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

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Place	Loudoun County Public Schools / School Board meeting (see BoardDocs / LCPS-TV)
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Speech-to-text: whisper.cpp, model large-v3-turbo. Produced 2026-10-21. Each paragraph starts with its time [HH:MM:SS] in the meeting video.

[00:00:02] Good evening. The equity committee for the Loudoun County Public Schools will come to order. And while we wait and make sure that we have a quorum to vote on the minutes, we're going to sort of take a sort of sidebar here and rearrange the agenda.

[00:00:32] So on your agenda, if you would notice, and I assume yours is like mine, on the second page, I'm sorry, on the third page, We're going to go to the third page, and we're going to start with our own Delegate David Reed.

[00:01:01] In 1972, Delegate David Reed's family moved from a modest home in Rockbridge County, Virginia, to the United Methodist Children's Home in Richmond, Virginia, where he and his three siblings lived for six years before moving with foster parents.

[00:01:25] In 1988, motivated to give back, he joined the U.S. Navy Reserve, serving as a naval intelligence officer for 23 years before retiring as a commander in 2011. He later founded Rock Bridge Consulting and has been active in his community, coaching soccer and volunteering at a local food pantry.

[00:02:05] Delegate Reed and his wife, Barbara, have two daughters who received a strong education in Loudoun County Public Schools. Now, let me share with you the reason we have Delegate Reed with us this

evening. Statewide, from the Virginia School Board Association, they have designated November as Bring Your Legislator to School Month.

[00:02:34] We were going to bring him to a first-grade class, but we changed our mind. So we decided to invite him here tonight to share with you some of his experiences as it relates to equity. will you receive Delegate David Reed yes all right thank you very much everybody and thank you Dr. Linda Deans it's really great to be here and for those of you who don't know me I am Delegate David Reed and I represent this area in the Virginia General Assembly and have for the last

[00:03:13] seven years I'll be coming up on my eighth session here when we go into session in January and it's really very interesting because one of the things that I so enjoy is this November take your legislator to school year I can tell you that as to school month I will tell you though that in these seven years that I've been doing this now this is the first time that I've ever had a school board member like take the legislator to school but I will also tell you that I think it's like next Tuesday or Wednesday I'm going to Stonebridge Briarwoods Broad Run all in the same day all separated by about 30 minutes apiece for each one of those things and it's a

[00:03:50] great way to do it one of the things that I like to share especially when we're talking about equity is I want to talk about another E word and that's empathy. One of the things that I like to share because I think a lot of what informs us with what we're doing with equity is having a little bit of empathy and as you heard Dr. Deans talk about the fact that I grew up very poor and she described the house that I was living in in Rockbridge County as being a modest home. It was far from modest. It was a four-room cinder block house with no indoor plumbing

[00:04:21] And so it was much, I mean, my half uncle who lived on the other side of the gravel road actually lived in a single wide trailer and they had indoor plumbing, so we thought they were living large. And it's really important to understand kind of where we come from because when you have a little bit of empathy, you have a little bit of understanding of how other people live and how they grew up, then that's what informs our discussions about equity.

[00:04:45] Because what we're trying to do here is we're not trying to do anything that is any way going to break the free market system that we have here in the United States and that actually provides an incentive for people to be able to do things and to be able to achieve. It's just to be able to provide an opportunity for everybody to have an equal and equitable start.

[00:05:05] And I want to share with you briefly because I have to leave from here to go to the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission meeting. but what I want to share with you is that there was a study a couple years ago that said the separation between the haves and the have-nots begins as early as pre-K. That's the difference between what a four-year-old who is in an environment, a great learning environment like this that may have access to pre-K or kindergarten, and the opposite effect of someone who is going and spending time with their relative and watching TV all day long. Those very young impressionable

[00:05:40] minds are at the time when they are forming that cognitive ability to be able to then be able to do well in elementary school, to be able to do well in middle school and high school, and then in college. And part of what we're trying to do here, what we're trying to achieve, and I will tell you that when I talk to my Republican friends and colleagues, they are oftentimes so hyper-focused on if we can get people into good quality jobs, then that will mean that everything else will kind of take care of itself providing health

care providing other educational opportunities but how do we actually get people into those good quality jobs is part of what your responsibility

[00:06:20] is from a Loudoun County public school system and also what your responsibility is from an equity standpoint of view because everybody does not begin at the same point I would like to think that because of things that gave me the opportunity to succeed because my family has lived in Virginia since the 1790s, and I am the first person to get a college degree. And I would like to think that Pell Grants and college work study and help that I got along the way from other people have allowed me to be able to be here today and be able to speak about this and have spent 35 years in the

[00:06:55] Northern Virginia business community contributing to the economic well-being and the tax base of the Commonwealth of Virginia. And so that's what we're trying to achieve. What might have happened for me by accident we want to be able to find a way to do that with deliberate intent so that everybody can have a chance to achieve everybody can have a chance to be the fullest person that they can be and everybody can have a chance to be able to contribute to the community and so that's the reason why i think that so much of what you do is so very important because again it starts here with the foundation of public school and then we'll carry through to college and then later in

[00:07:34] workforce development. So again, thank you very much for giving me the time to be here. Thank you all for everything that you're doing. I'm not going to take up any more time because like I said, I have to go and do the other part of my job, which is the Northern Virginia Transportation

[00:07:47] Commission. So again, thank you everyone.

