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Loudoun County School Board, Student Services Committee Work Session, Thursday, October 10, 2024

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[00:00:12] - Good afternoon, everyone. Thank you for being here. My name is Anne Donahue. This is the October 10th, 2024 work session of the Student Services Committee. That is the call to order. The three committee members are here.

[00:00:28] We are not having public comment today because this is a work session and not a regular meeting. We do have minutes from our previous work session, which was on September 12th, 2024. so I will ask my fellow committee members if you've had a chance to review the draft minutes and if you have any concerns, questions, proposed edits.

[00:00:54] They were really detailed. And I love that. The hair stand back on your neck was particularly funny. And if there are no concerns, questions, or proposed edits, I will entertain a motion to approve the minutes from the September 12, 2024 work session.

[00:01:15] Ms. LaBelle. I move to approve the minutes from the work 2024 session, the September 12, 2024 work session. I forgot to turn on. Out of sight, out of mind. You stopped laughing at me.

[00:01:34] You want to do it for me? Okay. Samir is not here. That's right. I'm sorry. I move to approve the minutes from the September 12, 2024 work session. I second.

[00:01:50] All right. The motion has been properly moved and seconded. Is there any discussion? I assume no. All those in favor, please say aye. Aye. So the minutes are approved unanimously. And just as a reminder, this meeting is being audio recorded, not visual recording.

[00:02:09] It is not being live streamed, but the recording and the minutes, the extremely detailed minutes, Ms. Winslow, I assume that's you, will be available. on the LCPS website for future public review so with that being said we will continue on to item number three on our agenda the purpose of this work session which is continued discussion around special permission Mr. Dolson again oh

[00:02:45] whoops thank you user user air she takes care of me thank you so much for allowing us to be here again before we get started I just want to recognize on some of the LCPS staff that is here with me tonight to help answer questions. Ms. Gabriel Carpenter, who is our Student Services Coordinator.

[00:03:03] Derek Ferry, who is our Director of Athletics and Student Activities. Ms. Donna Smith, who is our Director of Procedural Support. And Ms. Beverly Tate, who is the Director of Planning and GIS Services. And we also have Dr. Dave Blakelock, who is the Supervisor of Research.

[00:03:22] I just saw the Honorable Dr. Ryan Tyler walk in, who is our Director of Research. We also have Mr. John Lody, who is the Director of Diagnostic and Prevention Services. So good evening, and again, we are here to discuss with you this afternoon, and to further discuss, I should say, the special permission process here in LCPS.

[00:03:49] A few notations about this presentation that you have in front of you. We have color-coded some of the items to make it easier within the slide deck to correspond with our current practices, a proposal number one, and a proposal number two for your consideration the current timelines and practices are represented in red a proposal number one is represented in light blue and the proposal number two is represented in orange so as you see here this is a depiction of our current timeline process with the special

[00:04:24] permission window opening March 1st for school-based employees and April 1st for LCPS families. That's why the slide in the bottom is red. That's our current practice. Currently, special permission closes July 31st, and therefore, this timeline does include an outside-the-window timeframe in July for applications to be considered, even though the special permission portal closes June 30th. For proposal number two, which is indicated by

[00:05:03] a light blue frame at the bottom. This is a brief depiction of proposal number two. I'm sorry, number one. I apologize. Number one. The LCPS employee portal would open January 1st. The portal for LCPS families would open February 1st. Special permission would then close April 30th. There would be no provision for outside-the-window applications in this proposal. Mr. Dolson, If I could ask a question.

[00:05:40] Sure. Would that, when you say a special permission closes, is that the window to submit the application? Yes. So that would not include potential time for subsequent appeals in the case of a denial. Correct. Thank you. Proposal number two, denoted here with the orange color, begins February 1st for LCPS school-based employees and opens March 1st for LCPS families.

[00:06:07] The special permission window here would close May 31st with no provision for outside the window applications. Now you get to see the real color.

[00:06:25] On this slide, we see a color-coded representation of our current timeline and that of Proposal 1 and 2. Remember that renewals only apply to middle and high school students. We cannot guarantee that grade capacities within elementary schools will continue to allow special permission students to return year to year.

[00:06:50] Please note that within Proposal 1, given that renewals would fall at the end of February, employees and families would not have a full 30 days to submit renewal applications. I'll give you a moment just to look at that chart.

[00:07:27] Mr. Nelson, can I ask you another question? Absolutely. Thank you. So as it is right now, how -- do you have any idea if there's an average of how long the appeals process for applications extends past the close of application periods?

[00:07:45] So I can give you the example for this. So we follow 23 -- yes, we do. We follow 2350, which is the policy for appealing an administrative decision, and that does get lengthy this school year I believe we heard our last appeal the last week the last week of August so it was right after two or three days after the school year started I think was the Monday after the school year started and so it

[00:08:17] does go well beyond even when that outside the window timeframe ends so we should factor in approximately a month packed on to the end of whatever the application window is for actually finished completing the process of dealing with any special permission request based on policy 2350 it could happen now I will also say that it also depends on when the appeals committee can make itself available and avail itself to us to hear those appeals thank

[00:08:54] you so on these beautifully done things it does say at the end so like if you see proposal to it says like June 20th here would be the date the school board has 30 days I guess from June 20th or I think it the 30th June 20th May 20th and right now they have until July 20th so if I may there's another slide later on in the presentation like two sides from now that goes through this and is

[00:09:33] another representation of what you're looking at miss Mansfield yeah but the end would be what so the end for like the current timeline is July 20th right outside the window it was July 31st was when we had that that was the last time we accepted an application okay cuz I have July 20th here on the current timeline on this one but then on the proposal one it says May 20th here that would be the last day then you would have 30 days after that mm-hmm and then

