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Loudoun County School Board, Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) Meeting, Wednesday, November 6, 2024

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- Official meeting video (Vimeo / LCPS-TV): <https://player.vimeo.com/video/1027125664?rel=0>
- BoardDocs (School Board): <https://go.boarddocs.com/vsba/loudoun/Board.nsf/Public>

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[00:04:21] - Good evening, everyone. If you could please take a seat and we will get started with our evening tonight. I wanna thank everyone so much for being here, all of the staff. This resource fair is absolutely incredible.

[00:04:37] If you are watching from home, I highly encourage you to book it on over here because there are a ton of people here with really fun looking tables and handouts information it's definitely going to be worth your time and we come in your jammies whatever it's fine we're a casual group but thank you for coming here and I know it's um for for some of us we are feeling very excited tonight for some of us we are feeling very disappointed but I just want to say to

[00:05:15] to all of you that we are so lucky to have this community, to have so many things that we care so passionately about and places where we can all really make a difference together. And so I appreciate you showing up and continuing to show up and do the work with us. And we have a great presentation tonight. We have Ms. Jen Evans and Dr. John Walker to talk to us about our family supports and social workers, which is a topic I don't know that much about. And so I'm honestly

[00:05:50] very excited to learn more and then also very excited to get to this resource fair too. So without further ado, I will invite you guys to come up here. And also if you're at home watching or you're here, please scan the QR code and let us know that you're here. Oh, I'm sorry. One quick second. We have Leanne Kidwell. I told her she was going to get to go first and then I completely and totally skipped over. We need to give you a slide. You need a slide here because that'll remind me. Yes. Good evening everyone. It's great to see a full house. I'm Leanne Kidwell with

[00:06:28] Parent Resource Services and I am a resource to parents so my table's in the back. You can come and visit me. We only have one workshop this month which is incredible but it's an executive functioning workshop. It is next Thursday night the 14th from 6 30 to 8 here at the admin building and it's an overview and strategies but I brought the flyer participants will also be given access to ready-made resources for immediate use so if you went to our specialized reading and math

[00:07:05] that what I think is going to be very similar so please come out and see us next week thank you good evening everyone I'm Jen Evans I'm the director of student mental health services for LCPS. It is a pleasure to be here. And thank you, Liz, for the invitation to talk about one of our groups of staff members that are truly valuable assets to our students and our families. As the director of the mental health office, I do want to give a little bit of a history as to how it came to be. In 2019, our school board really saw the needs

[00:07:42] with mental health increasing, which we really kind of kicked off in 2010, really. And so we were given the opportunity to increase our staffing standards at the secondary level with social workers and school psychologists, which then came to the development of unified mental health teams in all of our secondary schools.

[00:08:02] With that came division leadership that was all within the Department of Student Services. We did trainings and really helped them figure out what that should look like at a systems level. So what are we doing for all students? And what is our data telling us about the needs of each school? And then what are the needs of our students in each school? It looks different. Each climate is different and the needs of our students are different. So then scaling what the services are for our students and then also responsive services. So we trained all of our staff, which was a big feat. And then again, we realized we need to go younger. The mental health

[00:08:40] needs were starting to show a lot younger so we increased our staffing at the elementary school so now we have unified mental health teams at every one of our schools and the individuals that are on that team are based on the school climate so at the elementary school level you'll have an administrator the team of school counselors which is usually a smaller number you have a designated school social worker, a school psychologist, and then sometimes the nurse or an attendance officer might be part of that discussion.

[00:09:13] And then at the secondary level, you have the same group. We have a director of school counseling, however, at the high school level. You've got your counseling team, administrators, a lot more school counselors, and a student assistant specialist, along with a social worker and a school psychologist.

[00:09:30] So what they do is they meet regularly to take a look at what they need to do for their students, the community, and then tailor the services. So I want to really focus on the role of the school social worker, and John Walker is going to take over shortly.

[00:09:48] But really, they are instrumental on the unified mental health teams. They really look at the students and the families and the community holistically and really are that link to the community resources for all students. So without further ado, I'm going to turn it over to Dr. Rockler, but I will stay here to answer questions that you might have.

[00:10:10] We've saved some time in our presentations for questions afterwards. I feel very comfortable at this podium because I'm here every month talking to school social workers. It could be a room full of elementary school level social workers, middle school and high school social workers. And I just think we're incredibly fortunate in Loudoun County to have such a strong unified mental health team.

[00:10:31] Because we did lots of interviews, you know, for the different new positions that we got over COVID. We were granted several new school social worker positions. And so we interviewed people from a lot of different parts of Virginia and elsewhere. And a lot of districts only have one school.

[00:10:49] social workers. Some of them only have a couple counselors and they share them across several schools. Some of them might have one psychologist for the whole district. And we're getting to the point where we have full UMHTs at every school, except for some of the small ones, and they'll share a couple schools going back and forth. We have a very robust team and supervising the school social workers is wonderful. It's one of my dreams come true. I spent probably about, I know I'm looking old, right? But I'm feeling old because my birthday was yesterday, but I don't feel as old

[00:11:21] as maybe I do some days except for this day, right? And so we have all of these social workers and bringing them in and seeing what they're doing in terms of prevention as well as intervention because for about 15, 20 years I worked at Department of Family Services in Loudoun County and all I got to see was intervention, you know, was kind of, you know, a severe type of a situation with kids, but coming to the schools, oh my gosh, I can't wait to tell you about all the cool stuff that social workers are involved with in terms of early intervention, prevention, and intervention.

[00:11:57] So as Jen said, one of the first things to remember about school social workers is that they're kind of the whole, they have a holistic view and really try to link students and families and community together. So it's really that link between the school, parents, and community. And they work in all of those different spheres. So if you think of them as kind of like a generalist that can refer out to specialists because school social work is such a specialized niche that like there's some MSW programs that you can specialize just in school social work because there's so much to it. And really a big part of that is knowing and understanding what

[00:12:36] is needed in each one of those areas, but also knowing all of the resources in the community so that the families and students can be linked with resources in the community. So if you look at the three circles that we have up, they've got facilitate activities and provide interventions that increase students' motivation to learn, a sense of belonging in the school community, which is incredibly important, right, and positive engagement in the local community.

[00:13:02] The goal for the community there is developing positive working relationships and providing easy access to the services in the community. and the services in the community can be quite complicated especially working i worked in department of family service before coming here worked in mental health in loudon county here it's kind of complicated when you're a parent my mom would joke and she she still thought thinks i'm a psychiatrist right but i'm not a psychiatrist right i just have a phd but it's hard to kind

of break that down you know the difference between a counselor and a social worker and a and a student assistance service providers so there's so many different niches in in the mental health community

[00:13:40] and knowing the community and the services in there is really important and also interacting with parents so our staff are trained you know to support parents as their students are adjusting to school if you remember back if maybe you're there right now with a little one you know and maybe it's kind of hard for them to go off to school you know social workers they're assisting with other staff as they get off the buses and get back on.

[00:14:03] Assisting parents access, you know, and utilizing school and community resources. Providing parent presentations to keep parents informed of maybe the latest trends that adolescents and other, you know, and our younger kids are being exposed to. But how to reach out is a really good question.

[00:14:21] And the way that we kind of like to do it across the board is like you can reach out to any UMHT member for a lot of different things. But to kind of narrow it down here, if you needed mental health resources, you could reach out to your school social worker. But you could also talk to your school counselor about that, and they might refer you to the school social worker to do that.

[00:14:41] If it's for basic needs, sometimes there's real tragedies that happen, everything from maybe a house burning down or displacement where children need to go live somewhere else in the county, and they need access to finding basic needs. This is what's really great about Loudoun County too is that we also have family liaisons that are working side by side with the school social worker to access anything from clothing and food and shelter and transportation.

[00:15:12] So basic needs is a big specialization that the school social workers do and you can go directly to them. If you need school counseling support, you can always start with your counselor, but you can also start talking to the school social worker, psychologist, or student assistant specialist to access counseling.

[00:15:30] That's kind of like, I figured that might be the best way to kind of start because who do you go to? Really could go to any one of them, but you could single it out with mental health resources directly to the social worker, basic needs directly to the social worker or the family liaison. Individual and group counseling.

[00:15:49] Social workers can provide individual and group counseling outside the IEP. It doesn't always have to be inside the IEP. It offers more flexibility sometimes when it's outside of the IEP. And it just allows them to access their special education services is what that type of counseling would be designed to.

[00:16:08] Counseling can identify strengths, including self-management, executive functioning skills, which I think there's a presentation coming up soon on, and coping skills. Counseling, it's short-term, it's solution-focused, and it helps improve educational outcomes.