[00:08:15] We are going to need two more people for a quorum. So we will move forward with our presentations before we do the minutes. In my day-to-day as a school board person as a school board member I am often asked by parents questions that I don't know the answer to. Now David Reed might know the answer because his students his children went

[00:08:49] through Loudoun County Public Schools and some of you may have children in Loudoun County Public Schools but some of those student questions that they ask me I don't know the answer to. Of course I could go on the website and I can search and find the answer, right? Okay. But we have someone who can intervene and help us with those answers. And I have referred parent after parent after parent after parent because I am, what, new to Loudoun County? I learned as much as I can learn

[00:09:27] From January to July, I went to every subcommittee meeting, every meeting that the system had. I even tried to get into some of the teachers' meetings because they have food. But anyway, I was trying to get into all the meetings so I could learn as much as I could.

[00:09:47] As a result, I still don't know everything. So we have with us this evening a person who either knows or has access to everything. And her name is Ms. Carrie Williams.

[00:10:06] Carrie Williams has over 20 years of experience as an educator in Northern Virginia, starting her career as a certified athletic trainer and health and physical education teacher in Prince William County Public Schools.

[00:10:23] She transitioned into administrative roles in Fairfax County, focusing on connecting students and families to academic and social-emotional supports. As the Coordinator for Equity and Student Conduct, she oversaw discipline data and implemented restorative practices.

[00:10:50] Recently, Ms. Williams has served as a Title IX investigator in the Equity and Student Relations Department in Prince William County. She is now our alms-buzzman here in Lawton County Public Schools.

[00:11:11] And she, every parent that I've sent to her, for those that I followed up with and said, okay, did you find out what you needed? They all said yes. And, of course, she did a presentation to the school board recently, and she gave us the percentages of success in closed cases.

[00:11:33] So I just want to share with you that this person may be a person that you can refer parents to rather than let the parents go without answers. So may I present to you Mrs. Carrie Williams.

[00:11:56] All right. Well, thank you, everyone, for having me here this evening to speak with you. This is my third year, going into my third year, and the role of the ombuds in Naughton County Public Schools.

[00:12:13] And I opened the office in August of 2022. And so I'm going to share first a bit about my role in the office and how I interact and the procedures I follow. And then I'll follow up with some highlights from my data. I do an annual report each year.

[00:12:29] I share that with the board, and that's per my policy. And I will highlight some of that data for you just so that you can see the growth and the type of interactions that I've had during this time. So I always like to ground my work in our strategic plan and the goals of Loudoun County Public Schools.

[00:12:50] And while I think I support all of our core values and all of our strategic goals, I think I land most squarely in goal four with the engaged community and providing an opportunity because I do serve students, families, employees, and community members to engage with Loudoun County Public Schools as a pathway or an entry into the system, especially being a large organization.

[00:13:16] Oftentimes, people don't know where to start, and I can be a great resource for that initial conversation to help guide people and help them navigate our system. I think I definitely build trust through listening. One of the main roles is for me to have time and space to listen to our constituents to make sure that their issues or concerns or their questions are heard and they are responded to, if there's a policy or a pathway or a procedure or an appeal process and people have questions and don't know how to navigate that, I can be there as a support for them.

[00:13:52] And then ultimately, I take my high-level data and I can elevate that to the chief of staff and to the superintendent to make sure we're looking for trends and themes so that we can continually improve as a system.

[00:14:07] So the ombuds role was developed in the early 1800s, and I would love to see a show of hands. In other areas of your life, how many of you have encountered or had an opportunity to engage with an ombudsperson, government, military, college setting, great.

[00:14:24] So I think that it's more and more popular in various settings. Each state is required to have an elder care ombudsperson on staff at the state level. Often it actually came to the United States from Europe and the first entity within the United States to have an ombudsperson was in Montana and one of the universities and so it really is in the collegiate setting but in the k-12 public school setting there are only about 40 ombuds offices across the United States so I'm happy to be in a system and I'm happy to be in Northern

[00:15:00] Virginia where I'm surrounded by other colleagues because my friend in Iowa she She is the only person in Iowa, and Iowa City Public Schools only ombudsperson in the whole state. But in Northern Virginia, D.C., Maryland, we have many ombuds colleagues to lean on.

[00:15:19] We all operate under the International Ombuds Association core values and standards of practice. And so those four core values on the screen, as you will see, are confidentiality. So unless it is pertaining to a mandatory Title IX report, a CPS report, because I'm also a mandated reporter, or potentially if I feel there's a risk of imminent harm to self or others, those are the three areas where I would breach confidentiality.

[00:15:47] Otherwise, parents, employees, students, and community members can reach out to me and I will not share anything beyond our conversation unless I have their express permission to do so. impartial and neutral and I can do that through my independence within the system and I know oftentimes people raise an eyebrow and they say how can you be independent if you work for the school system I am independent in the sense that I do not have any other roles or responsibilities that I am responsible for so that I can remain neutral and impartial when working with visitors who come into my office I do report to the chief of staff in the

[00:16:26] superintendent's office they supervise me they do my evaluation I have my money has to sit somewhere so I sit under that umbrella but otherwise they do not micromanage they do not ask for specifics or updates other than what I am able to share with them based upon my high-level data that I'm gathering and I am informal so by reaching out to me by working with me it is not part of any formal process it is not a requirement so I always You know, make sure that visitors, employees, as well as families understand there's not a requirement to work with me.

