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Loudoun County Public Schools, Equity Committee Meeting, Thursday, May 1, 2025

Date Thursday, May 1, 2025
Place LCPS Administration Building / School Board Room, Ashburn, Virginia
Length 1h 44m (video)

- Official meeting video (Vimeo / LCPS-TV): <https://player.vimeo.com/video/1080660915?rel=0>

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Speech-to-text: whisper.cpp, model large-v3-turbo. Produced 2026-10-13. Each paragraph starts with its time [HH:MM:SS] in the meeting video.

[00:00:12] Good evening. Good evening. I'd like to call the May 1st Equity Committee meeting to order at 530.

[00:00:30] And we will start with public comment. And since I have only one public comment person, Andrea Weisskopf, she's been with us enough to know the rules. I don't need to read all this verbiage.

[00:00:47] So, Andrea, we would like to hear from you first. Not too long ago, am I too close, too far? Not too long ago, someone I can consider a friend called me out about something I had said.

[00:01:07] And as painful as it was to reflect, there was a little bit of me that was proud to have been called out instead of called in. It meant that she trusted me enough as an ally.

[00:01:24] And it was painful. So tonight, I am calling you out. It is possible to want justice for Palestinians without anti-Semitic tropes.

[00:01:43] Last equity meeting, anti-Semitic comments were made by the speakers, and no one spoke up. Where I come from, if you don't call out anti-Semitic remarks, that makes you something.

[00:02:09] black lives matter thank you we will now go into the agenda um that all committee members have received and that agenda um includes um minutes from the april meeting and from the march meeting

[00:02:47] so uh committee members you should have received them by way of of uh email and so at this point Do I hear a motion to accept the minutes as written from the March and April meeting?

[00:03:09] Do I get a second? It has been moved and properly seconded that we accept the minutes from both the March and April meetings, and you do have copies of them for your information.

[00:03:28] For our old business tonight, you also received the subcommittee reports, And you received those for the last meeting, but we didn't have a quorum, so we didn't vote on them.

[00:03:50] So we would like to look at the subcommittee report on policies. And that subcommittee report states, This subcommittee met, accepted their added responsibility of reviewing policies as they are rolled out for review by the other school board committees and are through the process of the five-year review cycle.

[00:04:12] I have noted the appearance of the Equity Committee comments on multiple policies that have been rolled out. If we vote on this subcommittee's recommendation of reviewing all policies from an equity perspective, I would need a motion from the floor and note that the new charter has not been written yet, so the conditions under which those policies would be reviewed would be written into the new policy.

[00:04:44] So do I hear a motion to accept the report of the policy subcommittee? Do I get a second?

[00:05:02] Okay. It's been properly moved and seconded that we receive the report of the policy subcommittee. And I want to say to this policy subcommittee, thank you so much, because as I see the policies from month to month to month, we see, of course, SEAC, and we see equity committee in terms of having taken a look at those policies and giving your feedback.

[00:05:31] Now, there was a second subcommittee report, and that was the Charter Committee. This subcommittee met and voted as a subcommittee to dissolve the Equity Committee as it is structured currently. This subcommittee asserted that since LCPS now has a full department of DEIA to address the priority topics list presented during the 23-24 and 24-25 sessions there is no future need

[00:06:04] for the committee to meet as a body since neither a subcommittee or our committee is authorized by the full Loudoun County School Board to dissolve a committee we would have to take this recommendation to the full school board before there can be any change and the subcommittee said dissolved but we will take it to the full school board to see if they can reimagine what

[00:06:37] the equity subcommittee would do so do I hear a motion to support this I guess the stoppage of meetings for the equity committee until such time that the full board is available to give us

[00:06:55] direction. The subcommittee did not present or give a charter, okay? This is the subcommittee

[00:07:36] results that I presented at the last meeting. I don't know what it is that you have, but there are members of that subcommittee here. Do I hear, well, we'll have to vote on your motion if we get a second. Did we get a second for the rejection of the subcommittee's recommendation? Okay.

[00:08:07] It's been properly moved and seconded that we reject the recommendation of the charter subcommittee. All in favor of rejecting the charter subcommittee's recommendation, let it be known by raising your hand. I counted 10.

[00:08:44] All who object, raise your hand. I only got too okay so what we would do with the subcommittee on the charter is that we will we again cannot dissolve this committee we would take it to the full board for a final decision as to what to do with the committee and I see some people from the subcommittee here and maybe I need to explain that

[00:09:22] they wanted to dissolve the committee as it is now, but reimagine the committee to do something from a different perspective. And so we won't be able to move forward with that different perspective based on the vote that we just had. So I'll take that to Chair Mansfield and see what she wants to do with it. Okay. But I still will check with Mrs. Mansfield to see where we go from

[00:10:00] here in terms of the committee okay we do have programming for tonight for tonight's meeting and for tonight's meeting um we have a panel and i don't even have the names of all those panel people but what i'm going to do is just turn it over to mrs winkelman hi thank you for having us

[00:10:33] i'm sarah winkelman um and before i start i want to thank the committee for inviting us to come and speak, thank Dr. Deans, thank Shahid. We really appreciate taking the opportunity of the Heritage Month to talk about the Jewish community. So thank you for inviting us. I'm Sarah Winkleman, and I work for the Jewish Community Relations Council. And what we are is an umbrella organization of the Jewish community that represents all the synagogues and agencies around the whole DMV area. And my job as a director of education is to work with the 10 major school systems

[00:11:13] in our area to help them understand who are Jewish students, what's anti-semitism, and we also have like proactive problems, which we'll get to later, that we do, so that's sort of what my role is, and so I want to say that I'm just doing this introduction, and you're really going to get to hear from our panelists, because that's really what you're here for, but I wanted to just briefly say, I mean, I think, I know, well, I know because I listened to last month that you did an Arab-American one, so really, you understand that Heritage Months have come around for a lot of cultures, so Jewish-American Heritage month was started by former president George W. Bush in 2006. I mean it was an

[00:11:49] opportunity to celebrate the American Jewish experience and one of the things I love about this is that I spend a lot of time talking about anti-semitism and I'm so excited that I have a month to talk about the beauty of Judaism and what we have to offer this community so I'm really honored and happy to have this opportunity and I think also one question that might be in the back of your mind if you're not so familiar with Judaism is that why is there a religious heritage month it's supposed to be a heritage month but we're kind of complicated so Jews are an ethno religion is what we call ourselves so we are a religion but it's also an ethnicity so you meet a lot of Jewish

[00:12:26] people will be like oh I'm not religious I'm an atheist but I'm Jewish okay so that is a thing like that's like who we are so you know that we started in the middle in what is now Israel, Palestine, Jordan, like that area of the Middle East, you know, was ancient Israel. And really, we were dispersed from there thousands of years ago. And we really lived all over the world. So what's also interesting is most Jews in America are what's called Ashkenazi. We came from Eastern Europe, Russia, that area of the world. So most of us

[00:13:03] like a pure white and um but jews went all over so there's a lot of jews that came from arab lands um there's jews in india there's jews in uh ethiopia like you can find them everywhere around the world that look like the population because we're thousands of years old so it's just an interesting twist on why jewish american heritage month is more than a religion i think many times we live in a primarily

christian country so therefore there's christianity there's islam there's Judaism, like we think about religion, not sort of heritage. Okay, so I just wanted to throw that out. We're six million Jews in America, two percent in the state of Virginia. Just a really

[00:13:43] simple history of Jewish Loudoun. What's interesting, I think probably similar, I didn't really do the research on this, but I assume it's similar to most ethnic groups in Loudoun. Loudoun looks very different than it looked 30 years ago, and so in the mid-20th century, there was really only a handful of Jewish families here, but as more jobs moved here, as more development moved out here, also the Jewish community grew. So then, the first in 19, at the end of 1996, there was, what was formed was the unaffiliated Loudoun Jewish congregation. So that's really relatively, well maybe I'm just getting old, but that seems very recent, 1996. So, um,

[00:14:21] and that actually became, there's really two large synagogues in, well, relatively large synagogues in Loudoun and the Loudoun Jewish congregation became what is now known as Shari Shalom which is a conservative synagogue here and a year after in 1997 Beit Haverim which is a reform congregation started also in Loudoun there's also I know a very active Chabad which is they don't really identify but I'm gonna say Orthodox for the lack of the easiest way to describe them and so that sort of gives you a little bit of the lay of the land so I want to just thank our panelists for being here. We wanted to show you, get a little bit of diversity. So I'm

[00:15:00] very happy that our students joined us, Nathan, Lena, and Ava. Thank you. And Nikki Corson is, well, she'll, and Danielle Graham. And they'll introduce themselves. So I'm going to start with you, Danielle. And I want you just to talk, I want you to introduce, I might have everyone do this after Danielle, but we're going to introduce ourselves and your connection both to Loudoun in Loudoun schools, and along with sort of the Jewish American history of your family.

