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Loudoun County Public Schools, Performance Monitoring Committee Meeting, Thursday, May 29, 2025

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[00:00:03] - All right, good afternoon, everyone. I'd like to call to order this May 29th meeting of the Performance Monitoring Committee. My name is Arben Estreffi, and I'm joined by Ms. Chernoff, as well as Chair Mansfield. And I'd just like to welcome you all, and thank you, thank everyone for being here with us.

[00:00:21] It's always a special treat, and I see that we have two topics for today. My second favorite thing to talk about is dashboarding. But I saw, it would have been my first, but I saw that belonging was on the list of topics. So that is the number one thing.

[00:00:37] So again, thanks to everyone for being here. Just wanna make sure, see if anyone, if we have any public comment for this afternoon. - There is no public comment this afternoon. - Okay, thank you, Dr. Ellis. So seeing that we don't have any public comment, we'll move on to the approval of the draft meeting minutes from the April 29th, 2025 meeting.

[00:00:59] Do I have a motion to approve the meeting minutes? - Motion to approve the minutes. - Thank you. That motion has been made by Ms. Chernoff. Do I have a second? - Second. - Seconded by Chair Mansfield. That motion has been made and properly seconded.

[00:01:15] Is there any discussion? Seeing none, we'll move on to a vote. All those in favor of approving the meeting minutes, please say aye. - Aye. - Aye. That motion will pass unanimously. The meeting

minutes have been approved. We'll move on to our information items, starting with 4.01 Department of Academics, data dashboard and update.

[00:01:40] - So this is actually a collaboration between academics and digital innovation. And so we're each gonna take a few slides and I'm gonna turn it over to Aaron Smith, Chief Technology Officer to kick us off.

[00:01:56] - Excellent, well thanks for the opportunity to come and speak about the DDI portion first of the data dashboarding and kind of what we do in data governance practices. On the next slide, the next one. So a lot of what we do has been rooted in our, on the post-entry plan and with our strategic plan in alignment of what data metrics we're gathering and what needed to be presented.

[00:02:19] So you'll see a lot of that as we go through the slides. On the next slides, I kind of wanted to give a high-level overview of our internal data practices to start. So what tools are we using? We use a tool called Qlik or Qlik Cloud. It's a cloud environment that does data visualizations, but it also is our source of truth data.

[00:02:38] So you don't get to data dashboards at the beginning. You kind of get there at the end once you've done your data governance practices. And that really means that we have consistent practices among how we're collecting data. An example of how we're collecting and presenting data, an example of that would be when we show an indicator based off of a total number of student enrollment, that could be an indicator for, that would call out a specific student as a member of that group.

[00:03:02] So those consistent practices, having that consistent across all of our applications and how we use that data, is kind of what that team developed. The second thing that they developed was a data dictionary and that's consistent terminology. If you ask 10 people to pull a list of teachers, you'll get 10 different responses.

[00:03:18] Are you including librarians? Are you not including librarians? Are you including school counselors? Like, what other staff? So having that terminology consistent so that when you reference that data set, you are talking about that specific data. And then third is verified data sources. So our Qlik data repository has over 150 verified data sources, and so the teams work to make sure that we're getting data from authoritative source of truth and that it is validated.

[00:03:42] There's audits performed on this data. So when we're using it, we're sure that it is accurate and it is timely. Some of this data is updated every 15 minutes. Some of it's updated nightly. It depends on the applications. You can kind of see some of the data sources. They could be SOL data, map data, student information, ERP, financial HR data.

[00:03:59] So we have all sorts of data sources in there to kind of pull from. So we have a big bucket of what I like to call Legos. On the next slide, you'll kind of see our journey of how we have used data and what this has looked like so data you can see at the top it really is just a you dump all the Legos out on the floor and nothing's sorted and that's all your data and it's all available it's all right there if the next step is kind of sorting it you can see here it's kind of like sorted by colors and so that helps you see a little bit better about the data but then you arrange it and so you can see a little bit and where we're at now with our data dashboard is it's presented visually it really is not that next step of explaining with a story