[00:17:02] I am just an option. I am a resource. I like to think of myself as a navigational beacon. So if you think about LCPS being a large system, many roads and pathways that lead to multiple options can be confusing. There can be traffic. There can be detours.

[00:17:18] And I can help you navigate the big pieces of our system. So there are things that I can do. I can listen to concerns. I usually spend I would say on average 45 to 90 minutes with individual visitors on the first conversation.

[00:17:37] That may lead to three or four follow-up meetings that I might have on their behalf or to ask questions or to gather information and report that back. I might then have three or four additional meetings with the visitor. So that varies and sometimes it might be a quick question.

[00:17:54] How do I get my transcript? And then I can easily answer that and provide them the link and the direct access or information to those resources. I know with our website redesign, sometimes things have shifted or moved. Sometimes I need to take a moment, find the information, and then I'll always follow back with the individual.

[00:18:13] We talk about different options. So I listen to the concerns. We talk about what options have you considered, what options I might be aware of that you're not aware of, and offer those for consideration. We look for underlying issues and interests. Sometimes somebody comes in with a concern, but as we're talking, the underlying issue or unresolved concern emerges, and we are able to talk about that as well, because there might be another pathway to explore to help resolve that issue.

[00:18:44] I do offer a lot of information, resources, referrals to other offices, maybe a direct connection with a supervisor or a director who oversees the area where the concern is kind of pinpointed. And I go over policy pathways and help people navigate their policies and pathways and make sure they understand their rights within those policies as well as any additional maybe appeal options depending on where they are in that process. I really try to empower people who speak with me to advocate for themselves. So oftentimes people hear about my job and they say, oh,

[00:19:21] you're an advocate. I'm not an advocate for any particular party. I'm an advocate for fair and equitable resolutions and access and making sure people understand what options exist for them. So while I might elevate a concern on their behalf, it's not doing so in advocacy for that individual. It might just be the option that they have chosen because of whatever reason they maybe are not wanting to bring that forward on their own or I might make that direct connection for that individual have a pre-meeting before the meeting so that whomever the visitors meeting with has a better understanding of the concern because the meeting might only have 30 or 45 minutes but I've spent maybe an

[00:20:00] hour or two kind of digging into and understanding the problem I do facilitate conversations and this is more so in the employee realm I am the staff um delegate or person responsible for staff conflict within the division so i get referrals from supervisors principals to do conflict resolution restorative practices informal mediation with our our staff members who may be in conflict and then i i do identify those trends and themes that i see within my data to the superintendent's office to the chief of staff to the board through

[00:20:37] my annual report, and I elevate concerns and trends as I see them. So while I do do an annual report, I don't wait until the end of the year to say, "Hey, this is a problem," or, "Hey, I'm seeing this trend and theme." I elevate those as they emerge.

[00:20:53] So I do not take sides, as I said, I do not enter a conversation as an advocate for any particular person. I do not serve as the legal recipient of notice for the division. Oftentimes people will say, "I want to put the division on notice," and I will say, "I I can absolutely help you make sure that that is directed towards the appropriate office."

[00:21:15] I do not conduct investigations. I do not overturn decisions that have been made, and I do not overrule or overturn any disciplinary proceedings. And while I don't make set or change LCPS policy, I do get asked for input during the policy review process because if I've heard often about something maybe unclear or it would be nice to clarify this, then I can provide that input throughout the policy review process.

[00:21:44] And I do not maintain records, provide legal advice or participate in litigation. Under the Virginia Records Act, I'm able to shred my documentation at the end of each month after it is no longer administratively useful. So usually at the end of a month, if I know that case is closed out and I no longer need my notes, I'm able to shred those per policy.

[00:22:08] So before I move on to some data, I just wanted to see if anybody had any questions about my role. So Helen, in their information, do they have my form?

[00:22:30] So in the information that you received, you should have a one-page flyer, I believe. And then on the bottom is my direct line. I am an office of one with additional help hourly. But I am the one who will answer that phone directly, listen to that message if it is received.

[00:22:46] And then on my website, that has a direct Let's Talk form to reach out to me to set up an appointment. And I also, it's ombuds at lcps.org. Any other general questions before we dig into some data?

[00:23:04] All right, there'll be plenty of time at the end as well. So year one, I had 207 contacts. I arrived August 22nd, so there was a lot of, what does the word ombuds mean?

[00:23:20] Who is an ombuds? What is an ombuds? And I also had to do my training as well as establish the office, work on my marketing and outreach materials. And so then as the word started to spread, first year I saw 207 cases. And I, every single week, if you ask me, are you hearing more from families or employees, every single week it was 50-50.

[00:23:42] For every employee I heard from, I heard from a family and vice versa. So you can see up on the screen that last year with 369 increases, so I had, I believe it was a 78% increase between year one and year two, I had a significant increase in my employee concerns that were coming in.