[00:15:30] Thank you. So I'm Danielle Graham. I am the supervisor of social science and global studies for Loudoun County Public Schools, but I'm also the parent of two Loudoun County Public School students. My Jewish American heritage story, we don't have tons of details since it happened about 250, well no, 150. Not the math supervisor, guys. So my family came over in the late 1800s, both from Poland and settled in Maryland.

[00:16:00] And then the other side is Russian, technically Ukrainian, but it was part of the Russian Empire. And they came over as a result. They were escaping the pogroms, which were like violent attacks on Jews that were happening across Europe, but specifically in Russia at this time. They actually came through Ellis Island and then eventually settled in Sioux City, Iowa.

[00:16:20] And so that is my heritage story. I'm going to pass it on to the students. Yeah, we're going to pass it on to Ava. Hi, my name is Ava. My mom lived in Israel in the 1990s and moved to the U.S. about 25 years ago.

[00:16:36] I moved to Virginia from New York when I was one year old, specifically Loudoun County. We have lived here for about 12 years, and I'm really thankful to my mom for inheriting and giving me my Jewish tradition and culture.

[00:17:03] I am in seventh grade, and I go to Mercer Middle School. Hi, I'm Nathan. I'm a sophomore at Independence High School, and my mom's side of—so my grandfather on my mom's side.

[00:17:23] His family was from Russia and Lebanon, and they came here in the early 1900s, and that's about all I know. What about grade school? Oh, sorry, you said that.

[00:17:41] Okay, forget it. Sorry. Hi, my name is Lena Cass. I'm a sophomore at Potomac Falls High School. So I believe it was the mid-1950s. So my grandpa is Israeli.

[00:17:56] He was born in Israel. this is on my dad's side, and my grandma, my dad's side's Polish and Russian, and they came over here in the 1960s, 1950s, and they settled in America, and they went back to Israel, so my dad lived in Israel up until he was five, and then they settled in McLean, Virginia, and then the family my mom's side, I don't exactly know, but I do know they're Jewish, and then I was born in Fair Oaks, the ferrox hospital and then i've been living in sterling my whole life wonderful thank you okay

[00:18:35] nikki you ready okay um so mine's gonna be a little bit longer than theirs but um they uh i kind of prepared a little something so um so my name is nikki corson and i'm an lcps english teacher at heritage high school i am also the mom of two lcps alum i am the sponsor of the Heritage Jewish Student Union and Dominion High School before that, founder of the newly formed LJE, Loudon Jewish Educators Group, which is a group of teachers in Loudon, which is the first

[00:19:13] time we've had that, so that's super exciting. I used to be an equity lead, and I am a member of this equity committee. But my proudest affiliation is that of a Holocaust and human rights educator. Every summer, this will be the sixth, I run a week-long intensive seminar for teachers right here in Loudoun County. The seminar is part of a network of educators across the country that is led mostly by non-Jewish teachers, and their goal is to tie the lessons of the Holocaust with local human rights issues. So with ours, we partner with Pastor Michelle Thomas of the Loudoun Freedom Center as we delve into Virginia's history of racial injustice. We also partner with Sarah and

[00:19:51] the JCRC and local synagogues to give participants a glimpse into Jewish life. We do this because it's difficult to understand or empathize with a group of people if you don't know who they are, or in the case of the Holocaust, who they were. I love this part of the week when at my seminar that the fellow teachers show in the Jewish religion, traditions, and culture. We end the week with what we call Dor La Dor, which means generation to generation. After they hear from a Holocaust Survivor, we bring in a group of local Jewish teens, and plug for Sarah, that's called

[00:20:30] Student to Student, which is a JCRC program, and that program is available to come to any school at all, and they just have these local teenagers, and they come in, and they talk about what life is like as a Jewish teen in this area. It's incredible. So I'm super excited that we're able to have three LCPS teens with us here tonight. So with that in mind, I just wanted to take this opportunity to actually answer the question Sarah just asked me about who I am and I'm doing this as a kind of sample of the Jewish community in Loudoun County so I'm a Loudoun County transplant I came from

[00:21:06] across the river I grew up in Montgomery County Maryland and there was a pretty big Jewish population there my mom worked in a synagogue I went to Hebrew school three days a week and I had a bat mitzvah it was normal there to have the major Jewish holidays off from school my dad was a salesman in an appliance store and ended up with his own mattress store. Not bad for someone who never graduated from high school. I discovered the reason for that when I was eight, when I found out that he was a Holocaust survivor. I didn't even know what it was at the time, but I quickly learned the basics of our story, that my grandmother had survived Auschwitz, my grandfather had

[00:21:45] survived a work camp and a hidden identity, and that my dad, aunt, and uncle had survived two and a half years in a Belgian orphanage that was run by the Gestapo. And that my dad was just four years old when all of this happened. But my family was lucky. There's a lot more to it than that. But they all survived. I tell my story often because while it is obviously steeped in tragedy, it is ultimately a story of resilience and hope framed by the selfless act of many upstanders, many of whom were not Jewish. In fact, as I told it last week during Yom HaShoah, Holocaust Remembrance Day, Someone told me that they actually found it uplifting.

[00:22:24] My dad used to tell it to students himself, but like so many survivors, he's no longer here to do that. For him, I continued to tell our story. And through a JCRC program called Mageed, you guys should start paying me. You did your third shout out.

[00:22:41] I helped train other second and third generation to tell their stories. So what we all want is to simply pass on the lessons from this to future generations. I can't even put into words how proud I was when my college-age son, who was about to graduate next week from, in Hebrew, what does this say, you guys, in Hebrew?

[00:23:10] From Butler University. And he told it on his own accord to his fraternity brothers. And that was just, that was a really big step for me in the right direction. So after the war, my dad's family was able to move to the U.S.

[00:23:25] He was just 15. Going to school was not in the cards for newly arrived immigrants who had to start their lives from scratch. He worked hard with small jobs in Detroit and then the garment district in New York. And at that time, many Jews worked in that industry because the jobs they had been trained for in Europe, like diamond cutting, which was what my grandfather did, were hard to come by.

[00:23:46] And a humble brag, my dad was so stylish from working there that they nicknamed him the scarf, because of the silk ascots that he would wear. He met my mom a few years later, and her family had been in the U.S. since well before the war. They immigrated from Russia.

[00:24:01] They lived a typical New York City existence in Brooklyn, with family occupying apartments above and below them. My grandfather operated a hot dog cart. They called them Frankfurters, selling them for five cents each. And my grandmother, like most Jewish women, did not work outside of the home, but spent her time kind of tending to everybody else.

[00:24:21] So for obvious reasons, early on in my life, being Jewish became an important part of my identity. Despite living in Montgomery County, the Jewish community was still a minority. Not surprising, given that only 2% of Americans are Jewish. I always kind of felt like we were on the outskirts. Christmas time was always pretty difficult.

