an assistant principal. And I love HCA for a number of reasons. Let me just tell you about one day at HCA, and Ms. Lehman was present.

[00:50:44] Back in the fall, we had Flight Fun Day Fest and Career Day. It was all in one day. And on that day, a medevac helicopter landed on our grounds, and every scholar climbed into the cockpit. An airplane was pulled onto our property. Again, every scholar got into the cockpit and learned about the control panels.

[00:51:03] A robotic dog that is used in dangerous situations by the military and the police was brought to the school. Our scholars learned about the uses of the robotic dog and even danced with it. A weather expert taught them about predicting the weather using various models.

[00:51:20] A local lawyer ran mock trials with our third to fifth grade scholars. A paramedic and a nurse explained their work as first responders and in the medical field. A local farmer brought two brand new calves and taught the children about raising cattle and planting organic vegetables.

[00:51:39] An archaeologist taught the scholars how indigenous peoples from throughout the world have created tools for millennia. So, just a day at HCA. All right, let's see if I got this to work. All right, we're a little cut off, but there we go.

[00:51:56] All right, and the font's all funny. All right, well, so this is the lawyer's fault. But, all right, so we introduced ourselves. We'll do the abbreviated version, although I can talk quickly. I figure we should probably make it a half presentation rather than me talking too fast. But I want to just do a quick introduction to some of the folks that are here, Paul.

[00:52:13] Absolutely. So, our school is managed on a day-to-day basis by a five-person leadership team. And that leadership team is made up of Amy Eden, who's behind me. She's our operations manager. Julie Epstein, who is both our school counselor and our testing coordinator.

[00:52:32] Tiffany Miller, who is a first-grade teacher for us and also our dean of instruction. Megan Tucker, who is our STEAM teacher and about four other things, and our dean of curriculum and me. So several of those people are behind me. All right, I'll skip ahead to our video here.

[00:52:49] You might have to hit it on your side. Let's see if it works. And if not, well, it doesn't look live. Well, it's a great video. We'll send it to you later. It's on YouTube. And it's also linked off of our official LCPS website.

[00:53:07] So, okay, great. So, yeah, things are a little weird. All right, let's skip ahead. So, Megan, do you want to say a couple words real fast? Yeah, just skip to the next slide. We've talked a lot about our nest, which is kind of the center of all of it, and our community feel.

[00:53:27] While we only have one of each grade level, We do a lot of cross-grade level planning with lining up the curriculum. We have our own scope and sequence so that our classrooms are all doing the same strand of science at the same time, which lends to collaboration that wouldn't normally be there. As you can see in some of the pictures, we try all kinds of things.

[00:53:43] We involve the local fire department. We have a planetarium that we've inflated and figured out how to work, and the kids make their own slides to go inside of it. We're always doing something as an innovative lab experience daily. Next slide. We talked about shared leadership. Next slide.

[00:54:00] This is the fast version. We have a very interesting schedule. In the morning, we do most of our main academics. We have all of our interventionists come in the morning. We also have our enrichment classes in the morning. And then in the afternoon is when we put the application or the why to the curriculum.

[00:54:15] So the afternoon is when we have our specials classes, which are studio specials, STEAM being one of them, as well as our E3 time, which is Explore, Engage, Engineer. And that's bringing the curriculum to life through engineering design challenges, through project-based learning, through parents coming in as guest speakers in their expertise areas. There really is no limit to what we do during that daily E3 time, which is that hands-on application, getting the kids to understand, making it a high-stakes environment where they're wanting to find out answers using the academics that they've been

taught during their morning hours. If you want to flip that slide. They had just won the egg challenge. It had been dropped from over 100 feet. That was that, like, joy that you just saw.

[00:54:52] Our STEAM class is something else that is also innovative. It's unlike anything that I've seen at any other school actually across the country. We do a lot in the STEAM lab with learning the design process. We only use pens, we have engineering notebooks starting in kindergarten. Kindergarteners really don't like to see their mistakes, so it's that learning with it's okay, we learn from them, it's all right to just put an X through and move on.