[00:24:00] And I believe that's due to word of mouth, direct referrals, administrators referring staff to me as well. I continue to hear from families often, but I think because I am that staff conflict contact within the division I've been getting more more referrals in the employee realm as well so that's why I continue every year to come to to special advisory committee to equity to MSAC to make sure that our family and constituents know about my office and also have access. Students I've heard from a few more students and that's through the lens that some of our journalism students have

[00:24:39] questions about the division policies processes and their journalism teachers will refer them to me so I can put them into contact with the right individuals in the division as they're writing stories for the newspapers. I have broken my data down by voting district just to help the board members illustrate you know where the constituents I'm hearing from are living and where they might be voting as well as what level they are coming from so the numbers on the graphic on the right any teacher or any staff or student case that can be tied to a particular level

[00:25:15] I've highlighted there, as well as, you know, sometimes people reach out to me, and it's completely anonymous, and I never know what school or level they might be affiliated with. It could be somebody who supports central office or central support staff, and they might support all schools, not one particular school. So that's where that unknown, that kind of yellow-orange color is, because I just might not have all of that information. So looking at what type of concerns I'm hearing about. I keep my special education concerns separated out of my general

[00:25:50] education concerns simply because as the office grows and I have more volume, if I'm looking at increasing my staffing beyond hourly support, I want to make sure I have the right individual who is the person in that role. Fairfax County has a special education ombudsperson. The state It also has a special education ombuds down in the VDOE, so I do separate that out separately.

[00:26:16] And looking at the concerns in general, you know, while we have over 10,000 special education students, 35 of my concerns were related to either special education, 504, or the eligibility process, and then 27 cases were specific to staff concerns.

[00:26:34] Behavior discipline is kind of the next highlighted area. and regulations kind of navigating the next steps, how to work through those processes or just making individuals aware of the policies that guide the decision that was made or the process that they might be working their way through.

[00:26:54] I often get asked about, you know, bullying concerns or harassment concerns. I do make note of those if I hear that term being brought up in my conversations, but But those could actually be tagged to many of those different larger buckets, such as safety and environment, discrimination or harassment, and behavior and discipline.

[00:27:15] So I do keep note of that so that I can look for that as a trend or theme within those categories as those concerns come in. Looking a little bit more specifically at those special education concerns, a lot of them are IEP matter, very specific concerns about IEP meetings, lead up to meetings or outcomes of meetings. Sometimes questions about procedures, compliance, as well as direct issues with staff related to services. And then oftentimes it's just general information. They don't know where to start. They're not sure. They don't have the parental procedural guidelines. They don't

[00:27:53] understand the eligibility process. And so I'm able to provide documentation information at the local and state level and connect them with the appropriate offices. Do you just want to highlight on employee concerns.

[00:28:11] Most of the concerns that come my way are from school-based staff, whether it's support staff, instructional or administrative staff. And then last year, about 18% of those concerns came from central office staff. And the evaluative relationships and the peer and colleague relationships, a lot of that staff conflict is mostly what I am supporting in my role.

[00:28:32] Services, administrative issues, decisions that are made, and then questions about compensation and benefits. And so, like I said, I'm able to really listen, dig into what are those concerns and make sure they're connected with the right staff or in the division. And then if I need to, I can ask questions on their behalf and report that information back to the employees. Just some ideas about, you know, the actions that I might take. I always listen to the concerns and provide options when we talk about options. Then I may also provide additional information, direct links,

[00:29:11] referrals or connections to the appropriate offices. I will raise concerns on their behalf or I may raise concerns because of a trend or a theme that I'm seeing. I am also the person who facilitates those discussions or those informal mediations.

[00:29:29] Sometimes I just provide coaching. Sometimes I act as a sounding board. And then on very few occasions, I act kind of as the go-between and I do shuttle diplomacy. Not my favorite place to be. I'd rather try to bring people together to have that conversation. I think it leads to better understanding.

[00:29:45] But if two individuals or a group is not in a place to have that conversation in person, then I can relay that information back and forth. I have a personal goal that when somebody reaches out to me, I get back in touch with them at least to set up a follow-up appointment within 24 hours, if not the same day.

[00:30:04] And then oftentimes, I'm able to provide the information back or close out that case in one to two days. doesn't mean that it doesn't bubble back up because it may continue to be unresolved or they might need additional information. Sometimes it takes a little bit longer if I'm working with a larger group or I have to have multiple meetings to circle back around and to close that out. But for the most part, usually one to two days, I'm able to, because it's not my responsibility to solve the problem, but I can at least pass along the information, get them connected with the correct office and then always leave it open to a follow-up meeting if needed so

[00:30:44] before I get into my observations does anybody have any questions specific to the data that I presented a two-part question first is about a child having a problem in the school parents involved goes to a counselor or somebody and we are not happy is that something we come to your office separately or you would say until that is resolved I won't be involved so people can access me at any point in time I always we always talk about have you talked to the teacher have you talked to the counselor maybe the Dean or the assistant principal or the