[00:16:24] So it always looks at through the lens, an educational lens. and we use evidence-based curriculums and one of the newest things that we've gotten is character strong which comes with a lot of different curriculum in there to do group counseling and also how to do pre and post tests as well so that we can keep data on what's effective for certain students you have school social workers at all levels and this is what they provide at all levels and then i'll go into what the school social workers provide at the secondary level but at all levels social workers are sometimes involved in you know to do suicide screenings and threat assessments the threat assessments is always a team

[00:17:03] based type of a process that happens and the school social worker is one of the UMH team members that can be involved in that and then the suicide screenings are done by all the UMH team members including the school social worker and that's really to keep the school safe to keep our students safe and then we also lead or support crisis teams so when tragedies happen in the community you know if there's a death death of a teacher staff member a family member maybe somebody that was well known school social workers are sometimes leading those but they're involved with those in some kind of a way they're involved in social cultural assessments so if you if you went through the

[00:17:43] eligibility process with it which I think I'm preaching to the choir here you've sat down with a school social worker who got kind of the big picture your family and what's going on in each one of the areas of in community family history what they were behaviors been like since they were little but what they what how did the birth go where they adopted etc that paints a whole picture around the testing and everything else that goes on in eligibility so social cultural assessments are really a critical part of that eligibility process we support students in special programming one of my

[00:18:21] favorite things, I think it's one of the most powerful programs that we have in Loudoun County is restorative practices. And we could do a whole presentation just on that alone. But it used to be back in the old days, if there was a fight between students or a conflict between students, what would happen years ago?

[00:18:38] Maybe when I was growing up. You might get kicked out of school, right? Or your parents had to deal with it or something. Restorative practices are getting kids together in an agreement to talk about what has happened and how make amends and how to move forward very very powerful um so there's conferences that are done in classrooms there's circles that are done um i mean the conferences are done outside of classrooms and the circles are inside the classroom um school social workers um support with they provide support for attendance when their school school refusal could be related to anxiety um they help support

[00:19:14] homebound when that's necessary um again i think each one of these you could do like a night's presentation on each one of these programs and provide intensive case management to all students but also students that are at really high risk those might be students that are McKinney Vinto and they might be homeless or have home instability but it also could be students that are maybe suspected of sex trafficking and like what I was saying earlier in the presentation is that the school social workers very much networked with the community providers a lot in County Mental Health Department of Family Services juvenile court services unit. And so they provide case manager to some of the most at-risk students

[00:19:54] that are in need of support. At the secondary level, here's some of the programs that sort of stand out there. And the peer program, that's one of my favorite programs too. I mean, peer program is wonderful because that's where there's students that are selected by teachers who get trained in leadership and listening skills and different topics and areas of interest. And they help support other students in the school. So think about that just for a second. If you were like a ninth grader and it was your first time coming to high school, maybe you moved to this area from some other place, and then a peer leader came up to you at lunchtime and said, hey, can I have

[00:20:33] lunch with you? You know, I noticed you were sitting alone. Would you like to do this with us, et cetera? One of my favorite things is what we do with peer mentoring, where you link up a peer student

with um elementary school level age student or a middle school student and so peer students are always in the high school and they're in their senior or junior years and that just warms my heart to see that link being made and then also there's a I could go on and on about that but I got to cut myself short and move on to sources of strength another amazing program that social workers are involved with and that's how you know you just look at different areas of

[00:21:10] life everything from spirituality to family to medical to all the different areas of life and what your strengths are and it's a prevention program that really lends students to support one another. Provide classroom presentations in collaboration with others like signs of suicide and healthy relationships you know to do bully prevention. So lots of the signs of suicide is really critical, too, because that is for all students to help keep them safe to tell, you know,

[00:21:43] a safe adult, you know, when somebody's at risk for harming themselves. Again, topics that probably 15, 20 years ago weren't really addressed, but are being addressed in Loudoun County. So outside resources, I mentioned some of those. Here's kind of more of a longer list of everything that school social workers are involved with in the community. That link to the community is so important to access the different agencies because it gets very very sort of complex and detailed about what agency can provide what service and under what situations do you need to be eligible for a different service and different county

[00:22:23] services as well as private nonprofit agencies as well and this is one of my favorite quotes and I think it lends itself well to school social workers I think you guys might have seen that before any questions there's some links that you can access. We've got student mental health services there, LCPS mental health and community resources. Any questions? We won't be able to get into specifics of maybe what's going on with your child. We can spend some time doing that afterwards, but that's kind of hard to do in

[00:23:01] a large group. So I apologize if I missed this. I did come in a little late. Is there a school social worker in every school? Almost. At the secondary level, there is one at every school. And at the elementary school, you know, there's some tiny schools, right, where you need to kind have one school social worker that might have two or three schools. But for the most part, we're moving to that where there's going to be, we're getting close to having a school social worker at each of the elementary schools. I would just add that the services of the school social worker are offered at every school. We're moving to a model where you'll have one

[00:23:34] designated at every school. Okay. Along those lines, we are SEAC, so Special Education Advisory Committee. How often are social workers making contact with families in special education? because my son is now in seventh grade and for years we didn't know anything about the resources that were available in the community. There was nobody to talk to. There was no one within the schools that would help us, that would talk to us, that would offer any guidance. And we had to learn from other parents. So I'd like to know, are the social workers making contact and offering

[00:24:13] their services. I was told at one point that parent liaisons in counties throughout the state are also tasked with making sure that the special education families know the resources that are available, and all of the parent liaisons I've spoken to within Loudoun County say that is not the case within our county. So I can address that, and I am sorry to hear that you weren't made aware of those services earlier on and

that you had to find out the way you did so I just want to say that but I do know that the visibility of our unified mental health team has been a challenge

[00:24:49] because most of the kids in our school building don't know who they are but when we have students who are struggling those are the kids that know who the people are right but we shouldn't have to wait till something's going wrong for the services to be for the awareness of the services to be made to the parents, and the awareness is to be made to the students. So we've really been strategic in our presentations to make sure that all the students repeatedly see these are the faces of the Unified Mental Health Team members. And we also do that with our parent presentations. Our

[00:25:24] websites have been revamped so that parents can more easily access them. But I'd love to talk to you more on a one-on-one basis to figure out how we can provide supports that unfortunately weren't offer to you but I feel that families don't know what to ask and for the school social workers to actually reach out and say let's have a 15-minute conversation to the parents not the students because the students don't necessarily know what they need and offer you know is there anything

[00:26:02] that you need that we can provide resources for would I think be very very helpful especially parents who are coming up in elementary school and also the ones that are new to our community absolutely and I completely agree that the parents are the advocates you know your kids inside and out and are the experts students might most often don't want to opt in for services they just want to be invisible right so I do think we can do a lot better with doing that outreach across all levels with any student who might be showing signs that something might be going on regardless of

[00:26:39] what that might be so thank you and i'll be here to talk to you one-on-one later yeah it's hard it's a challenge because you're trying to make you know with the school social workers they try to make themselves as visible as possible as kids are getting off of buses and you know they'll do maybe signs of suicide presentation introduce their role who they are and what they do in the school but you know it would be great if there was a better way to access parents because your parents many, many more times are the customer in the beginning, right?

[00:27:06] We can have the kids become customers over time, but they don't typically say, I want service. Some of them do, though, right? Some of them are probably good advocates for themselves, but not all. I have a question. I just wanted to know if you can provide any thoughts on restraint, student restraint, student seclusion, and student isolation.

[00:27:29] I know it's a big concern, especially lately, especially that when we have students that can't really verbally communicate. Well, school social workers are involved. They get relationally trained in MANT practices, but not the physical part, because we want to be able to separate that role so that it doesn't get confused with the physical part of restraints.

[00:27:52] So the school social workers can be there to help, you know, de-escalate a situation before it gets too physical. That's kind of one way they can be utilized, right, in the school. And another way is talking to the child and or the parents afterwards to offer resources and support that way.

[00:28:09] But in terms of the actual restraints, or they're not involved with that directly. Thanks for your presentation. I'm Steve Meyer, a SEAC member, and I'm retired two and a half years ago as a special ed teacher in middle school.

[00:28:29] And I wanted to say to you, I was a case manager, and I worked, the only thing left out of this great presentation are the teachers who are case managers. Because we very often work closely, in my case at Harper Park Middle School, we had a fantastic coordinated team.

[00:28:51] And I often worked with them concerning my students or students that I was teaching, and also with parents. So it's really important that all special ed teachers are really brought into this process.

[00:29:09] That's a great point. Hi, I have a question. It's actually two parts. Parent liaisons, would you say that they are universally given the same information?

[00:29:28] As Bobby pointed out, she had a parent liaison in her school who wasn't as informed with, say, Medicaid or the waivers. And I am a Medicaid case manager, but my own parent liaison at the school that I worked, I had to kind of almost give her a training, and I give one once a year for all the ECSE parents coming in.

[00:29:50] And that parent liaison was not informed at all. But I have met others that have been. So that was my first question. And then my second one is the role of a social worker at an IEP meeting. What options could you, you know, maybe give us about having one at an IEP meeting?

[00:30:12] So we don't supervise the family liaisons, but I will say we've done presentations for them. And any position across any division that's this big, you're going to have different strengths and you're going to have areas for growth, right? So I do think if there are gaps, we try to get the seasoned family liaisons to train, like you're describing, and we also have in-service trainings that are available to all of them.

[00:30:38] But I think naturally you're going to see some gaps across the board, but that's something we want to know about and address, and that can certainly be shared with Sarah Boyce, who supervises them. As far as the role of the social worker in the IEP meeting, we encourage them to attend as many of those as they can and get to know the students to figure out how they can support whether that's counseling in the IEP whether that's pushing support in the classrooms or whether that's something outside that's not even related to their disability so we want to encourage that involvement and I don't know if you have an expectation for them to attend those

[00:31:17] meetings or as much as they can there's so many other things going on that like especially the families that request it. We definitely are involved in that. And everybody meets with the school social worker in the beginning of that eligibility process. So that's where they're getting to know the school social worker so they can be invited by any of the IEP members when they think it's relevant.