[00:24:39] But as I got older, Christmas got easier when I realized we got to go to the movies and eat Chinese food. But then I, you know, I did end up marrying a nice Jewish boy after we crossed the bridge to Virginia, and we found a very small but welcoming community here in Loudoun to raise our two sons. There were highs and lows to living in an area with so few other Jewish people. Their elementary teachers routinely invited me in to share their holiday traditions, which I very much appreciated. But every year, we had to decide between taking the boys out of school to observe Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, or ensuring that they stayed on track in school. I always kept them

[00:25:17] out, but many of my friends felt differently and sent their kids to school. So I'm so glad that LCPS now observes not only our holiest holiday, but those of other faiths. For both boys, that decision helped them see the importance of tradition and feel the power of community. And then came their bar mitzvahs what a great way to bring their classmates into their world their parties were super fun of course but so many of their friends gave up saturday morning sports practices or other commitments to come hear them read from the torah and connect that week's torah reading to everyday lives those were powerful moments but there were also moments that lent themselves to education

[00:25:54] and i'm going to stop there and i'll pick that back up when we talk about challenges great thank you. Thank you. You have a very powerful story and I appreciate you sharing it. Thank you for all of you sharing, but you see why I had Nikki go last. So I think our next question is really going to be, how has your school supported you? And what connections have you made that have helped you navigate being a Jewish student in Loudoun, a district with so few other Jewish students? And what do you see as resources that are helpful to you and other Jewish students? And i'm going to start with the students and then and then you two are going to answer as adults

[00:26:34] um who wants to lena you want to go first this time okay um so being a teen in louden county i've seen um seeing the events of october 7th and leading forward being a jew in louden county has been very negative um i've received very anti-semitic threats to me and my friends because of our identity um I've been scared to come to school many days because I'm scared of like what they're gonna do um I have we have a JSA at my school um and we have two Jewish um adults I can

[00:27:09] go to my school where I can talk to them but um it's just very a very unsafe environment to be a jew in like especially my school but like a jew anywhere in my area it's very like unsafe so lena let me ask a question on that because we were going to get to the challenges later but you shared some of the challenges now so even if it's before october 7th have there been certain things that a teacher has done or having that does it having a jewish student group does that help like are there certain things that help a little even if they don't make it go away and you can say no

[00:27:46] I'm not um not a leading question yes because um like even though the JSA I also have a little friend group as Jewish so we can go to each other about challenges we face like um things people have told us and what we should say to them and what not to say to them and just like people we like we're a little group so we can talk to each other about like anything we see um and my teachers are very supportive of well they better be supportive of my religion but they're very kind about it and um they're like oh we're here if you need us or if you need to like take a break then you can like go on a walk or something great thank you lena okay nathan you want to share and i want

[00:28:25] to say if you can focus sort of on the positive we will get a chance to say the challenges after okay um so at independence it's a very welcoming community um our jsu is definitely a safe place where we can talk about whatever um all of my teachers are very supportive um and like the days off are helpful so i don't miss any school when i have holidays and i feel like they just like

[00:28:59] really like help or they try to learn more about my culture um like for our library every time there's like a black history month or jewish um jewish american heritage month they have a display in their library with books that can educate you on the different or on the different cultures thank you abba um i find it really uh nice that they have holidays we talk about jewish holidays

[00:29:39] in the morning, sometimes during peak lessons that we have. And I feel like it really gives an opportunity for other students to understand our culture and our traditions and the holidays that we celebrate. I also have very supportive friends, not very many that are Jewish, but that still understands and are there for me. I have a few great teachers, too. I'd like to shout out

[00:30:12] to Mr. Donets for supporting me and offering any help if I ever need something or if I need to talk to him. Beautiful. Thank you. I want to just, I assume everybody realized JSA or JSU are the Jewish student groups, but I do find when I talk to students that having those groups, having trusted adults having friends that are supportive all you know makes their experience better and I just want to share that because I know we are going to hear some how it's not hard to how it is hard to Danielle you want to go so

[00:30:48] professionally I will say both as a teacher and now as an administrator I felt very supported over the years to give context I moved here from Louisiana my husband and I moved here shortly after Hurricane Katrina so very different environment living in Loudon from a teacher I had incredible amounts of support bringing 400 sophomores every year to the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum. We brought in speakers, survivor speakers. Actually, about seven years ago, we had an Auschwitz camp survivor in this very room speaking to our students. They were always incredibly supportive on helping me orchestrate everything with that. And in my current role, I have the opportunity to be a

[00:31:28] thought partner in a lot of different capacities and bring my experience, but not just that, also my history expertise to things. So I've felt incredibly supported by LCPS professionally. As a parent, as I mentioned, I'm from Louisiana. I definitely didn't grow up having the holidays off. So really love that my children have those holidays off and it prompts discussions about it.

[00:31:50] And not only that, but that they get to learn so much about the kids in their community's holidays as well. So I think that's been something really incredible. And I know it was something my husband and I thought about when we moved to this area. Not only that, there's parts in there, and I'll talk more about that in just a moment, but in the curriculum where they get to share more about their culture.

[00:32:09] A big core memory for me of we made the right move was my oldest, who is now in eighth grade, was in third grade. And third grade has a culture project. And I remember him coming home really excited to tell me the story. He was partnered with someone who they didn't know at the time, but had a similar family structure where one parent was Jewish and one parent was Christian.

[00:32:30] And they discovered that, and they were comparing how they celebrated their holidays differently. And that was just something that was reaffirming that, like, we made the right decision to be here. So that's, like I said, I've felt incredibly supported, both personally and professionally. So one of the biggest things that Loudoun's done to support, I definitely agree that they've been very supportive.

[00:32:53] When I was at Dominion High School, Dominion spearheaded something called the Loudoun International Youth Leadership Summit. And it was where they brought, like, 100 students from different, like, 20 different countries here. And I had this idea that I wanted to have this program called Adopt a Survivor, where we brought in multiple Holocaust survivors, and we had them talk to small groups of children, students, and at the end, the students would adopt them.

[00:33:19] And they would go home to their home countries, and they would tell on Holocaust Remembrance Days those stories. And it wasn't even a question. Like, they just said, okay, let's make this a part of the program. and it became a big part of the program, and it went on for, I think, five years where

we were able to bring in these survivors and have these conversations, and look at the LCPS website. They did a 10-minute video that won a regional Emmy Award about that program, so I felt supported in that way. I think that I'm now at Heritage High School, and, you know, I got there, and my principal is just like whatever I wanted to do to, because they just never had to do a student union. They

[00:33:58] just don't have a lot of Jewish students there. I decided that my small little like three person JSU was going to do latke palooza for Hanukkah and they just made it happen. They helped me set up the tables. They did it and we served little Trader Joe's bits of latkes and you know had a sour cream versus applesauce debate and but it was just his willingness and all the administration's willingness to help us do that was really just felt really really good. Also at Dominion one thing we did was connected with the Muslim Student Association and there was a lot of support from both of those groups there and that was we had an annual potluck and brought in speakers that was

[00:34:36] really good so I think that I think you know it comes from the top down and I think if your administration is supporting what you do that can that can go a long way wonderful great thank you for sharing all of those positive things it's great and I so before we sort of transition to talking about the more complicated things I just want to say that since October 7th when Hamas attacked Israel I think for the Jewish people I mean I'm not going to get into what Jewish people to Israel are thinking but in America it's been sort of the hardest moment for the Jewish community in my

[00:35:12] lifetime and I think there's still some trauma related to that and I know I mean I think Lena spoke to a little bit that I think and I imagine although I don't don't want to speak for you guys you'll get a chance to speak again that being israeli doesn't help um so i want this all to be about celebration of the jewish american heritage but i don't want to have five people here and not give them the opportunity to talk about some of the challenges that maybe we can work on and and and make better so i'm going to open it up to you to say

[00:35:44] to all of you about um if you want to share challenges you face and any thoughts about how your peers or your school could help so that you weren't in these hard situations and i think we will again start with the students and then move on to the adults let's see who has not started ava have you started no you started first nathan um so i haven't particularly faced any challenges at my school i love that sorry i can't speak for any other schools obviously um but independence is definitely a welcoming community.

[00:36:26] I know that my whole JSU hasn't faced any anti-Semitic comments, and I have friends who are definitely Muslim and Palestinian, but we all still collaborate, and we don't focus on each other's views on that whole situation.

[00:36:49] Beautiful. Thank you. Okay, Ava, you want to go next? I personally have not had any anti-Semitic remarks against me, but I've certainly heard very few.

[00:37:06] I know that there's not very many Jewish students in this community, and I don't have very many Jewish friends to turn to, but I do have a few friends that are Muslim, and they do not say anything mean.