[00:31:19] principal I am always welcome anybody to contact me to talk through that issue and then we can talk about what steps you have taken and so there's no there's no requirement of having done step A before moving on to step B if you if the concern has not even been brought up at the school level then we would talk about how to do so maybe what points do you want to highlight how to approach that conversation and kind of coach through that if attempts have been made to set up that meeting but there hasn't been a response sometimes I can reach out on behalf of the individual to let the administrator know that this parent

[00:31:56] is waiting on a response for this meeting and kind of help move things along so it does not matter what steps have been taken prior to reaching out to me so you could work in parallel the second question is when things come to to you, not always you may have a solution. Do you refer to, say, psychiatrists or the police, criminals? Does it escalate beyond you? Because a lot of times I think the schools have a concern or a reputation when the police is called or something. So we see these issues going on. How do you handle cases that you probably can't resolve? Do you refer to someone

[00:32:29] else? So in my role, it's not my responsibility to resolve the issue. It's to make sure that we've looked at what the concerns are what options there might be for resolution and then the visitor gets to move forward in whichever direction they choose so if it is something that they feel has not been handled at the school level we talk about what what steps have been taken and then if it is like an example where they say that they want law enforcement to be involved that's out of my my realm that's out of my control they absolutely have the ability to take that next step but i do

[00:33:09] not provide legal advice or legal information so if that's brought forward to me i you know i will certainly say that is an option that you have you're a citizen you have the right to make that decision but that is not a referral i would make outside of the division a final question i don't want to take too much time but has there been a spike post pandemic have you seen a lot of spike I wasn't here pre-pandemic, so I do not know.

[00:33:34] But I do think that the increase that I am seeing from year to year, so between year one and year two, I had a 78% increase. I've already had an additional 50% increase from July until the end of October. So I think just in general, people knowing about the office, individuals making personal recommendations, board members referring individuals to me as well as administrators is where I'm seeing my spike is just because more people are aware of my office.

[00:34:03] Thank you for what you do. It's a tough job where someone has to do it. Thank you. Thank you. Yes, sir. Thank you. It's great to hear that you're here for parents and students as a resource because sometimes as a parent it's kind of difficult to locate resources to get the answers that you need and so speaking of resources I think you said you're an office of one person and then looking at the statistics that you showed it looks like more than twice your double you spend twice as much time or you have twice as many contacts with employees as you do with families and students so I wonder

[00:34:43] get given that you're a resource of one person and I would expect that employees would have many resources at their disposal I wonder if you might have uh more success in in in engaging with families and students if uh if you could maybe separate your time and focus more on families and students to provide them with the resources that they're looking for given my assumption is that employees would have a number of other resources to resolve some of their their issues that's a great question so as of right now and wanting

[00:35:19] to be financially budgetary responsible, I want to make sure that we don't hire an assistant and then we're just sitting around looking at each other on slow days because it really does peak and flow for families as well as employees certain times throughout the year.

[00:35:38] So the strategy is that I do have an associate ombudsman hourly as needed so that there's never going to be a lag and my ability to be responsive to a family or an employee and right now I'm able to maintain I've been in three roles where I was a singleton doing that job so I've perfected my ability to to work through a high volume but also maintain a certain level of standard of care and then there from day one the division has always said like as this is a new office if we need to expand we will absolutely review

[00:36:16] that every year so you know I asked for a bit of money this year so I knew I had some hourly support I'd ask for a little bit more next year just based upon the numbers that I'm seeing and then that's that's why I'm tracking my data the way that I am so that if we do hire a 0.5 or another full-time individual they will you know be serving and really hone in on what that person will be doing thank you all right so I'm just gonna follow up with some of my observations and then And we'll have some time for any additional questions at the end.

[00:36:47] So part of my report that I share with the board is, what am I observing? And my first year, it was really around communication breakdowns. Sometimes when people, oftentimes when people contact me, it's because somewhere along the way, they have not felt heard.

[00:37:04] There's not been enough time to spend talking through the issues or concerns. And a lot of that loops right back to relationships and building relationships are essential, Whether that's between employees working together, principals outreach to families, teachers outreach to families, teachers working directly with students.

[00:37:23] So relationships are a critical piece and having that availability and the access and the open lines of communication whether it's through proactive outreach or when issues are starting to bubble up, making those connections early and often.

[00:37:38] Another observation after two years is seeing that when we have clearly defined processes, It does not necessarily mean you're going to get the outcome that you're looking for. But if there's a defined process to go through, through policy, I'm not saying that we need to have a policy or regulation around everything, don't worry, but that when we do, it is helpful and that, and then I can provide feedback in those areas where it's maybe unclear or there are complications.

[00:38:05] And then the confidential space, whether it is for a family or an employee, I think is valued because it gives you that opportunity to be vulnerable, to be authentic, to share what it is that you want to say, to be frustrated, to talk through things, to pinpoint what you would like to highlight for your follow-up conversations so that they may be more productive. And when I close out cases with individuals or even

just ending a conversation, you oftentimes see the shoulders come down because whatever has brought them to me or whatever is maybe causing that stress

[00:38:40] or that or that anxiousness just by having time and space to talk about it is helpful in and of itself. So those are kind of the three observations that I highlighted from this past year's data and then kind of following up with, you know, what do I do to contact the Ombuds?

[00:38:59] And when and how? So there, like I said, there's no set time. You do not have to have done step one or step two before contacting me. It can be at the beginning, the middle, or the end of an issue. Somebody said, you know, what if I have just a basic simple question?