[00:04:38] it really is just like here's a bunch of data elements that we're able to present and you can go to our public data dashboard now and you can see things like demographics of schools enrollment but it

really is just data points it's not telling any sort of specific story what that kind of looks like so that's kind of where we envision the next steps for like data dashboarding 2.0 for that being presenting some transparent storytelling to our community I mean that varies by from school to school and scenario to scenario when a lot of those details are very important to telling that story. One of the items that I like to highlight is something like there's a lot of comparisons

[00:05:15] that like to happen between school A and school B and really just looking at a single data point like graduation for example doesn't highlight the differences at a school. You could have a school that has a 30 percent student mobility rate and they have a completely different set of challenges than a school that has a two percent student mobility rate and so making sure that that story is encapsulating all of that perspective is really important to really telling a true story about that school, those outcomes, those students, whatever the kind of the intentions need to be. So that's kind of where our next steps are. Like, what are those questions we are trying to

[00:05:53] answer? What are those stories that we want to tell? And then once we identify those items, We work with our friends and Rozzy to really be like, what measures? And here's just some examples of measures and then by what dimensions and how are we going to present that data?

[00:06:10] Also, there's a lot of data that is complex. So how do we visualize these layouts so that everyone can kind of understand them without needing to read a 30-page diatribe about what this data means and how to interact with it? So simply telling a story is also a complex part of that process.

[00:06:27] And then timeline prioritization and ongoing support. Every data dashboard or visualization that we build requires some sort of technical ongoing upkeep. So if we do something, we wanna make sure that there's value in it and that the teams that are, the teams that are accruing that technical debt are actually, this is something that we wanna continue to invest time in to make sure that it's relevant.

[00:06:50] You'll see a lot of our data dashboards that we have up there now. We'll have timestamps of the last time that data was updated. The one, our public-facing dashboard is every night at this point because it's pulling from multiple sources, but we have internal data visualizations and dashboards for staff that are much more frequent than that.

[00:07:05] And so depending on the level of effort and the impact at the school is like how much staff resources and time we want to assign to that because we want to make the most impact with the resources that we have available to us. On the next slide, these are just an example of some guiding questions that we were kind of tossing around.

[00:07:23] We have an internal data dashboarding work group that is a cross-section of multiple teams. And so we're really working to like drive home some of these questions and be able to answer like, are students learning at the rate they are expected to learn? And you could unpack that deeply by school level, by scores, by all sorts of items.

[00:07:43] How does my child compare to others? That's another question we think, you know, parents want to know where they're at on some sort of scale. Are schools improving performance over time? So seeing some sort of trend analysis versus like a point in time snapshot, especially if you're coming into the district or you're moving from school to school and then how does my child's school compare to other schools in LCPS and even nationally in some instances so those are the type of guiding questions the team has been tossing around and then trying to deep dive into what it's actually going to take to tell that story

and tell it as as simply and accurately as possible to get the point across so from here I'll hand it over to Dr. Tyler to kind

[00:08:21] of take the next part of the presentation thank you Mr. Smith so continuing with the public dashboard sample looking at map based upon the questions that Mr. Smith outlined. So if we're taking different stakeholders through this, we actually put a map in the context. On this slide, you would see we explain map is utilized and grades run through eight and math and or reading and that there's certain practices in place at the high school level. So as we're sharing a dashboard, giving some background as to what you're looking at and its particular usage as far as a

[00:08:56] description and on the next slide explaining that it has different usages again important for people to see the context before they see the example that dr. Blaycock's going to take us through that it's utilized for sir so it's utilized for helping students that growth goals to differentiate instruction and we're keeping it more at a higher level it's utilizing decision trees and an intricate level for many decisions but the idea is that when you're starting off, you keep it simple, you put it in context, you're talking about, in this case, map at a straightforward level and some of its basic usage. And at this point, Dr. Blaklock will

[00:09:34] take us through an actual mock-up of a dashboard. Thank you, Dr. Tyler. So a couple of things to address as I present this slide right here is one is that this is fake data. So I just wanted to make sure that there's a clear understanding of that. A couple of things that we want to think about is the context that Mr. Smith alluded to in the sense of, you know, what does that, what does a number mean in comparison to other numbers as well, in and of itself? The other is that we want to focus in on telling the story, but just the story. We don't want to throw everything in the kitchen sink at people. We want to really help them be able to discern the signal from the