[00:31:39] Or a parent. Yeah, parent. Yes. On an ongoing basis. Yeah, and that happens too. So it just kind of depends on the purpose of it. And I just had a quick question about the peer groups Because I know we sometimes have SEAC award nominees for peer groups at schools where they're working with our students with disabilities and providing inclusion or tutoring or that kind of stuff.

[00:32:07] Is that something that this peer group does or is that something separate? So many of the peer programs do push into the specialized programs and do that mentoring as well. And it's a beautiful, I don't know if you've been to see, but it's a beautiful marriage to see the relationships built there.

[00:32:26] and they are long-standing relationships in high school. They also do new student lunches. Any students who are new, they will pair them up. So it's, and they do like no one sits alone at lunch campaigns. So they assign people to sit with folks who might not have anyone to sit with.

[00:32:44] So yes, PURE is actively involved in that. Thank you. So oftentimes many of the questions come in the form of there are gaps in services in various different ways.

[00:33:02] How do we solve that? And as you point out, we're a large district with a lot of staff, a lot of students, and a lot of different needs across many different programs. So let me ask a different style of question. As SEAC, what can we do to either help spread the word about what the UMHT teams do, what the social workers do, what those options are, and what can we advocate for?

[00:33:31] I appreciate that reframing, and I think the parents here, if you would please share that there are unified mental health teams in every school, and kind of summarize what they are, that this link right here could be shared amongst your communities.

[00:33:51] The student mental health services page takes you to an actual who's on the unified mental health team. It brings up every single school's page in one location, so that will take you directly to your school, where you can see all the folks and see who the contacts are. I don't know if you'd add anything.

[00:34:07] I was going to reference that, too. I think that link is really important because you can go to each school and see exactly the names and the contact numbers to get a hold of them. And knowledge is power, right? So I think this kind of a presentation is really good and maybe get it from all different perspectives.

[00:34:23] You know, family liaisons and others could do presentations as well because then you get educated on exactly what it's all about. It's hard getting the education out, you know, because until you need something, do you know what I mean? Like, you might not know what a hot water heater is and all the details of it until it goes out, right?

[00:34:40] We just don't know sometimes. I found that a lot working in Department of Family Services. That you just, but when the need comes up, boy, you need to know. So I think if the education and these types of speaking engagements continue, we could do like a refresher next year.

[00:34:56] I'd be happy to do that because I'd love to get the word out what the social workers are doing. because they're doing some great work, and it's very valuable. Is there a flyer that you guys have that kind of shows what the social workers do or what the parent liaisons do that we could give to our PTA, and then they could email it to our families?

[00:35:19] Absolutely. In fact, I kind of stole or lifted the idea from the PTA. They had a card with different URL codes on there versus the old-fashioned trifold, right? There's some of those. We got some cool cards right over there. Dr. Daniel, she's our coordinator for student support services, and she can tell you more about some of the services in detail, and you can access it all through there. That was a nice little planted question. So my question is this. So listening to your presentation, I did not get

[00:35:55] a sense of if there is an assessment or intervention at the level of those internal struggles that student can go through, whether even in elementary school, middle school, high school. What I mean by that is that self-worth and confidence and purposeful living. Are there any awareness or intervention at that level? Because sometimes those are the root cause of what we see externally with the struggle that we see the student going through. There is other reason for them if we don't dig deep and find out as mental health professional or

[00:36:34] psychologists, the team that you mentioned, if they are not digging there and trying only to solve the outside, the things that we'd see externally, like find the resources, find this and that, but if we are not aware of how to go deep and really truly help the student. Now my question to you is, are there any interventions at that level, any awareness, any assessment that you're doing to get to that, to really know the real struggle of those students? Thank you.

[00:37:04] So I will answer that, but we aren't doing any universal screener that would identify students. What we're looking at is data across our school climate. We're looking at data specific to students, whether it's attendance, whether it's performance with grades, whether it's they're socially isolating more, whether they're involved in any activities, and then observation of the students with the teachers providing feedback.

[00:37:32] So those are our, and family input, those are the first indicators. that there might be a need for services but I do want to address the resiliency piece and the protective factors and that is what we're doing across our MTSS framework our multi-tiered system of support with second step and our social emotional learning along with all the presentations classroom lessons that you heard about we're focusing on how do we build resiliency how do we help students identify the strengths that they have. What areas do they need to work on? Who are your trusted adults? Who are your positive friends? Who are the mentors in this building that you can go to?

[00:38:13] So that is the foundation of that. But when we start to see things a little bit off with students from all those different data points or observations, that's when we would try to dig deep. But again, when I hear dig deep, I think therapy, right? And because I am a therapist.

[00:38:29] and that we are not replacing clinical work um that's not the role of our school system but we will make sure that they can get to a place where they can do that deep work and if there's trauma involved we want to make sure they have those supports because in many situations there's trauma and we don't want to unpack all of that in a school setting so we're establishing the foundation helping them build the skills and then identifying when there's needs seeing if it's school interventions that are appropriate or seeing if there's a more intensive need that's that we can help them find in the community yeah and you said so many good things there the one thing i want to

[00:39:06] piggyback on is parents i mean don't you think like you don't have to have five kids like me to know that our kids show their true color sometimes at home like so parents might be in the best position to know what's going on and then to alert a umht member or school social worker and we can see if it's interfering with what's going on at school and they're learning so that's really critical. We don't always see everything that's going on like a parent does at home.

[00:39:32] Hi. So I have a separate question, but just going off of what you were saying about we might see the true colors at home. I do feel like sometimes teachers and faculty do spend more time with the children during the week than the parents do at home. So I do

[00:40:04] agree that um if the parents do see something to make the teachers or social workers aware of that but also is there somebody who and I'm sure is this still still working oh um will the teachers if they see something will they go and tell the social worker or somebody who can relay that information? Because I, you know, there's like the see something, say something, but I don't know if the teacher necessarily, I mean, there's how many students in a class. I think it's just important

[00:40:43] that they do say something to somebody who can relate to the parents who can help them. Yes. So within our MTSS framework, we have now within our Phoenix system, the ability for teachers to refer students to the unified mental health team or for academic issues or for behavioral issues, the UMHT so that then the team can then staff and determine meet with the student talk to the parent and see what services can be available but I think what I think what John was saying is that sometimes even my own kids they are angels in school and then when they get home it all comes out because they've

[00:41:20] been trying so hard to hold in whatever it is they're feeling so we need to know if that's happening so that we can help put some things in place some scope some coping skills and strategies to help them navigate so that it doesn't just bubble up when they get home. Thank you.

[00:41:35] And I have one more question. I'm really intrigued by the peer helper program. And I saw on the slide that's in every high school. But I believe you also said something about elementary school within that. Do these high school children go to the elementary schools?

[00:41:52] Yeah, some of them. Yeah, so one of the expectations of the program is that they either go to the middle school or the elementary school. Some actually do both, but we want that mentoring relationship to help students who are rising to that next grade level to have that support in place.

[00:42:11] And they listen to peers more so than listen to the adults who are presenting information. It's a credibility factor. Yeah, that is great. So how do you get your student involved with one of those high schoolers? You can talk to your school social worker, your counselor.

[00:42:30] Usually a counselor or school social worker is involved with peer and works with the peer teacher. And then so they can do that linking to get the mentoring going. Thank you. I think you want to have time for this resource fair, right?

[00:42:47] But Dr. Walker and I will be here if you have any other questions. And I appreciate the time. Thank you. Thank you so much, guys.

[00:43:04] so really quickly um we thought we would just go around with the mic real fast and let each person just quickly introduce who they are and what they represent so that our members here can get a lay of the land and know what direction to to run so i think katherine's gonna start us off over there um and then we'll just cycle around real quick i just had to give a heads up that she was going to be on the spot here we go good evening i'm elisa daniel i am the coordinator for

[00:43:39] the school's social workers. Good evening. I'm Dawn Harvey. I'm the supervisor of the Preschool Childline Program. This is Barbara Madgwick and Margaret Paganelli, SLP and early childhood special education teacher with Preschool Childline. Hi, I'm Ashley Spiegel, and I'm a special education supervisor, and I also support duly identified students for the division. Hi, I'm Stephanie Edwards. I'm an EL specialist, and I also support duly identified students working very closely

[00:44:14] Ashley. Hi, I'm George Bishop. I oversee the Navy Junior OTC program for CTAE. Hi, everyone. My name is Vandana Sharma. I'm the coordinator for Health and Medical Sciences Academy. I'm here to talk to you about the HAMSI program. Hello, everybody. My name is Louisa Quintero, and I am a World Languages and Culture Specialist working with the program of DLI, Dual Language Immersion, that starts in

[00:44:51] kindergarten. Sorry, guys. I am Fernando Ribari, and I am the International Baccalaureate, or IB, coordinator at Heritage High School, and I'll be over here to talk about IB. Good evening, everybody. My name is Joe Levesy. I'm here on behalf of the Academies of Loud Admissions and Outreach Office, where we offer three unique academic programs, the Academy of Science, AOS, the Academy of Engineering and Technology, AT, and the Monroe Advanced Technical

[00:45:26] Academy, MATA. Stop by my table to learn about it all. Hi, Jenna Arndt, Special Education Supervisor for Transition. Good evening, Jen Alpers, Supervisor of Career and Technical Education. Thanks, Jen. Dr. Michael Grubbs is here for the division of CTAE. He's right here, just putting him on the spot. I'm Nick Rosita. I work in the Computer Science Office as a supervisor. Along with me, we have a few people here to discuss our Robots for Everyone program

[00:46:01] available in our K-8 schools. We have Bev Fisher. Thank you, Chris Buguay, who's part of that program, too. We have Beth Fisher, who's the IFT from Little River Elementary. We have Sharon Brandon, who's an instructional facilitator of computer science.