[00:39:15] Give me a call. I'll look it up. I'll find it for you, and I'll give it back to you. Oftentimes when there's so many things going on, it could be like, how do I apply for free and reduced lunch? Well, I can send you that link directly so you don't have to take your time to find that.

[00:39:30] My website has more information about me, my role, it has my annual reports, it has my outreach materials linked and a Let's Talk form so that you can reach out to me through the form. My email address is there as well and that is my direct line. I'm the only person who monitors that so there's no worry about, you know, somebody listening to those messages or seeing who has called.

[00:39:50] I do clear that out usually at the end of every week. And then importantly for schools or information that you might take back to your buildings If there is an individual who needs response back in another language, I just need to know the name of the person, the phone number, and what language, and then I can use the language line to give them a call back.

[00:40:09] I think that's all I have for you today. And any other questions that have maybe come up? Yes, sir. Sorry, just real quick, one more.

[00:40:26] Nobody knows what ombudsman means. So have you thought maybe about just changing the name and that way people know what it is more like a help or support kind of term so the unique piece of the ombuds role is that we do have the standards of practice and we have our core values and that we must adhere to so I have colleagues who are maybe constituent services or in a smaller division the chief of staff might take on that role but there is nothing that is going to obligate them to hold your conversation and confidence.

[00:41:01] We fall under, like I said, the Virginia records destruction laws, like specifically says ombudsman under administration. So I think it gives us value and it gives us a unique role within the division and helps us maintain that independence.

[00:41:19] I align similarly with the Auditor General. He has standards and guidelines that he must adhere to. So it is really about getting the word out and informing around that. And I think in our handbook, you'll see in parentheses constituent services, but it does make me unique from other roles that you might reach out to in the division.

[00:41:38] You can help spread the word. Yes, ma'am. As a parent, I understand and I can appreciate the value of your role because you may not know where to start. You may not know where to get help if you have an issue or you just don't understand something.

[00:41:57] But one thing that you had just touched on briefly about staff concerns, that's a little bit harder for me to understand as opposed to in a traditional business where you might have a human resource

department.

[00:42:13] Could you just maybe explain a little bit further like how your role is different from any other type of business when they would have internal conflict or just questions and the role that you play there? So I think that when you have a supervisor or HR involved in trying to navigate those concerns, it's more of a requirement, and it might be reflected in your evaluation.

[00:42:45] I provide a space and an opportunity for people to informally talk about their concerns, work through those concerns, maybe come up with some mutual agreements between themselves about how they want to move forward and get past whatever's going on. And it is not tied in any way, shape, or form to their performance or evaluation.

[00:43:04] So whether it's just initially talking through the concern and, you know, some people would, they absolutely, the last thing they would want to do is have a facilitated discussion. But then I maybe hear some things that they are saying would benefit and support them in their role.

[00:43:21] I may hear the same from the other party. And then with their permission, I can take that back to their evaluator to say, you know, while we're not coming together to have the mediated discussion, they have given me permission to share what they need in support to help move forward in their working relationship.

[00:43:38] So it's completely non-evaluative, it is completely informal, and it provides that space so that if they want to work through it in that way, they can. And if they decline, or if that's not something they're interested in, and then it persists, then it might become more of an evaluation issue, or it might become more of a workplace relations concern.

[00:43:58] You're welcome. All right, well, I shared every which way to contact me, so that's all I have for you today, and then reach out at any time. Thank you all. I don't want her to leave. I want you to know that we were given 10 cards with her information on it and I went to three schools and my 10 cards were gone. So I need to get you more cards. I did I came back and got more so I want you to know that her honesty with sharing with you the way she resolves matters

[00:44:38] is sincerely for you the employee or for you the parent or even for you the student. She has just been so and she doesn't even know that i was passing out her cards like okay i started to sell them but they wouldn't pay me i'm joking you know i'm joking i do have bookmarks in the back of the room um next to my little placard there so if you do want something that's a little bit smaller and you know easier to hand out you can grab a few of those and i can replenish them so

[00:45:11] feel free to take those as well thank you so much thank you all right i'm going to leave okay Ms. Linda, can I have a related question to you?

[00:45:28] You have a gate check on meetings. That has more than one person we need to declare based on the FOIA. Is it okay to meet the members? Okay. So my question is about meetings.

[00:45:46] You have a FOIA rule where there are more than two persons who can declare it. When it comes to the Ombudsman, can more than two meet or do we need to declare it in advance? Yeah, with the meeting, especially with the Ombudsman, is that okay to meet? More than two members can meet the ombudsman, or do we need to inform before the meeting?

[00:46:08] So are you asking if more than two members of this committee can meet the ombudsman? Yeah. He's asking. Carrie. The committee person has one other question.

[00:46:24] My question is when committee members, more than one person meet, there is some FOIA rules, and can more than two members meet you to discuss anything? So can community members? The equity committee members. Oh, equity committee members. I'm available to speak with anybody about anything.

[00:46:43] So I think if it has, if it's a group of individuals who have. In a group setting. Yes. And, you know, it depends on, I don't know, your bylaws or what. Full of them, for you. So the question is. Not more than two of them speak with you simultaneously.

