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Loudoun County School Board, Equity Committee Meeting, Thursday, March 7, 2024

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Place Loudoun County Public Schools / School Board meeting (see BoardDocs / LCPS-TV)
Length 2h 8m (video)

- Official meeting video (Vimeo / LCPS-TV): <https://player.vimeo.com/video/920757524?rel=0>
- BoardDocs (School Board): <https://go.boarddocs.com/vsba/loudoun/Board.nsf/Public>

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[00:00:01] Good afternoon. I guess I'm using my teacher voice plus the microphone. Good afternoon. We are so happy to have all of you here this evening or this afternoon. We are having our first equity committee meeting for the Loudoun County School Board for the 2024 school year or year. I call

[00:00:34] this meeting to order at 531. My name is Dr. Linda Deans and I am the school board member who chairs this committee. We appreciate your presence here today, but you know we always have people who support the chair, and I'd like for those two individuals to turn their mics on and introduce themselves, the two school board members. Hi, my name is Arvin Estreffi, representing

[00:01:09] the Sterling District on the school board. Hi, Dena Griffiths, representing Ashburn. Thank you. And, of course, we always have an administrative staff member to liaison with this committee.

[00:01:27] And may we have her to introduce herself? Good evening. Dr. Letitia Ellis-Williams, Assistant Superintendent for Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility. Welcome, everyone. So welcome, welcome, welcome. If you didn't get your notebook from the table on the side, please get your notebook, which also has your name tag.

[00:01:48] Because as a teacher, as I walk around, I want to be able to call you by name when I need someone to speak up. Don't teachers do that? Yeah. Okay, the purpose of this meeting is, of course, to

continue the work that the committee has already accomplished by the last school board and, of course, this great equity department.

[00:02:21] The purpose of DEIA is to promote and sustain diversity, educational equity, inclusivity, and accessibility so that each and every student can benefit from an academic pathway that provides college, career, and life readiness.

[00:02:39] We collaborate with all stakeholders to facilitate the development, implementation, and refinement of a comprehensive educational equity strategy that aligns with Loudoun County Public Schools' strategic goals and objectives.

[00:02:58] This meeting will accomplish introductions, public comments, an exchange of ideas, exchange of personal demographic information as you feel comfortable doing, the Freedom of Information Act information, an overview of the scope of work for the DEIA department, and we will have an announcement from the Virginia School Board Association.

[00:03:27] that relates to equity. So all of your names, if you're here today at a table with a notebook and a name card, all of your names were submitted to the full school board on February 27th and you were all approved to be a part of this committee. I think when you came in in the lobby, you signed in with my staff aide and I asked her to coach you into giving her your telephone number so I

[00:04:00] can find you day or night. So I appreciate you doing that, and I welcome you heartily to this equity committee meeting. If you will open your notebooks, you will see the agenda. Because this is your first time seeing the agenda, do you have any discussion or questions or adjustments?

[00:04:39] Arben, do I hear a motion to approve the agenda as presented? Yes, Chair. I will at this time make a motion to approve the meeting minutes? No, the agenda. Just the agenda for now. Yes, I motion to approve the current agenda for this meeting. Dina, do I have a second? I second it.

[00:05:05] Thank you. All of those in favor say A. All right. And all those who oppose say nay. Not a mouse was heard. It has been properly motioned and seconded that we accept the agenda as given. The first part of the agenda will have our public comment participation. In order to have public comment

[00:05:36] here in Loudoun, we have some guidelines. And those guidelines include, thank you for engaging with the school board through the public comment process. And this is one of the school board committees. So you are engaging with the school board committee. We welcome you and we welcome your comments and we believe that strong community engagement and outreach are important components

[00:06:07] of a successful school system. Speakers must have limits to their comments in order for the meeting to go forward. Based on the fact that we only have four public comment speakers today, we're going to give each speaker two minutes and we are going to indicate to you that we will share with you when your two minutes has expired. During public comment, we expect proper decorum. The first

[00:06:43] person for public comment is Andrea Weiss. Andrea. Okay. Okay. Good evening. My name is Andrea Weisskopf. I made the commitment to be at every equity committee meeting since it started and was held in person because I want you to be encouraged in your work and I decided I

[00:07:20] would always show up in case there was someone who spoke against equity so you will see me here every month I do want to say that the last years maybe two years committee did not meet quorum uh

often it was out more than it was in so i am hopeful that this committee will take its job seriously and if you don't plan to show up you need to please let the school board member who

[00:07:55] appointed you to this committee know so someone else can be on the committee thank you mr philip Thompson. Good afternoon. Good afternoon. My name is Philip Thompson. I am the former president of Loudon NAACP. A lot of our efforts are while you're sitting here today. So as she said, I hope you're taking this serious because those of us that were battling this school board and this

[00:08:33] school system in the dark days know that diversity, equity, and inclusion was not on their agenda. I don't think it was in their vocabulary. That being said, I'm here today to talk about the possibility that we're going to have law enforcement coming into our schools with dogs to quote-unquote find drugs. As usual, we see people that are out there trying to fix a small problem with a sludge hammer. And I won't say it's small, but we're trying to deal with something that needs to be more targeted rather than having the Loudoun County Sheriff's Department come

[00:09:10] through these schools with dogs. Anybody that knows our sheriff knows that he is a political animal. And he will use this to try to go back to his little groupie group that he goes to all the time and his supporters and say, oh, I'm doing this and I'm doing this for crime reasons. And he's not interested in that. He's interested in his own political agenda here. And you need to be careful when you're dealing with this guy. I was involved when they negotiated the MOU to let the school resources officers in. Initially, when the school resource officers came into the county, They came in as police, and we put some limits to that in the MOU, and that's what you need to do here.

[00:09:48] You need to be real careful what's going to happen. One of the things that I would be concerned about is where these dogs are going to come in and when, what schools. They're going to target the schools in the eastern part of this county because that's just what they do. You need to have a voice on this and be sure you understand what's going on.

[00:10:07] Do not let Sheriff Mike Chapman in these schools without controls. He is not interested in totally protecting people. He's interested in his own political agenda, and I hope you stand up to him. Thanks. Thank you, Mr. Thompson.

[00:10:26] Mr. Charlie Lane King. I'm sorry, I'm not reading the... Okay. I apologize. No, no, ma'am. Good evening, everybody. My name is Charlie King.

[00:10:42] I'm here to join my friend Phil Thompson in expressing concern about the sheriff's policy, The school policy now of bringing dogs in to do random search, ostensibly for fentanyl. I've practiced law for 35 years. I used to teach at the police academy.

[00:10:59] For four years, I was chairman of the Community Criminal Justice Board, and I represent a lot of police, everything from writing wills to fatal shootings. And I have very serious concerns about random searches in the schools for drugs.

[00:11:16] And if I had more time, and I'll be glad if this committee wants to give me some more time in the time in the future to come and explain the legal ramifications of the U. And I'm particularly concerned that this policy will impact the more populated areas in the east and the areas where there are, you know, the population, the student population is, you know, more diverse.

[00:11:38] And just a couple of things after I'm watching my time is that, you know, these dogs are going to come in and they're not trained just to look for fentanyl. They will look for anything. And, you know, the student is usually and when I looked at your policy, you really don't have a policy on this.

[00:11:55] I mean, look at this. You don't. You have a policy for individual searches. You don't have any policy at random. So I don't know whether this is being done pursuant to the board's authorization or the superintendent's authorization. But I think there really needs to be more discussion about how this is going to work because these kids have rights and these kids are on camera, you know, most of the day anyway when they're in the hallways.

[00:12:16] But, you know, I'm particularly concerned about the police interaction that the child will be drawn to the locker, the child will feel, you know, got the administrator there, they've got the police officer there, they'll feel a compulsion to speak with them.

[00:12:32] And I think the whole notion of putting, and what I'm not against is particularized things. If there's a reason that the police have to be there or there's been anything. Thank you, sir. Your two minutes. Ms. Robin Burke.

[00:12:54] Ladies and gentlemen of the Equity Committee, I'd like to share a timeline that stretches back over half a century. A timeline marked with both progress and setbacks in the pursuit of equity here in Loudoun County Public Schools. I will start with 1968, a pivotal year for Loudoun County Public Schools finally achieving full integration.

[00:13:14] 14 years after the groundbreaking Brown v. Board of Education ruling in 1954. However, this integration was merely the beginning of a long and challenging road towards true equity. I'll fast forward 50 years, the fall of 2018, a time when the NAACP Loudoun branch brought to light troubling disparities in the admission process of the Academies of Loudoun, when only one African-American was admitted to AET, and not a single one to AOS.

[00:13:46] This raised serious concerns about systemic barriers facing minority students. In February 2019, then-Superintendent Eric Williams announced that LCPS would undertake an independent equity assessment, signaling a commitment to addressing these issues head-on.

[00:14:04] By April of the same year, the Ad Hoc Committee on Equity convened its first meeting. I was one of those members. In June of 2019, the initial equity assessment report was released, highlighting glaring disparities faced by African-American students on a daily basis.

[00:14:22] On November 28th, 2020, the Attorney General charged Loudoun County Public Schools with discrimination after a year-long investigation spearheaded by the NAACP. Despite these challenges, such interruptions due to COVID-19 debates surrounding critical race theory and changes in LCPS administration and leadership, I believe we are to return to this essential work of the committee. In the words of Martin Luther King Jr., the time is always right to do what's right. Let's seize this moment and

[00:14:56] redo our efforts and commit to this work. Thank you, Ms. Burr.