[00:37:30] They are very sweet, and they understand. Beautiful. Um, so this, so before October 7th, um, in kindergarten, I believe when I was six, a kid told me I was going to H-E-L-L because I didn't believe in the Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

[00:37:53] And I went home to my mom about it. And I was like, what does this mean? And she was like, well, you're in kindergarten. Like, I don't know why kids are talking about it. Um, and then after October 7th, my school, um, the Arab American club at my school posted about a Palestinian walkout and I was like this is kind of interesting but maybe I should just go and see what it's about and I saw staff members counselors every staff member or many most staff members at my school teenagers at my school shouting from the river to the sea Palestine

[00:38:27] will be free and I sat there and I looked like I was about to cry I was about to run like home but I didn't. And I was like, what is going on? And from that moment, I like looked at staff members a little differently. I had to tuck in my star, David, because I was afraid of people. I remember a week later, I was in the lunch line, and a group of boys came over to me, and they were like, yo, can you buy us lunch? And I was like, why? And they were like, well, use your Jewish money for it.

[00:38:59] And I was like, what does that mean? And he was like, well, you know, Jews are like the richest people so why can't you buy me food and I was like because I'm not about to spend my money on you and he was like whatever and then so that block which I had history we were learning about Judaism and like we were learning about religions for a day but they made Judaism seem very very short it was the shortest one they talked about um Christianity would Christianity was the longest one and buddhism was not as short as judaism and i didn't say anything i sat there um and then and

[00:39:35] then we it took us a year to get a jsa because a whole bunch of palestinian kids and arab kids said they would jump people who joined the jsa the jsu um so in the hallways um i'd get remarks about my star david and people were like oh oh you should take it off because israel doesn't exists to me um so I went home telling my mom and I was like I'm just gonna take off my star David for a couple of months and she was like okay do what makes you comfortable and then so I started wearing it again um and something happened very recently I was in bio and I noticed one of my

[00:40:11] friends had like she turned on her phone and her clock wasn't in numbers it was in Arabic and I asked her about it I was like oh what language is that and she was like Arabic and I was like oh I want to join the Middle Eastern club and I was very excited about it because I was like telling another friend about joining the middle eastern club because i'm israeli and she was like yeah go for it and i told her and i was like oh i'm israeli and she looked me up and down and said that does that country does not exist to me it is palestine and i remember i walked away about a cry in bio um and then from that moment on i would like tell my mom every single time when this happens

[00:40:48] i didn't feel happy to be a jew in my school like i should know i shouldn't be embarrassed to be a Jew but since like October 7th moving forward I've been like sort of ashamed of being a Jew and then I joined a support group called BBYO which is very which is international and ever since I joined that group it's been like a support group for everybody and it's been very supportive but yeah. Wow thank you that's thank you for sharing that's not easy. Okay Nikki I know you're

[00:41:23] talking from a different perspective um first of all just thank you for your honesty i think that um it's hard to hear those things um it hurts my heart to hear those things but um i think that when you're a really small minority in a big school and there are a lot of um just stereotypical tropes that go really far back in time um we have to we have to do something to counteract that um as a as a parent um my my sons they had a couple things that happened um and you know i won't go into the well i'll tell you one one of the stories but i think that a lot of times what students tend

[00:42:02] to do and i see this a lot as a teacher is you know oh it's just a joke it's just a joke and then they can say whatever they want if they're saying it's just a joke and so my um my youngest son's name is evan and um you know i mentioned before is bar mitzvah and we had all these people come and then i looked at the like the we have a little caricature thing and everyone signed it and people were like way to go oven and that was his nickname now a lot of these kids knew that evan had a grandfather that was a holocaust survivor but and they're like oh it's just a

[00:42:37] joke i'm not sure if they knew or they didn't so i think that in terms of what we can do about this i think it's that type of education and you know um like Lena was saying like it's if we're not going to you know if the unit's that small it's not just about teaching about the holocaust we have to understand who the Jewish people are as a people and what has happened over the past 2,000 years not over the past 100 years and it is you know exposing our students to that and that's i think Danielle's going to talk some more about that with curriculum. i also think there's power

[00:43:14] in conversation and i think that but it's hard for students to just get into that conversation i think that we as adults have to figure out ways to facilitate those types of conversations so that they can talk honestly i think the worst thing of all of this is that i can't i can't wrap my hands around the fact that jewish students are afraid to show their judaism in public in school and i just think that's a travesty and i think that is something that absolutely um 100 percent has to change. Yeah, i want to thank you all again for sharing. And i'll share up front, like carrying

[00:43:52] my own trauma when i was a teacher from what happened to me when i was a student in school and being made fun of and those types of things actually led me to conceal that about my identity for my first couple of years as a teacher. And then when i started to share it, i did realize the power that it had and it did encourage students to connect with me. i heard your shout out to Mr. Dinetz. And i, you know, i realized that and that did shift how i thought about how approach that with students. But i really want to talk a little more about what i've done professionally and kind of challenge we've navigated there. In my role, i don't just develop curriculum, but i also help teachers navigate that. And with social studies, there

[00:44:30] are lots of topics that might be tough. And in my finishing up my fourth year in this role and early on work to create frameworks for how to teach topics that were considered hard history or sensitive, things like the Holocaust, but also things that are controversial, things that people are widely debating in public forum um and one of the things we realized was there was a lot of power in leveraging different community groups in that process um in fact the equity committee a couple years ago had provided feedback on that framework and the policy and the professional development that accompanied it um but really all of this came to life in the wake

[00:45:04] of october 7th and some of the protests that did occur um at our schools um we partnered with the uh, DEIA office as well that supported us in this. And we, um, i knew coming up that our world history two teachers would have to teach about the Israeli Palestinian conflict. That is something that is actually in their history standards. Um, and so one of the things i knew is that was going to be a particularly challenging topic for our teachers that year, um, and for our students and our communities. And so one of the things we did early on is we partnered with, um, our Jewish community. So Sarah was one of the members of that, along with some of the rabbis from our local

[00:45:42] synagogues. But we also partnered with the Palestinian community, and what I looked to do was develop a lesson that was more scripted probably than most of our lessons that would be in a curriculum. And we set out with the idea of not saying everybody's going to walk away agreeing with every last piece of this lesson, but we need to get to a point where we feel this is being presented in a way that we feel comfortable for our students to be presented. And so we went through multiple feedback rounds from the initial conception of what is the driving question.

[00:46:09] We utilized our frameworks, which is really presenting students with those sources and letting them draw their own conclusions and creating those spaces where there's clear norms and expectations on how we're going to interact with each other. And as I mentioned, so feedback was provided multiple times, including on the resources.

[00:46:26] And then at the end of the process, when we sent out the lesson to our schools, we gave both communities opportunities to address our principals and teachers to talk about what our families might be going through while this content is being presented. So that's been one of the challenges, but it's something that I hope to continue to navigate with community.

[00:46:44] I think there's a lot of power in that, and I hope in the future that that supports you all. It does break my heart when I hear, like, you know, certain religions are given more attention. We really work to do a lot with that in our curriculum, but you all give me more to strive for, I think.

[00:47:00] Am I allowed to reiterate something really quick? So, in fourth grade, in my elementary school, I know we learned about the Holocaust, but they only touched on it for ten minutes, and I, like, looked at my teacher, and I told him straight up, I want to learn more about the Holocaust, and I don't know what it is, so can you tell me what it is?

[00:47:20] Because they only went over, like, one slide of it, and it was only five minutes, so my history teacher, well, my teacher, well, he wasn't my history teacher, he made, like, a whole slideshow for me just about the Holocaust, and, like, because they don't really teach about the holocaust in schools in general the only thing they teach about in about um in world history is judaism which is a day um only 90 minutes and they read they talk about the holocaust for a day in world history which is what my teacher told me because i asked him i was like are we learning about the holocaust this year and he was like yeah but it's not a lot like we're

[00:47:58] learning more about hitler and i wanted to be like i want to know about the holocaust i don't want to know about who Hitler was um but I was would like to look for like seeing the curriculum like moving forward that they talk about the holocaust because my brothers are in seventh grade and they want to know more about where they came from not who started the holocaust they want to know more about what happened during the holocaust who the nazis were and what they did so I would like look forward to like learning more about that in schools because I can talk about like i love talking about it in school but i don't like talking about it when it happens for a day

[00:48:36] and then everyone forgets about it so yeah i see you in a future in danielle's job i'm just saying yeah you want to add something um i also agree that they in my school they do explain a little bit about the holocaust and anti-semitism but it would be nice if they could say more about about American Jews who contributed, who were famous in literature, in science, in math.