[00:47:01] Okay. Two of the committee members. Okay. Yeah. It would all depend on the rules of your bylaws. Okay. Thank you. That's all I needed. Yeah. So, and I think if it were larger than that, then we wouldn't have a discussion. with your chair to see you know what what we would just want to make sure that we're not violating any of your vilos. Wes can share with you better than me about that foyer.

[00:47:23] Well I just want to clarify as to the foyer rules I mean any group of us can meet that somebody's has for a barbecue or something we just can't come together as a group of two or more or more than two and discuss committee business so if we're meeting with the ombudsman about an issue that's not related to the conduct and the purpose of this committee that doesn't apply yeah that helps that was my question actually thank you yes if it's not related to

[00:47:57] direct committee concerns that would violate your bylaws I meet with you know I've had groups of employees who have similar concerns they have their own unique perspective on that concern but they brought it to me as a group of individuals um because they have been talking about it separately and then wanted it to bring to my attention to talk through what potential option there might be um as a group so yes i do meet with groups of individuals thank you that was where i was headed so thank you sorry um if

[00:48:35] you get a complaint or you get a concern about an equity issue do or any type of issue do you then like would you tell would you forward that to the equity office like do you even though it's confidential with you um if you know if there's an issue happening do you then report that back to other divisions in the school system so it depends if it's a singular concern about equity we talk about options with the visitor and then they get to choose how they would like to move it forward um and it could be that they raise it to the equity office or they're working through it

[00:49:14] with the school and then they ask me to raise it to the equity office on their behalf or to loop them in. If it is a trend or a theme that I'm seeing, like maybe across multiple schools or one particular concern but multiple times within a school, then I may elevate that as a trend anonymously.

[00:49:32] Like I wouldn't tie it back to any one particular group. Sometimes that's difficult because it's a very specific case that only happened to maybe one student. But I would not do that unless I had the visitor's permission to do so. So I would not take any next steps unless I had their permission to do so. Okay.

[00:49:48] But if it is a trend or a theme, like an example of that was within a week or two, I had heard about some trauma-informed practices, and it touched the elementary, middle, and high school level. So

then I looped back with the director of our student mental health services to talk about what type of trauma-informed training do we do?

[00:50:08] What levels and groups are we reaching? we getting into the classroom teacher as well as assistant principals, principals, United Mental Health team members, and then kind of pushing that forward as a training area that they wanted to highlight in our professional development when we came back in August.

[00:50:24] So that's an example of how, like, through my cases, I was like, huh, how do we do this? And then I let that director know that that was a theme that I was seeing. Okay. Yeah, that makes sense. Okay. Thank you. All right. I will leave you to the rest of your meeting.

[00:50:43] Thank you. You're welcome. So we've had two speakers tonight, one because it's bring your legislator to school night or month, and the other one because we have found such value in her office since it has opened that we would like to promote her office to you as you have parents express concerns to you.

[00:51:17] I have used it, and it works perfectly for me. I hope it works perfectly for you as you see the need. Okay, we're going to circle back because now I think we have a quorum. We have minutes from two meetings, from the June meeting and from the September meeting.

[00:51:39] And those minutes were sent to you electronically, as well as the fact that you have them before you tonight, I think. Is that right, Helen? Right. Okay. So at this time, I'd like to entertain a motion to receive those minutes.

[00:52:01] Now, before I entertain that motion, I would like to say to you that there have been some questions about the minutes in terms of them not being so detailed. Helen is well taught and learned in the presentation of minutes by the board and the board's committees.

[00:52:24] and this is a committee of the board. So those minutes are as complete as what the policy allows for Loudoun County Public School subcommittees. So do I get a motion to receive the minutes? Can I make a comment first about the June 6th minutes under part five? It seems like some things were lumped together under one statement that were two, probably two separate

[00:52:58] discussions. The last three sentences were not anything that I brought up, which is tied to the first stuff that I brought up during that meeting. But the policy says that the minute should be a compilation of the full discussion without names assigned to it. Well, I don't want my, I don't care if my name's there. I mean, you can put it there or you can not put it there, but it talks about when I brought up the issue about I felt that we weren't following the charter for the equity committee and then it rolls into something about planning of bus routes course offerings

[00:53:35] community engagement wasn't all tied together it looks like it's all tied together in the minutes okay it's a summary of what was said by different individuals not by one or two individuals okay i just since it was all one paragraph i thought it was all tied together to what i brought up that day okay no and when we receive our minutes from the school board um they are similar in that we don't know who said what, but we have a summary of what was said in that meeting. Also, I'd like to

[00:54:07] share that if you choose to have more specifics from the minutes, you can go into the board docs and listen to the entire meeting. You can actually audibly listen to the entire meeting. And if you feel

that something was left out, then that might be a way for you to document it. But otherwise,

[00:54:35] it's a summary do i get a motion to approve june the june minutes yes of the equity committee yes so moved do i get a second second it has been moved and properly seconded that we accept the minutes from the june 2024 equity committee all in favor say aye all who oppose nay we have one