[00:10:10] on on this proposal to it would be June 20th and 30 days after that do we have to have 30 days so based on policy that is that is in policy and it's written in 2350 we're gonna get to that in just a second okay when we're looking at this and we're saying 30 days does that include

[00:10:45] the 10 days that the parent has to peel no ma'am so a parent has longer correct so a parent has 10 school days to appeal an administrative decision by virtue of 2350 staff then has 30 days to render its decision based on that appeal but those are 30 calendar days that's the problem and there's that's where you get into some of the gaps calendar days that does not does that include saturday sunday yes okay so business days are wherever we are in

[00:11:21] school days and calendar days equals okay thank you no you're fine no you're fine so this slide is just a simple overview of policy 2350 and that is the appeal of administrative decisions as I said before parents have 10 school days to submit an appeal of a denial for special permission based on capacity the director of student services is my role or the school board then has another 30

[00:11:59] calendar days to provide a decision if the parents appeal. If that initial denial is from me, the director of student services, parents have another option to appeal directly to the school board, and that would be the special committee of appeals that you all share responsibility for serving on.

[00:12:21] Parents then have another 10 days to appeal to that committee, and that committee then has 30 days in which to meet and render its decision. the committee decision is final. So we're actually talking about closer to three months of potential appellate processing. Correct. Yes. Okay. Thank you. Absolutely. So let's go through a sample current timeline could have happened this past school year. If you look at the slide before you,

[00:12:58] a parent could have applied for special permission on March 1st. That same application might have been denied by Ms. Carpenter on March 31st. The parent then appealed and sent that to our office on April the 10th. That appeal determination must be sent by May 10th and that appeal determination could be approved or could be denied by me, the director. Then the parent decided to appeal my

[00:13:32] decision to the board and that was received on May 24th and therefore the board has one month by June 23rd to render its decision, which is final. So that truly does give you the scope of if a parent applied the very first day and then extended it, if every timeline was extended to the maximum, you are looking at over two months.

[00:13:59] And that's the worst case scenario. And I do want you all to understand, and I think you all do, that Mrs. Carpenter and Mrs. Mahoney and I work very quickly to try to batch as many appeals together. So we are not asking more of your time, but we are also being responsive to the timelines that we must follow by policy.

[00:14:20] So I want to go back to the 2350 piece just a little bit, because Mrs. Richardson and I had this conversation. That is our policy, but if the board directed my office to work in a tighter timeline, we could make it more condensed, if that makes sense.

[00:14:39] Ms. Mansfield. So I'm wondering, so the first thing is either you are over-enrolled or you're not. Can that be a computer thing that just spits, like, okay, this is over-enrolled, immediate thing, you guys don't have to send that appeals?

[00:15:01] It could be, yes. You know, it's just immediate. So that could be pretty much within two or three days, honestly, if we code it right or whatever. So you're talking about like an automatic reply? An automatic reply if that, why do I have college and university in my mind?

[00:15:23] if that school is over enrolled immediately boom that takes a little bit out from you guys a thought we might have to talk to DDI about that or someone okay miss Mansfield yes ma'am that once a student or a parent hopefully a parent is applying sometimes we do have students who apply for special permission if it's to an over enrollment or high school it automatically sends the notification that you are applying to an over enrolled school and your request will be denied and then you will have the option to appeal this decision

[00:15:57] so when you do that when you say you have the option it doesn't say you are denied it says you will be denied yes so I'm asking you are denied that's what I'm that's what I'm wondering if that's so so what happens miss Carpenter in that case if there's they apply the schools over enrolled so they get the automated response you will be denied the file then goes to a human being who reads it and then says yep over-enrolled school denied something like that well

[00:16:34] honestly they get that response and they think they've already been denied and they send an appeal so then we wait and we have to tell them you have not yet been denied but you will be and once you are denied within 30 days then either resubmit your appeal or we'll you know hold it in queue but we do allow over enrolled schools of people to apply to over enrolled schools the only way to prevent that is as Miss Mansfield alluding to you just can't even apply to an over enrolled middle or high school thank you and mr. Wilson you mentioned a moment ago the possibility of shortening the time frame for your

[00:17:14] office to consider the first layer of review is is that is that something that your office has capacity to do or is that something that would be overly So, I think what we would need is a commitment of the appeals committee to be able to meet on a more regular basis and set timelines to where we then could work sort of backwards and forwards at the same time, and I know that doesn't make sense, but when we look

[00:17:50] at the number of appeals that we receive and we get, knowing when we have a deadline based on policy 2350 and knowing when how many committee might feel comfortable hearing at one time i think we could shorten some of the time frame but we also need to make sure that we have special education staffing set and elementary school staffing set because that's where it gets very dicey with special education and with elementary because elementary it's not building

[00:18:26] capacity it's number of grade level capacities and what we found this year is that with the teacher shortage some of the elementary principals have had to collapse a class which means they have less seats that are open and that's why we've had to go to some of the regional assignments that it's happened that have happened are happening in ashburn as well as in the eastern part of the division so i think what i found this from this first experience and it was great because you we all renewed this process if we had a cadence of of committee members that were able to hear

[00:19:05] appeals i think we could get through in a shorter amount of time and have to turn around um a little quicker i say that not ever having experienced it but i think i did see the ability to do that and shorten the time frame for when a person PR I'm sorry applies to when the final decision if they go through the appeals process that the board would provide thank you chair Donahue so what I'm thinking it to make more efficient is first the immediate denial and then you don't have to like we say it again the