[00:49:10] What a good plug for Jewish American Heritage Month. So yes, that is the next question. And we're just going to do one more question because I want to open it up if people have questions. I want you to share, and again I'll start with the students, sorry guys, is how do you feel like you're contributing to educating other people about Jewish American heritage besides coming and presenting on this panel which is huge that's a big way but if there's other things you're doing or you aspire to do if you could share sure um well I love talking about

[00:49:46] Judaism because it makes me well I don't mean stand out but I love talking about it um and when I was in elementary school I brought lockers um I brought dreidels and guilt like every Hanukkah because I love celebrating about it um in middle school I made presentations about Passover and the importance of Passover. And I loved talking to my teachers about it because they would ask me questions and be like, oh, what is this holiday? What does it mean? Because we wouldn't have awe for it. And I love talking about it. And when I have my bat mitzvah, I, well, I love talking about

[00:50:21] Torah. I love talking about Judaism because Judaism has been a very big part of my life. So when my confirmation, I have confirmation at the end of May, and I'm just going to be talking about why i love judaism so much because like it's fun being jewish like it's different um but i love talking about my religion and i like how it sets me apart from the rest thank you ava um i like to invite friends over who are non-jewish to celebrate holidays with me like passover and hanukkah

[00:50:57] especially the major holidays and shabbat i think it's uh fun and i like teaching them like to them about it and answering the questions playing dreidel eating latkes and sometimes i let them borrow my jewish history books um so this recent passover we invited our neighbors over um and we

[00:51:28] brought in their understanding of passover and the whole story um and they had a little kid who was really informed on the whole story. And then for our JSU, we allow anybody, even if you're not Jewish, to come so that you can expand your knowledge on the Jewish culture.

[00:51:52] And so we'll have like a whole dreidel and latke event for Hanukkah. And then we also talk about the upcoming holidays and we just keep everybody informed on the whole culture itself those are all great i'm so glad to hear thank you for sharing those ideas with us which one of you wants to go now um so i think that you know we're so much more than

[00:52:31] you know victims of the holocaust we're so much more than victims of anti-semitism and i think that's the greatest thing that we have to remember and um as a teacher i think that the great i mean this is what matters like they matter right it's the next generation and every single thing that i do as a teacher is is to make that happen um and so um you know i'm an english teacher so danielle represents social studies and i represent english and from the in the english classroom there are just so many ways that you can tie in culture there's not unfortunately most young adult novels

[00:53:08] are about the holocaust but there are some that aren't and so i think figuring out again who were the jewish people who are the jewish people um there's a lot of ways to work that into classrooms but the teachers have to want to do it it has to be something that they're willing to do that they are feel that they have the resources to do and so and we do have a lot of diverse books that have been delivered to our classrooms that represent you know all kinds of different cultures that don't normally see themselves in books and I think that's been a positive but I think that you know by teaching teachers I think that's a way to do it I got to speak at the social studies

[00:53:46] PD this year and I got to tell you know my family's Holocaust story and I thought that was great and then that got a lot of feedback and I think even just things like that make people want to do it more. What I do notice is whenever I talk to my colleagues they just want they're so we're kind of a cool religion we're kind of a cool culture people want to know more and so you know like wait I have questions I have questions and so people really are interested and so I think that Just by allowing people time to share that, I think you guys both or all three of you alluded to the fact that, you know, it's inviting those people to the Seder.

[00:54:19] It's inviting people in. At RJSU, at Dominion, even the one at Heritage, because Heritage is so small, it said we literally have on our flyer, you don't have to be Jewish. The president of RJSU was not Jewish. And I think that's the way to do it. I think it was really powerful.

[00:54:35] At Heritage, I have to say this year, one of our five members, like it fluctuates between three and five, was Palestinian. He went to the MSA and he said, you know what? I think I would like to be a part of your organization. I just feel comfortable. I like the fact that you let anybody come.

[00:54:52] And it was great because then we got to have so many conversations back and forth. So I think, yeah, I think that's what I have on that. Thank you. Powerful. So I want to echo what Nikki said.

[00:55:07] it's so much more than holocaust education that being said like i work with teachers so we have brought in a lot on holocaust education in terms of resources in the curriculum teachers have like multi-week lessons available to them if they want to go that far on the holocaust from facing history we work with groups like echoes and reflections um for professional development we bring in those groups as well along with jcrc and nikki was there to talk about the holocaust speakers bureau um but it's so much more than holocaust education and so we've also brought in professional development for our teachers to teach them more about ancient Judaism because while there might be three little bullets in the standards there's so much more to it than that

[00:55:45] and we want our teachers equipped to teach that we also had sessions on Jewish immigration like so that they can feel more equipped to teach those standards that are in the late 1800s we support the toli seminar that nikki does so we sponsor a lot of that and last year i came to present on that as well and it's not just that secondary where that really that history kicks in the little bit of Holocaust education at the elementary level was actually connected from reading Number of the Stars. In elementary, it's really about an introduction to social studies, but that's really done through, we've taken a lot of effort to take the standards on things like holidays and use that as an opportunity for students to bring in more about the holidays

[00:56:22] they're celebrating. How do they celebrate with their family? What does that mean? For standards on culture, what does that mean? What does their culture look like and how can they share that? Because it is about educating them and it is about educating them young before they start saying things that they don't fully understand the implications of um and so that's one of the big things that really um we work to do in our curriculum and to celebrate that diversity in loud and really allow students to bring that piece of them into the classroom starting as as little as kindergarten so um but i i love that you all were able to share your experiences because

[00:56:53] it shows we just continually have room to grow and so thank you all so much great and i love that we're modeling here by teaching our culture just like they're starting in the elementary schools um it's

great to be here we i do want to open it up we have i think just a few minutes for questions if anybody has questions do you want help hi so i'm asking i'm a jewish staff member

[00:57:30] in loud and cunning i'm a counselor at mercer middle school um shout out to all of you you guys did fantastic i guess this is more of kind of a staff-based question so all of you guys had fantastic things to say um i am also very lucky to have been feel very supported in lcps in the school i work at and i'm very glad to hear um that ava feels the same way at mercer and i'm not missing anything i think especially when it comes to high school like with what you've been talking about remind me your name lena has been talking about um i think one of the interesting ways when

[00:58:08] it comes to dealing with anti-semitism in schools among students and this is something you touched on at the beginning is that there's somewhat of a tendency especially with the large ashkenazi population in america to think it's sort of easier for jews to like hide their oppression if that makes sense like it's very easy to look at jews as not being as much of a privileged group and i can even admit that i maybe had some of those internalized beliefs myself before october 7th and that i grew up very sheltered from anti-semitism and was only after october 7th that i was able to like see all the nuances of how like just because i am white blonde hair blue

[00:58:45] like there's other things happening so i guess danielle like mostly this be a question for you and maybe you too nikki what ways how might be a complicated question do we like incorporate like this knowledge when teaching students about oppression that doesn't reduce it down to like who looks the most oppressed like who have we learned about being the most oppressed like who is it easiest to hide their identity if you understand where i'm getting at so one of the

[00:59:22] things and i mentioned developing frameworks i i really encourage our teachers to teach about nuance and not oversimplify things um that is something we really it's um i frequently say that like history is how we're trying to make sense of all of these collective experiences knowing that all of our experiences are very different and we we try to to fit in there like we try to weave a narrative to that to make sense of our history. And so really it is about treating people like people, talking about lived experiences of people and not oversimplifying it. And sometimes I will say like teachers feel pressure to move through things. And so sometimes things do get oversimplified.