[00:55:13] nay in terms of um documenting in the in the minutes that was our school board member miss dina griffith okay now for the minutes from september we did not have a meeting in october because it was a student holiday and um and it was a a religious holiday i think and so we didn't have that meeting but we do have the minutes from the september meeting do i get a motion to receive the minutes from september yes motion to receive so moved do i get a second second thank you it's been properly moved and seconded that we receive the minutes from the september meeting as well

[00:55:53] all in favor i and all who oppose nay i would just like to abstain i was in in attendance i can't hear you abstention i wasn't in attendance okay so we have are you abstain or two abstentions three three three four four i was not okay okay we need to we need to count then all in favor

[00:56:29] raise your hand i counted 16. did you help me okay thank you i counted 16 who are in favor now i need the number who are opposed this is for september okay how many of you abstain i have one two three four five i have five for september do i need to go back and do june for numbers um is it a policy

[00:57:09] that we need to abstain if we weren't present i beg your pardon is there a policy that we need to abstain if we were not present? No. Or is that just a preference? No. Okay, thank you. That's not a policy. No. Okay, let's go back and do June. Yes, ma'am.

[00:57:27] I have a question. It was actually a follow-up to the individual that asked earlier. So when I'm reading, I wasn't there for the June meeting, but when I'm reading, and you had mentioned that you were the committee member, the first part that expressed the frustration, right? Then there's, then it goes on to say that the committee member pointed out that this research should be aligned with the policy goals set forth in 2027 Strategic Plan for This includes various aspects such as the planning of bus routes You're saying that that's not something that you brought up. So in the paragraph it does read as the same individual It reads as the same individual it does we've not we've not put individuals attached to it

[00:58:04] I know but if you if because I read it and it when it starts I was saying a committee member and then it says the committee member so the to me seems like it's Referencing the that committee member The way I read it is that it's pointing out referencing

[00:58:34] I'm just stating what I see right right thank you okay for the for the june we'll go back to the june all who are in favor oh wait i have a question sorry i'm listed as present and absent for june i am here present

[00:59:04] and i'm here okay that's an error will you take me home i was i was absent that one so take me off

[01:00:22] I wanted to make this observation or this point of clarity. Each of you has received from the equity office, from Helen, Mrs. Randolph, policies that you can comment on.

[01:00:47] I would like for you to feel open and willing to comment on them as individuals. But for the equity committee, I need that subcommittee to comment and write equity subcommittee as the person or persons commenting.

[01:01:07] Is that a point of clarity that's understood? Anybody, they are sent out throughout the city. Any parent, any teacher, any administrator can comment on the policies as they are sent out.

[01:01:25] And Dr. Daniel Smith came in and explained to us that policies are reviewed every five years. So when you get policies that are sent out, it's time for you to give input or feedback because that policy will probably not be looked at again until another five years.

[01:01:47] So all of you are open to give your feedback, but I would give my feedback as Linda Deans, whereas the subcommittee that's handling policies will give that feedback as a member of the equity committee policy committee.

[01:02:10] okay okay so it is it is now 6 35 we're going to ask the policy committee to all come to my right my right my right and all who are on the the rewrite of the of the charter for the equity committee to convene on my left we had sent out an individual signed up to be a part of those two

[01:02:48] committees. And then there were some who said, no, I cannot participate in a subcommittee because that will take more of my time. So I want the individuals who were selected as policy on my right and as charter on my left and all other equity committee members are free to leave. Yes, you have a question. Yes, I do have a question. Since we jumped the agenda to four, that's where we started.

[01:03:17] Did we make room for public comment? Because I do see people in the galley i just there were no names on the sheet okay thank you there were no names on the sheet okay okay thank you uh since we were jumping around thank you um so we are not adjourning the equity committee because the subcommittees are a part of that committee but

[01:03:48] we are inviting the policy people to convene on my right and the charter committee to convene on my left and all other members of the committee who did not sign up for a subcommittee you are free to leave at this time I just have one more question we on the agenda we didn't uh open to new business because I did have a question under new business okay uh hold on before you leave we now will entertain any new business and here to for uh or here in the future will you share

[01:04:27] with me your new business prior to the meeting okay so let's go to new business uh which is help me helen number six it's at the bottom of page number it's the single agenda page item six okay okay so under new business and i reviewed the meeting number six new business yes will you

[01:05:02] help me thank you Helen so this is committee member Robin Burke yes committee member Robin Burke in May we discussed are we broke into groups and we did equity focus topics I don't know if anybody remembers that reviewing the meeting minutes prior since that meeting we haven't revisited those priorities so I would like to put that down under new business that we tried to address that at our next meeting we we as a committee at this point we passed some of those priorities on to

[01:05:40] msac and then there were others that were already satisfied as we met with the equity department um you can talk with me one-on-one if you would like but at this point our job is the policies and the and the charter because it is felt or it we were told by the public that the charter does not now encompass what it is that we need to do I will take that into advisement okay and maybe that should just be captured in the minute somewhere because I don't see them captured so we

[01:06:17] performed an exercise what she's saying as new business under um in in our minutes for us okay yeah thank you just a simple readout would be would suffice thank you okay we'll ask the

subcommittees to convene and all other members may leave Mr. Mohammed is going to be here to help me with the two subcommittees and there's some other DEIA people who will help me but we will remain here for the subcommittees and



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