[00:19:43] second part is what you're talking about so you know as the board we and as the board like when we do our committees right we have you guys schedule them from january on out right and so i'm like what you're saying if we could just schedule those committees and say you're responsible for this this and this like because it's three of us right so i so you would already have the this the date and the time and the room and we would fill in the people you

[00:20:21] know that's what you're talking about is a cadence would you want that every month every two for two times a month I would say every other week spring possibly twice a month and then in the latter spring like May June we might need it three times and because right now what we have is like a whole year worth of board members able you know three board members for each month or whatever but we would be condensing that yep yes that that is an approach that mr. mrs. Richardson and I discussed

[00:20:56] and we thought we would still be within policy 2350 but we would be able to get through more of those appeals in a shortened amount of time and that would help principals it would also help parents knowing where their students were going to be going to school I have a concern about families that have a

special ed student that are going or want to go or need to go to a particular school because of these special needs. I love the idea of saying if you're applying to an

[00:21:34] over-enrolled school, you will be denied. That cuts out one of the times that you have to write these letters back. But if we decide to go that way, could we have a box somewhere where they could check if they have a student with an IEP, a 504 plan, any of those things, and that particular family would not get that you are denied letter that would be something we could look at and schedule because I don't want them automatically denied I think we

[00:22:10] need to look at them because that is a federal concern IDEA so I'd love to do the first one but I'd also like to see if if they can if DDI could put a box there so that they won't automatically get the denial level I have a letter sorry I I have a related question which is that if we're talking about saying sending an automated response if the requested school is over enrolled is that going to be looking at the overall enrollment or the special ed services

[00:22:49] enrollment because those are frequently different yeah that's based on its overall well we would not be able to project what a particular school's special education capacity is until we know the staffing for that particular school and as you know that comes in in some times it comes in waves the other thing that we have to think about it consider is that the eligibility process doesn't stop so we have other students and other families going through that eligibility process and that can also teeter-totter for a school's special

[00:23:29] education capacity I think it's also important to note that families of students with disabilities would not be going through the special permission process to access a specialized program because they would be placed in a specialized program by their IEP teams right and then our Office of Special Education looks at where programs are placed composition of programs we factor in transportation and then students that require the access to specialized programs the Office of Special Ed places them and they receive

[00:24:04] transportation now we do have some some sometimes we do have families of students that require specialized programs that will ask for special permission the very first thing that we look at is does the school that you're requesting and it could be for child care purposes right do they have that specialized program and if they don't we usually pick up the phone and we walk the parents through it like here's the impact so here's some things that you might want to consider. You're discussing like AUT programs and those kinds of things, you're not just... Correct. CrossCAD's different. Yes, CrossCAD's different. I'm talking about self-contained

[00:24:42] autism, IPAUT, self-contained ED, MD. So our specialized self-contained programs. Back to you, Mr. Doolson. Okay, thank you, Ms. Donahue. So this chart here maps out the three scenarios that we have presented to you. The red block blocks map out our current timeline, starting with the earliest possible date for application submission the blue blocks represent proposal number one with the earliest possible date for application submission and the orange block represents

[00:25:20] Proposal number two which with the earliest possible date for application just as a reminder the single asterisk on this chart Represent a 10 school day time frame and the double asterisk represent 30 calendar days

[00:25:37] Mr. Nelson, is there any, have you all considered or heard feedback from potentially interested stakeholders as to potential downsides of moving the application window to an earlier start?

[00:26:10] The only downside I have heard is based on knowing when your staffing is pretty concrete. So it shifts, and obviously I think I'm not going to speak for elementary because I wasn't an elementary principal.

[00:26:29] I see Dr. Brewer in the galley, so he's high school. I think for secondary, there's more benefit to having the application moved up because we at the secondary level are really working on our schedules and our class schedules, our course schedules early, like in January, February.

[00:26:49] For elementary, I can use the example that happened in one of our Ashman Elementary schools where principals, because of the teacher shortage, were having to collapse sections. And that meant that they were then over-enrolled in a grade that they weren't expecting to be over-enrolled in or at capacity or above capacity.

[00:27:08] And so families that moved in were then regionally assigned to another school. So I can't speak for the elementary world because I wasn't, but I do see more benefit for probably our secondary schools. I think it really does help the high school and the middle schools because they know how many sections to build in their schedule.

[00:27:29] Um, whereas with elementary, I think again, looking at kindergarten, I agree that leaving kindergarten to the last minute is probably the best benefit because families are moving in and they want to go to their neighborhood school if possible. Thank you.

[00:27:47] Ms. LeBeau. So how does, uh, or how do, plural, these different proposals, uh, impact the construction and the people moving in, excuse my phone, I'm going to ignore it.

[00:28:04] um how how does it impact the families moving in over the summer and and the building going on not just people who who have moved in near the end but who expect to be moved in by august we have miss tate here who can help answer that question hi miss tate thank you for joining us

[00:28:36] so miss lavell um the projections do anticipate student growth but we all know we probably all have people we know who have waited to the last minute to register their children and so that i believe is perhaps an opportunity to do some pr work about the importance of registering early but we do anticipate children with our projections of moving in it just depends on when their house is ready when you know when they buy when they sell that's the unfortunate i don't really know

[00:29:13] if i answered your question whoops thank you miss tate thank you mr dolson so now we're going to move on to some special permission data. The first few slides you have seen before I did want to enumerate the current selectable reasons that we have in our application to request special permission and those are are listed for you in no particular order but I did just want to have those reasons out there

[00:29:49] for transparency purposes. The data in this table you have seen before it offers percentages attached to the reasons that people have chosen to select and not every person that applies selects a reason to apply for special permission.