[01:00:01] That being said, really what we're trying to promote is teaching about people and the complexities of history. In fact, the Middle East lesson that I had referenced earlier really was the topic of is why is this particular conflict so difficult to resolve and that was the driving question that students were working with um and really we want to encourage them especially in history classes to have opportunities to explore deeper and not just have that like surface level because that is when you I think get into that oversimplification or grouping things like that because that's what we actually want to do as humans is do that so um yeah and I I just really

[01:00:39] love that question that's a question that I've been asking for a long time um so I don't know that I have an answer to it, but I really appreciate that view on it. I think that a lot of it comes back from the fact that because many Jews are white, that it's a perceived, oh my gosh, senior moment when you have more than others. Privilege. Oh my gosh. It's a perceived privilege. It's a perceived privilege, and it's a perceived level of privilege, and so people assume that, and I think

[01:01:16] that goes way back to the you know all of of the ancient tropes but actually the Jewish people are because of the diaspora because we've been so spread out over so long Jewish people are every skin

color they're from every nationality like there's so many different things and people don't know that and so I think that's one thing that's a problem one of the issues that that I've had that I think you're kind of alluding to is you know I feel like I've always been an ally right Jewish We ally for everyone else.

[01:01:44] But sometimes it just feels like because we are not visibly oppressed that people tend to not ally with us because of that perceived privilege. So I totally, totally get what you're coming from. And, I mean, the only answer I would have to that is, again, more and more education and education about who the Jewish people are and that they are not what people may perceive them to be.

[01:02:11] Thank you for being here, and I'm Ava's mother, so I'm glad that I could join.

[01:02:27] And so my question is, I'm hearing a lot about the JSU, the JSA, and these student groups or teacher groups, and it's so wonderful to hear that. I guess I'm just curious how, because in middle school we don't have something like this, I don't think. Do we? Not in middle school, so it starts in high school, I guess.

[01:02:44] But it's not in every high school. No, it depends on student decides to start a group and a teacher agrees to be the advisor or a teacher says, I want to help start the group and finds the kids that are interested. Yeah, that sounds wonderful. So I didn't know if that ties to the county in general or how. So, yeah, I was just curious about that.

[01:03:05] It's interesting because in Fairfax County, what I've learned is that it is tied to the county. They are county sponsored groups. but in Loudoun they're just affinity groups and so there are affinity groups that are kind of grassroots like at my school we have club days and so it's considered a club and so the way that I started the JSU at Dominion 10 years ago is literally a Jewish student came up to me in the hallway said hey Miss Corson would you be willing to sponsor this club and you don't even have to do anything yeah that didn't happen but um so it is very much if you have the interest and you have a sponsor and I think that's probably why Potomac Falls it took a while because they may not have

[01:03:43] had a teacher that was willing to kind of do that I will say too one thing that I very much appreciate at Heritage is that our affinity group because we we've just moved to this schedule where we have clubs during the school day and they make it very um on the on the days where we have our JSU club my room is emptied so the group that I usually have during that time specifically for the affinity groups, they make sure that the students feel comfortable. And so they go to Great Lanes to make sure that we have that safe space to have our club meetings. But there's nothing to say that you can't have it in middle school. Ava, you could start that. So just find a willing teacher

[01:04:22] and I'm sure that your admin would back you. Yeah, I think you got an ally here. There is a Jewish group Ava is able to join. You have to be in eighth grade, but it's something i touched on called bbyo um we have two loudon groups um basically bbyo is stands for b'nai birth girls there's a guy group and a girl group um and it's international so 64 countries around the world israel being one of them um and basically what it is it's just a whole

[01:05:00] bunch of jewish teens coming together um usually on friday uh saturdays and sundays because fridays It's our Shabbat, so we can't really do anything. And it's basically, we all hang out. We do have Dala. We do, I remember we did a Purim event. We made hamantashen.

[01:05:17] We do a whole bunch of community service events. And like I said, you start, you can join in eighth grade, and it's so fun. Like, you meet so many Jewish teens in Loudoun County. Like, I met some of

my best friends during BBYO, but it's really fun, and I wish I joined in eighth grade, but I didn't, I joined in freshman year.

[01:05:36] But I think Ava would really enjoy it. Dr. Deans, I just want to thank you again for inviting us and thank our panelists.

[01:05:53] A big round of applause. They were great. And you know that I see future student-to-student leaders here. I just happen to have flyers for some other event, but if anybody wants info on the Holocaust program and the student-to-student, it's here. And I think we're all able to stick around if people have questions they want to ask us afterwards.

[01:06:12] We're going to go to item nine on the agenda for those of you who received the agenda.

[01:06:29] And item 9 indicates that I have some new business. I like to raise as new business a conversation about the sustainability and ongoing work of the equity committee in its current form as a select committee of the school board.

[01:06:45] And when we go into looking at the definition of a select committee, a select committee shall be discharged when that purpose is fulfilled unless school board action authorizes the earlier discontinuation or the temporary continuance of...

[01:07:06] Don't interrupt your business. I'm sorry. I just interrupted to say it. This is real quick. The select committee shall be discharged when that purpose is fulfilled unless school board action authorizes the earlier discontinuance or the temporary continuance of select committees.

[01:07:32] A quorum for each meeting of a select committee shall be a majority of the school board members assigned to the committee. There are three school board members assigned to this committee, and tonight we have two of us here.

[01:07:56] Specifically, in its current form as a select committee, we've had difficulty with attendance of members at our meetings. It's my understanding that the charter subcommittee supports a reimagining of the equity committee in a different form, meaning not as a select committee.

[01:08:16] To be sure, there continues to be work to be done, but in its current form as a select committee, it's been difficult to have quorum for a broader level of production.

[01:08:31] Therefore, I'd be interested in, I'm sorry, my understanding is that the full school board will ultimately have to vote on this since it created the equity committee as a select committee as per policy 2310.

[01:08:49] So I'd be supportive of recommending that the equity committee be reimagined in another form and would like us to think about what form that would develop into. At this time, I'd like to suspend the rules of order to make this new business item an action item for today.

[01:09:17] So that would need two of the three of us to vote in favor of doing so. Okay, so do I have a motion? Orban? And the reason that we are going forward with the motion and the second, and I second that motion, is because we've had difficulty having enough members present each month to carry out any business.

[01:09:50] So that's why we have resorted to having programming versus having committee meetings. Even the room we have changed. At this time, I'd like to move that the Equity Committee recommend to

the full school board that it be discharged as a select committee of the school board and reimagined in another form.

[01:10:20] What form that would be, the school board would tell us. Do I have a second? It's been properly moved and seconded that we take it back to the school board for them to take this select committee and make it into a committee that is functional, which may not have 33 members in it.

[01:10:40] So, all in favor of taking it back to the school board and changing it from a select committee, sure. Okay, I have a second. Any further discussion? Yes, sir.

[01:11:07] Okay, so that means we'll meet in June, and then again, we'll start in order. Mr. Ketchum, can I have you repeat that, please? Oh, in order to get it on the mic. Oh, yeah, yeah, sorry. I would like to make a motion to amend the base motion that we recommend that the current equity committee is not discharged until the school board forms some new equity committee, either as a standing committee or as an advisory.

[01:11:40] Okay. Do I have a second? Okay. It's been properly moved and seconded. Oh, I'm sorry. Cassidy Kavanaugh, I second. Okay. It has been properly moved and seconded that we have continued our equity committee meetings until the school board comes back and gives us the direction for the type of committee that we will have. Discussion? Yes.

[01:12:21] Charles and I are one of the original members of the equity committee so we've been here and I think we're some of the few that have been here from the very beginning and I kind of question the idea that we have that we've finished our business of the original committee's intent when the committee was first formed we had really really good attendance we had a full room and I'm concerned about disbanding the committee because Because I think the community voice is extremely important in this work.

[01:12:58] We had a long list of priorities in the very, how many years has it been, like four or five years we've had this committee? Six years we've had this committee. And I don't think, I think what happened in terms of attendance was that people started feeling frustrated that we weren't actually making action.

[01:13:17] We would talk a lot about what our priorities were, but there weren't good pathways for us to actually make that action. So I think that that is part of what happened with the attendance, is that a lot of the people who are strongly involved in this work are also strongly involved in other committees and their time is very valuable.