[00:15:22] Thanks to each person who selected to give public comment and of course your comment will be reflected in the minutes. Now we have the minutes from the last equity meeting that was held in December of 2023. The equity committee goes from January to December of each calendar year. Let me give you a few minutes to scan those minutes that

[00:15:54] are in your notebook. Will you take this time to scan the minutes that are in your notebook? We need

[00:18:22] to approve the minutes from the last meeting, December 2023. Are there any corrections or additions that anyone has observed? I'd like to ask a question if I can. Being new to this, are these minutes allowed to be altered or clarified? Because I see a section that troubles me a little bit being part of the equity committee. Sorry. I'm asking. I'm new to this. I don't know. Can you amend meeting minutes before you approve them for the last meeting or do they

[00:19:00] have to accurately reflect okay correct okay i just had a question about something do i hear a motion to approve the minutes yes yes chair deans i would like to motion to approve the meeting

[00:19:37] minutes from the december 2023 meeting do i get a second i'm catching my second thank you it has been moved and seconded that we approved the minutes from the last meeting of course that meeting was under a different school board and a different administration so we are receiving those minutes and as we read them if there are questions we would be glad to have conversations with you that is the reason the secretary in the hallway got each of your telephone numbers if she if she

[00:20:14] could convince you so I wanted you to know if you have a question we won't leave you without an answer so it's been properly moved and seconded that we accept the minutes of the last meeting in December. All who are in favor, let it be known by saying A, and all who oppose, nay, okay? Will you get his name for me, Helen, the guy who said nay? Okay, thank you. We will now move on the

[00:20:52] agenda to information items. Mr. Wesley Allen, who is the school board attorney, will talk to us about FOIA. He will give us an overview, but you also have information within the confines of your notebook on the process. Thank you, Dr. Deans. I'm going to see if we have our presentation

[00:21:21] queued up, and I'm hopeful that Helen or DDI could help.

[00:22:53] All right. Good afternoon, everyone.

[00:23:20] Thank you for your patience, those technical difficulties. I'm Wes Allen. I'm LCPS's division counsel. I've been with LCPS two years, I guess next month, and I've stepped into my current role in September as in the acting capacity, and then in January became the permanent division council. So I'm pleased to be here speaking with you, and I have the privilege of training you on the Virginia Freedom of Information Act. It's an exciting topic, and so buckle in for the next 30 minutes or so. Here's an overview of today's agenda. I'll give you a brief introduction

[00:23:59] of what the Virginia Freedom of Information Act is, talk about training, and then we'll talk about the two elements of the, and what I'll refer to as FOIA going forward, which is meetings and records. And then there's a cost aspect, as well as rounding out the discussion with the penalties, what happens if there's any missteps with respect to FOIA.

[00:24:28] So what is FOIA? A bit of history. FOIA, the Federal Freedom of Information Act, It was enacted in 1966 and took effect in 1967, and then a year later here in Virginia, the Virginia Assembly passed the Virginia Freedom of Information Act in 1968.

[00:24:47] And what FOIA guarantees is that citizens of the Commonwealth of Virginia and media representatives have access to public records held with public bodies, public officials, and public employees. It essentially allows light to be shut in on public entities' performance of statutory duties.

[00:25:06] So the guiding principle of FOIA is openness or transparency. And it aims to ensure the people of the Commonwealth, two things, ready access to records in the custody of public officials and free entry to meetings of public bodies where public business is being transacted or conducted.

[00:25:25] So simply put, FOIA attempts to ensure that Virginia citizens and the media have the ability to observe how their elected public officials are conducting public business. And this quote is from a 1978 Supreme Court of the United States case, which speaks to FOIA.

[00:25:48] So again, the two main purposes of FOIA are to govern meetings that are public and records that are public. It determines how local public bodies must conduct their meetings, and it also regulates public access to local government or public body records.

[00:26:08] So as a public body, you're required to complete FOIA training within two weeks of your election. And I believe each of you have been provided the statute FOIA, which is 2.2-3700 of the Virginia Code, but I just want to make sure that's correct.

[00:26:26] Everyone's received that. I'm hearing nothing, so you have. Okay, great. So you have a duty as members of a public body to read and familiarize yourself with that. Additionally, under the Virginia Code, there's the Virginia Conflict of Interest Act and the Virginia Public Records Act, which tells how local public bodies handle public records and gives retention rates and whatnot, but we're not focusing on those today. We're only focusing on FOIA. So the first item we'll be talking about

[00:27:03] under FOIA are meetings. And meetings have notice requirements. There's such things as having virtual meetings or remote participation. As you'll see, meetings are defined as anytime that three or more members of a public body, so anytime three or more of you folks in this room get together and talk about public business and providing tips and recommendations on how to avoid

[00:27:32] holding inadvertent public meetings and then agendas for public meetings. So what is meeting? The definition of meeting is broadly construed by the FOIA Act and it intends to capture any meeting where public business is transacted or discussed and that's critical because as you see on the slide. And as I mentioned, if anytime three or more of you are together, that doesn't constitute a meeting in itself. It's when you're talking about public business that could come

[00:28:09] before the equity committee. That's when it becomes a public meeting under FOIA, which would be subject to notice requirements, which is three working days, agenda requirements, and minutes requirements and so it's important that you all be aware that if you're together three or more and talking about business that is either before the equity committee or could come before the equity committee that would constitute a public meeting under FOIA of the equity committee even a

[00:28:44] work sessions deemed a meeting and again the informal assemblage of three or more members discussing committee business as a public meeting so I know I've said that a lot but it's a very important principle in FOIA that you should be aware of what doesn't constitute a public meeting would be if you're at a gathering and you're not discussing public business so if you're out to dinner and you don't speak of anything that's coming up in equity committee or you're at a conference or a community event or social engagement that wouldn't constitute a public meeting because you're, as long as you're not planning to discuss anything before the equity

[00:29:23] committee or you don't actually, when you're together, speak of anything that would be before the equity committee. So now with the invention of emails, you could have what's called a virtual meeting

and you could do so inadvertently. And what that looks like is all of you, maybe Dr. Deans sends out an email and is talking about one of the agenda items that's coming up and then folks start replying all and then just the simultaneous nature of those

[00:30:02] communications that would constitute a public meeting and the public has a right to see those emails they actually have a right to have been noticed before three days before of you know that those communications. And so you want to be careful of that. And I have some tips on a future slide to share with you as to how you can avoid the optics of an inadvertent electronic or virtual

[00:30:31] meeting. And here are those tips. So avoid replying all when receiving an email. And we oftentimes sometimes are kind of wired to do that, but be cognizant that that could be creating a public meeting. It's helpful to keep all communications, both written and oral, one-on-one to avoid having that third person, particularly if you're talking about, again, any business that could come before the equity committee. You'll want to make sure that you keep those conversations one-on-one.

[00:31:10] And, again, optics-wise, you know, even if you're taking a stroll to the parking lot after equity committee and there's three of you and you're talking about something that was before the equity committee or you're talking about, well, maybe we should look at this or discuss this next time as an information item, you know, that would be construed as a public meeting.

[00:31:34] So you have to be cognizant. And it's a little awkward, I know, but for the board members here in the room, I think it's pretty much wired now to be very mindful at the front of your head when you're in groups of three or more. And in terms of agendas, as you know, agendas are posted on board docs.

[00:31:58] And under the Virginia Freedom of Information Act, at the time when the members of a public body get the agenda, whatever agenda and packet items need to be made available for public inspection at the same time.

[00:32:14] And so that's why when board docs goes out, you get a notification that the equity committee has posted its agenda. You're all getting that at the same time that the public's getting that. And that's required under the FOIA. And if that wasn't the case, then there could be a potential violation.

[00:32:33] So if you all had the agenda and packet items before the public, members of the public could say that's a FOIA violation. There are exempt items. That includes, you know, personnel information that might be attached to the agenda or discussed or scholastic.

[00:32:50] That's kind of executive content, which would not be subject to public review. All right. I don't anticipate that this public body would have closed meetings, but as required FOIA training, I would be remiss if I didn't provide you with an overview of what a closed meeting is or closed session.

[00:33:14] And you may, if you've watched the school board meetings, seen that sometimes the school board does go into closed session. So there's a couple aspects of closed meetings or closed sessions. First is a motion to go into closed session, and there's currently 54 reasons why a public body could go into closed session.

[00:33:35] Award of a public contract where, you know, if you publicly discuss that, you could jeopardize negotiations. There's consultation with counsel, legal counsel, about certain cases. There's discussion about personnel matters, and you wouldn't want that to be public.

[00:33:51] there's also a discussion sometimes about students and maybe student discipline. So those are reasons a public body would want to go into a closed session, and when they go into closed session, they have to make a motion to go into closed session, and they have to cite that specific reason or subject matter while they're going into closed session.