[00:30:09] The other selection analysis we went over this last time this actually delved into parents that did provide text to explain their other reasons and so what What Dr. Blakelock and his office did was be able to put that into an analysis and identify the categories for us to render some percentages.

[00:30:41] Thank you, Chair Donahue. So it says special education, instructional suitability of programs. What do they mean there? Are they talking about actual programs or are they talking what?

[00:30:57] Do we know? I don't think we know because, again, with what Mrs. Richardson said, if it's placed by special education it is more likely for a program I would have to delve into that a little bit deeper I don't know this specificity based on what we have

[00:31:18] in here I'll have to look into that and then finally we have students with disabilities who requested special permission here this is by level I believe the committee asked for this last time and so you see elementary middle and high school and these are the percentages again by level for the

[00:31:57] requests for students with disabilities for special permission yeah I I agree I looked at that they're all within one or two percentage points of each other and I think that's because as dr. Richardson pointed out they are placed by the special education staff so that anything that we're hitting or getting I should

[00:32:28] say at the appeals level is something just a little bit different than you know and really needs to be looked at because it looks to me as though most of the time they're pretty happy with where they're going.

[00:32:52] It's important to note that the majority of the special permissions requests that we get for students that are eligible for special education are cross categorical students. Not so much our specialized program students like autism, ED, MD.

[00:33:14] This next chart depicts the approval percentages for the students with disabilities by level. And again, just so you know, the asterisk there does indicate that it was based on data extracted while the peers were being processed.

[00:33:38] Again, we talked about there were some appeals that lagged into late summer. That was -- the question I was about to ask was if this says special permission requests that were approved, is that the end result after the parents have gone through the whole appeals process. Yes. Okay, thank you. And then the next slide is students without disabilities and their special permission approval percentages. This is a new chart that you requested because you wanted to see a comparison between special education approvals and general education student

[00:34:18] approvals. And this is students without disabilities by level. Just a reminder that the approvals are based on grade level capacity at the elementary level and school-based capacity the middle and high school levels and we talked about this the last time but I just wanted to reiterate the general staffing standard that we have for students with disabilities in LCPS which is one teacher per 10 students that also factors into the capacities of grade levels in school buildings when considering the capacities for students with disabilities and that is where it

[00:34:53] sometimes becomes very challenging. Mr. Dolson do you have any sense of I'm a little i'm not super surprised to see that the top line is a pretty high level of approvals i'm a little surprised that it dips so much at middle school and then is you know fairly high again at high school do you have any sense of any idea behind the trends for the approvals or denials given so i will defer to miss carpenter on that given this is my first year going through

[00:35:31] this process I I can't really say from experience I do think that what we see in high schools is that for the most part most of our high school students really appreciate and I'll just say love their high school community so we don't see a lot of fluctuation of students in high schools miss Carpenter do you have any yes are you asking about the percentage as far as approvals versus

[00:36:08] special education so I'm in special education it looked well it is the same it's the same there for both for both students special ed students and non special ed students it looks like the approval percentages are high for elementary go down fairly significantly at middle school level and then bounce back up somewhat for high school and I was just curious if there's any trends I

[00:36:47] would say other than that you know elementary students they are being dictated by their parents what schools are going to attend and at the middle in the high school level it varies students they start in one place and then they decide that they want to go to a different school and then they shift and depending on whether the reason for the shift is based on that I think that that initial approval so if they if that's the school that they wanted to attend then we don't get so much variation but if it was a forced fit then kids speak out their parents listen they'll allow them to switch schools I

[00:37:27] thought you were speaking about the the difference with the special education and why there's that fluctuation but the sped students have another layer of approval and that of course is whether or not there's space in the special education program so those those percentages are lower because gen ed students only have that one layer but we have to always ensure that the IEPs are being met sufficiently by the staff and so it's lower as far as approvals so having gone through some of these issues in like middle school middle school

[00:38:03] seems to be a hard time for a lot of kids with disabilities and it seems sometimes kids aren't found eligible until their fifth grade year and then they go into sixth grade and things get a little squirrely but I think the concern and and also I think that there's a lot more support in elementary school for special education students because they're there because there's you have one teacher and your special education teachers there in the classroom middle

[00:38:35] school you have many different classes going on and so it's harder I think to get element special education teachers and specialized instruction I it is so the numbers could be a little bit more wonky I think it is concerning that there's quite a significant difference of like 30% you know 30 percentage

[00:39:05] points from middle you know like say 2024 80 to you know 56 to 80 and 57 to 78 I don't know what to do for that so I will say that when you look across our special ed staffing the majority of our special ed staffing are at the secondary level I think the structure at elementary sort of lends itself right because there's fewer transitions and you are with one teacher and then you have your one assigned case manager, whereas as you have shared, at secondary you

[00:39:42] begin changing classes, so you're changing classes for core teachers, and then sometimes your special ed support that's in that classroom is different from class to class, but when you just, so if I was to run a report of staffing, you would see more special ed teachers, TAs and BAs at secondary than what you would at elementary.

[00:40:05] So I think the structure supports students differently in elementary. It's the structure that changes in secondary, which is why we need more staff at secondary because of the multiple classes and the changes across the different levels, and then how we have to differentiate and offer collaborative and

self-contained classes concurrently, right, for students across the three grade levels and then, of course, the four grade levels at high school.

[00:40:36] But I did take note that you want us to dig in a little bit more into the difference between elementary and middle school for students with disabilities and those without. Is that my understanding?

[00:40:51] Look into some of the factors that might be impacting the differences. I don't know. I just want to make it better. Okay. I don't know if the factors matter.