[00:10:13] noise of the information that they're looking at. So we follow Stephanie Evergreen's data visualization guidelines in the research office and build a lot of things around that, and I'll walk you through this app right here, which is basically the map data. So on that top one where it says conditional growth percentile, you see one for a school which would be selected from the little gray box in the upper left-hand corner, and then it would compare it to, if it's an elementary school, all elementary schools. So instead of a school-to-school comparison, it's a part-to-the-whole comparison, so you can get a little bit of better context. And then

[00:10:49] at a bigger, a larger context, the division. So, you know, if it's a reading and it's an elementary school, you'll see the middle school data involved in that as well. And that's for the conditional growth percentile. So that answers the question of, you know, what does the growth look like at my child's school? Below that, we see a very similar concept, and these are called cards, is that we have the achievement percentiles of the school compared to all elementaries compared to the division, which answers the question of how is my child's school performing?

[00:11:24] Beneath that, on the bottom left-hand corner, we have the line chart there, which is the CGP over time. I know it's small, but basically that answers the question of what does the growth at my child's school look like over time? And then, very similar fashion, the achievement over time, how is my child's school doing over time?

[00:11:42] When you look at the little gray boxes at the top, those are the filters. So you would be able to filter across, you know, if you wanted to look at third graders of a certain ethnicity that were English learners at a certain school, you would be able to drill to that using those filters at the top.

[00:11:59] And then the other piece of it as well, as you'll see on the right-hand side, the mathematics reading, that would be a toggle. So you see right now that the mathematics is showing, and then the reading is showing. If you click the reading, the reading scores would come up. Yes, Ms. Manfield.

[00:12:15] So the custom build-a-table for VDOE also goes down and looks at the students with disabilities by disabilities. Are you just thinking just general students with disabilities generally, or are you looking at going to categorize it like they do at VDOE for the custom build-a-table?

[00:12:35] So we could do it either way. We typically, in our internal apps, do students with disabilities, students without disabilities, but I understand what you're thinking there in the sense of what level of granularity beyond that you would like to look at. The one thing I would say is that we do use some standard data suppression rules, that if you end up with subgroups smaller than 10, just nothing shows up at all, just to make sure that we're respecting confidentiality.

[00:13:03] So you'd be able to toggle back and forth between mathematics and reading. The other thing that we just kind of spoke about that Dr. Tyler mentioned is putting it into context. So what is MAP? What does MAP mean? What are the concepts around it? You'll see that little question mark hovering right there next to conditional growth percentile.

[00:13:20] If we go look on the next slide, it's an example of what could happen in a situation like that where a little pop-up box came up with an explanation of what it was. The other options that we've discussed is how it would embed inside the iframe of the website itself with text above and below or text on sides to make sure that there's a clear understanding in addition to the visualizations themselves.

[00:13:44] I'll turn it back to Dr. Tyler to talk through Matt and the rest of it. Thank you, Dr. Blakelock. So what you see here is a way to kind of represent an experience that a user would have. And on these next few slides, there's context, whether they hover over a concept and they see this content or they see it, say, in a guide or in another page.

[00:14:06] The idea of a more important background, the conditional growth percentile and the 50th percentile is typical kind of giving people a way to kind of anchor what they're looking at. The conditional growth is different from achievement, the idea of the history of utilizing it, reminding folks of its usage, and then explaining the achievement percentile and giving examples of that.

[00:14:28] This is there because when we create a dashboard, we have to find multiple ways to ensure that people are not looking at the information and lacking context. So whether they're hovering over it and they can see it, like Dr. Blakely, I'll give you an example of it, or they see this content in multiple locations, It must embed people in what they're looking at.

[00:14:47] The achievement percentile is different for growth, for example. So this is an example of the content we would have to convey to folks to ensure that they're grounded in the context of it. The next slide, again, explains conditional growth, and it gives an example here, whether it's something they hover over and they see the next slide, they see an actual visual of the difference between two students starting at a certain achievement percentile, Significant growth at the 99th percentile means that they're accelerating and their achievement increases.

