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Loudoun County School Board, Legislative, Audit and Policy Committee Meeting, Thursday, March 21, 2024

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Place Loudoun County Public Schools / School Board meeting (see BoardDocs / LCPS-TV)
Length 1h 2m (video)

- Official meeting video (Vimeo / LCPS-TV): <https://player.vimeo.com/video/926080787?rel=0>
- BoardDocs (School Board): <https://go.boarddocs.com/vsba/loudoun/Board.nsf/Public>

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[00:00:00] Good afternoon. This is April Chandler calling to order the Legislative Audit and Policy Committee for March 21st, 2024. We will begin with public comment. Sign up to make in-person public comments occurred prior to the start of the committee meeting.

[00:00:16] The meeting will be audio recorded and is posted in BoardDocs. Today, we have three speakers signed up for public comment. We will allow three minutes. Our first speaker is Abby Platt, followed by Shelly Schlebridge, Schlebridge, Abby Platt.

[00:00:48] I am here today as a parent, a taxpayer, and a community member to speak about participation in public meetings. With the recent vote to turn the camera off speakers during public comment, I am concerned that there will be further effort today to limit that participation, which is stunning to me because we have a new school board, nine new members, all of whom spent the better part of the last year and some too campaigning with the promise

[00:01:21] that there would be more transparency more more listening less division and yet here we sit and it appears that the loudon county school board is actively working to limit public comment at their own meetings and yet you're eager to spend fifty thousand dollars on to set up anonymous focus groups paid and facilitated by consultants we are your focus group we are in the room as a parent I'm begging you to listen and to care about the

[00:01:59] issues that are facing our family and my children my daughter has a boy in her PE locker room this is not okay to hire some outside consultant to do the work that you campaigned for the better part of a year or longer to say you wanted to do this job please do the job that you campaigned for this is your decision to make not some outside group so I'm asking you today to please do what you campaigned to do and to have greater transparency don't limit the public from participating in these meetings thank you

[00:02:36] Shelly Schlembridge followed by Sandy Sullivan too much H community sorry you

[00:03:39] me to start over you good yeah per the lcps strategic plan the fourth goal listed as being foundation foundational and helping you achieve your mission and vision is engaged community policy 2520 participation by the public reads the school board welcomes comments from the public and believes strong community engagement is important to successful a successful school system this policy was recently updated on november 2021 and is not up for review for another two years so why are we discussing it today at the last board meeting we heard statements from the board

[00:04:17] regarding not wanting the camera on speakers and wanting to limit public comment to keep lcps out of the news because you have concerns over what i may be wearing ones views comments as political grandstanding which by the way is only political if you make it political you're concerned about safety and what could be a Jerry Springer type of show or somehow sharing input on my personal or religious beliefs on decisions you are making could take away from the work in transparency of the board transparency that word right there makes my eyes rolls because all of you including Spence ran on

[00:04:54] platforms of transparency but here we are and you are trying to shut us out I'm intrigued to hear today's discussion on how further limiting public comment will allow the community to feel heard on relevant topics such as the budget changes to state laws policies of review building development and growth and will allow the board to speak on behalf of their constituents if you aren't hearing from us email is not engagement listening sessions are presentations from you how do we feel engaged if miss manfield is the only one allowed to

[00:05:27] respond to an email address to lcsb at lcps.com the board meets once a month in march has no meetings in july one meeting in august and one meeting in december how will you fit in public comment to stay in this schedule and be relevant at this point doesn't matter what the public has to say which means if it's on today's agenda we should be able to speak to something on today's agenda you often ask about what's going on in other jurisdictions they're allowing people on the camera and they're allowing people to speak at every meeting we should be doing the same it is

[00:06:05] listen to your focus group we are your focus group we're involved and we are free however when there there will still be political grandstanding people will still wear what they want to wear people will still hold up signs and if somebody wants to put on a jerry springer show type of episode then they will the news will continue to broadcast interviews because that is their job to share community news the more you limit us from speaking directly to you the more

[00:06:32] you will find us reaching out to the news thank you the next speaker is sandy sullivan good afternoon my name is sandy sullivan and i currently serve the members of the loudon education association as their president first i would like to say that we are glad that we finally came to the day where yesterday was the first meeting of the joint committee of collective bargaining it was a very productive

meeting we have two meetings set forth on the calendar and we look forward to great things that will benefit our students our educators and the community the other item i want

[00:07:11] to speak about is the policy 2620 recognition of student and staff accomplished accomplishments by the school board while recognizing students and staff is important and critical adding recognitions could impede the board from completing important and timely work as well as result in limiting the amount of time the public has to provide input perhaps adding a couple of separate meetings throughout the school year devoted to recognitions would be the best venue for this purpose thank you we're going to move to item number three approval of the February 22nd 2024 draft minutes additionally we have minutes

[00:07:50] from the last meetings of the community outreach and audit committees these committees were dissolved by the board and a process of verification of the minutes was developed the verifications are provided by the previous committee chairs could I please have a motion to approve the meeting minutes so moved thank you the motion was do I have a second second thank you the motion was made by Ms. Chernoff and seconded by Ms. Donahue is there any discussion all those in favor please

[00:08:24] raise your hand and say aye aye seeing none opposed the motion passes unanimously with all committee members present we will move on to item number 4.1 joint committee on collective bargaining update Ms. Donahue do you have an update for us thank you madam Chandler as Ms. Sullivan said yesterday was the first meeting for the joint committee on collective bargaining uh eight of Eight of the nine members were present, one of our members had an unexpected circumstance and was not able to be present at our first meeting, but the other eight of us were there.