[00:41:10] Actually, I think they would because then why would they do special permission if they were happy in a way? And I don't know that our data factors in happiness or unhappiness. Sometimes I think it's a lot of perception.

[00:41:29] If we went back to the other factors, it's child care, it's being closer to where their parents work. Sometimes it is for access to special programs, not specialized, special programs like JROTC, IB, like those sorts of experiences, which, of course, we are growing those as a school division.

[00:41:53] I don't know that we've factored in the happiness piece, and I don't know whether that's what parents are writing about, but when they do get to the level of appeals, but certainly we can begin to look into some things and try to tease out those factors that may be impacting.

[00:42:14] Because I know it's being used as a valve, as a way, and I'm sorry for just being blunt here, and please take it that I do care. I think that there's a lot of conflict that can happen with IEP teams, and I think that it has been reported that special education uses it as a valve, like a way to get away and start fresh with a new team, new things,

[00:42:53] different for whatever happened during that period of time things are getting better but I'm just I think that this is something that I have heard and and I think even talking with some SEAC members it was it's something that they would report to now I don't know that will be contemplated anywhere and I don't know how to make that better but I think for me I think that there it's a pooling off valve like a I don't even know what do you call it well I mean and

[00:43:28] I think that might be applicable to even our families of students that that are non-disabled right that some something has happened that has changed the dynamic of a relationship and that could be a factor that families consider within this process I would also remind the committee that out of 82,000 right that's a large number 10,222 as of yesterday were eligible under the IDEA so that will also impact the percentages because you're talking it's not apples

[00:44:07] to apples because this the general ed number is so much larger and of course our 10,222 are part of that 82,000 I mean so I don't know if it's you know again digging into those factors is it adding an explanation box to the process so we can gain insight into more data from our families possibly wondering i mean i think that we should like really look at the the process and then at the same time looking at the digging it

[00:44:45] into at the same time but i think what we can do something about is the timeline some of the things that occurred to me back when we were speaking about student medication and the needs of students with diabetes and all the other problems, sometimes I think the elementary school might be convenient to where a parent works, but when they move to a middle school, it's not

[00:45:24] necessarily close, or it might be that they want to get to a middle school or a high school, depending, that might be closer because they are concerned about the medical issues that their child faces. so I think that might be something else we might look into to see if that might be a factor in the changes they worry a lot so since it's since it is 5:15 I'm

[00:45:58] going to ask mr. Dolson if there are more topics in the prepared presentation so the only other topics we have to go through is just the rescission the rescinding piece which we talked about this very briefly last time miss Carpenter I just wanted to revisit this to make sure that you do understand there are two possible ways that we can or a parent and or a school can rescind special permission obviously the first way is through a parent just requesting that they want to rescind the other is for a school

[00:46:33] administrator or administration to request that special permission be rescinded and we take our schools our school administrators through a detailed process for that there we shared with you at the last presentation letters that we ask that they send the parents. We ask that they communicate with the parents. And then finally, we communicate with the families and the school to ensure all of those processes have been met before a decision is rendered. And the last slide that I have for you all tonight is just data on that. There's three years of data for special

[00:47:09] permission rescissions. You will see that we as a school division have very low numbers, and those are actual numbers not percentages those are numbers of the rescissions that have occurred over the past three years for special permission by LCPS the lower bar is by parents so those are parents that may have to miss LaBelle's point realize that the elementary school was a lot closer in proximity and once they got to middle school it was not close or not on the same pathway of travel when that you you commute and transportation becomes difficult and so they decide to

[00:47:47] go back to their homeschool. And Ms. Donahue, with that, that is the end of our presentation. Thank you, Mr. Dolson. Do you want to tell us anything about the other materials that are in our packet? I would love to, yes. So thanks to Ms. Freeman in our communications office and some of her graphic designers. You do have examples, and again, these are up for your ability to provide us feedback, but these are three different graphics that have been rendered by that office just to provide graphic representation of

[00:48:26] the process. I do feel like this is a better representation because it's a little bit more linear. And I will just say for fact finding sake that some of the dates may or may not be accurate based on some of the proposals that we've shared with you, but we can certainly go back and change those.

[00:48:47] So those are up for your feedback, as well as the other two charts that we added in your packet this evening were just the most up-to-date data that we have. So again, going back to the data that we shared with you that Dr. Blake Luck put together, this is the most up-to-date data for the number of students that applied for special permission, those that were approved by the Department of Student Services, and those that were denied,

[00:49:20] And then either approved or denied by the school board as well as rescinded by the parent. And you have that for students with disabilities as well as all students.

[00:49:38] This is fantastically helpful. Thank you for putting this together. Thank you to Dr. Blakelock for putting this together. Actually Ms. Mahoney, our program assistant, she put the charts together for us. And Ms. Mahoney and Dr. Blakelock worked very closely together to get all the data rendered for us.

[00:49:56] So yes, it's very helpful. appreciate that. Thank you to Ms. Mahoney as well. That's huge. And then you mentioned you have some guests here. Is there anyone who would like to share some thoughts, opinions, recommendations regarding the special permission process? I see everybody putting their heads down.