[01:13:42] And I think when it felt like we would meet and we would talk and nothing was getting done, that it slipped down the list of priorities, even though I think everybody believes in this mission. So what I would love for us to do is think about not reimagining what the purpose of the committee and the structure of the committee is, but maybe to look back at those early meetings to think about why we did have such good participation then and what we can do to get back to that original intent of the committee. I think even as a staff member here I think that the

[01:14:21] DEIA department is such a strong part of our our district and our division and our work but I think even as staff members who are not part of that we don't always have the opportunity to be really a part of this work and I definitely think having parents community members I've really enjoyed the student members of the equity committee and their voice. Um, so I would hope rather than re-imagining, we, uh, look back on what was really successful in the past, um, and getting back to that.

[01:14:57] May I share that through re- sorry, through research, um, the year before I came, there were seven of the, of the 11 meetings where it was dismissed because of lack of attendance.

[01:15:18] And then I came, and we've had the same concern. If we were to dismiss all of the members who had missed two or more meetings, which was what was in the charter, then we would not have a committee that is functional.

[01:15:36] And that's what the subcommittee – would you like to speak to the subcommittee piece? Yeah, so I was one of the members of the subcommittee for the charter, And we had, I believe, three meetings and tried really hard to come up with a new charter and to define what it is that the equity committee would do.

[01:16:00] When the equity committee was originally formed, there was no DEIA department. So we kind of felt as we were researching and thinking and talking that that department now handles basically what this committee was designed to do whenever it was started.

[01:16:18] So we didn't really feel like or think of anything that the committee could do differently than what that department's already doing. I've been on this committee since January of last year, and other than the subcommittee on policy, actually looking at some policy and stuff, I can't think of one output in those 16 months that this committee has accomplished or done.

[01:16:46] We come here, and thank you, Dr. Deans, for finding interesting stuff to fill the time, but that might be your attendance problem, too, is you know you're just going to come here and sit and listen to people talk. I mean, you might as well go to your kid's baseball game or whatever.

[01:17:05] Hi. I would just like to pivot back to what – what's your name? Jill was actually saying. I think you all are reflecting back to a year, and I think Jill's comments were reflecting back to the original equity committee.

[01:17:22] And so your comments basically further support what she was saying, where, when was it created? How many years? So yeah, that's not 24 months. That's not last year. That's not since last January.

[01:17:37] So I think what Jill was proposing, which I fully support, is to go back then, 2019, and take a look at what the committee was discussing, what comments people were making, and what was causing a barrier to those conversations progressing forward into action, and then go back to that and kind of fix what that barrier was.

[01:18:06] And once you start to shift the foundational issue, which looks like people are not coming because it's shifted more to programmatic stuff or programming versus having equity conversations, finding out what aspects of policies we can impact, what in actual LCPS we can shift and impact regarding equity decisions, I think people would be re-energized to attend.

[01:18:36] So I think, I just want to pivot back to what Jill was saying, which is 2019. I was on the charter subcommittee, and what you're saying was basically what our last meeting was talking about.

[01:18:53] And you can correct me, Dr. Deans, if I'm wrong, but I believe that what the idea was for the reimagining was a much more clarified vision, with a non, like not an ad hoc, like as needed basis, but having a consistent committee.

[01:19:10] That was, I believe, under the school board rather than, or in whatever the case, it was not an ad hoc committee that was then basically partners of the community coming together to then address like

real issues happening in the community to then bring it to the DEIA department or whatever departments it was needed.

[01:19:30] So I think that that goal was a lot more targeted. We also brought up the idea of talking about policy specifically. But I feel like that was lost a little bit when we were talking about, like, just ending the committee altogether as of today.

[01:19:49] That freaked me out a little bit. I feel like that's why I abstained from the vote, because I just felt like that was part of the goal eventually. But it was not, I don't know, I feel like there's a little bit of a disconnect happening. Okay.

[01:20:06] So I know some of the people in this room obviously know this history. But, of course, this committee was formed as part of a resolution agreement between Loudoun County Public Schools and the Commonwealth as a result of a lawsuit that Loudoun County was not doing the right things.

[01:20:24] And if you go back and look at that, you also look at the report that was done by an outside consulting firm that looked at issues of equity across the district. They made a number of different recommendations, one of which led to DEIA, one of which led to equity, and there were some other recommendations that went along with that.

[01:20:44] I think that the critical nature, going back to what Jill was saying and Charles was discussing as well, you look back at the original history of this and the role, I think, for the equity committee in terms of the community voice is still a complementary role to DEIA.

[01:21:03] I think reimagining this as either a standing committee or as an advisory, which has a different standing under 2310, I think that would be great because it does give us a sense of both more formality and purpose as an ongoing body.

[01:21:23] But I think so. We have the base motion. We have this motion. This motion was really just to confirm that this body would not be disbanded before the school board comes up with basically another plan.

[01:21:38] It is my understanding that we are no longer an ad hoc committee, and that has been the case for a couple years now.

[01:21:57] Is that not the case? I know we start as ad hoc, but I believe that that has evolved probably before. The language has never changed. The charter remains as it originally was presented, as a select ad hoc committee.

[01:22:15] Okay. So that's what we're asking the board to do, or that's what we need to ask the board to do, is to either make us a standing committee or some other type of committee so that our function would be valuable.

[01:22:34] Informative. I thought that happened already. Okay. Thank you for that. And I also want to share that the committee was formed after the lawsuit was given to the Attorney General, and that lawsuit has been dismissed and completed.

[01:23:01] Dr. Spence showed me the response from the Attorney General that said that you have satisfied the conditions of which the lawsuit was made, and therefore, Loudoun County Public Schools is no longer under that lawsuit and its recommendations.

[01:23:22] It has met all of the recommendations of the lawsuit. I just was going to tell you, yeah, so that was June of last year, because I have all the paperwork with me, not surprisingly. And, yeah, just to confirm to your question, Charles, the original charter was revised once in January of 21 and hasn't been touched since, so it still stands as an ad hoc committee currently, officially.

[01:23:47] Okay, so since it's still at hot committee, let's vote on the last motion first, the amended motion, the amended motion that indicates that we want to continue to meet until the full school board meets.

[01:24:09] All in favor of that, let it be known by raising your hand.

[01:24:22] I counted 14, 15. You need something? Right on. Okay. Okay. All who oppose, all who oppose, raise your hand.

[01:24:37] Okay. there's one okay now back to the base motion the base motion was the base motion was just a minute the base motion was to suspend the rules and take action on the item that we would actually send it back to the full school board for them to give us a new status and that's not the way I read it

[01:25:14] before but it said at this time I'd like to move that the equity committee recommend to the full school board that it be discharged as a select committee that's ad hoc of the school board and reimagined in another committee form and i got a second to that so all who are in favor of us asking the full school board to switch us from a ad hoc committee to a different type of committee

[01:25:46] we don't know what type that would be let it be known by raising your hand ad hoc um what an ad committee is. Ad hoc is temporary until such time that the school board, the ad hoc committee shall be discharged when that purpose is fulfilled unless school board action authorizes the earlier discontinuance or the temporary continuance of the ad hoc committee. So temporary. Temporary.

[01:26:20] Got it. Thank you. So even though it's been in existence for seven years, I think someone said seven years. Help me. It has been under this type of committee for that time. Sorry. What would the school board be decided between, like, is there like four options and ad hoc is one of them? What's the other three? I don't know what their direction would be, but they were either like what are the three options that they can vote among? They can make us a standing committee. Okay. Which means we

[01:26:59] continue to meet and create a charter because we don't have a charter. Okay. Or they can make, Leave us as a select committee. There are three different four different committees. I don't have those in front of me. I'm sorry There's four different types of committees of the school board Would we be as a we as a committee be able to provide Recommendation to the board or are we just saying? Oh like just hey board And just come back or can we provide recommendation of the four types?

[01:27:33] Right and vote on that, right? I will I will take it to the board and then get the description of those different types and bring it back to you. Thank you. So it's all listed in policy 2310. There's the four different types as I recall them off the top of my head. We would fall either under a standing committee or an advisory, both of which have kind of ongoing official status.