[00:09:00] We discussed norms and protocols for the way that we shall proceed forward, and we did schedule two half-day sessions on April 15th and on May 2nd to start working through our substantive discussions.

[00:09:16] I also felt that it was a very successful meeting, and I am optimistic going forward. Happy to answer any questions. are there any questions from the committee I have not yet listened to the meeting so I apologize but is that the only two we're planning or is it just that you've planned to and then if needed you'll plan more the latter okay thank you for the question mr. Knopf yes we wanted to at least get two meetings on the books and with the understanding that if we don't get through all of the work that we need to get through we will schedule more but to at least have a

[00:09:54] starting point. Perfect. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Seeing no further questions, we will move on to item number 4.2, the Office of the Auditor General quarterly status update. Mr. Ahmad Woods, Auditor General, will be presenting. Mr. Woods. Thank you. Good afternoon, Chair Chandler and members of the committee. Today, the Office of the Auditor General, hereafter referred to as OAG, is providing its quarterly update of office activities. Next slide, please. Next slide. First

[00:10:33] First up we have our current audits. Currently we are, those current audits include audit of LCPS SPED staffing needs and requirements and the audit of LCPS fine arts fine departments stipend program. As you can see on the presentation the highlighted green identifies which phase we are in each project.

[00:10:53] Give you a second to take a look. For the audit of LCPS SPED staffing we are in our reporting phase and for our audit of Fine Arts stipends. We are currently in the fieldwork phase.

[00:11:08] I'll give you a moment to see the tasks we do in those phases. All right, next up we have our new audits. Over the past two weeks, the OIG has begun work on two new audits. The two new audits are review of LCPS student placement policy and practices and an audit of student software applications.

[00:11:31] Both are in the planning phase with acknowledgement letters recently being forwarded to the auditees who will participate in these audits. And that concludes the current audits, for current and new audits. Next week, or not next week, next up we have our Fiscal Year 25 Annual Audit Plan.

[00:11:55] OAG is currently in the beginning stages of developing its FY25 Annual Audit Plan and is currently identifying potential audit projects to be performed. Once the OAG has developed its risk-based audit universe, we will present it to the LAMP Committee later this spring As an information item for review and then subsequent discussion that you can see we are currently Identifying audit projects and that's where the arrow is and so as you see we have a five-step plan And we will present that for your guys's review that concludes our quarterly update

[00:12:32] And I'm happy to take any questions you may have. Thank you. Thank you so much. Mr. Woods Are there any questions from the committee sure I have a couple of questions just I know this is sort of high level of where we are in the process but it notes here for the audit that is finishing up for LCPS sped that you're in the reporting phase so can you kind of walk us through how that works with the draft report and what the timeline is sort of specifically to reporting that out then to the public I know that it's I think

[00:13:08] draft report means it's reporting amongst the LCPS cabinet and staff and possibly us and then how that reports out to the public and what the timeline Yes, so once an audit report is drafted, we'll provide it to the auditees.

[00:13:26] So in there, we'll provide our recommendations, and we'll give them a timeline to respond with their action plans. And so once they submit their action plans, we'll review it. We will determine whether we concur with their audit plan or their action plan, and then we'll have an exit meeting.

[00:13:46] Once we have exit meeting, we will try to come to a concurrence on our recommendations. They may also provide information that mitigates our findings. And so in the draft phase, you may see a finding that may not end up in our final report because the auditee has provided information that now makes the recommendation null.

[00:14:09] And so that process can take anywhere from a couple weeks to a month or two, depending on the complexity of the recommendations, the complexity of the area we're recommending. And so there's a lot of things that may go back during that back and forth.

[00:14:28] Once we come to concurrence, we will meet with Cabinet to give them an update of what the report looks like. And on that same day, we will issue and upload it to our OAG webpage. And so it will be public. And once we issue our report, that report goes to all board members.

[00:14:46] It goes to the superintendent and it will be uploaded to our web page. Thank you. That is very helpful And then just a point of clarification I've gotten several questions about I believe my understanding is there's two LCPS special education not there's two audits in regards to special education going on by two different groups Could you just clarify what that is and specifically? I don't want to get in the weeds, but what is the purpose of each?