[00:46:17] Jill Buss, another instructional facilitator of computer science. And Joyce Sharp from assistive technology. Geez, I didn't stumble over that at all. All right. Thank you, everyone. Oh, sorry. Becca's hiding in the back over there. Becca Gratz was one of our instructional facilitators of computer science, too. Good evening. We are Specialized Instruction. I am Margaret Osbury, one of the supervisors for specialized instruction. We also have Kimberly Jones, one of our special ed supervisors, and then we have four of our specialized instructional facilitators for special education, Jess Pellegrino, Perry Hamilton, Jamar Brown, and Mary Berrizato.

[00:47:00] Hi, I'm Joy Engstrom. I'm a special education supervisor who oversees the specialized programs, and I am here to talk about the TeachTown curriculum. Good evening. I'm Bridget Gorey. I'm a supervisor of special ed, and I support our deaf and hard of hearing students in our division. Hi, RJ Horsemeyer. I'm the deaf and hard of hearing specialist for Loudoun County. Hi there, Liz Martinez, special ed supervisor, and I oversee the teachers who work with students who are blind and visually impaired, as well as orientation

[00:47:36] and mobility. Good evening. My name is Carrie Williams, and I'm the ombuds person for Loudoun County Public Schools. And if you are not familiar with the role of the ombuds, come on over, and I've got a bookmark for you to take and share back with your communities as well. Hi, I'm Heather Swanson. I'm the Medicaid specialist for Loudoun County Public Schools, so I'm here to talk about the Medicaid and Schools program and parent consent. Hi, I'm Chris. I'm Chris Bouguet. I'm

[00:48:07] the specialist for assistive technology. Hello, my name is Erin Kunkel, and I am the chair of the Minority Student Achievement Advisory Committee, or MSAC, and I'm just here to share a little bit about what we're doing this year and here just to support your wonderful committee. Hi, I'm

[00:48:46] Linda Bland and I'm here with Sarah Reeps. We represent the gifted education department and we're here to talk to you about all things gifted. Thank you all so much. Oh, one more. You keep forgetting me. Never, Leanne, never. Yeah, we have a whole row. Okay. I am still Leanne Kidwell and I am still with Parent Resource Services and this is my supervisor, Jennifer Hansen. Hi, I'm Holly

[00:49:18] Angle and I am the McKinney Vento Specialist for the division. Hi, I'm Jeannie Kloman. I'm a nurse and I'm the Supervisor for Student Health Services. I think that's it. All right, we got everyone so feel

free to get up and and go walk around.

[00:49:42] We have until 7 15 so enjoy.

[01:22:28] I hate to do this guys but it may be time to wrap up our conversation so we can get going with the meeting and we can let these very, very generous individuals get to their homes.

[01:25:57] Yeah, right, exactly. We have everything, like everything's handy.

[01:26:18] All right, let's get started. So above are our role of SEAC and our Virginia regulations. They are available on our website, so feel free to go and check those out if you are not familiar with them.

[01:26:40] I will, rules and regulations. You're welcome. And real quick, my name is Liz Pratty. I am the chair of SEAC. We've got Carla Sola, our vice chair of membership over here. Katherine Moran, our vice chair of planning. Katie Rosenbrook, our SEAC secretary. We've got over here Erin, our vice chair of communications, and Carrie LaBelle, our SEAC school board liaison. And then all the way on the end we've got Dr. Paige Carter, our director of special education.

[01:27:18] So the first portion of our meeting tonight will be public comment. We use public comment to inform our work, to advise the school board on special education needs. We focus on system-wide issues rather than individual concerns or specific situations.

[01:27:36] Please do not use student or staff names. Verbal comment may be given. Please complete and submit your comment form tonight or any written form. You can email it to us, and also written comment can either be read by the author or by myself.

[01:27:54] And we ask you to please keep your remarks limited to three minutes. And we have, I think we've got two public comments today.

[01:28:10] There we go. There she is. Okay. But our first public comment is by Laura Colossi. This is my first public comment, so bear with me.

[01:28:27] No, it's your second. Second, well, my first year, okay. Well, good evening, everyone. For those of you who don't know, I'm Laura Colossi. I have a six-year-old son with autism. He previously completed two and a half years in the ECSE special ed preschool program, and then now he's currently in kindergarten.

[01:28:48] He's in a K-2 autism class. So I know that we've talked extensively about playgrounds and everything entailing that. I just kind of wanted to give a bit of like my own perspective and like what my son goes through with all that and the kids in his class. So at my son's elementary school, the preschoolers and the K-2 autism class there, they are restricted to a bricked off indoor courtyard.

[01:29:14] It very much resembles like a prison yard rather than a playground situation. It's just tall brick walls all around. You've got, you know, a little bit of grass and stuff and then a small semicircle sidewalk, very, very tiny. It gets incredibly muddy out there whenever it rains, so they can't even really play out there much.

[01:29:39] Okay, all right. Well, okay, so the kids do not have access to any sort of commercial-grade play equipment. There's no real play structures. It's just, like, these commercial, like, you know, consumer grade stuff that you can buy on like Amazon, whatever, Walmart, Target, like plastic little play equipment. Most of it's been donated by families, you know, and a big issue with all of this is that the stuff isn't even

like really intellectually or physically stimulating to these kids. It's meant for toddlers, really, the play equipment that they have. It's meant for little kids, and you have these school-aged kids that are five to eight years old playing on stuff meant

[01:30:19] for actual toddlers. I've talked to my son's teacher at school. She has complained that the kids are just simply bored out there. They have nothing to do. They're digging for worms, playing in the mud. There's just nothing for them. When it rains, like I said, they are forced to stay inside and play for several days until everything dries out there. We know recess is a very vital time of day for our students. It's time for social interaction, sensory regulation, a chance to foster physical development and just simply a break from the day.

[01:30:54] I feel like at the bare minimum, our kids deserve the opportunity to have access to an inclusive playground. The policy 6320 states that having a safe and cognitively and physically stimulating place to play, commonly used during recess, during school hours, and by the public during non-school hours, is an important part of overall student well-being.

[01:31:14] If this is LCPS's policy, then why do our students with disabilities not have access to a cognitively and physically stimulating playground. I think it's incredibly important that my son and other students with disabilities are no longer forced into a indoor courtyard with teeny little plastic play equipment where they're lacking space and proper equipment and instead should have be afforded the same opportunities as other students and have access to playgrounds with their peers.

[01:31:39] Thank you very much. - I didn't know we actually timed those. Okay, Carrie is our second public comment this evening.

[01:32:04] Okay, bear with me. I hate public speaking, so we're going to do this. Hi, if you guys don't know me, I'm Carrie Adams. I have a six-year-old or first-grader here in LCPS.

[01:32:22] I also have a two-year-old. But my son was born with spina bifida, which is a neurological disorder, which basically means his spine did not fully form when he was inside of me. So he is paralyzed from the waist down. We entered LCPS through Child Find and did the ECSE pre-K, And then we went into kindergarten, and just like Laura was describing, we did kind of a similar playground situation.

[01:32:47] Didn't really notice it because it was all accessible. Everything was one level, one small space, and he was able to fully participate. Well, we moved into first grade this year, and very first day of school, he comes out and gets into the car, and I was like, how was your day? And he said, everyone left me behind at recess today because they do not have an accessible playground at my son's school.

[01:33:08] So hence why we're here. We're here to get started on really pushing for these accessible playgrounds and on all levels. Sorry, I'm just going to read from here now. None of the equipment is accessible for a wheelchair user.

[01:33:26] The entire playground is covered in mulch, which he can't roll over, and it makes the entire area inaccessible to him. So sorry. It's caused him to be left behind. As a medical professional, I'm a family nurse practitioner. I can quote numerous studies that clearly show the importance of play and child development, not to mention the lifelong issues that could be caused by exclusion at such a young age.

[01:33:48] My son, along with every child in LCPS, deserves to have a playground that is accessible to him. This is not a want. This is an absolute need. I've been working alongside SEAC and the facilities team,

and we've been talking about the funding going into this, and the current plan is three playgrounds a year.

[01:34:05] This plan will take 20 years to replace all of the inaccessible playgrounds in our county, which is absolutely just unacceptable. Additionally, the replacement plan needs to prioritize schools with the known need in population versus the current plan that just replaces by age.

[01:34:20] There's at least 16 schools, there's probably more than that now, with known accessibility issues, and they need these playgrounds now, not 20 years from now. Additionally, accessible playgrounds at high schools with no ECSE program should not be prioritized over any elementary school.