[00:50:23] I'm John Brewer, principal currently at Dominion High School, actually for a very long time at Dominion High School. As the longest standing of our 100 principals, I have a perspective that's pretty longitudinal about this policy. Adopted in 1970, the policy didn't have a provision for special permission for decades. When I began my administrative career at Broad Run High School in the mid-1990s, 1996 to be exact, I specifically remember Dr. Hattrick, our superintendent at the

[00:51:01] time, informing our principal, Dr. Markley, that a student who had moved from Parkview High School's attendance boundary to Broad Run in the middle of her high school career would be attending Broad Run High School for her remaining time. There was no such provision for something else to happen. I don't necessarily advocate that we go back to that, but at some point in the 2000s, maybe circa 2010, the current policy of, not the current one, obviously the policy has been amended 12 or 13 times since 1970, but the special permission process that we know now went into

[00:51:40] place. The Loudoun County of 1996 and the Loudoun County of 2024 share similarities and substantial differences. Similarities, we were one of the wealthiest counties in the nation then, and we continue to be a relatively wealthy place. We were growing fast then in pockets of Loudoun County, not everywhere. And we continue to grow now in pockets, but not everywhere. And

[00:52:17] yet there are things that are very different about Loudoun County now than they were in 1996 and 2010. And some of those things are really relevant to this policy and how it plays out in our current reality of 2024. Among the things that are most significantly different is while we continue to be wealthy, the disparities in economic capacity of our families are far disparate far more disparate than they were 30 years ago and 20 and 10 years ago 10 15 years ago

[00:52:52] when this policy went into place our school community uh is you you know as well as anyone extraordinarily more diverse than it was in 1996 and even in 2010 i want to let you know that i've worked very closely with the middle school principal nick katone who we share a attendance boundary between the two schools and he and i talk about the special permission process all the time And we feel that on a number of levels, the process is not helping us uphold our commitments.

[00:53:30] One of our goals, for example, is to establish school communities that help us to enhance partnerships. One of the other things that's really important is our value that we provide all students, staff, and students and staff with the resources and programs necessary to enable a successful future.

[00:53:50] The special permission process, as it currently stands, makes our commitment to fulfill that value and that goal really difficult. And some of the tangible ways in which this affects us were discussed at the last meeting, and so I won't repeat any of them.

[00:54:08] I will repeat one that Mr. Dolson mentioned earlier, and that is it's a pretty difficult hardship on a new family moving to a community, needing to establish routes for their children only to find out when they try to register in September because that's when their house became available that their student can't attend kindergarten or can't attend second grade in the street in the school that they could walk to because

all the classrooms are full and many of those seats haven't been filled by individuals who live in other parts of the county. A second challenge that I've noticed in my 22 years as

[00:54:43] principal at Dominion High School is that we've had to establish entire initiatives within the school division that cost us at least some degree of money to deal with the impact of special permission. And the impact has to do with congestion. Our school communities or our school properties are typically designed, certainly there were in 1996 and in 2003 when Dominion opened, for kids to either walk to school or ride the bus. At the high school level, we have the added interesting factor of students driving to school. If you want to change that policy, I'm all for that. I'd love for them to all ride the bus. The impact

[00:55:22] at a school like Dominion is that 10% of our student body is made up of students who do not live in the Dominion community. The impact on congestion is unbelievable. Fortunately, this did not happen last year or so far this year, but in the 2022-23 school year between Seneca Ridge and Dominion, a shared campus on Augusta Drive in Sterling, we had three students struck by a moving vehicle on their way home from school, and that hadn't happened very often in the 20 previous years in almost 50 of Seneca Ridge's existence. Traffic congestion in our

[00:56:00] neighborhood is an unbelievably dangerous and difficult situation to get in because at our school again about a hundred additional cars are being introduced into have to. They don't have a bus option or a walking option. Our schools just weren't built to handle another hundred cars in the time frame, a reasonable time frame for students to arrive and depart from school. So congestion i think not i know our experience at dominion well but i think it's an experience in other places biggest challenge though and i'm sure this is well documented in your mind although i

[00:56:36] didn't see it as much reflected in the minutes from your last meeting is our commitment to provide excellence and opportunities at all of our schools is deeply compromised when students who've never even set foot in school buildings can say this school is not for me and I know firsthand we certainly at Dominion High School we have almost 150 students again attending our school who would attend other schools honestly and same thing at Seneca Ridge very similar that's got to be very close to if not the highest percentage of any of our high school and middle school combinations

[00:57:13] it's that brings tremendous resources to our school but at the same time that drains other schools across the county of resources that they have that in in some of that impact has dramatic effect especially at the high school level when it comes to academic opportunities like the ability of a school to offer reasonably offer an AP physics course or a Latin program and it also impacts certainly their viability of fine arts programs and athletic programs and so I would just say that I speak for Nick Katone and myself and our experience I feel

[00:57:50] confident that I speak for other school administrators that you know we feel like in our increasingly diverse school community this policy written over a decade ago in a different time in our school school's history I think is a threat to our ability to provide equity and excellence for all students across all 100 of our schools at this time I sure appreciate the opportunity just to share that perspective with you thank you very much for joining us today and for sharing your thoughts particularly as based on your years of experience here and thank you for

[00:58:26] your service to our students in our division i i have to say i think you are putting into fantastically precise words the icky feeling i have had since i first learned about special permission which is exactly that that i i realize now having been on the appeals panels there are some cases where there may

be really really good valid reasons to want to go through this process and I have not felt like I could say no on some of them but

[00:58:59] when I first learned that this is even a thing that loud and allows I was upset about it for the reasons that you cited that it I fear that it contributes to the stigma of some schools not being good enough and I fear that it also exacerbates inequalities that we do already know exist from school to school and I you know my hope naive though it may be is that we lift the quality of all of our schools rather than letting people who are able to you know pick

[00:59:38] whatever school they want to go to because they can but I'm I came into that with those thoughts as being someone who I did not grow up in this area my kids are only in elementary school so I don't I it was my instinct but I I very much appreciate hearing your perspective that maybe I wasn't completely off base with those thoughts Miss LaBelle Miss Mansfield you have comments questions yes sure Donahue so it's really hard because we are thinking

[01:00:16] I can't remember the lady's name who was sitting over here I can see your picture. No, no, it wasn't Ms. Tate. It was last time. Ms. Layman, Elaine Layman. Layman, who was talking about, you know, at first, like, I was like, okay, special permission. Even though I did have it in Texas, it was different transfers. We were able to go wherever we wanted to go.