[00:15:15] So I cannot speak to any other audit. Okay, I do know that for my audit. We are looking strictly at Staffing requirements for per state standards would that include compensation - no, we are not looking at salary. Okay, and so Thank you. Are there any other questions?

[00:15:42] Thank you so much. We'll move on to our next item 4.3 We have Tanya James from Jackson West here to provide us with a legislative update. Ms. James? Good afternoon, Madam Chair, members of the committee.

[00:16:00] It's an honor to be here with you all and back in the northern Virginia area after a very, very good session, to say the least. And I want to commend this committee with bringing forth one of the most pro-education, pro-teacher, pro-student legislative agendas to the General Assembly.

[00:16:28] So next slide, please. First, I want to highlight two of your priorities that were carried over to the 2025 session. Delegate Marty Martinez carried legislation that requires the Department of Education to conduct a biannual audit of education prep programs to ensure alignment with the Literacy Act.

[00:16:56] In committee, multiple higher education institutions stood up because the Literacy Act as it currently stands is fairly new, and they just felt they needed more time to do their audits.

[00:17:14] Many of them expressed that they were in the midst of doing their audits right now. So the House Education Committee felt it was better to carry it over to 2025 to hopefully have some more data points on where higher ed was in that.

[00:17:33] Free school meals, Senator Danica Roan patroned the legislation, which was intended to ensure all schools have free lunch for all students. Of course, that was carried over mainly due to budgetary concerns.

[00:17:53] However, when the conference committee met, they did allocate an increase of \$0.28 reimbursement rate for breakfast meals. Currently, it is a \$0.22 reimbursement rate, and that hasn't changed in 12 years.

[00:18:14] So I would definitely consider that a win. Next slide, please. And here's other legislation that was supported by LCPS. The student overdose bill that was patroned by Jennifer Carroll Foy and Delegate Holly Seafolt passed both chambers and will be sent to the governor for action.

[00:18:43] comprehensive community college, otherwise known as dual enrollment, and this is current law. However, the patron of this bill wanted to, right now it offers that for dual enrollment for high school diplomas.

[00:19:02] He wanted to take it a step further and add high school equivalency programs as well. The committee laid that bill down, so it did not move out of the House Education Committee. The fentanyl and opioids education material, what that bill does, it requires the DOE along with stakeholders to develop and distribute to each school board age appropriate and evidence-based education materials concerning the risk to health and safety

[00:19:38] um that that are posed by opiates it's it's currently with the governor and uh awaiting action and um the finally the public school staffing and funding uh bill it this bill is an omnibus of uh for education so it uh covered a a litany of um education issues from uh funding of

[00:20:10] English language learners programs, student-to-teacher ratios, teacher certification incentives, and establishes at-risk student programs. Next slide, please.

[00:20:28] But the main piece of legislation that was included in this omnibus is LCPS initiated priority for special education staffing requirements carried by Senator Subramanian and was incorporated into the omnibus and as you can see here the two highlights to that piece of legislation smaller counselor to student

[00:21:00] ratio from 1 to 25 or 1 to 325 to 1 to 250 it also requires facilities and transportation staff uh be included in coca adjustments to salaries moving forward with lcps priorities mental health service basically tele tele mental health services did pass both houses and the governor has is is also awaiting governor's action and he has until

[00:21:36] april 8th to do that and what that does is directs the development adoption and distribution to each school board a model mou between a school board and a nationally recognized school-based telehealth provider that sets four parameters for the provisions of mental health teletherapy to public school students enrolled in local school divisions and finally one that has already been signed into law by the governor is the sol curriculum guidelines for research base hazing prevention instruction

[00:22:14] He signed that bill on, I believe it was March 8th, so it does take into effect on July 1 of this year. Next slide, please. And some budget highlights.

[00:22:37] LCPS, although there was a bill by Delegate Tata from the Virginia Beach area to establish recovery schools for certain superintendent regents to include this region.

[00:22:56] That bill did not pass out of the Senate. It did pass the full House, but it did not pass out of the Senate. However, because Senator Russi Perry and Delegate Cannon both put forth a budget amendment in there and it did pass we we do still have that funding to start to be able to start a recovery school or recovery program and it authorizes certain school divisions to establish a recovery school

[00:23:35] for students who are in the early stages of recovery for substance use disorder or dependency this the school also is for the purpose of providing such students with support necessary to make progress towards earning a high school diploma and reintegrating into a traditional high school.

[00:23:58] And also, although none of the budgets, the House budget, or coming out of conference with the House and Senate budget and the governor's budget did not remove the support cap, Delegate Reed, ahead of that, did put forth a budget amendment and the House and Senate Conference Committee kept that.

[00:24:27] The Conference Committee appropriated the following to backfill the reduction of sales distribution to school divisions. Next, at-risk students. The Conference Committee provided a groundbreaking investment in putting forth those funds, \$171 million in updating the state at-risk add-on based on the methodology proposed by JLARC.