[00:34:13] When they go into closed session, all they can talk about is that specific purpose. They can't stray off-topic. They're limited to that noticed topic, and again, should fall under one of those 54 reasons that was listed in their motion. When they're in closed session, a public body cannot make any kind of official vote. So no motion can be adopted, passed, agreed to. At most, you can take a straw poll, like thumbs up, thumbs down. Are we thinking we'll

[00:34:49] take a vote when we come out of closed session that that's the most they can do when they come out of closed session a public body has to first make a motion to come out of closed session and then next they have to certify it's a separate motion they have to certify that all they talked about in closed session was that specific purpose or reason that was mentioned in the motion to go into closed session then if the public body so chooses they can take an official vote after if there's a required vote based on something they discussed in the closed session that's what becomes

[00:35:26] public next we'll talk about remote participation and the main things here which applies to all of you all and the equity committee the virginia code and virginia freedom of information act allows for you all to attend remotely for two purposes one is personal matter matters and this is all listed under policy 2420 section d so if you ever have a need where you are unable to attend

[00:36:02] in person and want to use a personal matter you can look at again policy 2420 d that sets out all the um procedure for following that the the main things to to think about there it's either two times per calendar year or 25 percent of the meetings um held whichever is more so here when you meet once a month that's going to be more so uh 25 of the 12 meetings theoretically that you would have would be three personal time or times you could um attend remotely based on specific

[00:36:36] personal matters the other purpose that you could attend remotely is for medical conditions or disabilities including if you're taking care of a loved one family member and again you can look to policy 2420 for those procedures and for the medical conditions or disability exemption you can use that unlimited you have unlimited times you can use that okay we're going to switch over from meetings to records um this is probably uh more uh alarming i would think because that the main

[00:37:14] thing here is that anything any terms of emails or texts or even voicemails electronic recording all of that um where you're discussing public business or critical here business of the equity committee, that's all subject to be FOIA. And so if there's a FOIA request for all text messages of equity committee members concerning a certain matter, then you would, our public information officer or FOIA officer would reach out to Dr. Alice Williams and say, I

[00:37:51] need a list of all the equity committee members. I need to reach out to them and request that they send me their text messages to the extent they have any concerning this matter that's in the transaction of public business that came before the equity committee. So not to scare you, but again, to be aware of what legal obligations you have on that. So in terms of a timeline, it's a quick turnaround. There's five working days from when the request comes in to when records should be produced under the Virginia Freedom of Information Act.

[00:38:30] And again, our public information officer will work with you in an expedient fashion to obtain those records. A couple things about the requests as they come in. They need to be reasonably specific. They can't just say, all email to the equity committee.

[00:38:48] We need a little more information than that. It has to be sometimes the scope of time frame would also be helpful from x date to x date or specific people if they want to hone it down because the next line you'll see is an estimate and that's a cost estimate so if it's not reasonably specific and we're looking for everything under the sun that's going to take time and resources and review and under the Virginia Freedom of Information Act, you're allowed to assess costs. And that's to, you know,

[00:39:26] access the records, duplicate the records, search the records, redact the records, and then ultimately supply the records. All of that, with the exception of Scholastic Records, you'd be able to charge for that under FOIA. So if you can't meet that five business day, then the FOIA does allow for seven additional business days so that's 12 business days total which still isn't a lot of time if it's kind of a voluminous request sometimes we'll have records and sometimes we won't

[00:40:01] so if there's no responsive records it's fine to say no responsive records sometimes they request for information not records and we say FOIA really just applies to records requests for records and we just have a duty to respond with records not information. Sometimes as a courtesy depending on the request we could offer information but again FOIA only applies to records requests. There's also no duty to create a record that doesn't exist under FOIA so it's not

[00:40:36] the public body's duty to compile information and create a new record. So if the record doesn't exist, you can simply say the record doesn't exist. In terms of redactions, sometimes there's records with sensitive information, like student information or a personnel matter. And so under FOIA, there's a list of what is applicable exemptions in terms of what's appropriate that you can redact. So one of the big takeaways here is if you are alerted to a FOIA request,

[00:41:15] And they don't even have to say that it's a FOIA request. If you receive a request for any kind of records, I would immediately turn it over to our FOIA officer, our public information officer, Dan Adams. His name is listed on that third bullet, and I'll have his contact information on a later slide.

[00:41:34] And of course, these are on board docs and maybe in your notebooks, so you'll have that information. Also remember, you know, any emails, texts, voicemails, any kind of record that's created, that's going to be FOIA-able to the extent it's talking about committee business.

[00:41:54] So, you know, you may want to think about that before you memorialize something in writing and maybe you think, maybe I'll just have a conversation instead. That's an option as well. I talked about the costs and the charges.

[00:42:13] And then lastly, penalties. So under the Virginia Freedom of Information Act, folks who feel that there are FOIA violations are able to file a written mandamus petition with the circuit court or a general district court.

[00:42:33] And when they do, the burden of proof is going to be on the public body to say, to defend its response. So for a records request, if there were no responsive records but a requester thinks there is, it's going to be on the public body to explain and testify that, no, there really are no public records, and that burden, again, relies and rests with the public body.

[00:43:00] There's a quick turnaround time for that too. If someone files a writ of mandamus FOIA petition in the court, they have a right to a hearing within seven days, and that's seven calendar days. Given the local court's docket, that doesn't always happen. It sometimes could be a month later or so. But again, if you're at the center of a FOIA lawsuit, which I'm unaware of any folks and the equity committee being off the top of my head, you can work with Division Council's office and you can work with our FOIA officer for next steps.

[00:43:42] And here are two contacts. Dan Adams is our public information officer and FOIA officer. And he'll be your first line of defense if you receive a request for records. And then I also listed the Virginia FOIA Advisory Council.

[00:43:58] That's a great resource. They issue advisory council opinions. that provide guidance for what constitutes a public record if there's questions or what constitutes a meeting and handles different various nuances that may arise to get into the nitty-gritty issues that arise.

[00:44:21] Okay, so the two takeaways I want to leave you with are please avoid conducting or holding inadvertent meetings. I can't stress that enough. And then the second one is just understanding that e-mails and texts regarding public business of the equity committee, they're likely and subject to disclosure in response to a FOIA request, so be mindful of that.

[00:44:47] Are there any questions? I know it's a lot of exciting information, but yes. So two questions. One is if you could just maybe address the issue of retention standards and policies with regards to that so that people are holding on to these records as appropriate or not.

[00:45:09] And then the second question is, you mentioned about remote participation and the ability to do that, and just wanted to understand the guidance, because I know in previous years for equity committee, we were told if we did not have quorum physically in the room, we had to adjourn the meeting immediately.

[00:45:26] We didn't have any portion of the meeting, not even just the voting parts, but no portion of the meeting. Is that still the standard that we have to have physical quorum in the room, and remote participation does not count for quorum? Yes, great questions. I'll take the second one first. That is still the standard.

[00:45:42] In order to have a meeting, there should be a physical quorum convened or present. That fully answered that question, right? Okay. And then with respect to the retention record, so it's a good question. The Virginia Public Records Act talks about retention of public records.

[00:45:59] So I would encourage you all to look at that and be guided by that. One thing is, if you have a practice of deleting your text, you know, every weekend, that's one thing. If there's public business in there, you would be required to retain it because it's public business.

[00:46:16] And under the Virginia Public Records Act, there's a retention, like, period beyond just a week. It's usually two, if you're not kind of a department head for text and emails, it's two years that you need to retain it. if you're department head then it's three years and then the higher you go the chair of the board is permanent um all the records need to be maintained permanently uh but that's more a construct of the vpra the virginia public records act but um yeah you you could uh be charged with spoliation or destruction of you know potential evidence if you know that case went to litigation

[00:46:54] let's say so i'd encourage you not to delete any items for public business at least until two or three years after i saw a hand up over here as well yes hi um you mentioned something about a meaningful time interval when you were talking about email how is meaningful defined i know you gave a tip of not replying all but it was something about a meaningful time interval let me see and it was on this side it was on the email slide when you were talking about

[00:47:26] Oh, okay. Yeah. To clarify that, that means, so email is kind of conflated or muddled what a public meeting is. And so that, and I'll keep going until I get it just for everyone's awareness. But that is, you know, if there's kind of a simultaneous back and forth, like your IMing or instant messaging, that would be, there we go. Yep.

[00:47:55] So that would be more, have optics and constitute a meeting more so than a day or two goes by and then a response to that that seems more. Still, that gives me some pause. The safest approach is to look at things like if you're sending a memo, like an old-fashioned memo or faxing a memo and you get it, that's one thing.

[00:48:19] If you're sending that via email, if Dr. Dean sends that, memo out. But then once people start hopping on and saying, oh, we should talk about this, or we could talk about this, or I'm going to vote this way, then, you know, that simultaneous communication, or even if it's like a day or two later, even if there is a, quote, meaningful time interval, that still could be arguably a public meeting just because there is the back and forth.

[00:48:45] And when there's, again, three or more people on that email thread. Yes.

[00:49:11] Yeah, that's a great question.

[00:49:32] in terms of Robert's rules my understanding is that if there's going to be if you're conducting I think that's a quote conducting public business and so then it becomes what is what constitutes conducting public business is that talking about information items is that conducting or is it only action items because there's kind of a fundamental lack of agreement on on that and so I think it would be fair to revisit your bylaws and potentially carve out what you define just for clarity. Is this just an information item being discussed? That, if you agree, doesn't

[00:50:11] constitute the conduction of business. Then you could meet without a quorum to hear that information item. But I think arguably anybody would agree that an action item is conducting business because there's an actual vote right yes hi um so i have a question uh what would be defined as topics of discussion that could be deemed uh public record or things that would need to or could be uh pulled yeah that's good so any agenda item would be a matter of public record

[00:50:48] um so if i think norms or protocols might be an information item today so if you leave here and you're in a group of three or more and you're walking to your car and you're saying, well, I think we should talk about this, revisit this norm or like what about this protocol?