[01:00:42] But coming here, I was like, oh my God, the schools are so great. I mean, there's a lot of resources and a lot of supports. Why are we doing this? However, I have sat on those appeals. I see the value. And I also, you know, the other thing was like, okay, should we put criteria down, right?

[01:01:01] And then we had Ms. Lehman say, we tried that once, and it was more equitable not to do that. And if someone had, if they had space, then that's what you would do. So it's a really hard, complex issue. And it's already started. I mean, it's like the bar in Dara has already been open.

[01:01:24] And I'm just trying to figure out what is the best path forward because something has to change. Because I think that not being able to figure out what kind of your teachers are going to be until later, I think that's a huge issue.

[01:01:43] So I do appreciate you and your thoughts. And I really do. And I just visited your school and Robey last week. So it was great. Any other special guest commentary, thoughts, opinions?

[01:02:07] Mr. Ferry, you want to add anything? I'm sorry, Mr. Ferry, can I ask you to go to the microphone?

[01:02:30] There are situations with athletics, as we know, with the special permission policy and the current status of the Virginia High School League rule, which permits ninth graders to enroll at the school and determine their eligibility there, even regardless of residence.

[01:02:53] And that has had deep impacts on a number of our schools, being able to field a competitive team. For example, there's been situations where we've had a first-team all-state player transfer.

[01:03:09] They did it legally, by rule. They transferred from their school as a ninth grader and enrolled at that other school because they had a better program. And we believe that student would have a significant contribution to the overall environment and program at the school where they resided.

[01:03:27] And we've also seen another school lose eight freshman football players in one year, which that significantly impacts the ability to field teams later down the road for that program when you're losing that

many freshmen in one year.

[01:03:46] So just some things to consider the impact of what we're doing to other schools when we are making these decisions. Thank you for those thoughts, Mr. Ferry. If I could ask you a question, hypothetically, other than scrapping the whole system, have you thought of are there changes we could make that would improve the process from your perspective?

[01:04:15] so we did present uh when this policy was reviewed last time we had information in there that would rule any student who was using special permission ineligible for 365 days and that included the freshmen which would help our programs that are struggling to field teams because they are losing those students I've had a pretty lengthy conversation with Dr. Hahn at the Virginia high school league it looks like he's going to he's actually retiring at the end of this coming

[01:04:49] year but it looks like he's going to propose that legislation to remove that caveat to you don't establish your eligibility anymore regardless of residency as a ninth grader so basically it would imply that you'd have to attend the school in which you are zoned for and right now that's not the process for an incoming freshman so that would fix our problem that would fix that would fix our vhs part of it i also think uh you know we consider waivers um i think in policy we

[01:05:25] shouldn't have to consider waivers a parent makes a decision right to to transfer their student they understand the repercussions and you know sometimes if there is a validated reason we have a policy under school placement where we would place that student if we felt like felt compelled, felt like there was substantial evidence to determine that it would be in the best interest of that student. And we do work through student services and multiple offices at OSA to make sure, Title IX, to make sure we're able to accommodate those situations as needed,

[01:06:03] but not based on student, on parent requests, based on, I would say, more of a collaborative of agreement between LCPS and the parent recognizing both of us need to do something to assist that student and instead of how we currently are using it. Thank you very much Mr. Ferry. Anyone else?

[01:06:32] Ms. Smith? Mr. Lodi? Comments? Thoughts? No. Well I don't expect that we're going to make any decisions right now today not least because Ms. Mansfield had to leave for another appointment so I did have one question that started percolating while we were talking hypothetically if we were to if we were to revise the policy and change the

[01:07:09] timeline of the application window to one of your proposals that you've laid out here how would that affect as as other people were mentioning students moving into attendance zones like if we looking at proposal one which is the earliest right so that would anticipate final decisions made by the end of May how would that affect families moving into school district attendance zones

[01:07:48] over the summer would they still be out of luck as far as sorry your kid can't go to kindergarten here because all our spots are full as the policy exists currently yes because of that regional placement piece that is in and I'm not exactly sure which policy that is miscellany could probably quote it for me but currently yes we have to have that because of grades being at capacity and there being no seats based on the staffing standard that we have from the school board and or the staffing standard that is presented if you are a

[01:08:26] title one school which policy is that mr. Dolson the regional assignment 8155 It's ours, but it's in 8155, but it's school assignment, but I depend on Ms. Lehman to articulate and interpret that policy for

me.

[01:08:55] That part of the policy, I should say. Ms. LaVelle. As I'm looking at our special permission reasons, I'm seeing things that might be a non-reason if we're having trouble with schools that continually are full up and, you know, parents can't go.