[00:25:01] English language learners, the conference committee put forth a historic investment in tiered support based on English proficiency levels for English language learners with \$72 million.

[00:25:16] And for teacher pay, the conference committee added a 3% teacher pay increase, maintaining the General Assembly's commitment to reaching the national teacher pay average by the 2027-2028 school year.

[00:25:36] And this will be the first time that Virginia reaches the national teacher average. And that concludes this update. I will say that we will, for those bills that still need action from the governor, We

will hope to see that upon reconvene in April.

[00:26:03] Thank you so much, Ms. James. That was very informative. I know as the Algonquian representative, seeing the bill, the anti-hazing bill, knowing what it means to the members of our community passed and signed into law is just really significant and meaningful and very heartened and hopeful to see other things come forward.

[00:26:26] Thank you for that update. Are there any questions from the committee for Ms. James? Sure, Ms. Chernoff. I just wanted to thank you for the report. It's exciting to see after, especially we got to go down, I want to thank you for all the work you did in helping facilitate the day where we could meet and talk to people.

[00:26:43] And I am encouraged about the very teacher-forward, student-forward decisions, particularly in the budget, to see them talking, you know, about tiered support and, you know, responding to EL learners and things like that. think it's been a long time coming and so it's really exciting to see that that we're gonna finally be catching up to the average for teacher salaries those things are really important so being even just a little small piece of that that was really exciting can you just talk about what what the next step is I know you mentioned you reconvene and then yes so when I mentioned some of

[00:27:17] those those pieces of legislation the governor has has time to act it's a lot of bills so they send the bills in blocks to the governor and the governor then decides if he wants to of course sign into law or veto it or send it back with an amendment for the for the the members of the General Assembly to consider and once reconvene happens we will see what happens to we're gonna see what happens to all of those bills and hopefully we we and reconvene with the

[00:27:57] budget thank you are there any further questions no seeing no further questions we will move on to item number four point oh four we will review proposals for additions and or changes to the VSBA or the Virginia School Board Association positions dr. Smith can you please share the additions or changes that have been submitted thank you chair Chandler just a little bit of background on this process and to talk a little bit about how it moves here moving forward so VSBA does submit to all school divisions ask them to submit

[00:28:36] any ideas in terms of changes or additions that school boards may have for their statewide positions and so they they have come out with that request we do have we have a process here in in LCPS where it does start in the legislative audit and policy committee where it'll be heard for information if it passes through to action then it would go to the full board and if it if that position in terms of a proposal addition or change passes the full board then it will go to the virginia school boards association for consideration and so they have a committee that meets that looks at all of the positions submitted by school boards across the state

[00:29:15] they do that over the summer they have a committee that takes a look at those and if adopted if approved through that committee it is included in the VSBA statewide positions that they would advocate for and other school boards would sign on and advocate for so just wanted to have a little bit of clarity on there on the process here because that is very different than the Loudoun County School Board legislative program which we will do a little bit later we'll start on it later in the spring and into the fall so today is about the the VSBA the statewide change requests for additions or changes to their statewide proposals and so we do have four

[00:29:53] proposals that were submitted and fortunately we have all three board members that submitted those here with us today who can probably speak better to each one of those but we have one for Miss Mansfield we have two for Miss Chernoff and we have one from Miss Donahue so maybe more help for them to explain each one of their proposals for consideration thank you so much Dr. Smith chair Mansfield would you be happy to start us off I would thank you chair Chandler So this is for the literacy audit, and I have a little short history lesson for everybody since I've been one of those people with decoding dyslexia for about 10 years, putting all these things together.

[00:30:34] Evidence coming out of Virginia demonstrates an ongoing problem with teacher preparation program for general education teachers, special education teachers, and reading specialists in literacy, forcing school boards to effectively retrain new and old teachers at a considerable expense.

[00:30:48] Out of the 31 undergraduate and graduate educator prep programs in Virginia audited by the National Council on Teacher Quality, which is NCTQ, in January, and six did not participate, only nine, which is 36% of the 25 programs reviewed, were found to accurately teach all five components of early literacy, which is phonemic awareness, systematic phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.

[00:31:14] Teacher preparation programs must guarantee teachers have the necessary expertise in reading instruction before they enter the classroom. So I'm here to give you a little short history about how many years we've requested institutes of higher learning to revamp their educator prep programs to teach pre-service teachers how to teach reading, writing, and spelling according to science-based reading research.

[00:31:38] Decoding Dyslexia Virginia has been doing this work for years. Parents of students with dyslexia have noticed for decades that their kids weren't learning how to read, write, and spell, and we know this takes time. As a way to get the ball rolling, in 2016, legislators passed HB 842, which mandated a 40-minute teacher training module on dyslexia attached to state licensure.

[00:32:01] We knew that the only approach to teach a student with dyslexia how to read is to teach them with evidence-based literacy instruction grounded in science-based reading research. That means code-based instruction that's explicit, systematic, and cumulative. That wasn't happening because teachers were not being taught this instruction in their educator prep programs.