[00:55:15] And then we also bring that STEAM throughout our entire faculty. All our faculty has been trained in STEAM. We've actually trained teachers in the state level, nationally and internationally with how to teach quality STEAM. We go to conferences, one of the best things about our school is we even close our school for a week to send our teachers to quality PD across the country to bring things that are back that are new and innovative and cutting-edge because we need to get out to bring back to our community we always present it inspire loudon to give back to Loudoun County Public Schools I've presented recently with the gifted department to share some of the aerospace curriculum that has free resources so we like this symbiotic relationship with giving back to where

[00:55:52] where we are but also giving beyond our school and bringing that bringing that back as well that's just an example of our interesting like we teach all that the SOLs just like LCPS but we do it in a certain order to line it up so that we can collaborate so we have a different scope and sequence for science so that we line up all of those strands for our E3 time and these are all on our website that's just an example we did line up the math and the science together to do more quality STEAM with those science and math concepts it's interesting to know what they're learning so then we know how to collaborate the faculty gets together on Tuesdays as well as three days during the year where we plan out

[00:56:30] how we're gonna do these projects these project-based learning the Buck Institute we've all been high-level trained we use those methods but we have our kind of own way of speed meeting where we set a timer and we go and we know we need to learn and how to collaborate and the standards are always at the center of all of our conversations we have a very interesting enrichment program our schedule as I talked about with having the morning being academic there's the opportunity for our scholars that might be reading at an advanced level to join an advanced grade level not an accelerated curriculum but it's just a way to have them to continue to learn and to stretch their brain we have the same opportunities available for our enrichment our intervention students as

[00:57:07] well we do have a gifted program I collaborate all the time with the LCPS gifted the Wendy King and all the people on that committee to make sure that we're aligned because our scholars do get identified through LCPS to then go on to the middle school gifted programs I already talked about you three and you can keep going we do we have been recognized internationally for our steam program this is the fifth year in the road the award has only been around for five years I actually leave tomorrow morning super early to go accept this award in Memphis Tennessee as well as to present on our steam program so I'm really excited about that and the fact that it puts some street cred to what

[00:57:46] we're doing having to get that award you have to fill out a huge application where it's all the different parts of a quality steam program and it's a reflective process each year where the whole staff helps to fill in those pieces to make sure that we're not just saying we're doing a good job we have a measure to show that we are providing this program and it's at an international level we've also been for

the past five years a distinguished school with project lead the way which Loudoun County uses in middle and high school we use it at the elementary level and it has been extremely successful we collaborate all the time with local organizations we love to present at conferences like I said and I think I'm done now yes I said I know a few of you

[00:58:23] have already made it over to HCA, so obviously we welcome everybody to come and join us as well. And I'll just jump ahead sort of to our renewal. I mean, you all can read the application. It really gives the answer as to why we're doing what we're doing. Megan just provided a good deal of that. The good thing on the agreement, which you'll see when we do discuss that, whether I think we're going to hit the timer today, but we discuss it. There's only a few items, and frankly, even that list, since we've had our board meeting, there's probably even fewer items that we disagree on, because we've said, no, We agree with where staff is at.

[00:58:53] Most of the other changes are for really just updating the law. Like I said, us lawyers are going to have to get together on a few of these things and make sure we're all aligned, but it's all things that we're on the same page on. And then other basic updates, things like, you know, systems that have changed over the last five years, other updates like, you know, I have to send you a letter every time we change a board member, it's just going to be on the website.

[00:59:11] Silly things like that. But overall, and some of our speakers spoke about it earlier, a big piece of what we're asking for here not only is this for the renewal but really to support the future of hca and in turn the future of lcps um as some of our folks talk talked about you know we have the nest it's a nice round area in the center uh the scientific term is the cafe gymatorium um it's everything for us right because it has to be um our music room uh is also the stage um because it's everything that's behind that stage and the the the you know the the current's pretty good and the sound baffles are okay, but that can only do so much. Counseling is a side room off of the STEAM lab. Intervention

[00:59:49] is the former teacher's lounge. The art cottage -- yes, I would say that now there is no teacher's lounge because that is the intervention room. The art cottage, the temporary space, we all haven't been around for long enough, but the best we can tell by looking at the electrical panel, it was built in 1998. We have, like I said, no faculty space, the playground, You know, ADA accessibility, just this year we had to pay separately for -- to getting a ramp installed for one of the classrooms in order to achieve that.