[00:51:05] I don't like that we have a minute for public comment or two minutes. Like those items, anything that is either on the agenda and unfortunately come before the agenda, you have to be cognizant that, oh, this could come before the equity committee.

[00:51:23] There's more than three of us or three or more of us, we really shouldn't be talking about this because this is a public business. To further add on to that then, does that apply like when you talked

about the records themselves, do text messages and emails and that apply to conversations with people outside of the committee? Sorry, in terms of, so it's three or more of the committee. Okay. Yeah. So if there's two of you and someone who's not on the committee technically because they're not that third person

[00:51:59] isn't a member of the public body then arguably that wouldn't be construed as a meeting under Virginia FOIA. Okay perfect thank you. Yes. So just to clarify on that because I think some people may have heard that a little differently than what you intended which is that doesn't constitute a meeting but those records may still be discoverable under FOIA because if you're posting about the committee's business in twitter or a facebook group or sending messages to people etc that's still discoverable right correct i didn't equate that with the me i was talking about the median

[00:52:37] aspect not the records but i think does dr alice williams have anything to say that or no i just saw you reaching okay i'm just stretching your hand okay any yes just a disclaimer this may not be specific to FOIA. So if this needs to kind of be held and discussed later or with someone else or among the committee, that's totally fine. Just let me know. Um, I don't know your, I don't remember your name. I'm sorry, but she did mention something that is a key policy tactic. Is there something where if people are purposefully, purposefully not attending meetings, so we can't

[00:53:15] get to a quorum, is there something in policies where they're removed from the committee to reach a quorum so that we can have business done because, you know, we don't want to waste our time. Yeah, I'll let Dr. Dean's answer.

[00:53:32] Good evening. We are a select committee. Therefore, the choice not to meet because of not having a quorum was a delay tactic. And so at this point, we will not use that not to have a meeting. As long as the school board members and our liaison or her designee are here, we can have the meeting.

[00:53:59] I've had that conversation with the superintendent and I'll add to that as a person that's representing based on your nomination if you miss two or more meetings without the approval of dr. Dean's you will be asked to relinquish your seat so that will not that will further mitigate any other actions that may prohibit the work of this committee any other questions yes okay I'm sorry I thought I knew but now I'm confused can you please maybe this is for dr.

[00:54:40] Dr. Deans, can you please clarify once again, if there is not a quorum, we can still hold the meeting. Is that true, based on what you said? The quorum is determined by the three of us, Dina Griffith, Auburn Istriffi, and Linda Deans. Okay, so just to clarify for everyone, that's a little different than having a quorum present of the committee, right? So instead of

[00:55:12] 35 plus being your populace, then it's the three board members and a staff designee, liaison. Not to belabor, but so the quorum of the three board members, the staff, liaison, if they're present, we can meet regardless of how many of us are here, but we can't vote on anything.

[00:55:47] Is that what I'm hearing? That's my understanding. Okay, thank you. Anyone have a question or pondering that?

[00:56:13] Okay. There's no other questions. I'll put this. Hey, I do have one other question. Oh, yeah. You want to ask? Oh, I'll ask it. Go for it. Okay, so if, then how many, if we are, okay, so we have the quorum, then to vote, how many then people that are not of those four would need to be here for a vote to happen?

[00:56:39] Two-thirds. Two-thirds. Okay. Two-thirds. Yeah, no, I got that. Two-thirds. Yeah. Yes, the question was, if we do have a quorum of the board members, how many votes of the committee, the select committee at large, if they were voting, would you need?

[00:56:59] And that would be two-thirds, and that's set forth in your bylaws. These are great questions. I did this presentation last year, which some of you might recall, and I didn't get as many questions, so thank you. All right, I'll turn it back over to Dr. Deans.

[00:57:20] Thank you, everyone. Question. Thank you so much. At this time, Dr. Ellis Williams and her staff will give you an overview of the DEIA committee. Okay.

[00:57:45] Priorities this evening.

[00:58:01] So we're actually going to have our real introductions now. I know you've been sitting here wondering, like, we've been talking, we've been giving information, and we have not learned who's in the room. So I wanted to anchor us into the mindset of our why. When we think about our why, we usually are fueled by something that we're passionate about, something that we feel strongly about and something that matters to us deeply to the core of who we are. So today I'm going to walk you through an activity of understanding what's your why as it relates to why you are here serving in the capacity you're serving under. So after I walk you through

[00:58:37] this activity as you notice there are numbers on the table 2, 4, 6, 8, and 10 and I will call upon that table and each person will take an opportunity to take one minute to state your name first and class in your why. How do I know? A lot of people, when they think of the phrase, how do I know, they always want to put the what behind it. How do I know what I'm supposed to do? The question that you really should ask is, how do I know why I'm here? Because when you know your why,

[00:59:11] your what becomes more clear and more impactful. If you know, like for instance, people know that I do comedy, but that's what I do. My why is to inspire people to walk in purpose. So I can do comedy, I can write books, I can be in a movie, because all of it is motivated by my why.

[00:59:33] In fact, I have a new web series out called Michael Jr. Break Time. We probably just did the sixth episode. It's on YouTube. So every single Wednesday at 3 o'clock, we drop a new episode on YouTube of Michael Jr. Break Time. What it is, is it's me. I travel around the country and I do stand-up comedy, in case you didn't know. And in the middle of my comedy set sometime, I'll stop and just talk to my audience.

[00:59:59] And we've been filming this, and it's, you know, it's pretty cool. So we're in Winston-Salem. I'm going to show you a clip from Winston-Salem. And I'm just talking to this guy in the audience, and he tells me that he's a musical instructor at a school. So I was like, all right, you're a musical instructor.

[01:00:16] You know, can you sing? Let me hear you sing a song. So this is what happened at the last episode of Michael Jr.'s Break Time. Check it. So you're a musical director. Yes, sir. All right, so let me get a couple bars of, like, Amazing Grace. Can you do the first part of that?

[01:00:31] Go ahead. Amazing, great, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me.

[01:00:50] Wow. That bro can sing. You know what I'm saying? All right, all right. Now, why don't you give me the version as if your uncle just got out of jail, you got shot in the back when you was a kid.

[01:01:07] I'm just saying, let me see the hood version real quick. If you know which version I'm talking about, just see if that exists. Let me see what you got. Amazing how sweet.

[01:02:40] This space is not an opportunity to tell us why you made it. It is not a space to tell us what you're disappointed in that's happening. It is a space of inquiry and respect so that we can come together because everybody in this vulnerability of being in the business.

[01:02:58] It is not about personal endeavors, affiliations. It's about making sure that each and every student at LCPS is able to reach their desired goal of success, to be academically, socially, emotionally prepared to be the adults to take over this world.

[01:03:16] And Lord knows we need it. So when you think about your why, I would like you to anchor in my words. I'd like you to anchor in the respect to the gentleman that sang. When he sang his first version, it was like, I'm just here to do what he asked me to do.

[01:03:33] I'm challenging each and every one of you to figure out what's your why and connect that why to how it's going to impact students. So as we go around the room, I will call at a table. You can decide who will go first, second, third, and so forth.

[01:03:49] And I'd like for you to state your first, your last name, and your why. And in fairness, I'll give you about 20 seconds to think about it. Thank you so much.

[01:04:20] Keep Dina's name. Keep her name. We need it every time. This is a personal journey. So we've got to tuck it to ourselves and think about what's our why. Because your neighbor can't tell you what your why is. And you don't need affirmation because this work requires bravery.

[01:04:37] This work requires you to be able to stand up when no one else is standing with you. So you do not need to talk to your left and your right to get confirmation because what you stand for collectively will be what we all stand for in this space. Serena couldn't be here tonight. She's one of our student delegates.

[01:04:56] And she felt so strongly about her why she wrote to me and asked me if I was to keep her... I wanted to join the Equity Committee to advocate for marginalized committees bringing their concerns to the forefront.

[01:05:13] I've been debating on a national level for more than three years, and I've learned how policies can positively and negatively affect persons for underrepresented groups. My goal as a part of the Equity Committee is to help steer policy in the right direction, creating a more inclusive environment that celebrates and promotes differences.

[01:05:39] Table two. Hi, I'm Rajesh Gudi. I'm representing the Hindu... We need to use the mics for recording, please. Hi, I'm Rajesh Gudi. I'm glad to be here.

[01:05:55] I served in the equity committee right from the inception as an ad hoc committee. I'm here because Hindus are called the overrepresented minorities. So we are deprived of a lot of merit scholarships. And also, there's about 10 Indian students of Hindu origin who've been killed in the past two months.

[01:06:14] There's a lot of mental health and so many other issues going on, so I personally want to engage to see how I can elevate those concerns. Thank you. Hi, good evening, everyone.