[00:15:20] But if they regress or lose ground, that student could end up at their first conventional growth percentile and their actual achievement percentile can drop. So we have to find ways in this kind of platform, in the dashboard, to ensure that people understand what they're looking at.

[00:15:37] And it's not going to be the conventional way as they may read an actual paper book as much as a digital interface where they're reminded consistently of what they're seeing, how to interpret it. So this gives you an example, I think, on the last slide, just additional terms explaining what the terms mean.

[00:15:59] So the idea is that this is a mock-up of what it would look like. But thinking about ways that we can, using this as an example, it's not just the information that you're seeing. the context of it and understanding it at a conceptual level and then kind of understanding how it's utilized so we can have informed conversations. So we wanted to give you an opportunity to see what the mock-up could look like and think about what your constituents are

[00:16:33] asking you and what information you are hearing from them and how we can solve for those questions. Going back to the guiding questions that Mr. Smith talked about, are those the same questions that you're hearing? What else are you hearing? You know, there's so much data available.

[00:16:53] We could really saturate the dashboard, so we want to be really thoughtful about what we share and what we prioritize. So with that, I'll turn it back over to you, Mr. Streffi, and we'd love to hear your thoughts. Sure. So two things.

[00:17:09] so first of all I do appreciate that you need to look first at the achievement percentile in a way to decide like for a kid or for where they start off especially like say EL students might start off here but then they're going to have a lot of growth but then maybe gen ed students might in the stereotypes I'm sorry but and then other general ed students might start here and they won't have as much growth so it's important to know where they start off and how much growth they have. Now, talking about that, something that I always hear about are how are your tier two instruction going? How is that going? And are you making progress in

[00:17:46] your schools? And I think that's an important measure to know. Are the SLD kids making progress in tier two instruction or tier three instruction? Or grade two or grade three, are we seeing EIRI making a difference to K through two? I think those are important questions for a parent well i mean they were important for me to know that i can count on the school to um that they're making gains that the kids are making gains and they're we're just not seeing

[00:18:22] a flat line and and that we're holding and we're understanding those gains um that's those that's what i think is important as well and that um what was that bar graph thingy that you made the other that was so cool between the two. The Sankey chart. Yeah. The Sankey chart, S-A-N-K-E-Y.

[00:18:43] Sankey chart. We'll try to find places to put that. Yeah. I think it's such a great visual. We've already added it into a few of our existing click apps to help people see growth. Okay. And that's all I'm thinking. I was a big proponent of the custom build a table for the SOL scores, And I really used that a lot in my advocacy and at the legislative level, too, to show differences and to show that we needed help.

[00:19:19] And so I think this is a great way. And it can also show that we're doing the right thing, right? Thank you, Mr. Streffi. This whole thing just makes me so happy. I love it so much.

[00:19:34] I feel like since, I mean, I've talked about data since, that how do I transfer? But I also know that if we go down the rabbit hole with too many things, we will lose people. So good luck with figuring out where that line is.

[00:19:50] I'm not sure that I have that answer. But I also have this belief that much to the Lego representation, which I love that, by the way, the visual of it is really great. And I do think that each student's little house, if you will, or even if they have a room in the house, is very different based on their individual needs, based on what they're bringing to school from their home life to what they're eating for lunch versus, you know, what kind of sense of belonging they feel in school or what their achievement data is.

[00:20:26] I mean, all those little blocks are creating a story. And so for parents to really understand that, or even, I think, just the greater community, I think, is a heavy lift. And what I would really love to see, and the beginnings of these conversations have started to happen.

[00:20:43] Dr. Ellis and I met with Dr. Tyler, and I've had some of these conversations with Dr. Spence as well, is what I'd like to really help parents understand when you talk about context is what kinds of structures exist within our schools to support student learning. And so learning around the multi-tiered systems of support, learning around the fact that we care about kids having a sense of belonging in school, that we believe that that matters for achievement, talking about the work that we do with our English language learners and our special education students and the different types of intervention and thoughts that go into all of that.