[01:34:37] I'm urging everyone to get behind and increase the CAP funding to replace at what the facilities team said they can do is 12 playgrounds a year which will cut that to a five-year plan versus a current 20-year plan and I urge everyone to get behind and throw their support towards this measure thank you so much all right and now we're going to move into our did you know on disability employment presented by our SEAC member Catherine Moran good evening

[01:35:15] Thanks for hanging around. I have a few handout things to share with you all at the end of this. October is Disability, National Disability Employment Awareness Month.

[01:35:30] It's November, but we still need to talk about it. Next week is National Career Development Week, just FYI, so we're still in the ballpark. There are-- the purpose of INDEAM is to celebrate contributions of people with disabilities to the workforce, raise awareness about the importance of an inclusive workplace.

[01:35:53] And I have some information on benefits for employers, for employees, and for families. But I need one thing.

[01:36:11] All right. So from the Bureau of Labor and Statistics, US Department of Labor, there was a news release in February persons with a disability labor force characteristics from 2023 in 2023 22.5% of people with a disability were employed and that is next to 65.8% of persons without disabilities employed kind of a big gap in there highlights from this 2023 data include half of all people with a

[01:36:48] disability were age 65 and over, nearly three times larger than the share for those with no disability. Workers with a disability were more likely to be self-employed than those with no disability. I won't read them all, but I have a few copies, and then there's a link for this.

[01:37:06] And if you're a data nerd, check this out. It's like all data. So it's interesting. It's worth taken a look at we have a lot of work to do around disability employment when we celebrate the accomplishments of our individuals with disabilities we have to make sure that we are talking about where we started how we started and we need to start young so I'll take a step back for benefits for employers there's

[01:37:44] an enhanced innovation diverse perspectives when you hire people with disabilities, improved morale and teamwork, expanded customer base. There is, um, inclusivity resonates with consumers and that's been a researched, um, piece. And there are tax benefits, which is huge. Um, in this flyer that I have for you guys, we have, we'll have an electronic copy in there are hot links in to all of the information so that if you or your family member are a business owner or you work with a company who may potentially benefit from hiring people with

[01:38:23] disabilities and you're not aware of the tax benefits, it's pretty cool. The three main things are the work opportunity tax credit, and there is a quick reference guide for employers that's available. Again,

everything is linked in, but this is all from U.S. Department of Labor.

[01:38:45] disabled access credit and then barrier removal tax deduction and that's kind of what it says if something's not ada compliant and you make it compliant there's a tax benefit benefits for employees independence and financial security skill development and a sense of purpose we consider work as therapy it's it's a paycheck it is a road to a life like yours like ours that we want to

[01:39:16] have but um it is therapy to uh to know that you are part of a community part of an organization part of someone's bottom line to help move move the needle forward for that business or that organization it's incredible um and there are things for benefits and things that parents can do promote workplace readiness early so if our parents of six-year-olds looking at you yeah

[01:39:53] we need to be talking early and often at home and in school about work opportunities what does it mean to to work as a six-year-old or an eight-year-old well helping around the house with chores um let's following through um with uh soft soft skill development so following through with things i said i would do this i'm gonna do this um there's always something we can learn and do also encouraging family and community support we all are consumers so look to your community

[01:40:31] and where do you shop where do you spend your money how you know how do you spend your time what organizations are you engaged with and are they disability friendly do they hire people with disabilities and if not why use use your connections and speak loudly and then advocate for inclusive employment policies there's a lot of work to be done there's a lot of good work happening there's a lot of cool things that have happened to get us to this place but there's still a lot of work to do. So I would encourage you guys, even though we're past October, to check

[01:41:08] out NDAM online. If you just Google NDAM, you'll find all the things. This year's theme was access to good jobs for all. So advancing access and equity. And there are lots of data points, lots of statistics for businesses to really pay attention but it has to start with us home with us in the classroom and working in partnership so i'd love to hear how you guys are building

[01:41:44] business partnerships in your community and as a cast teacher if any of those business partners would like awesome work experience would like to develop some awesome work experience opportunities for students. I would love to have a conversation. Thank you. Thank you so much, Catherine. And now we have our update from Dr. Paige Carter, our Director of Special Education. Thank you guys so

[01:42:22] much. I have my usual updates. We have identified 53, I believe, more students with disabilities since we last met last month. I'm serving 10,275. And I am really excited to report that we have 21 TA, BA vacancies down from closer to 40 a couple of months ago, and 23 teacher vacancies.

[01:42:51] And I just kind of wanted to share a little bit where those vacancies are to let you know there isn't any one area, especially for TA and BA, teacher assistant or behavioral assistant. They are spread out across autism, job coach, cross-categorical, ECSE, intellectual disabilities, multiple disabilities, and vision.

[01:43:14] So it really is spread across several, the greatest number being four in cross-categorical across the division and five in autism. And considering that we have served 321 programs, which each have between two and four TAs or BAs, we are very close to 99% staffed right now.

[01:43:38] And if you look at surrounding counties and look at their vacancies, I don't believe they are. So I really am excited that we are beginning to fill a lot of our vacancies. We're using contractors, but also

getting applications in-house.

[01:43:54] And it's taking us, once we identify someone, around three weeks to go from found you to got you. And so that's, I think, moving at a really good pace right now. I would love it to be one day, but it does take time, of course, to do background checks and things like that.

[01:44:12] For teachers, they are spread out across autism, cross-categorical intellectual disabilities, vision, deaf and hard of hearing, and a speech-language pathologist. Vision, we have two vacancies for our students who are blind or visually impaired, and they are very special unicorns.

[01:44:31] Even the agencies that we normally use to contract through are not finding anyone right now. So that is a real specialty. If you know anyone out in the community or even across the country that would like to teach in Loudoun, please let us know.

[01:44:48] And we are interviewing all the time for speech-language pathologists, So that position should fill rather quickly. And that vacancy was identified because someone retired. So it does happen.

[01:45:03] So we can be fully staffed and go to not fully staffed throughout the year, not unusual. There are 10 cross-categorical vacancies, seven autism vacancies. Those are the two largest categories. But usually I just give you a big number, but I thought I would break it down for you that it isn't really any one area that is impacted, but autism and cross-categorical are the largest.

[01:45:27] And then, oh, it's time for Tetra. But I did want to take a moment, and I believe it might actually be Nakia. Is it going to be you next? Oh, she's here. Thank you. I'm sorry. You were there, and then you were gone.

[01:45:44] I just wanted to take a minute, and I know they've already gone, and we will send thank-you notes to all the folks who came out tonight. But I thought it was really exciting to see folks from so many different areas. I hope that you had the opportunity to get questions answered. And if you didn't, feel free to reach out to me so I can connect you with the folks that you couldn't connect with tonight.

[01:46:04] But I think this should be an annual event. That was really good. And I want to give a special shout-out tonight to Kim Jones who helped. Liz Crotty and Kim Jones were really instrumental in reaching out and contacting folks.

[01:46:20] So I just wanted to give a shout-out. Thanks. Good evening. It's always a pleasure to be here with you guys this evening and Paige you stole my my opening comment was just kudos to SEAC for such an amazing resource fair. It was beautiful.

[01:46:48] It was just the human connections were just absolutely wonderful to feel. The energy that was in this space was just amazing. So thank you for that opportunity for sure. Some happenings across the DSS. So as a department, and we are a rather large department, all total, we're about 350 strong, and most of those supports are out in our schools, but we are working on creating a culture of care and connection. And so we have really dug into the work of how we're showing up.

[01:47:23] How are we showing up for ourselves? How are we showing up for each other? Of course, you all know that the theme of the office of special education is at your service you know that is how they are showing up but we are also digging into the work of what is sometimes we're put into the awkward zone right as people in the work as people just having personal lives right and so we are working on taking care

of each other so I want to make sure that you know that we are very mindful of how we show up for for you all for your students on a daily basis and for our staff and our schools

[01:48:01] FY26 budget planning it is in the works it's moving rather quickly we are hopeful to find out sometime this week how much we could possibly expect from our locality our school board has worked to prioritize their initiatives and I'm happy to share that they some some DSS items have risen to the top like our transition school we do serve students in our alternative educational school and additional staffing for student health services across our schools have been prioritized

[01:48:40] so we continue to work through that process and we'll keep you updated as we continue to move through. The superintendent will be presenting his estimate of needs in January. Upcoming policies for student services committee that is tomorrow afternoon at four o'clock. We're in rooms 102 A and B. We will be digging into a little bit more policy 8155 school assignment. So this was a request from our school board to bring this policy forward and this policy contains all of the

[01:49:15] language and the process around special permission specifically tomorrow at the direction of our school board committee we have been asked to bring back policy revisions that reflect a timeline that is moved up and so because as it stands now our school board was still considering special permission appeals even after our school year started.

[01:49:44] And so they had a series of work sessions. They had principals to come and speak to them and really share information on how this impacts a school community. And so we'll be talking about that as well as policy 5345, which is restraint and seclusion of students.

[01:50:02] And we do have very comprehensive feedback from SEAC, so thank you for that. Again, you're welcome to join us at 4 o'clock tomorrow in 102 A and B. I'm also excited to share we have a school board meeting November 12th, and our one LCPS instructional highlight is going to be the transition team from Light Ridge High School.