[01:06:31] I'm Dr. Tiffany Forrester, and I am really excited to serve on the Equity Committee as a school board nominee. So my career and my education background focuses on education policy and equity. I have a doctorate in education leadership policy and administration, so I'm very aware of how the school system works, and I know what it takes or what can be done to ensure that equity remains at the forefront

of conversations for decisions that impact our students. But as the video said, that's my what and has nothing to do with my why. My why is simple.

[01:07:03] I'm a mom of a black son in Loudoun County Public Schools. And I'm committed and I understand the importance of stakeholder engagement and the value of it. And so I'm committed to be an engaged stakeholder and engaged with the school district, the school board, and the community to ensure that County Public Schools remains somewhere for students including those that look like myself to thrive and have equitable access to supports resources and opportunities that recognize cultivate and celebrate their excellence one of my favorite quotes from a very influential and inspiring writer and

[01:07:39] civil rights activist James Baldwin really exemplifies my why and it says for these are all our children we will all profit by or pay for what they become I look forward to collaborating with each and every one of you. Thank you. My name is Dorothy Roney, and I am the second-year member of the Equity Committee.

[01:08:02] And my why is to fully support the DEIA. It's under fire within our school system. There are board members that want to remove it. And we have come so far to be able to create an equitable space and continue to open conversations throughout schools for students.

[01:08:24] I, myself, am a mom. I have five adopted children, three of which are black, three of who are black. And I get to see firsthand the difference between white and black students and how they're treated. And I'm lucky enough to be a part of an elementary school that's open to moving and having hard conversations and moving equity forward and making it a safe place and environment for my students.

[01:08:49] However, we have a long ways to go. It's an education for our students, education for the teachers, and education for the staff to understand why DEIA is important for Loudoun County Public Schools.

[01:09:04] We have to fight for it. It was under fire at our school board meeting the beginning of February, as soon as the beginning of February. We have to fight for it. We have to support it, and we have to get numbers out there to back it. Good evening.

[01:09:25] I'm Ryan Tyler, Director of Research Assessment School Improvement. I've been in the system for 11 years and simply my why is to do everything i can whether it's providing data whether it's providing perspective to help us fulfill our promise because what i see at the end of this is that as we become more diverse we find more ways to capitalize on all the incredible human ability and potential we have in all of our community members so my why to see us completely fulfill our potential as a community and find a way to celebrate our differences and to be as effective as possible in sharing this community.

[01:10:02] Thank you. My name is Jill Rotifer. I am representing the Gifted Education Advisory Committee. I am a member of the Gifted Education Office here in LCPS. My why is really to participate in this work so that we can make sure that all of our students get the education that they deserve, that they all experience the chance to have a rigorous education, to experience critical

[01:10:41] thinking every day, to have opportunities, that we can make sure that we have opportunities in all of our schools, not just the schools that have more affluent populations, but all of our schools, that we do everything possible. In my role in the gifted office, I've seen amazing work happening, and I'm really proud of the work that we're doing in LCPS, but I think that we're just getting started, and I really would just like to continue to advocate for all of our students

[01:11:13] to make sure that everyone can reach their potential. Good evening. My name is Robin Scott. My pronouns are she, her. This is the third year I've had the honor and privilege to serve on the Equity Committee as a representative of MSAC, which is the Minority Student Academic Achievement Committee. The work we do here matters. It's necessary and important. And for me, my why, I feel like this is the best way to be involved and contributed to my children's school district.

[01:11:43] I am a mom of two children in Western Loudoun. I feel no child should have to face hate in their schools. Every student deserves to feel belonging. And as proud as I am of the accomplishments of this committee, we have a long way to go and a lot more work to do, so I will continue to show up.

[01:12:01] Table four. Good evening. My name is Robin Burke, and I'm here as the representative for the NAACP Loudon branch. My why, I'm here to advocate to ensure we acknowledge and remove the barriers of opportunity and provide the supports necessary and needed that allow all children, but especially black children and brown children to reach their full potential.

[01:12:40] I started this work four years ago when my son was here in the Loudoun County Public School System and I believe through my advocacy work as a member of the NAACP and this amazing committee that some of those barriers that existed for him were removed.

[01:13:00] Now he is a first year student at the University of Virginia on a full academic scholarship studying aerospace engineering. He is a brown boy, faced many, many challenges here in Loudoun County Public Schools. But he is an example of if you stick to the work and advocate for them, opportunities do exist.

[01:13:30] My name is Saba Beg and I am here representing the Adams Center which is the All-Dulles Area Muslim Society. This is my second year, and I am here to advocate for Muslim students. I think we are a relatively newer population, and I think there's a lot of education that needs to happen.

[01:13:57] And I can tell you, as someone that was born and raised in this country, there are strides that this committee has made that I did not get to see when I was growing up in my public school system and i'm so proud of the work that everyone does here and the commitment that everyone has i share the same commitment although i am advocating for the muslim students in the end i hope that everything that i advocate and push for is a benefit to all students and that's my goal table six i'll go first all right i am kevin tyson i'm currently the principal at john champ

[01:14:37] high school and I am here because I know who I am I'm comfortable with who I am no matter where I am and I now have a good understanding of what I mean and what I represent for a lot of people and I love people period full stop it's just that simple and I love to serve and I'm here to inspire and influence decisions that eliminate barriers to success for all people served by the

[01:15:05] school system not just the students but the people that work here as well. Thanks. I'm Cassidy Cavanaugh. I work as a digital experience specialist at Belmont Ridge Middle School and my why is really about the students that we serve. I think it's really really important to take care of them and provide an environment where they can really grow and thrive. I think that the work that we do here is so so important um and i do believe in an idyllic world where we

[01:15:44] can we can really come together i think that these conversations though are what brings that forward from people um yeah to put it very very simply um we need equity we need equality for all people

and i know that you all know that that's why we're here um but yeah that every student every staff member um should have an equal opportunity to grow and thrive um regardless of creed identity

[01:16:15] um and ability so yeah thank you and cassidy thanks for that emotion and passion i think that's what we all hopefully are bringing here my name is tom ketchum um i'm the father of four three of which are uh students here at loudon county public schools i am the designated representative for the the Special Education Advisory Committee, and so through that represent what is oftentimes a very invisible population of students, though currently we have 10,277 students in the Special Education Program,

[01:16:52] which is about 12.5% of our student population. And while some disabilities, physical disabilities, might be quite visible, many that are suffering from mental illness, social or emotional type of issues or disabilities, other types of learning disabilities, It's oftentimes an invisible population, and that's the what.

[01:17:13] The why I'm here is, I think, this. All of us really represent multiple communities. We might be here for a specific, in my case, committee or some other organization that we are representing here, but we all belong to multiple communities, whether by ethnicity, religious views, our economic status, our family, etc.

[01:17:35] And those things are too often these days used to divide us, And I hope that this is an environment, continues to be an environment where we really are brought together by some of those things. And those differences that we have inform our opinions and they allow us to see a diverse set of opinions and really come together to help promote these issues of equity throughout the district.

[01:18:06] Hi, everybody. My name is Nicole Corson. I go by Nikki. I am here on behalf of the Jewish Community Relations Council, but I am also an English teacher at Heritage High School, and prior to that, I was at Dominion High School, and I was the equity lead at Dominion for several years, since the start of the equity program.

[01:18:28] So I, as the equity lead, I think that one of the things that we did really well was allowing students to be part of the process, to be part of the solution, and to find ways to have their voices be heard.

[01:18:44] And I think that's something that I think we need to really continue to do. Because when we put it in their hands that they know better than any of us what needs to be done and they know how to do it. So I think that's one thing. I also run the Jewish Student Union. I did it at Dominion.

[01:19:00] It's not an easy thing when we're in a community where there's so few Jewish students. So I just started one at Heritage as well. And one of the things at Dominion that we focused on was connecting with other affinity groups. And what is really, really hard right now is the breakdown between the groups.

[01:19:23] And I think that's something that is really hard, specifically between Jewish groups and Muslim groups, given what's happening politically. And I just think that we need to figure out a way to to like you were saying like bring us together find ways to have these conversations find ways to work together to find solutions that bring us together and that do not divide us I think that's really why I'm here I just feel like we need to we need to we need to come together we have to stop being divided among you know like you said we all represent different groups but we're all here for

[01:20:00] the same reason and so i just think that um if we can give everybody a voice that that needs a voice um in the jewish population i think one of the issues is that we're so small and we often get

overlooked and and you know it's our minority status is not visible and so that's something that can be difficult when students um when anti-semitism happens in in our schools that you know you don't know who's jewish you don't know who you're affecting so but i don't want to speak just for the Jewish students in Loudoun County. I speak for everybody. I'm an ally for every group, and I feel really, really strongly about that, and I feel really strongly about

[01:20:38] bringing all the groups together. Thank you. Good evening. I'm Dr. Vaninda Coleman. I'm at Independence High School. I'm the equity lead there. I am also the Special Education Department chair and I have been brought to you by school board chair Melinda Mansfield just a background of who am I straight out of Compton raised by a U.S. naturalized father a mother from the south

[01:21:16] and today have doctor in front of my name even with that I am disregarded and set aside even sometimes by my own co-workers so if that is what I'm experiencing as a professional I can't imagine what our students that are black and brown that are economically disadvantaged that are disabled are experiencing.

[01:21:49] So my why, I am here for them. I am here for those who I know that are experiencing some of those same things that I experience in as a professional of a woman of color.