[00:21:21] I think as we start to overlay and overlap some of that data much like the building of the house I think parents will begin to maybe have a better sense of what questions to ask because I think the biggest issue for from parents that I hear is they don't know what to ask because they don't understand the context and so yes they want to know how they stack up everybody wants to know where their kid stacks up in comparison but I think what they really want to know is how they can support their kid how can I support my kid and what can I do to partner with you? At least most of the parents that I talk to, that's what they're

[00:21:59] interested in. So I think having that understanding would be really helpful. And one more thing I just want to say is that I love that you're going to put the definitions in there, like the overlay. I think that that will go so far in educating our parents. Obviously, maybe having them in different languages would be really helpful. Additionally, I don't know if we thought about this. I think at one time we did videos to kind of unpack things or even I know when we were doing our learning Dr. Tyler about MAP way back when we had some case studies where we looked at different data points

[00:22:33] and exactly what you said made me think of it um Chair Mansfield because we talked about a kid who's two like two grade levels above is going to have significant growth for a couple of years and then they could drive unfolding some of that in a case field.

[00:22:51] I think just kind of some random thoughts. One is to the point of the tips that you can hover over or pop up, maybe there's a way as you would in some type of an e-learning course where it would actually force you to go through some steps to navigate before you could even play with the dashboard.

[00:23:16] So like, you know, the first step pops up, you have to click this button. This does this, right? And then, so it's a quick, not every time. Well, that's a good question. Yeah. But just a thought, right? That could, that could be one thing. Cause that it's, I mean, dashboards are still can be, can be pretty clunky and heavy.

[00:23:36] And especially if you're trying to allow people to dive deeper into, give them the ability to dig deeper into the data, it can be, you know, overwhelming. But I like where this is going. The other thing I'll

mention is I have tended to think a lot about our school improvement plans and how we could tie data and dashboards into the priorities of each school community and what's top of mind for that school community and how do we feed our dashboards into that.

[00:24:11] I think could be another, you know, it doesn't necessarily play into if I'm a parent and looking, I want to compare my my child's um you know progress but at the end of the day that context of where that school community is and what the challenges they might be facing and what they're what they're doing in a given year attaching some dashboards and insights to that could be

[00:24:38] really powerful um but yeah that's it for me anyone else so is this so for matt is it just going to be for map score? Are we going to have VALs in here and whatever they decide to do with SOLs whenever that, how that is going to happen? Are we going to have that on here too? Or are we just going to allow the state to do SOLs because they already do it anyway? So if we're thinking

[00:25:15] about the purpose, if the purpose is to what extent are we preparing students for the next grade, then it would be SOL scores. So it's really kind of geared around what purpose, what message are you're trying to share with the community to what extent we're preparing students for the next grade to what extent we're building those reading skills those foundational reading skills where all students will be ready to read at a particular level and that may be vows when it evolves to give us the data that we need so the idea of purpose driven dashboards that have a clear purpose that drive the data we look at in the story we tell if that helps with how we proceed so when you guys

[00:25:54] And I'll just add real quick that we used MAP as an example, just as a mock-up and as a starting point because we've been collecting the data for a significant number of years now, and we are very clearly in that presented visually category.

[00:26:12] We do that really well, and so we're trying to shift and use MAP as an example. Part of it is bandwidth to create the dashboards. And so, for example, getting to where Ms. Chernoff was describing, being able to tell the whole story of a student or a grade level or a school, we need to evolve to get there, starting with something simple like MAP.

[00:26:38] So this is going to be public-facing. This isn't on ParentVue. Correct. Okay. So when we do this, is there any way, I know that like MAP has been studied along with SOLs and like they actually have a technical document talking about like what RIT scores are comparable to past the SOL, that kind of thing.