[00:32:18] So we started a module for all teachers. However, during this journey, we found that it wasn't just students with dyslexia who required this instruction. We came to understand it was more like 60 to 70 percent of all students who required this code-based, systematic, explicit, and cumulative instruction in order to learn how to read, write, and spell proficiently.

[00:32:38] We realized that we didn't have the teachers who could teach reading because VA Virginia was steeped in balanced literacy and reading recovery and whole language. Therefore, we decided to focus on reading specialists, who were the ones who were providing early reading instruction. Special education teachers were more likely to agree with direct instruction, so we started with the population of teachers who needed the most change.

[00:32:59] In 2017, SB 1516 passed in February, and this was so all districts with a reading specialist to designate one as a dyslexia advisor, acting as an expert for the district. The hope was that this reading specialist acting as a dyslexia advisor would help to change the whole language-balanced literacy culture in their district, and specifically help our families with children who had dyslexia.

[00:33:24] Then we realized the dyslexia advisor bill was ineffective, because there was no accountability for school districts. Many stated they didn't have reading specialists, they had Title I teachers, so therefore they didn't have to have a dyslexia advisor. We still don't have any accountability for what exactly a dyslexia advisor does for the district.

[00:33:42] It's up to the district how they want to implement the law, and still, students were not being provided appropriate instruction. Again, we went back to legislators and asked that they make certain that at least reading specialists know how to teach reading. In 2018, with SB 368, the General Assembly passed legislation requiring each education preparation program offered by a public institution of higher education or private institution of higher education that leads to a degree, concentration, or certificate for reading specialists shall include a program of coursework and other training and identification of and the appropriate interventions, accommodations, and teaching techniques for students with dyslexia or related disorders.

[00:34:20] However, this law was not sufficient because to comply with the 2018 law, the Virginia Department of Education merely advised institutions of higher education of this new requirement and only requested that they self-report their preparation.

[00:34:38] VDOE did not review content, syllabi, lectures, etc. to make sure there was compliance. A self-report of yes or no with no accompanying third-party audit of instructional materials for teacher prep is not an appropriate way to ensure compliance. We also found out that in Virginia, the Board of Education requires only new endorsement programs to include a review by content specialist.

[00:35:02] So after an initial approval of educator prep programs, there is no continuing audit of syllabi and instructional materials by VDOE to get accreditation and no focus on literacy instruction. So again, legislation with no teeth is not effective, so still not good enough.

[00:35:21] Teachers were still coming out of teacher prep not knowing how to teach reading, so we figured that perhaps professors should discuss among themselves how to get this done. So in 2020, SB 904 was passed to assist institutes of higher learning in determining how educator prep programs should teach evidence-based literacy instruction.

[00:35:40] Higher Learning had meetings with State Council for Higher Education to discuss what evidence-based literacy should look like and how they should provide this instruction in their educator prep programs. That was four years ago, and nothing has changed. Finally, 2022, HB 419, legislators finally passed a law that requires each Virginia education preparation program offered by a public institution of higher education or private institution of higher education that provides training for any student seeking initial licensure by the Board of Education to include a program

[00:36:20] of coursework and require all such students to demonstrate mastery in science-based reading research and evidence-based literacy instruction. The VDOE will audit each program at least every seven years to ensure compliance. The effective date will be 2024-2025 school year.

[00:36:38] Here's your problem: The educator programs are audited in cohorts with a seven-year cycle. That cycle doesn't start until this year. That means that the programs that were accredited last year will have seven years before they're audited.

[00:36:53] We have no baseline audit to make certain that these teacher programs are teaching teachers how to teach reading in accordance to the Virginia Literacy Act. Other states like Colorado have conducted

literacy baseline audits of education preparation programs and found them to be woefully insufficient. Colorado now requires literacy audits of education preparation programs every five years. Some of the universities have been so resistant to change instruction that it's taken three to four years to comply after they were found to be out of compliance. Therefore, if in seven years the last cohort of educator prep programs are not

[00:37:31] finding compliance, it could take another three to four years to get in compliance. And that's a whole other generation of teachers and students. We simply don't have that time or money. As you've heard through this somewhat shortened Virginia Literacy Legislation History lesson, educator prep programs have had enough time to comply with the Virginia Literacy Act for teacher prep and reading specialist programs. And still, according to the January 2023 NCTQ study, many programs are not in compliance. The only way to fix these programs is to advocate for a two-year baseline

[00:38:06] audit so that it is clear which teacher prep programs comply with VLA requirements. Teachers must come out of educator prep programs knowing how to teach reading. Schools districts should not have to spend millions of dollars reteaching teachers and reading specialists how to teach reading, writing and spelling. LCPS as you have heard has had this on this legislative agenda this past year. And the universities came out against it, including GMU. They don't want to be told what to teach in their classes. But the problem is, is they've had since 2017 to get with the