[01:09:21] that moved to the area we might want to look at paring down some of these reasons that we're accepting that is something that maybe we can look at because that seems to be where the issue is some of these reasons are I worked with dr. Rashid on a lot of the appeals and as she listened to some of the parents when they go out she'd look at us and she'd say I didn't hear the big why we should do this and I think that that says a lot there really has to be

[01:09:58] I think a compelling reason I tend to agree with that miss LaBelle and I I do think that that is part of the root of the problems with the current process because currently we don't require a reason right just people request because they want to for whatever reason and they may or may not tell you what their reason is why they're making the request but I that was one of my early thoughts too especially once I got past though let's just burn it all down stage of

[01:10:35] reflecting on this process was I I am leaning towards thinking we need to change the timeline for the application window and we need to establish some basis for making the requests I talked briefly with Ms. Richardson a few days ago about where we go from here and how we structure and time out our next steps even if Ms. Mansfield had not had to leave I would have said probably too

[01:11:15] much to ask Ms. Richardson and Mr. Dolson and your staff to come to next week's committee meeting with proposed revisions but i think what i would like to do is now that we have all of this information and we've had these conversations and all this input i would like i think for our next committee meeting which will be next thursday the 17th right thursday the 17th um and maybe have this as a discussion item where the where the three committee members can

[01:11:49] talk in depth and hopefully come to some conclusive directions that could help staff put together specific policy revision recommendations that we would then review at one of our future meetings do you have thoughts about that i agree i think that having all of this that the three of us should be looking carefully and come up with some concrete suggestions that we can talk about

[01:12:22] I think that we need to be, and this is something I used to say back in special ed when parents were asking for every accommodation in the world, excuse me, we're not a restaurant, this is not a menu, and I think that at this point in time it kind of applies here.

[01:12:40] I agree, I agree. Ms. Richardson, Mr. Dolson, how does that sound? Well, we certainly appreciate not having the seven-day turnaround for next week. Monday is a holiday. Yes, yes, and Monday is a holiday, so thank you for that.

[01:12:58] We're the super team. And we are quite the super team. I do appreciate that, but we have taken some notes. You guys have talked about some suggestions. I think we have one piece of data that you wanted us to dig into a little bit further to bring back, not necessarily in a work session, but we can provide it to you as a committee.

[01:13:22] We can certainly make sure that we allow time for discussion at next week's standing committee. And then we are scheduled again November the 7th as our monthly standing student services

committee. And then in anticipation of the likelihood that you might want to have staff make some revisions to policy for your consideration, I did email you all asking our availability in this building and your schedules, and our schedules are really tight for November,

[01:13:57] but at least wanted you to know that we were thinking about the possibility of trying to schedule a second meeting for the month of November so that you could have some time to dig into this stuff, especially if we're considering any changes to timelines. There is work on the backside that our digital innovation department would need to do.

[01:14:19] with with what drives the the portal and then of course we would also want to work with our Department of Communications and community engagement because it would be a massive communication campaign to our community yes and miss Richardson thank you for doing that outreach to try and see if there might be an additional possible date I had requested that after I looked at the calendar and saw oh we only have one full school board meeting in December and if we're considering making a change to the application window as early as

[01:14:58] January we would need to have the policy voted on finalized and implemented before the end of the year and that does not leave us a lot of time at this point so perhaps part of our discussion on next Thursday could be looking at dates to see if there is any possibility of squeezing in one more student services meeting if we need to to work on this policy we were able to identify one date but it would change the time of day that the committee would be able to come together so definitely once you guys to consider that impact and what

[01:15:38] additional communication you would like us to send out to our community so we can make sure that we have folks here to hear our discussion and your processing So certainly you can let us know at any time. I know miss LaBelle. We have heard from you. Thank you and so Mrs. Donoghue if you could let us know by next week so we can get the room locked in. Thank you, Mr. Richardson I will do that and can you can you please remind me for our meeting next week on the 17th or standing meeting?

[01:16:09] Is that still scheduled to start at 5:30 our regular time? Yes, that starts at 5:30 Okay, and the November 7th meeting 5:30 - Also 5:30. - Yes, that's what I had down, just-- - Ms. Donahue, if I may, one of the things that I think my-- - Suggest an earlier start?

[01:16:28] - No. One of the things that I think my office would really like for you as the committee members to consider is, I'm just gonna say this, that no really does mean no.

[01:16:45] I think part of what I've heard this evening is looking at timelines and condensing the timelines, And again, to Dr. Brewer's eloquent points that he made, what I see as a division administrator, but then also having been in the school building administrative process, I think we need to support one another in the processes of when we do not, we say no, we really do mean no.

[01:17:16] And I've heard that a little bit considered, and I just wanna echo that. I think when we look at the timeline and the process, that is when we have the ability to extend that no. And I said this to you all last time with your other colleagues in the room, you all were very consistent.

[01:17:35] So you do have that data that represents what previous boards have done and what you have done. And so that messaging, in my humble opinion, is out there that no pretty much is going to go down the route of probably not.

[01:17:51] I do appreciate the fact that you all met considered in some very weighty situations what was best and you all did always consider what was best for the student but I also heard you thinking about what's best for a school and what's best for that school community so I would ask just from our offices perspective that you you consider that process because what I have learned in in doing some research is that our process is very different from other localities thank you mr. Dolson appreciate

[01:18:25] that input, and I think the three of us, and not only the three of us on the board, but certainly the three of us have a desire to improve this process so that it functions better, but that is a difficult balancing. Better for individual students, better for individual schools, better for our division as a whole. How do we weigh those things? And that's why I'm very grateful for all of the work that you all have done in providing us with all

[01:19:00] this information and setting up these extra meetings to help inform that decision. So if there is, do you have anything else Ms. LaBelle? Ms. LaBelle. Yes, I move or second if you will say the appropriate words. Go for it, you can do it. Unless Mr. Dolson or Ms. Richardson have anything else for us thank you very much everyone thank you everyone for being

[01:19:34] here thank you for your thoughts and input this October 10th 2024 work session of the Student Services Committee is adjourned our standing monthly meeting will be October 17th at 5:30 open to the public as always thank you all for coming and everyone get home safe



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