[01:00:18] And really the way we're looking at things, and I'll be very brief here, is just looking at some comparable schools in the system. Catoctin Elementary, if you all are familiar, also has a similar circular design, but they're a lot larger in that regard. And I just had a piece here from -- this is 2022, the beginning of the year, you know, At the time, 56-year-old schools, same as us.

[01:00:39] They just got upgrades for the first time in 23 years. We're obviously still lagging on that. Comparably with population-wise, we have the Waterford system. And again, when you all have the better formatted piece, you'll see some of the quotes from that article as well, talking about it from teachers at Waterford saying, how is that equitable that we have a system in this way that we don't have that ability?

[01:01:01] And as you all probably know now, Waterford was approved for a 14,000 to 20,000 square foot adjustment, similar to things that we're looking for as well. Banneker Elementary, same thing. Obviously, there are other factors involved in Banneker to sort of retrofit a lot of the pieces that are there. But again, Banneker is almost exactly the same population as HCA.

[01:01:19] As of a couple weeks ago, they had 145 students. We have 144. So for us, I think one of the things that has always sort of plagued the history a bit is that we have this idea that passed us prologue, but it's not, right? Hillsborough Elementary School, as it was constituted before, was a school that had very low enrollment.

[01:01:37] A lot of people were rezoned for Mountain View and elsewhere, and Kenneth Culbert. But now we're a school that is at capacity. We have a waiting list that's technically right under 400, but when we pull the new lottery next week, it'll be well over 400 yet again. The slogan that we've been using is that we're ordinary but extraordinary.

[01:01:55] We are like any other LCPS school, but we're doing extraordinary things. Not only with limited resources, but with a great staff, with great scholars, and everyone working together. As somebody mentioned earlier, we do experiments all the time, especially science-based, right? We do experiments. The experiment of starting a charter school at Hillsborough has worked.

[01:02:14] Now we're moving on to the next step. There were some questions over funding and what is a constituted incentive or a disincentive. Again, the legalese on it, but from what we've looked into on it, there's sort of the outer, the low range and the high range.

[01:02:29] The low range is, from an attorney general opinion from 2010, that you could give us less than the per pupil. We ask that you don't do that because you are currently giving us the per pupil average for operations. But then on the far end of it, it says that even if there were additional funding given to the charter over that of other schools, that would not necessarily constitute an incentive.

[01:02:49] What we are asking for is just to be equalized. We want that equity between us and the other schools. Again, it's a Loudoun County public school, Loudoun County public teachers. and CPP is only part of that equation. So we want to support not only our, and it was a great little gif with Handshake going on, but it was the support of HCA and LCPS working together.

[01:03:13] As Dr. Ellis said earlier, talking about the lab schools, right? Maybe it's a little early to start talking about scaling up, but there are other opportunities we can look at. We can look at additional sites, we can look at middle school programming, we can look at training facilities for other LCPS staff. I mean, Megan's doing a great job right now, sort of on a shoestring, and if we can get folks in the building, not only from LCPS but elsewhere. We had folks from the Virgin Islands come and visit to see how the school was operating.

[01:03:37] We'd like to do more of that, so we'd ask you to help us do that. But the bottom line is, no matter what you decide on any of these other extraneous factors that, you know, are very important to us, and as you heard from the speakers today, the most important thing to us, and really the priceless part of all of this, is that you approved this charter again for another five years to allow us to keep innovating, keep progressing, and keep making HCA, the greater Hillsborough community, and really all of Loudoun County Public Schools, because everyone is invited through our lottery, to just thrive and continue to get better and better year after year.

[01:04:08] And hopefully I didn't speak too fast. Thank you so much for your time. Well, thank you, Principal Vickers and Mr. Esposito. Any questions, comments from anyone? I'll just say that this presentation was dizzying and amazing.

[01:04:26] Wait until you go to the school. But I do have questions, and I think that I'll hold them for now. Fantastic. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Estraffi. Okay, so if there's no further comments, we'll go ahead and talk about our future meeting, which is our next meeting is scheduled for April 2nd at 3.30.

[01:04:44] Please mark your calendars. And if there's no further business, I entertain a motion to adjourn the meeting. All those in favor of adjourning, say aye. Aye. And the meeting is adjourned. Thank you very much for coming. Have a wonderful week.



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