[00:38:45] program. That's a long time. So it's time to act. We shouldn't have to spend millions upon millions of dollars, year after year after year, teaching new teachers and older teachers and reading specialists how to teach reading, writing, and spelling. It's not fair to the teachers. It's not fair to our students, it's not fair to our school communities, and it's really not fair to our taxpayers. And I think that the VSBA, at this point, we need to come together as school districts to get this done. Thank you. Thank you, Chair Mansfield. That was very

[00:39:23] informative. Ms. Shornav, are you ready? All right. Thank you. All right. So for mine, I have two different ones. I'll start with the first one is proposing that the state-mandated Virginia growth assessment be offered unless a sufficient alternative such as the MAP assessment be considered and the rationale for this is with the increase in standardized testing and with the addition of the required Virginia growth assessment this proposal would allow for districts to take the Virginia growth assessment or another approved growth assessment that may already that they may already implement such as we do here with MAP to

[00:39:59] avoid double testing of the same students with the same exact purpose so So we have many required assessments from the state at various times throughout the year, and very recently the Virginia Growth Assessment was added. So while its intention was to render similar results as the MAP Growth Assessment that we already currently had in place here in LCPS for years, it has not yet provided the same breadth of data as MAP, and it is seemingly less user-friendly in terms of reporting and informing instruction.

[00:40:29] Additionally, it has added just one more thing for teachers and students here in Virginia when we already are suffering from so many assessments day to day taking away from our instructional time. So that is proposal number one. And then my other proposal is a request to review the list of state mandated teacher trainings and professional learning that are required each year and remove or update any that are outdated.

[00:40:54] We are also requesting that a new training, when a new training is added, that older trainings are reviewed for necessity. Additionally, proposing these trainings coincide with either the teacher's evaluation cycle or renewal cycle instead of requiring every training every year.

[00:41:11] So again, with the increase in mandated state professional learning, the trainings, there is less time for professional learning around curriculum, strategies for pedagogy, and district initiatives, all which teachers are also accountable for. And depending on what role you have in the schools, there is a long list of state mandated trainings that seems to get longer every year.

[00:41:33] This last year for classroom teachers alone, it could be up to approximately 38 hours of state mandated training, that's an entire work week. And then for EL and SPED teachers and other specialists, it could be up to 60 approximate hours depending on their role.

[00:41:48] And that is not in, that is the mandated training. Then we also offer here in LCPS, a list, a menu, if you will, of opportunities for PD that they might choose. So things that they may be interested in pursuing to help hone their instruction in different ways to meet the students' needs that are sitting in front of them.

[00:42:07] So that is why I am proposing this, and I am hopeful that we will be able to support our teachers at a statewide level with these recommendations. Thank you. Thank you, Ms. Chernoff. Ms. Donahue, please. Thank you, Madam Chair.

[00:42:23] I am proposing a new position that VSBA adopts that would require all school boards to enact requirements in their districts to provide information on safe firearm storage laws and evidence-based best practices to the students and families in their communities.

[00:42:44] I am making this proposal because 4.6 million children in the United States live in households where there is at least one loaded and unlocked firearm present in the household. Firearms are the number one cause of death among children under the age of 19 in the United States.

[00:43:02] 700 children die by gun suicide in the United States every year. 350 children in the United States every year obtain a firearm and inadvertently shoot themselves or someone else. These are horrifyingly troubling statistics to me as the parent of two elementary school children and as a firearm owner, and I would advocate that in the same manner that public schools currently provide information to their students and the public about the dangers of drug abuse

[00:43:37] and also how to access mental health resources, that our schools are in a unique position to and should be encouraged to provide evidence-based information about best practices for safe storage of firearms in order to try and minimize these numbers.

[00:44:00] In addition to the statistics I cited earlier, also it's been found that three-quarters of school shooters have obtained their firearms either from a parent or a close relative. That is my basis for this proposal.

[00:44:17] Thank you. Thank you so much for bringing forth such thoughtful and innovative proposals. I will be excited to continue to discuss this further with the rest of the board when the time comes. With that, we'll move on to the next item, which is...

[00:44:35] Just one question, Chair Chandler. Just wanted to make sure we have direction on this. So with these, we would bring them back for action at our April 25th meeting of the LAMP committee, if that's the

will of the committee. Yes, please. Oh, well, do we need to take a vote on that? Nope, just wanted to make sure we were on the same page in terms of bringing them back for action.

[00:44:54] If that's the will of the committee, we'll bring them all back for action at the April 25th meeting. Thank you. I'd be happy to have that happen. All right, so the next item is Action Item 5.1. This new policy was an information item on February 22nd, 2024.

[00:45:10] Policy 2620, Recognition of Student and Staff Accomplishments, will be presented by miss natalie allen the chief communications and community engagement officer please share the purpose of this new policy with us yes we'd like to have an official mechanism at school board meetings to recognize all the wonderful things happening in loudon county public schools thank you are there any questions from the committee um i will just ask one question

[00:45:45] In passing this policy, are we necessarily setting any guidelines around the way that we move forward in terms of procedures with this policy? We haven't as of yet.