[01:50:26] We're going to have students and staff really explaining to our school board what that experience is and what they work on. have a video students will be there to speak their transition teacher their job coach their administrators and of course jenna arndt and the transition team will be there to support as well so we're excited to height to highlight that and then our transition services we will be giving a presentation to the joint committee of the board of supervisors and the school board on november 18th and really it's going to focus on first of all what is special education

[01:51:03] what is transition what does it currently look like in lcps and what is our vision for our new career and technical educational transition center for students with disabilities so please mark your calendar for that that it's at four four o'clock on the 18th at the county government building so we would love to have cx support there as well that's it for me thank you Thank you so much, Tedra.

[01:51:34] And Carrie, do you have any updates for us? Absolutely. I'm walking better, but not well yet.

[01:51:51] I'm sorry. Last week, we had a meeting with our local legislators and told them what our initiatives are at Leiden County Public School that we want to bring to their attention and have them see if they can get us some support, has some policies for us through the state.

[01:52:18] And one of the things that I was the one who got to talk about, and I was really happy to do so, was our transition center. And we had a lot of questions, and I think we have a lot of support for it

legislatively. We're going to be looking for grants and things like that as well.

[01:52:35] The following Monday, I got up and went and was in Riverview for a breakfast. and made a lot of good connections a lot of people there are also curious about what we are planning to do with our transition center and aurora school was there and some other community agencies were also there and again so we're reaching out to a lot of places and getting

[01:53:11] a lot of traction and information and interest in our transition center so that's going to move well go forward with that uh the week before that we had our um oh i hate this when words go away um yes the workforce summit and we got to speak to a lot of people there were a lot of breakout sessions i was on the one with agriculture that was a lot of fun we're hoping to bring back more

[01:53:44] agriculture hands-on agriculture for students especially those that want to work with animals work with plants I heard from Temple Grandin that 22 percent of our people that work in agriculture are people with special needs special disabilities and this is a wonderful place for them to go so hopefully we're going to get something on the road for that so those are some of the things that i've been working on on behalf of of our students in the special needs population thank you thank

[01:54:22] you so much carrie and now we have our membership report from carla good evening everybody i want to let everyone know that seac now has a full membership of 21 active members our newest member is Marsha Kelly she's still here so we're very happy to have her we will continue to accept

[01:54:59] applications for SEAC membership and please contact me if you have already submitted an application and you want to find out where we are in the review process for that we have 80 PTA PTO representatives for 101 schools so for any parents please check with your PTA PTO presidents and make sure that your school does have a SIAC representative and finally on October 23rd Liz our chair and I we held a zoom

[01:55:38] Google meeting for PTA PTO reps to discuss their role and how best they can help SEAC and what they're looking for from SEAC for their schools and it was a really great evening to meet so many of them even virtually they were all incredibly passionate about helping the students be fully included in their academic and their social activities in their schools so we would like to and we

[01:56:16] plan to hold another meeting early next year for the representatives one of the specific topics we want to talk about is how they can help to make events at their schools be fully inclusive and accessible so when we have a date we'll will let you know and also if any of you are like event throwing gurus and really good at coming up with lots of great creative ideas reach out to us because i don't think carla or myself consider ourselves to be experts in this area and so we would greatly welcome a little bit of expertise

[01:56:55] um in that area so feel free to reach out to either of us thank you carla and then yes let's welcome our new SEAC member, Marsha Kelly. And I'm just going to put you on the spot real fast, Marsha. And you can just give a quick little introduction. Hi, I'm Marsha Kelly. Tedra and Paige, hi. I was going to introduce myself to you guys earlier. I have two kids. Okay. I have

[01:57:34] nothing on. I know, right? Can I just turn it off? Well, I'll just talk really loud. Can you guys hear me? come on come on wow is this hazing this is this is our version of you I can stand at the podium no I really don't want to um I have two kids um you've already come this far I have two kids uh that are uh have IEPs um I've been at this for a couple years now

[01:58:10] like eight and a half um and I don't know I just joined I wanted to become a member to help advocate for all the kids and all of the people that we work with, the communities that we are a part of. And I just, I love the work that you guys have been doing. I've secretly sat in the back, you know, for a long time, many years now, and I just thought it was time to stand up front with Liz, I guess. So, thank you. Thank you, Marcia. Care you from becoming a member will be nice.

[01:58:49] All right, real fast. I'll try and keep it short because I know it's getting late. Our advocacy initiatives are coming up, and Tedra already hinted at them very nicely. So we've got that Board of Supervisors School Board Joint Meeting coming up on November 18th.

[01:59:08] That's a Monday at 4 p.m. It is not here. It is at the Loudoun County Government Center in Leesburg. So please show up for that. We would really appreciate having as many people from our community there as possible.

[01:59:24] it's perfectly timed to talk about transition. It's literally on the agenda, so if we could get a bunch of people there talking about it, even if you have a six-year-old, even if you already have a kid who's gone through, like, it would just be so helpful to get as many voices there and perspectives as possible.

[01:59:41] And then we have the Capital Improvement Program School Board meeting on Tuesday, November 12th, and also November 19th. both are at 6:30 p.m. those are here you can sign up for public comment by just going to the website and it's in the it's in that letter that we have posted on our SEAC website and that I emailed out to you but we will we will refresh your email box with another one so that you can get signed up for all of those things and again we would really I mean you heard from our our public commenters

[02:00:18] today like how important these playgrounds are we know how important the transition center is these things are not going to just happen I think then the capital budget they basically had double the amount planned in there as what they got last year so there are going to be a lot of things cut we want to make sure sure that those aren't our things and that if we can boost the playground funding because three per year it's it's not going to get us where we want it's not going to have a big enough impact

[02:00:56] for our kids who so badly need those playgrounds right now so we really appreciate you coming out and this is the work we're here to do right like I know it's it's tough to make the time to do it but you know this is this is why we're here at SEAC is to actually make a difference and I know that that's what all of us at the end of the day really want to do so if you could please do that if you go on to Facebook hopefully you're already following SEAC on Facebook but if you're not please do

[02:01:29] we've created events for those three advocacy options just select that you are going to them and then that your social media network will then see that you are going and maybe ask you about it and you can try and recruit some other people to go you can share those events on your Facebook page please engage with your neighbors your friends your school community everyone because you know there's nothing better than going to give public comment than having your buddies there with you for a little extra support and bravery and get them

[02:02:06] to do a public comment, too, supporting you and your family. You can help them sign up for public comment. If you need help signing up for public comment, reach out to any of us. We will help you find exactly where you need to go.

[02:02:23] We sent out some template emails that you can use to email your school board reps or the board of supervisors. You do not have to use them. I would encourage you to personalize them. Put in the things that you feel like are relevant to you, that are important to you.

[02:02:41] We can't create an email that is perfect for every person. So please, this is just to give you a few little snippets that perhaps are helpful, perhaps are not. Feel free to completely disregard and do your own thing.

[02:02:56] But for those who need that little starter prompt, that's what these are for. yes the budget is coming up so we need to get moving on that so either email me come to a subcommittee meeting please share your thoughts what you're seeing in your schools what UCS needs and then our annual report will be presented at our December meeting and we're thinking we're gonna bring cookies so it's that time of year and I will be giving our quarterly presentation to the school

[02:03:33] board on November 12th which is next week so that is exciting so feel free to come to the school board meeting and give public comments and and also watch me at the work section which is at 4:30 p.m. so you have nothing better to do I would love to see your faces out there all right new business we need to admit our virtual attendees do I have a motion for that and a second Erin

[02:04:03] seconded excellent all in favor any opposed any abstentions all right Beth Carlson and Kelly Ralston you are admitted to the meeting I sent out our minutes from October are there any changes hearing none those will be

[02:04:30] approved. Now we need to do our roll call for quorum. Beth Carlson. Here. Liz Crotty. Here. Jennifer DiDonato. Kathy Fuligati Lambert. Marsha Kelly. Tom Ketchum. Shanaz Khan.

[02:05:00] Razina Katak. Laura Colossi. Alicia McFadden. Craig Metz. Stephen Meyer. Catherine Moran. Sarah Plattenberg. Kelly Ralston. Kelly are you here? Erin Roselle Poe. Catherine

[02:05:33] Rosenbrook, Carla Sola here, Sharon Trope, Melissa Waugh, Sakina Zarbouche. All right, great. So we have met our quorum and we can move on to our policy review. So, oh, Jen, maybe. Yeah, so with

[02:06:07] those meetings, I believe it is just you go ahead of the meeting and you sign up. I'm going to double check and confirm that there isn't a link. It's a little different than, yeah, there was like phone number if you need special accommodations and i did call because i've done public comment one time at the board of supervisors and i did call and they acted like it was kind of weird that i was calling um most people seem to just show up ahead of the meeting put their name on a list so i think either will work but we'll be sure to send out that phone number if you want

[02:06:43] to have a similar experience okay all right melissa and craig i'll let you guys do this Thank you, Liz. First of all, I just want to remind everybody that our next policy and compliance subcommittee meeting is Tuesday, November 19th at 630.

[02:07:06] And I'm sure you'll get something in your email about it to remind you. But as Liz said, budget's coming up, and that is on our agenda to talk about. So if you want to talk about budget things, please come to the policy and compliance subcommittee meeting. Hopefully, we're also going to get some updates on some of the previous policies that we've made recommendations to.