[01:28:02] The other two I think are sort of more internal types to the school board, but it's all listed in policy 2310? I could be missing something, but from my perspective, type of committee is secondary to what we are doing each month. So whether we're a standing committee, advisory, ad hoc, or select, I think that is still less important than what is our purpose at this time and what are we accomplishing? Because I can envision us becoming a standing committee, but still have the same

[01:28:40] month-to-month difficulties with what are we meeting for, what's the purpose, what are we going to accomplish. So again, I could be missing that there is something significant about the labeling or type of structure that is assigned to this committee, but to echo what Jill shared, it's really honing in on what are we working towards regardless of the type of committee that we are does that make sense anyone I can't say that all of those topics that you came up with

[01:29:19] initially that were important to you all of those were given to the DEIA department and there is evidence that they are dealing with all of those topics within the schools so it's not like you came up with that list and it was and it went into a dark hole they were given to the department The department handles the situations from day to day in the schools, and they have the manpower to do that because every school has an equity lead, and then the department has individuals who are sent out.

[01:30:00] Thank you. I in no way intended to make it sound like we did not think that the DEA department is doing a fantastic job. I've been like part of being equity lead at my former school before I came here to the admin building.

[01:30:19] I think that what I would love to see the purpose of this committee is I think a lot of times there are things that are going on in our division that are so powerful and so strong and the community does not know that this work is taking place. And I think that having an equity committee where we have parents, we have community members involved, I think that that can help spread the word. I think that a lot of times we hear negativity from people and those voices are the loudest. And I think that if we could do a great

[01:30:52] job of educating the community, if that could be part of our role, I do think that some of those initiatives have been addressed by DEIA. And I'm really proud of that work. I'm excited about the work that we've done but I don't think that that means that like we shouldn't constantly be looking for that continuous improvement I love the idea of like the video that won the Emmy like really spreading the word about what good work we're doing about equity I am really proud that we're taking a stance

[01:31:29] you know amongst the community and I think that there's been a lot of support for that so I think that it would be a mistake to you know not have this committee here to do this work I think that it could go it could go side by side and what you referenced education to the community I want to share that that could come under the new charter we have to create a new charter in order to do the things that you are saying that we do we have no charter I'm going

[01:32:05] to keep it very brief because I know everybody wants to go home. But I do feel it's necessary to just put it out there. I'm a very strategic and long-term thinker. And so right now we're being very short-term focused. Not everyone, but we do have the DEIA. DEIA board division is doing a fantastic job. We currently have a superintendent that's very equity focused. Superintendents come and go. School board members come and go. So there could be potentially a time where we don't have an

[01:32:39] equity-driven superintendent. We don't have more equity-driven people on the school board. And then they may choose to dissolve the DEIA. Should they do that? Is that a good decision? Absolutely not. But those things could happen in the future. And if that does happen, what would be the advisory committee at that point to make sure that we maintain focus on equity? I just wanted to say like to what Jill was saying, the reverse is also true. I think part of the benefit of this committee is that not only do we educate the people here about what's happening, but the people

[01:33:18] here can educate DEI about what's happening in their individual communities. And to me, that's one of the most important parts of this committee, because if you have a DEI that's an office, which again, I agree is a great office, but it doesn't have the input of the community, then I think then that's kind of an oversight.

[01:33:38] And so I think that all the groups need to be represented, which is what I understood this to be about. What I would see happening is, is it possible, like before we go to the school board to say, this is what the purpose that we as a group think that our purpose should be going forward, which I guess would turn into the charter, and then recommend to them, this is what we think this group should be.

[01:34:03] We think we should be this type of a committee, and we think that this should be our purpose. Because I think it sounds like everyone here is kind of on the same page that we want to make sure that we're making a difference. We want to make sure that we're advising, that we're having some type of outputs that make us, you know, that make this committee valuable.

[01:34:37] I've sat on this committee, I think, since 2020, and there has always been at least one person in these rooms who isn't aligned with our vision. And to me, and I know others feel that way, that that makes the space unsafe. So if we are dedicated to the work, then maybe restructuring the committee to keep it a safe space, because I understand as it stands right now, some people have to be placed there.

[01:35:00] Board members have to put a designee, and you have to have three board members. I get it, but maybe making the space safe again is a way we could reimagine going forward as a committee. Because we do do a lot of important work. It just kind of has gotten lost, and I don't think right now at this time in history, especially the optics of getting rid of an equity committee is very good or strong.

[01:35:21] Okay. Thank you. Farhan Syed, Adam Center. I echo everyone's statement here. I think the equity committee is a necessity. How it can be reformulated, we can absolutely discuss.

[01:35:42] And I agree that there is a fear that, as she mentioned, that people come and go. But the most important thing is you want to make sure that all the diverse views are heard and that there's advocacy that's taking place. We all do agree, I think, that's what I've been hearing, that DEI has been doing a great job, and we support it.

[01:36:00] And everything that's come out of the DEI committee, it seems like it's been discharged to their group, to the department, and it's being executed. I agree that what we need to do is, you know, just change that verbiage from an ad hoc committee to a standing committee or a select committee.

[01:36:19] That way it remains permanent, regardless of, like, who comes and goes. And I think that's what we want. And we're not looking for a disbandment of this committee, but have a permanency to it in however way we decide we want to envision ourselves to be.

[01:36:39] I think that's what we're looking for. - Will you put that in a motion? - I think that motion was echoed in the amended motion. - But you said to change it to a, you were specific-- - Oh, to a, well, it's not one of the four. I call it, it's a permanent committee.

[01:36:57] We voted already on his, didn't we vote on your motion? Yeah. Yeah. Right. So. Yeah, so if we can reformulate the equity committee to become, to not be an ad hoc committee, but to be a permanent committee within the four that are permitted, then that's something that I see all of us supporting.

[01:37:19] Okay. That's the motion that I, if you want me to put forward, I can put that forward. Okay. You would get communication from me, from the board, based on us continuing to meet, but for the board, and I'm going to assume that was a motion.

[01:37:38] Do I get a second? Do I get a second from anyone? Yeah, so I motion that we change the status of the equity committee from an ad hoc committee to a permanent committee that's aligned with one of the four based on the policy 23, I believe, 23.10 in the line with alignment with that okay do I get a second discussion my clarifying question you're recommending to the full board yes it's

[01:38:17] only a recommendation got it so it's been properly moved and seconded that we take to the board that we transition did it sorry I didn't see I'm sorry yeah Tom Ketchum, second.

[01:38:35] Okay, so now can we vote on that last motion that we transition from ad hoc to standing? That's within the policy of 2310.

[01:38:58] All in favor? I got 17.

[01:39:17] So it would be? Oh, I'm sorry, all who oppose? Okay. And I want to help support the one that opposes because he came to all three of those subcommittee meetings and others and many others did not show up and so um he was left to to create a charter by himself well not by himself but with two other people whereas the committee subcommittee had eight

[01:39:51] people on it okay so we have one who opposed and so I will take it to the board the full board your recommendation and so we'll meet back here I don't know the date the first Thursday in June help me the base motion was um that the equity committee um be discharged as a select committee

[01:40:30] of the school board and reimagined in another form that's what we just voted on to change it from okay at this time i'd like to move can i read it so that you know what you're voting on i'd like to move that the equity committee recommend to the full school board that it be discharged as a select committee of the school board and reimagined in another form so as to be determined

[01:41:08] by the full board with the two other amendments that we've had tonight. The first amendment would remove the word discharge and so we would have to formulate the wording that amends the base motion so the amendment would take the two amendments would have to be kind of merged but the word discharge would have to be removed okay but not discharge but discharge as an ad hoc

[01:41:48] committee isn't that what we're saying and we want it to become no we're going to take it to the board before june and you gave me the date for the june meeting june 5th the first thursday in june is june 5th and i'll bring back to you on june 5th if they've had an opportunity at that

[01:42:16] point to discuss it okay so um so all in favor of the uh of the base motion with the two amendments

[01:42:38] on top of it let it be known by raising your hand 17 and 18 17 okay all those who oppose okay so based on the the conversation and the decisions tonight we will get those written up for you and

[01:43:17] i will share with you before i take your recommendations to the board by way of email yeah helen will help me okay well is there any other new business to come before us tonight if not we are adjourned at what time 7 35 7 15 7 15 7 15 so we made it before 7 30



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