[00:46:01] We can definitely talk through procedurally how we do it. We currently kind of do it in an unofficial way now, and so I think what we would do is at the beginning of the meeting, depending on how many recognition nominations that qualify, would kind of spread them out over each meeting so that you're not having you know 20 in one meeting or anything like that but we would make sure that it was at the beginning of the meeting so that students and families could be invited and recognized in that way thank you yes oh yes sure to piggyback off of that in that case if that were if it were to be needed could a regulation be added for

[00:46:38] some protocols if that were the case yes I think so okay oh Miss Donahue thank Thank you, Madam Chair. So, Ms. Allen, I am curious, certainly support acknowledging accomplishments of our staff and students and other members of the LCPS community.

[00:47:00] But I have felt like we have been doing that already. This is not an amendment to a policy, correct? This is a new policy. Right. So, what was the thought that -- I assume because there is a proposal for a new policy that there was a thought by someone that something was missing in the way that such recognition has been handled previously.

[00:47:20] previously so can you explain to me more what what was the gap that we're trying to fill yes absolutely it was done so and I think a little bit more of an ad hoc manner so we might hear about something and then be able to recognize it at a board meeting but this way we'll be able to publicize this with our school principals school leaders teachers I mean really any staff activity coordinators and send out that form to them and say hey if you have really great things going on if you have state recognitions at the school level we would love to recognize them at the board level rather than it just being a sort of word-of-mouth about something great happening at a school so this is just a mechanism by which we

[00:47:59] can better and more effectively recognize more students and staff I think thank you are there any further questions I'm seeing none is are there

[00:48:17] any motions mr. enough is there a second second thank you any discussion I missed on thank you madam chair I will support moving this to the full board although I I think I raised one comment last time and I will raise it again that it seems

[00:48:55] to me that the categories for both student and staff achievement to be eligible the catch-all categories are related to a school situation or beyond school performance and I I would like to see a little bit broader language there so that it's not siloed down to specifically a school situation that's all thank you the motion was made by mr. and often seconded by miss Donahue all

[00:49:32] those in favor please raise your hand and say aye aye all those are seeing none opposed the motion passes unanimously with all committee members present thank you all thank you the last item on our agenda is for discussion this is number 6.1 policy 2520 participation by the public on May 23rd 2023 the school board voted to revise policy 2520 the revision was about the time allotment it added following sentence committee chairs reserve the right to limit the number of

[00:50:11] speakers at the committee meetings if they estimate the time for public comment is likely to exceed the time allocated in the agenda this policy has been requested to be reviewed again are there any questions or comments from the committee and well would you mind if I go first yes I'm happy to share my intentions not only with the committee but with the room I want to state first and foremost there are currently no specific plans to change the procedures

[00:50:50] around public comment but given the recent action at the last school board meeting it felt like it might be possible to me for us to have a discussion and the way that we have discussion is in committee as you know quorum rules and don't allow school board members to caucus with each other so we will have a transparent discussion in committee I also want to remind the community that the cameras have been off since I believe 2021 and during that time the school board was still able to hear from constituents and do the work

[00:51:27] that's necessary of the school board school boards are elected to pass policies that serve students teachers parents and the wider community we cannot fulfill that obligation without focusing on the school board's work and working together as a community to support students to make sure our schools are fully funded allowing our teachers to teach and engaging with parents as well as increasing academic performance we have to balance the need to hear from the members of our community with allowing for time for the school board to do the work that they need to do one of the things that I

[00:52:05] wanted to bring up in this discussion is that Loudoun County School Board has a very transparent and even permissive public comment policies when you compare it across the Commonwealth of Virginia in the interest of keeping our meetings focused productive and efficient in the interest of keeping meetings focused productive and efficient many divisions across the Commonwealth of Virginia have more stringent policies around public comment there are divisions that do not allow signs or demonstrations inside or outside of their meetings while the

[00:52:39] meetings are taking place many limit comments to 30 minutes only there's one division that only allows for 20 minutes of public comment and sometimes public comment is limited to individuals to only speak on a topic once some require that all commenters submit their specific comments in writing to the board and the the chair is allowed to choose whether or not those comments can be made in public and they there's even a division that asks the speakers to

[00:53:18] first try to resolve their issues with the superintendent before bringing it before the board we are aware that there is at least one division that has said that they will cut the microphone of speech speakers are too emotional that may mean that the audience is too emotional I couldn't say for sure but I

am interested in having this discussion I would like to make sure that our public comment is as a productive a conversation as it can be and seeking

[00:53:53] out the best and most effective policies in the common we you know I think we should be willing to look at some of the other policies in the Commonwealth to see what's most effective I would love to hear from more students and some districts even prioritize allowing their voices before others public in public comment so my only reason for bringing this forward is to gauge whether or not there's interest in the committee to have a conversation thanks are there any