[01:22:05] Thank you. Charles Barrett. I'm a school psychologist. I've been in Loudoun for 16 years. And my first 13, I spent serving students in Sterling Park. And it has been the joy of my career to serve students in Sterling Park.

[01:22:24] And working in Sterling Park, I learned a lot about how different things are done in this county. So I always want to show up and represent Sterling Park, the students that I've come to love and really admire in so many ways.

[01:22:43] Table eight. These are the tables that had time to prepare. Take us home. I wrote this down. I'm Mark Lucero, and I am a Latino human being, and that's who I'm representing here.

[01:23:06] So my why, I'm here to, so we're a committee. Our job is to advise the school board on policy recommendations, things like that. So I'm here to help the school board find a way to promote equity without impacting the rights, safety, and the dignity of the students, teachers, and families.

[01:23:29] Equity does not need to be a zero-sum game, and this should be reflected in the policies. Thanks. Hello, my name is Anna Purdy. I grew up in Sterling, and I am now fortunate enough to be a principal at an elementary school in Sterling.

[01:23:52] At the front of all my thoughts is always serving the Sterling community. We are the schools in the East that are speakers earlier today. spoke about, we're the ones that have the dogs coming, and I will always stand, force it, and advocate for the schools of Sterling. This may surprise you, but most teachers and administrators are white, and when I grew up in Sterling, and we were taught the colorblind scenario,

[01:24:31] Maybe that's why they only hired the white people, but I will tell you that I am extremely dedicated to hiring a much more diverse workforce. We need adults in buildings that look like the children in the buildings, and I hope to be on the forefront of that work.

[01:24:50] I also am here to advocate for a differentiated staffing standard for schools that fall under the federal category of Title I. We do not yet have all the resources that we require to become equitable to non-Title 1 schools.

[01:25:09] I am also here for our LGBTQ community. I am here for linguistically diverse, culturally diverse, and just vulnerable communities based on the way that they are treated by majorities.

[01:25:28] Hello, my name is Raquel Chapman, and I am a member of MSAC. the Minority Student Achievement Advisory Committee. My what is what brought me here.

[01:25:44] That video was amazing. It really, every time somebody asks me about my why, I go to what brought me here, not really the why, but the what brought me here, and the why is why I continue to show up every day for all of the underrepresented students, not just my child.

[01:26:05] This is my second year on the Equity Committee, and an equitable education should be just a given. I grew up in Richmond, so I wasn't used to the kids not being given an opportunity to be in the gifted programs or to have the extra support that they need.

[01:26:33] And being in Western Loudoun, it really opened my eyes to what I could do, And I am completely grateful for having the opportunity to be able to be a voice, to be able to educate myself. That way I can take that back to my community and to be here and assist with the policies that are out there.

[01:26:57] And looking at the school system and how some of our white teachers just disregard what the policy says, to have that background, to be here, to be able to have an impact on what is written and what is enforced is why I continue to show up. Good evening, everyone. My name is Todd Ritchie. My wife and I are the proud parents of four boys in Loudoun County Public School. That's part of the reason that I'm here to attend Loudoun Valley and to attend Blue Ridge. I'm here as a nominee from the

[01:27:37] Catoctin District School Board member, Carrie LaBelle. As the equity charter states, I look forward to being a representative of the diversity within Loudoun County to ensure multiple perspectives are presented when addressing anything coming before this committee. Loudoun County Public Schools School Board Policy 1040 states that the school board is committed to providing an equitable, safe, and inclusive learning and working environment. My intent is that every policy, practice, and procedure this committee addresses will meet this goal regarding the education, and I'd like to emphasize the education of the students and the working environment of the

[01:28:14] teachers. Equity can be subjective, and I'm here to provide my perspective so we as a committee can meet this goal. Thanks, and I look forward to working with everyone. Hello, my name is Lori Levine, and I am the school board nominee from Lauren Chernoff in the Leesburg District. My why is pretty easy. I'm a mom. One of my children has gone on to college, but I still have a son.

[01:28:44] He's in middle school, and I think I echo a lot of the same thoughts as certainly others at my table here to review the policies, give advice, provide a perspective. I've seen my children excel in certain subject areas and some have had that opportunity to be pushed and challenged and it's great to see. And then when they struggle, they need that support. And so I'm here to look

[01:29:17] at um what i can do to provide feedback so that all of our children are getting a good quality education ableton hi i'm serena rani i represent the head start sorry serena rani i represent the head start and step preschool program um that's part of my why because we represent the most underprivileged children in this county that receive free preschool and it's to see it every

[01:29:56] day the inequity is heartbreaking i'm also a mother of four one elementary one in middle school and two in high school and the daughter of two immigrants i'm a first generation american so i feel

strongly about equity in all all forms good evening my name is brian klippel and i'm the proud principal at Goshen Post Elementary School and my why is grounded in the community, staff, and students that I serve of an extremely diverse population, ensuring that each and

[01:30:33] every child has access and opportunity to authentic, rigorous, and personal learning experiences to ensure that they can take that out into the real world and be positive and productive members of society. And so that just continues to drive the work at Goshen Post.

[01:30:57] Good evening. My name is Nikkei Hughes. I'm also an MSAC member, second year MSAC member. I moved to Loudoun County during COVID. I come from a family of advocates, particularly in civil rights and the intersection there with early education. And I was raised to believe that Advocacy is a civic responsibility.

[01:31:22] I am the parent of a second grader in Loudoun County Public Schools, and because we chose to raise and educate my son in Loudoun County, I feel like it's my responsibility to add a voice to issues that will ensure that students like him and those that share his experience have emerged from this experience whole, but during this experience are supported, provided all opportunities available to them, and are really able to thrive as they move on to the next phase of life.

[01:31:56] My why, or my sub-why, if you will, when asking my son about what I saw as kind of a lack of curriculum in Black History Month this year, he responded to me, well, Mommy, there's really not a lot of black people in the world. It's kind of like at school. All my teachers are white, and they're all girls.

[01:32:14] And to that, my sub-why is to provide my voice to any issues that involve diverse hiring practices in Loudoun County so that we can see the teacher population reflect the students that they have and what that adds to their experience.

[01:32:35] Thank you. Thank you. I'm sorry. I should have mentioned that I'm representing Little River District and the school board nominee from Dr. Samira Rasheed. Sorry, I didn't mention that.

[01:32:51] It's okay. I didn't even require that. It was your name and your why. It's okay. Thank you. And I truly mean that. Thank you for being vulnerable. Thank you for your share. Thank you for your thoughts. And thank you for sharing your why. When we have a universal understanding of our why, whether we agree wholeheartedly or see each other or understand one another completely is okay.

[01:33:15] Because the diverse perspectives in this space provides an opportunity for us to challenge. And through challenge, we grow and we stretch and we become better human beings so that we can continue to advocate better, push harder, strive for better for each and every one of our students.

[01:33:36] So I thank you for walking through this exercise with me. I appreciate your vulnerability. And I turn it over to Chair Deans. The staff, right?

[01:34:12] At this time, I'd like to introduce my phenomenal team. And one of our team members is not here tonight. Collectively, you are a part of our team as well, in case no one gave you the memo. At this time, I'd like to thank my phenomenal EA, Helen Randolph in the back, who makes all of the magic.

[01:34:29] Who is co-piloting with Miss Jory in the back and making all of the magic happen here tonight. Shahid Muhammad, one of my DEIA supervisors. Michelle Fresina, an instructional facilitator, Lauren Freeman, instructional facilitator, Everett Callaway, instructional facilitator, and Cynthia Lewis, supervisor for the Division of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility.

[01:34:53] And before the team comes up, you know, there's a lot of misunderstandings and lack of qualifying measures that are surfacing around about what it is that we do, what we participate in, how we support this division.

[01:35:10] And to the point that was made earlier, yes, we do need to continue to have a tremendous amount of support. But I'll share with you what I share with my team all the time. We stay focused on our mission, not our jobs. We stay focused on our mission because if we stay focused on our missions, we will always manifest what needs to happen.

[01:35:30] If we worry about a job, we'll be missing our mission. So I often repeat that to them, and I also say I'm the only one that could be fired, so don't worry. And that's okay, too. LCPS centers equity as one of its foundational core values. For our community, equity means being committed to providing a safe, supportive, inclusive, affirming, and respectful environment for each student and staff member with the goal of fostering success, growth, and academic rigor.

[01:35:58] The cultivation of this environment requires us to reject and condemn hate speech, racial slurs, anti-Semitism, and any other action or behavior that is discriminatory based on race, ethnicity, national origin, gender identity, sexual orientation, gender expression, socioeconomic status, religion, ability, and other cultural identities or expression.

[01:36:23] Such non-inclusive speech, behavior, and actions do not reflect who we are as a learning community. We embrace and value the uniqueness, identities, backgrounds, experiences, perspectives, and needs of each student and employee. Celebrating diversity is important and helps define us as a school division.

[01:36:45] Demonstrating the courage to address inequities and remove barriers represents an integral part of our collective effort toward excellence in education. Equity in action leads to greater access, opportunity, and equality, so that each student is empowered to make meaningful contributions to the world.

[01:37:15] So when we talk about diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility, there are some operational definitions. And no, they're not the traditional ones to be found in Webster's Dictionary. These terms are ever-evolving because, as you know, within education, there's constantly evolution.