[02:07:23] So that's always nice to hear what happens. after all this happens all right um so that's that and then oh good uh right so up here on the screen is the qr code if you want to try to um while we do the no

recommendation policies if you want to pull up some of the other policies to look at as we're reviewing them that's great i'll give you some time to do that while we handle first of all the three policies that the policy and compliance subcommittee recommends no recommendations or comments. It's policy 4320,

[02:07:57] methods of procurement, policy 4180, sponsorships and partnerships, and policy 5130, textbook adoption. So is there a motion from the floor to adopt the subcommittee's recommendation that we make no recommendations? Thank you, Tom. And thank you, Jen. And is there any discussion from the floor. I'll repeat the motion. It was to adopt the policy and compliance subcommittee's

[02:08:36] recommendation that there be no recommendations to policy 4320, 4180, and 5130. Is there any discussion from the floor? Okay. Seeing no hands for discussion, then we will go ahead and vote to approve the recommendation that there be no recommendations to those three policies. All in favor say aye aye uh any opposed any abstentions okay and beth what is your vote aye and kelly what

[02:09:15] is your vote aye so that passes unanimously all right now we're going to move on to policy 6120 which is the wellness policy this is basically a policy about um healthy eating physical activity and social and emotional well-being and this is a summary of our recommendations but I'll give you a little bit more background so the first thing is that we consider known student allergies and

[02:09:44] sensitivities when staff are planning meals and so let's see and what we're asking is that oh here we go sorry I had it on the wrong page my apologies so what we're asked is that we add the phrase and known food allergies and sensitivities so that the sentence in the policy would now read qualified child nutrition professionals shall provide students with access to a variety of affordable nutritious and appealing foods that meet the health and nutrition needs of students and will

[02:10:19] make efforts to accommodate the cultural diversity and here's our new part and known food allergies or sensitivities of the student body in meal planning the second concern had to do with educational materials that are produced by our wellness staff, and SEAC believes it's important to include instruction regarding food allergies and sensitivities, diabetes management through insulin monitoring, and other food-related medical conditions in those educational materials that they provide on health and wellness.

[02:10:55] And so what we're suggesting is to add to the policy the phrase medically aware, so that the policy would now read that they provide grade level appropriate medically aware and culturally responsive education materials all right the third one is about in the policy it talks about how the division and nutrition services shall share information about nutritional content of meals and so what we're suggesting is they also add with nutritional content uh the ingredients listing the ingredients in the meals um so that those families of students with

[02:11:33] allergies um can make informed decisions about um food choices and so that provision would now read for school meals the division of school nutrition services shall share information about the nutritional content and the ingredients of meals with parents and students via the school nutrition website cafeteria menu menu boards and point of purchase signage the next issue this is regarding a provision related to fundraisers in school that involve the sale of food and or beverages

[02:12:05] and it had been proposed that a provision be added to this that limits any fundraiser that sells food or beverages that they could not be conducted during school meal service times which includes 6 a.m. to the end of breakfast period and from the beginning of the first lunch period to the end of the last

lunch period which at first sounds innocuous enough the problem is that as you many of you may be aware we do a lot of community-based instruction in our schools and workplace readiness skill programming in our schools that involves things like little cafes

[02:12:40] and coffee shops and snack carts and things like that and these are mission critical opportunities particularly for our students with disabilities, to develop workplace readiness skills. And so we just want to make sure that inadvertently we aren't impacting in a negative way these items.

[02:13:01] And so what we are recommending is either to delete that provision that had been proposed completely or to add a sentence at the end of that that this requirement will not apply to community-based instruction activities or workplace readiness activities or instruction, just to make sure that those really important opportunities for our students are not impacted.

[02:13:26] And that's it for wellness. Do you want to have anything? Let's do one at a time because I get long. Okay, so we're going to do these three policies one at a time because they get a little long and I don't want people to get lost.

[02:13:42] So can I hear a motion from the floor to adopt the recommendations by the Policy and Compliance Subcommittee on Policy 6120 Wellness? So we've got that down here and a second. Thank you. Any discussion about the wellness policy from the floor?

[02:14:03] Yes. Right. Purpose of our schools is to teach our children. And part of that teaching instruction is that work-based, experience-based instruction.

[02:14:21] So I want to make sure that when we're reviewing these policies, and I just wanted to say it again because I feel very strongly about this, that since that is the core mission of our school any policy that inadvertently would thwart those activities those changes should not be made and Ms. LaBelle is so happy that you're here here or today to like you here are at every one of our meetings to hear that and echo that to the school board if this does make that there thank you thank you anything else if there's no more discussion then all those in favor of adopting these

[02:14:56] recommendation, say aye. Aye. Any opposed? Any abstentions? Beth? Aye. Kelly? Aye. Great. And so that motion passes unanimously. All right, moving on. Policy 6320, playgrounds, which you guys have heard a lot about today already, but this policy is up for review. This particular policy is addressing playground, general standards for playground design and construction, maintenance, equipment use, approval processes, and funding. And so, uh, the first concern that we have is

[02:15:36] regarding, um, uh, not limiting building inclusive playgrounds to only high school, preschool playgrounds. Um, I, I just, the way the policy is drafted, I think it kind of reflects a lack of knowledge or understanding about, um, how our, uh, our, our schools are operating because roughly two-thirds of our elementary schools have preschool programs so limiting this to just high school preschool playgrounds doesn't make any sense so we are requesting that the line in the

[02:16:12] policy that says that it's limited to high school based preschool programs that that just be deleted outright and the way that's worded is it says playground equipment constructed at lcps facilities should be designed to create a cognitively and physically stimulating recreational space appropriate for elementary age students or preschool students in the case of those constructed as part of a high school-based preschool program.

[02:16:39] So we're just requesting they delete as part of a high school-based preschool program. All right, concern number two, we want the word roots deleted from the policy. SEAC has long expressed concern that merely providing accessible routes to playgrounds does not actually make the playground accessible.

[02:17:01] It just makes it more enticing to the disabled student who can't get to it or get on it to play. For example, playgrounds surrounded by mulch are not accessible to students in wheelchairs, as we heard in our public comment tonight. Thank you. So what we are recommending is that the word routes is deleted after the word accessible, So that the policy would now read, LCPS playgrounds will be compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.

[02:17:28] Additionally, efforts shall be made to install accessible, not routes, but accessible and inclusive playground equipment within each LCPS planning district such that children of different abilities can play together. Also related to that portion of the policy, we were concerned that the, well, let me read what it says.

[02:17:49] So there was a new sentence added, which is good, that says, all additions or replacement projects for full playgrounds undertaken with LCPS managed funding will be inclusive playgrounds. Yay, that's great language. The problem or concern we have is nowhere in this policy is inclusive playground defined.

[02:18:09] So we thought that was pretty important. So we have proposed that we add, after that great sentence, this sentence that says, Inclusive playgrounds include essential features that make them welcoming, safe, and enriching spaces for all children, such as accessible play equipment, safety servicing, a variety of sensory experiences, adaptive swings and seating, multi-level play structures, quiet and calming spaces, signage, and visual communication, inclusive swings and roundabouts, shade and seating, wide pathways, and a clear layout.

[02:18:42] All right, concern number four, we were concerned that the provision in here for inspecting our playgrounds, the term used is routinely. It says playgrounds and playground equipment shall be properly maintained and routinely inspected for compliance.

[02:19:01] We were just concerned about how often routinely might be and would like to propose the word routinely be substituted with annually, so that at least once a year that these playgrounds are being inspected for safety. and maintenance purposes and then related to that um page 123 uh this is in the section about the approval process and funding and about um replacement of entire playgrounds or specific equipment should be done at the discretion of the department of support services to enhance safety efficiency effectiveness and or fulfillment of this policy um the problem is again there's no

[02:19:37] definition of how often this review is happening and so we felt like that really should be spelled out in policy so we're recommending that we add to this provision playgrounds and equipment should be reviewed for replacement at least every 10 years all right so those are our recommendations for the playground policy and um liz i had mentioned to me as well all of these were discussed also in our subcommittee um that has been in the work session related to playgrounds as well okay so do i hear a motion to accept the recommendations from the policy compliance subcommittee moved seconded okay and do we have any discussion from the floor

[02:20:17] about the playground policy I want to add something I think why these playgrounds are so important not just for the special ed children but for the children who need to understand and be able to

interact and play with those children and it creates a sense of empathy which a lot of kids don't have because they're hooked on you know screen time all the time so these things

[02:20:57] are just really important for everybody thank you any other discussion yes any other discussion from the floor okay hearing none all those in favor of adopting the recommendation say aye those opposed any abstentions Beth aye Kelly aye all right and the motion passes unanimously just one more guys thanks for hanging in there okay our last one is policy 8230 procedures for student disciplinary appeals to the school board and just to kind of help

[02:21:36] people put this into where does this policy fit into the disciplinary process so basically this policy only applies for long-term suspensions short-term suspensions would go you know either the eight assistant principal or the principal would make those recommendations they could then be appealed to the office of school administration sorry and then that's where it stops long-term suspensions there would be a disciplinary hearing at that level from osa but then they that decision the parent could appeal