[00:54:25] other comments missed on here Thank You madam Chandler yes I am interested in having an engaging in a conversation about ways that we may be able to adjust the public comment process I do believe that the public comment opportunity is critical a critical method of communication between those of us that sit on the dais and the voices that we represent that being said I do fear that

[00:54:59] it can at times distract from or derail our work as we try to get through all of our agenda items in a board meeting and as as you mentioned I have also become aware that we are I believe the only district in Virginia in the Commonwealth that allows essentially unfettered public comment in that we allow as many speakers who want to register to public comment to publicly comment we allow and while we do place time limits on individual comments we do not have a

[00:55:38] time limit on the overall amount that comments will take in the span of our entire agenda nor do we cap the number of speakers per meeting and many other districts impose those limitations while on the one hand I am I'm glad that we encourage more fulsome participation of the community before our board as as you said I agree we need to figure out how to balance the community's entitlement and right to present their views to us with how we balance the rest of our work.

[00:56:16] And I have thought to myself of some possibilities of how we might be able to change that, which I'm looking forward to hearing from other people what they think could work or would work.

[00:56:35] Thank you. - Thank you, Ms. Donahue. Ms. Chernoff? - Thank you, Chair Chandler. When I heard that this was added to the agenda today, I was concerned at best.

[00:56:52] I must say that given the decision last week to turn the cameras off the public commenters at our meetings and the subsequent reaction to some of the comments made, this feels a little ill-timed in my opinion. I could possibly be open to a discussion around certain items, but I would prefer that we set those parameters around which parts we're willing to discuss before we open this up, given where we've been at with the public.

[00:57:18] I've gone on record before at our retreat, and I have made it clear to all of you that I really have no desire to limit or change the public comment in any way. The last four years, the board made decisions, in my opinion, that led to a much larger conversation around the word that our public speaker put, transparency.

[00:57:39] It has become this, like, buzzword, transparency. What does that even mean? And I actually went and looked it up in the dictionary today. And the first definition of it says to shed light. And, you know, that's kind of how I see public comment is it sheds light. And I know in your comments, Chandler, at the board meeting last week, you said, like, you went and researched things.

[00:57:59] I know I did. I've met with teachers and groups. So it is there to shed light. And the public right now, I don't think, is feeling valued or heard. Even with an unfettered policy, I don't feel that they feel that way.

[00:58:15] And while I understand it is my job to consider the options put on the table, and I will if we pursue this conversation, I am deeply concerned about the message that we are sending. I'm disappointed that this has been put on the agenda also in light of new groups that have been coming forward to speak.

[00:58:32] Teachers advocating for equity of art storage spaces, teachers desperately concerned about their students' safety and the current drug policy, Muslim believers who share their fears of their religious freedom of their daughters being taken away, support for our DEIA work, support for our trans students, attention to better nutritional options for students in school, parents affected by early start times.

[00:58:54] This is how we hear their voices. This is how they tell us how our decisions might impact them. I cannot find a reasonable argument to suppress that. It's too important to the work that we do. Yes, we are going to disagree. And yes, decorum must be followed.

[00:59:11] And yes, we must have that in place, and we will hold to that. The argument has been made that the length of public comment hinders the work of the board, making the minutes go long into the night when people aren't able to watch and see and hear. I would honestly like to see the viewership staffs on our meetings.

[00:59:28] I tend to believe most digest our meetings later or through the local news outlets. Personally, I have tried to offer board meeting and weekly recaps through social media so that people know what is discussed and can know what I'm up to. Also, we have other ways, some of which I've already discussed with Dr. Spence, staff, and most recently, Chair Mansfield, to cut down on presentation times and allow for more work to happen so we can offer more transparency through discussion on the topics.

[00:59:55] Lastly, I can only speak for myself, but this is what I signed up for. To do the work for the people of Loudoun County, no matter how long it takes, and if that means two very late nights a month, so be it. We are a broken community. Our community put their faith in us this past November by saying no more to the past and electing a brand new board.

[01:00:17] We have spent the last 10 weeks talking about building bridges, restoring trust, and working in good faith for the good of our schools and communities. I meant what I said in my campaign. I want a new way forward for us, and I do not see how changing public comment in any way, especially at this particular time, can help us to do those things.

[01:00:39] I ask that we consider the damage that this could cause versus the personal sacrifice that we as elected officials should bear. So that's where I'm at. And I find it interesting that we want to compare to other districts for the policy, but we don't want to compare to other districts for the cameras.

[01:00:57] Again, I brought this up in my argument last week. It's a struggle for me. Either we're going to do it or we're not. So maybe that is a piece of the discussion that we could have. Like I said if the will of the majority of the committee is to have the discussion I will open my ears but currently I cannot support a discussion at this time well thank you both for your feedback that will be something that we will certainly reflect on as we decide the best way to move forward together with that I will ask if there's any new business seeing no new business the meeting is adjourned thank you



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