[01:37:37] We've yet to have a revolution. Diversity is all the ways that people are different and at the same time at the individual and group levels. Even when people appear the same, they are different. Organizational diversity requires examining and questioning the makeup of a group to ensure that multiple perspectives are represented.

[01:38:01] Equity is a fair and just treatment of all members of a community. Equity requires commitment to strategic priorities, resources, respect, and civility, as well as ongoing action and assessment of the progress toward achieving specific and common goals. Inclusion refers to the intentional, ongoing effort to ensure that all persons fully participate in all aspects of the organizational work, including decision-making processes.

[01:38:29] It also refers to the ways that all persons are valued as respected members of an organization and or community. accessibility is giving equitable access to everyone along the continuum of human ability and experience. Accessibility encompasses the broader meanings of compliance and refers to how

organizations make space for the characteristics that each person brings. Hi, everybody. I always feel like I'm coming home when I come to the equity committee, so it's good to see faces.

[01:39:00] So I'm Laura Freeman, and I'm going to speak to the role of the equity lead. So I got to be the equity lead at Parkview, and it was a really wonderful experience. I see you, Charles. And so I'm going to talk about what kind of looks like a day in the life of an equity lead. So the equity lead works with the principal of the school to carry out and address priorities determined by the school leadership. And so we often say that the true equity lead of a building is the principal, and then we are there to support and make sure that that vision is carried throughout the school.

[01:39:38] So on the screen, we have a few pictures just kind of to share some big points. So one of the things that my principal would do is when there was a concern that was brought to him by students or just something that he knew was going to be an issue in the building, I would put together a presentation for staff to be able to share about whatever that was.

[01:39:59] So if you look on the screen, it was about the same time of year when we were doing this slideshow and Ramadan was coming. And we had a number of students who expressed concerns about what this was going to look like at school. And so what I did was I worked with our Muslim Student Association and a couple of Muslim teachers in our school to be able to provide for teachers some thinking points and some dialogue around how we were going to support those students.

[01:40:29] So that was done. We did that at every faculty meeting. So there was always an equity focus. Um, another thing that Equity Leads do is we are resources to, um, to staff and for students.

[01:40:44] And so one of the things that I would do was make myself available and visible in the school building. So I always had my planning blocks in the library because that's where people would come to do their planning or study or whatever. So people would be able to bring any concerns or any questions that they had, um, any day of the week.

[01:41:04] Down in the lower corner, you're going to see a picture of my students that's in the beginning of the school year, so not a lot of decorations on the wall because the kids helped me decide what was going to be up there. But equity leads are full-time teachers, counselors. They have a full-time job on top of doing the equity lead work.

[01:41:24] So this was really crucial because it kept me in tune with what the kids needed. I was a reading specialist and English language learner teacher. And so our school improvement plan was often lined up with those kids.

[01:41:39] So it was really strategic to have me in that role to be able to work on those goals. And then in the lower middle, you'll see our student equity ambassadors. So often our equity leads are the point of contact for those students. We have Layla and Anaya up there.

[01:41:56] And I put the picture of them because they were really instrumental to our school. So I think it was Nikki over here who said that students need to be part of the process and part of the solution. So these students would come to as many of the equity committee meetings that we have, our staff equity committees as possible.

[01:42:15] And they would provide their perspective and also bring the concerns of students to us as well as bringing the concerns of students to the DEI team at the time. When we were looking for student equity

ambassadors, we had such a huge turnout.

[01:42:31] We had like 15, 16 students who really wanted to be a part of that work. And so what we did was create a student equity advisory committee so that they would be able to talk about, educate each other about the issues that were important to them and lean into student leadership and advocacy.

[01:42:51] And so some of the conversations that happened at that student equity advisory committee led to the Parkview redo and getting the new building. And I don't say that to toot anybody's horn, but just to say that what the equity lead does in a building is to uplift the needs of the student and really empower students to be their best selves and take action.

[01:43:16] So I'm Michelle Fursina, and a great part of my day is when I could always talk about family engagement. And as I was really listening to all of your whys, so many of you really raised up that you have children within the school system or you had students who graduated from LCPS.

[01:43:37] And so much of what I do as part of being part of DEIA is a member of the Family Engagement Work Group where we really do try to engage families, lift up, and empower our families. So I'm going to talk to you a little bit about the work that we do as part of that group.

[01:43:52] So a big part of understanding family engagement is understanding our why. So really empowered family engagement, impactful family engagement, really impacts student outcomes, attendance. It really builds that strong school-home relationship.

[01:44:09] And for schools, it really helps to build school morale. We have reduced turnover in terms of staff and overall job satisfaction for teachers. And I want to say overall satisfaction for the entire community. Family engagement is really tied into four core beliefs. And this is research that was done by Karen Mapp. And these are really some of the underlying and fundamental tenets that we hold around family engagement that I just really want to bring here tonight. One is the idea and the belief that all families have dreams for their children and want the best for them. So that really

[01:44:48] is thinking and knowing that this is what all of our families want for their children. All families have the capacity to support their children's learning, and that can look really different. This isn't about how many times a student can, I mean, a parent or a family member can come to a PTA meeting or come and volunteer at a school. This looks like what's happening at home.

[01:45:13] So sometimes parents support their students' education. Actually, many times, that's not visible within the school. We really need to build those relationships with our families to really understand the support that they're providing for their students and how we can partner with them.

[01:45:30] And that leads us to the next one. Families and school staff are equal partners. Our families and our schools come together as equals to support our children, educationally and socially and emotionally. The responsibility of cultivating these family relationships lie within the schools.

[01:45:49] They lie within our school leaders. They lie within our school board. they lie within our principals, they lie within our schools to be reaching out to forge those relationships with our families. And in doing this, the Family Engagement Working Group has connected all of our work into our strategic plan, specifically 4.1 that calls out family engagement and developing a work group to do these such things. And in doing this, I'm just going to really briefly go over some resources. One is we've created a rubric so schools can really gauge

[01:46:26] where they are in terms of family engagement and what are the things that they can do to really help improve upon family engagement. We've outlined a best practices outline of family engagement practices for our division. We've outlined all the division resources that we have throughout our division. And the last one that I'm really excited about because it's our newest one that we worked on is a welcome guide for our new families.

[01:46:52] So we are right now in the midst of doing professional learning with our family liaisons, with our registrars, with our front office staff that really engage with our families on a day-to-day basis. We really like to say our front office staff is a handshake of the school. They're the ones that greet our families at the very first.

[01:47:14] And I'm going to be going over to, is it Mr. Heed, Mr. Muhammad for Division of... Okay, good evening, everyone. and happy National Women's History Month. One of the other roles and the scope of work for our division is to work with schools and the division of school leadership on mitigating how to eradicate racial slurs and hate speech in our schools.

[01:47:42] This data that I have up here for you is of March 4th. So we have 574 total incidents made by 564 unique students. that time 87 high 178 elementary and 309 middle we continuously work with schools on the strategies that they're involved with in order to mitigate these incidents we can tell you that a lot of work with the school administration the community the students are working very hard with consistent messaging of these

[01:48:19] expectations and why we cannot allow these things to happen within our schools and the harm that they cause the various levels of consequences from warnings detention and in-school restriction to suspension one of the big pieces is the educational piece and how are we educating students to deconstruct some of these ideas that allow them to do these things in schools say the things that they say and the harmful things that they are saying so we work on reflective lessons, how to educate students on the harm that racial slurs

[01:48:54] and hate speech cause, restorative practices, professional development for staff, and the ongoing support. I want to give an update to student voice, which is a huge alignment, and Laura spoke a little bit about this earlier, to our strategic plan for empowering students. We look at our student equity ambassadors as student leaders. We've now included our MSAC student delegates. We will continuously get student voice from them and help them become advocates and leaders in their buildings to really lead the way of this work because they

[01:49:31] know firsthand what kind of environment that they would like to learn in they have the ability to coalesce with others and get more information that's going to be supportive for not only our division but also the entire school division as a whole so we're very proud of that and this is ongoing work with our student equity ambassadors, and MSAC student delegates.

[01:49:55] - So again, as part of that work, something that Dr. Spence did when he first came to the division was he found out that we had this wonderful group of students, and so he met with a focus group of our high school student equity ambassadors and talked to them to get their perspectives on student safety, academic excellence, what they think that is, and then welcoming, inclusive, and affirming school environments.

[01:50:16] So we have followed up with these students and will continue to do so, because the charge that has been given to the students is what can you do in your school? What can you advocate for? What actions can you take to help create or strengthen a welcoming, inclusive environment?

[01:50:33] And so we actually just met with them last week and they have some great ideas for how they want to showcase that, things they want to do and use their voices. So we will continue to support them in whatever they want to do.

[01:50:50] - So I'm also going to talk about our work with schools and collaborating with our schools, which is a big focus of our work this year. One of those responsibilities evolved around instruction, which many of you spoke to, which was your why, that high quality instruction for each and every student.

[01:51:07] So one of our responsibilities this year was creating some professional learning for all the teachers here in Loudoun County. This took place on our countywide PD day back in November. And the focus of that instruction was around access, opportunity, and knowledge.