[02:22:12] and that's where this policy comes in and they can appeal that to a committee of three members of the school board and it's the sbac committee all right um so that's what this is about oh go ahead did you have some these are like the really big deal disciplinary infractions and many of these there's a state mandate that so we're talking the weapons the drugs these sorts of things this is very much not the everyday behavior situations nonetheless there's a discipline you

[02:22:46] know disability aspect involved in this absolutely okay so the first concern that SIEC had was that whoops let me scooch down the timing of notification and we were right now the way the policy is drafted parents receive notice the time and place of the hearings by mail after the hearing has been scheduled and what the feedback we've gotten for years now from the field is that it's not enough time. And sometimes this letter, it's only sent by mail, and it arrives the day of, or the day

[02:23:19] before, or the day after the hearing is actually scheduled. And so the mail just isn't a sufficient, we think, means of providing notification. And so we feel like simultaneously it should also be emailed. And also there was no timing of that either. So that's, we feel like there needs to be a time so what we are suggesting is in the provision for notice of hearing by the sbac the three member school board committee um the superintendent or designee will provide to the party making the appeal and we are adding at least five business days before the hearing

[02:23:56] is to take place by email and by certified mail and then also that the written notice will be will include written notice of the date the policy does not include the date it just says written notice a time and place i would like to think people would use common sense and include the date but i think let's just make that super clear in the policy that it's they get notice of the date time and place for the hearing go ahead i make a potential friendly amendment from the dais should telephone be part of that too um you know if we're trying to and for for others like even

[02:24:35] for shorts from suspensions it's common that they try to give you all three phone email and a letter home why wouldn't we say like all reasonable methods of communication what do folks think yeah it would be like voicemail let's talk about it during discussion okay yeah and then we can vote to amend okay so that's that concern thank you and then concern number two because um we're the concern is because written witness statements may be received in lieu of personal testimony we're concerned that some of the prior language in the policy would be inconsistent with that

[02:25:13] So what we are recommending is that for the provision related to documentary evidence which currently says any documentary evidence not referenced or included as part of the appeal packet, which is what the principals would send up to the committee, we want to add or documentation or evidence provided to the SBAC prior to or at the beginning of the hearing may be offered during the hearing at the discretion of the chair.

[02:25:42] so we just want to make sure that we're clarifying that and then concern three uh whoops sorry okay right and concern three is also in that same provision and for this one uh SIAC was concerned that the party making the appeal um as notice of the procedures for how the hearing will be conducted SIAC was concerned that it would be unclear to the parties who are not attorneys who would be doing the cross-examining of the party or witness and so this is just kind of a little technicality but

[02:26:19] they just originally said any party or witness who provides testimony may be cross-examined, and so we were just suggesting we add the phrase by the other party. All right, concern four. SEAC's concerned that as written, the policy will not give parties a chance to fully present their case to the SBAC. Our committee did a lot of research, as we typically do, of similar policies in other school districts. We found language we really liked in Fairfax counties similar policy and that's in the policy packet the citation to that but they allow parties to submit a written statement of facts to the hearing committee prior to or at the beginning

[02:26:58] of the hearing and so we felt like our LCPS parents should have that same opportunity so we are suggesting or recommending that the provision for written statements that I referred to just a minute ago but that that be substituted with the following language the parties may submit to SBAC prior to or at the beginning of the hearing a written statement of facts additional evidence and or written witness statements in lieu of personal testimony then concern number five this is also in this provision about allowing written statements but also explanation for

[02:27:38] previous sanctions. So concern five, we just felt like the way this was drafted was just patently unfair to students. Basically the way this is written, it says that the school can present to the committee the students' attendance, academic performance, and the fact of and reasons for any past disciplinary action. They can present that to the SBAC. However, the facts and findings surrounding past disciplinary sanctions will not be the subject of inquiry at the hearing.

[02:28:16] So in other words, the school gets to tell the SBAC committee about all the bad things that they previously, you know, put the kid on the hook for, but the kid gets no opportunity to put it into context or to explain or anything else. And we just felt like that was patently unfair.

[02:28:35] What about? For example, if a subsequent manifestation determination hearing determined that it was lcps in the wrong that can't be presented right right so there's just no again putting it into context right there's just no opportunity um to allow the student to get so our recommendation is just to delete um that provision that says however the facts and findings surrounding any past disciplinary sanction will not be a subject to inquiry at the hearing um we're not saying don't present it it's clearly relevant or it could be clearly relevant we're

[02:29:10] just saying give the student a chance for their parent or representative to put that into context or provide you know information about an mdr hearing result okay concern number six um all right for concern number six um siac was concerned oh okay that this this is just a technicality that they were just we were just concerned the way it was drafted was confusing and so we just are suggesting to substitute

not any substantive change but just the language after the presentation of evidence by all parties including testimony cross-examination and documents and summations

[02:29:49] by the parties s back will deliberate um concern number seven uh this is a provision in here where it says um only the school board's attorney may remain present during deliberations okay that's the language currently in the policy uh we were just concerned because it almost sounds like the school board attorney is participating in the deliberations, and that probably is not the intent, but we feel like that's, um, it could be interpreted that way, and that would be highly inappropriate. Um, the school board's attorney, attorney's role should solely be to answer legal

[02:30:28] questions that SBAC members may have. The school board attorney should not be acting as a member of the committee and participate in the decision-making process. So what we suggest is that after the word deliberations add solely to answer legal questions period the school board's attorney will not otherwise participate in the deliberations just to make that that clear um concern number eight uh and so and this is a biggie um we don't have any provision in here for there to be a continuance of the hearing for good cause such as parent gets hit by a bus and is in the hospital

[02:31:06] and can't make it. I mean, stuff happens, right? Life happens, and there is absolutely no provision for a continuance in our policy. Again, in our research, we really liked the language in Prince William County's policy, and we cite it in our policy packet, but that with the approval and within the discretion of SBAC, that such an opportunity for a continuance of the hearing date for good caution be allowed. So what we're proposing is to add the phrase, however, at least one day prior to the hearing date, the party requesting the hearing may request a continuance

[02:31:40] of the hearing date at the discretion of SBAC and with good caution. Concern nine, SEAC was concerned that without notification by both email and regular mail, families may miss a relevant appeal deadline. So this is after this decision by the three-member panel or committee. If it is not a unanimous decision, there is an opportunity to appeal that to the full school board. All right, so it's in the notice of that that we're asking that that notice be provided in writing via email and certified mail although we may in discussion talk about telephone and concern 10 the um we are

[02:32:20] concerned that notification of sbac's decision does not include notification of the right of the party making the appeal to appeal a non-unanimous decision to the s back of s back to the full school board within five business days of receiving written notice of the decision it's pretty important information it's probably an oversight but that absolutely should be part of the notice that's being provided so what we propose adding to the policy is notification of the right of the party to appeal a non-unanimous decision of SBAC within five business days of receiving notice of the decision that's it okay so do I hear a motion to adopt the

[02:32:58] 10 recommendations of the policy and compliance subcommittee thank you Jen is there a second is tom okay and so uh at this point we're going to open it up for discussion so i'm going to turn it back over to craig like to make a motion to amend the notification recommendations to add telephone notification telephone or voicemail okay is there any discussion second oh we need a second do we have a second discussion all right is there any discussion about making this amendment from

[02:33:33] the floor does anyone feel strongly one way or the other about adding telephone notice no it's Discussion. Yeah. Is there any discussion? Nope. Okay. Um, so we'll move on to a vote. So all those in favor of amending our recommendations to add telephone notification to the list or voicemail, would voicemail

not be included in telephone? We've had this come up in discussions of other policies where they said, well, what if we can't reach the parent? And so we're trying to kind of

[02:34:07] make that a little bit easier for LCPS aside. If, if they call and leave a voicemail. Yeah. Yeah. because uh it has in the past been expressed as a concern by the staff what if we call and we can't reach you does that count and we do want to make sure that the goal is basically we're using all available communications methods any other discussion all right all those in favor of

[02:34:39] adopting the amendment from the floor say aye aye those opposed any abstentions beth aye kelly aye all right and so the uh amendment from the floor to add telephone communication to include voicemail to our recommendations is adopted unanimously. Okay. Oh, got it. Thank you. Yes.

[02:35:09] All right. Uh, so, uh, now we go back to the base motion to adopt the recommendations of the policy and compliance subcommittee for policy 8230 as amended from the floor. Do I hear a motion? It's already moved. It's already moved. Is there any discussion? Okay. All those in favor say aye.

[02:35:30] I opposed any abstentions Beth I Kelly I okay and motion carries unanimously now I think we're done thank you everybody thank you all right and I'm going to make the decision that we are going to skip our subcommittee reports this evening since it is so late we will be sure to send out an email to everybody

[02:36:02] um with all of the upcoming meetings and um little snippets of information so um oh the one thing i just wanted to mention really quickly because it's coming up on november 11th at 9 45 a.m we're going to have our first um SEAC awards planning meeting um just to kind of like go through paperwork and get things rolled forward and updated for the next school the next um season of awards planning so if you would like to join us for that we would love to have you um we are going to be meeting tonight at Clyde's after this business meeting and we will also send out our SEAC

[02:36:38] representative reports and I think a couple of them are tomorrow so might as well give it a day so we actually have some good information so come join us again on December 4th and get your SEAC annual report and cookies and hope you all have a great month and we'll look forward to seeing you then thanks



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