[01:51:23] So we had a creating team which included members from the special education office, members from the English learners office, and we co-created professional learning for our teachers to use access, opportunity, and knowledge as a lens for how they're planning their instruction, the way they're interacting with students, and the way they're thinking about learning and getting to know the learners that they are working with.

[01:51:50] So this was facilitated in all of our school buildings by the equity lead, a teacher for special education, and one of the English learner teachers. So the focus was on these three concepts, access, opportunity, and knowledge. So when we think about access, as we really hope to increase the rigor in our classrooms for each and every student, we want to make sure that all of the students have access to that learning.

[01:52:16] So we talked about providing the support that all students need, whether that's scaffolding. Another way we talked to teachers about providing that support so that kids can access what they're learning was around the connections that you can make in the classroom.

[01:52:32] Those culturally responsive connections, those relationships that teachers build with their students. Those are two ways that really helps our kids get access to that high-quality instruction that we're all looking for. We talked about opportunities.

[01:52:48] So that's the frequency. We want our children to have multiple opportunities to be involved in critical thinking, to be having deeper learning experiences. So we talked about that as a point of daily instruction and not something that is held for the end of the quarter or a special project or something that happens if students finish work early, but it's just a part of the daily instruction that's going on in every classroom.

[01:53:14] And finally, knowledge. We want our students to know themselves as learners, and we want teachers to know their students as learners. So that type of knowledge is really empowering and really helps our students to reach their full potential. So that learning that happened in November included opportunities for staff-wide discussion.

[01:53:37] It included opportunities for teachers to think about what does access opportunity and knowledge look like within the content area that they teach. It also included opportunities for small group

discussion, large group discussion, and we included strategies that teachers could use even the next day within their classrooms to really begin to implement those strategies and to implement those culturally responsive practices that we are seeking in Loudoun County.

[01:54:03] And so as to bring us home and to paying attention to the time, and that's why I signed up for the end because get it wrapped up here. So as she talked about the way that we collaborate with schools and the way they collaborate with people, up here we have a couple of our documents.

[01:54:25] What we want to do is collaborate, right? We don't want to come in at the end. We don't want to come to a finished product and then add our lens to it. We want to partner with people the whole way through because this needs to be ingrained in everything that we do and in everything we present and everything that occurs within our school division.

[01:54:42] So on that document, we include various collaborations we've had in the past. We include what our goals really are going to be there. And we have various tools that can assist someone in kind of figuring out exactly what it is that they want to build. Next to that is a sample of professional learning.

[01:54:59] It speaks to kind of demystifying culture and some of the myths in and around it that's one that we presented in the past because a lot of people are walking around with a they feel that they have an understanding of the concept of culture and what we all know is that no one is the holder of all of that content and all that information so we have to be students of it and we have to be culturally humble right we have to be about that cultural humility so that is one presentation that we've created and the other is a document that shares all of the opportunities to collaborate with us and the ways to do that. And when you share a way to collaborate with you and you put that offer out there, people take you up on that. One thing that we've done this year that

[01:55:39] I have loved, it's been really the joy of my work this year, is the opportunity to get into schools. There are schools all over this district that if you work in one part of the district, you don't even really have a vision for their existence, what those students are doing day to day, what that community looks like, and the family that they are building within that building. So this year every week we are in different schools in every corner of the district we get to know those principals we get to know what is it that we can do to help service your community what are those questions that you have about what it is that we do on the daily and what are the ways

[01:56:14] that we can partner with you right some of those collaborations have looked like students well actually we gave this presentation to principals a principal reached out to us and wanted to partner because they found an issue with those racial slayers and hate speech within their community.

[01:56:30] And they invited in student voice to come up with a solution. So we went out, facilitated with those students, and literally within two months, they were launching a campaign around mascot empowerment. I'm not going to blow up what school that was, but the way in which they exemplify the ideals and the motto of their school through this poster campaign that a student was like, I saw this and it impacted me at another school and another division, and they put all that together.

[01:57:01] They also identified trusted adults within their building. One of the big things that we're doing this year is making sure that each and every student can identify one trusted adult in their school. Research says if you have at least one trusted adult, you're going to have more positive outcomes.

[01:57:18] So these students nominated people to be those trusted adults, to be available to students who may be having a hard time with those racial slurs, hate speech, anything in that community that's not making them feel welcomed, affirmed, and have that sense of belonging. This was student-generated.

[01:57:35] There have been opportunities where we visit schools that are having programs. We come in for the good stuff, too. It doesn't just have to be racial slurs or hate speech. Let us know. We want to be in your schools. So, with that said, as promised, if you have any questions for us as it pertains to the presentation that you've just seen, we'd like to give you a couple moments to ask those.

[01:58:02] Very quick question. How many equity ambassadors do we have in LCPS? Oh, you don't.

[01:58:19] But we just got three more. We need about 300, though. We're small and mighty.

[01:58:38] Hello. Good. I was just going to say that if you don't, we're out of time, but please, if you have any questions, reach out to us. We're always willing to have dialogue. And I want to assure you, I'm willing to tag along with them.

[01:58:57] They got me out of bed one morning, and they said, come over to Arcola Elementary School. Champ, our school was there. The step team, they had me rocking at 8 o'clock in the morning, even at my age.

[01:59:15] So I just want you to know that they are doing what it is that you say that you want to happen with the equity committee. They are carrying it out.

[01:59:32] Dr. Ellis Williams ain't joking. And I know, is there an English teacher in here? She's one. But she ain't joking. So I want you to know that I am so proud to be assigned this committee.

[01:59:49] I said to my school board chair, you can put me on anything else you want to put me on, but I want to be on the equity committee. And many of you have heard my story. I'm a sharecropper's daughter from North Carolina, and education got me out of those fields.

[02:00:09] So it is that I want every student in Loudoun County Public Schools to reach their potential, because I feel like I'm at the pinnacle of mine right now. And I want you to know that even the state of Virginia has designated March as DEIA month from the Virginia School Board Association.

[02:00:39] And they have given a proclamation for DEIA for the month of March. Because we're out of time, I'm not going to read all of it. But I want you to know that we are not in this work alone, and we will move it forward for Loudoun County Public Schools this year while I am the chair of the equity committee, I promise.

[02:01:14] Is there any new business that anyone may have? If so, we can record it and take it over to our next meeting. Sorry, I will be brief.

[02:01:35] I don't know if this is really new business or if it's the right place to bring it up. But one of the things I had a comment to is that the equity board committee says it runs from January to December, but we only have meetings from March to December.

[02:01:50] So we've lost two meetings because we've waited for the school board to delegate the new delegates or committee or approve us for a new committee. What does it take to make it a two-year commitment so that we don't lose ground?

[02:02:06] because I feel like we lost a lot of ground from December's meeting was kind of a buy to the last chair and we didn't do much and then we missed two months and so I feel like we're just we lose a lot of ground with renewing yearly. May I share with you that I was elected to a two-year position so I will be here for two years. All the school board was new and the chair and the vice chair who's

[02:02:38] here had to put our talents where they thought that they would work best. And so it did take those two months for us to get the volunteers or the designees for this committee, as well as our assignments for us to get on board. But I promise you, did I promise? I promise you that we will not stagnate out over the next two years that I am on the board. And i have been elected for two years and i often say that i'm going to run again but i gotta talk to

[02:03:17] him our vice chair is here and so i'm joking with him so then can i just make one comment so to be clear then we can expect a meeting in january and february next year no that i i'm just i'm just trying to set an expectation so that people because we genuinely want to be here and do the work but frustrating when it gets stalled all of the board members all of the board members will be here this year and next year and i think that when i ask my chair and the vice chair hint hint to allow me to

[02:03:54] stay here i'm sure they will in the original charter of the equity committee it states committee members who miss two meetings without contacting the chair will be removed and the stakeholder group will be asked to nominate a new member. So if you are from a group and you miss two meetings without contacting us, then we will ask the person who sent you to send us a

[02:04:26] replacement. All proceedings and documents will be subject to the Virginia Freedom of Information Act, which you have been briefed on this evening. I would also like to remind you that under this current superintendent. Hear me. Dr. Aaron Spence, the DEIA department has been elevated to a cabinet level position and thus Dr. Letitia Ellis-Williams is now an assistant superintendent. This speaks

[02:05:05] volumes to the level of emphasis that this administration places on our work here in the equity committee. Further, the equity committee is a select committee, which means we were created for a specific purpose. However, as the DEIA department has been elevated, who knows what our next assignment from the superintendent, from the community, from the administration,

[02:05:39] from msac might be so you know select committees sometimes are temporary but with those kind of actions from the superintendent do we not think that maybe we might become a standing committee i'm supposed to get a hand clap so i just want you to know that i am inspired i am excited i could preach a sermon tonight about the work and the direction that loudoun county public schools

[02:06:18] is headed with this equity committee. So I just want you to know that this is our organization meeting. Let's see how much we can get done between now and December and on into 2025.

[02:06:37] Again, I thank each of you for being here with us this evening. And do I hear a motion for adjournment? I motion to adjourn this March 7th meeting of the equity committee.

[02:06:56] at 7 39 p.m. do i get a second a second i know we all want to go home who's feeding me thank you so much and i will see you hold on put it on your calendar right now before you move april the 4th at 5 30 i will see you here next month we got spring break in there you got things to do. But April the 4th, I want you to be here. Good night, and I thank you immensely.



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