[00:27:06] I have to go digging for it all the time but um when they redo the SOLs or or when this happens I mean that might be something a link to put on there as well just if people want I am one of those who do a lot of digging other parents aren't but I can guarantee you a lot of special education parents are diggers and researchers so um that and so that's always helpful for them to say okay I get it yeah yeah I really appreciate this I love this I wish y'all had this

[00:27:39] like 10 years ago but I have a question when I don't have click anymore which I wish I did still but it's weird to me that I don't have access to that anymore but in click isn't it when you go in like you can click on the different you click on the different assessments and then it takes you into that specific dashboard and then you can filter from there so it the way that we analyze data internally now we use that I would assume that's still the case like you can look at I think we well it used to be PALS and DRA was in there even and you know some of the older tests that we took

[00:28:16] and then those were phased out but I think we still have that right? We do and that's been a significant like professional development around that so yeah building some data science mindset and like how to look at the data and when you release a public facing dashboard you kind of don't have that ramp to do all of that to establish those procedures so you've got to kind of have it like a one-stop shop because we're not going to be able to necessarily build a data science mindset with everyone who's going to be interacting with a public facing dashboard so that's where like telling a complex story as simply as possible because you're going to have some people in the community who just want to dive into the numbers and you're going to have other ones who just want to see the picture and clearly understand what it means yeah meeting all of those needs has kind

[00:28:54] of been the challenge so internally it was easier we had a set we could at least say okay teachers understand this they know what all these acronyms are they right those type of things and then do some professional development and then um have an iterative process with them yeah so that makes sense it's pretty complicated i'm also wondering too if we could leverage parent view that way where you the numbers in parent view could say hey this is explained in the dashboard that can give you bigger context like sort of work backwards into the numbers that parent view has because parents do have access to their own individual kids scores and then they could use the dashboard to give the greater context so it's sort of like the inverse of what teachers have if that makes sense and i

[00:29:33] And I think where we have gotten to where we're at now is a little bit organically. So where we could put a PDF document in a place that parents could access that for their student is where it went. Maybe not that made the most sense and told the best story and was the clearest way to interpret the data. So I think the teams in some of these applications in Qlik, we may be presented visually.

[00:29:52] But in ParentVUE, it may be much more in that arranged and you have to go and kind of build those connections yourself. Yeah. Wow. Fascinating. Really cool. important also when this comes out to do training for the parents and also make those connections that Ms. Shurnoff was talking about that you can use this for parent view and then look at your kid and then look at the bigger picture here or or whatever and I think that's really um I think that's really important. I love that um so Mr. Smith also scope creep is coming but I was just

[00:30:30] thinking so I had this so you know how you get you do these assessments that are personality assessments or you know to look at your propensities and you're filling out a questionnaire scrap the questionnaire you have this data that is specific to a student if a parent or even just a teacher if you can run like build an AI model that actually produces the PDF for you that says you know this student compare the data in that school this student with all the challenges with what's going on in that school the school improvement plan and the

[00:31:06] the circumstances within that school and all the scores all the insights that come out of that specific school maybe some insights at the division level but really that pdf focuses on that that student and where they are at versus all of the resources that we talked about that that could play into recommendations for that student even if it was just for the for the for the you know teacher or potentially at some point to the parent is that something that you all have maybe thought about or am i just cuckoo so i know we're looking at vendors who propose to do those things

[00:31:42] so um the challenge is finding one that actually does it so especially in the ai landscape we have a lot of vendors bringing a lot of solutions and a lot of them are powerpoint click-throughs and not

actual applications that work so we are really trying to find something that we can leverage there because i do think the power is individualizing that story even to a parent per student different students are going to have completely different stories, whether it's grade level or ability level or whatever it is. So I think we're looking for that. We actually have some vendor demos set up to look at those. But it's about, can they actually deliver at this time frame? And

[00:32:18] the inconsistency of data sets used across school divisions causes some challenges there, too, because there's not one consistent practice that everyone follows, which means we don't have that data governance kind of built in so we the the team has had conversations about what it would take to build these internally and the resource allocation technical debt there is just way too high so we're looking in that in the our vendor partners to really help us solve that problem but we we do see that as like going to parent view is difficult but at least it's there it's something to at least say we're presenting it to you our data dashboard is presenting you data may not be in the best way or the most usable way so we're really trying to like rethink that with that 2.0

[00:32:56] okay thank you for talking me through that that's really helpful it's just with all the optimism around dashboarding I just I think one of my colleagues mentioned already is the accessibility of dashboards as the the way to tell the story for the parent is is a such a big barrier for so many families so I just wonder you know to me the question would be how much resources are we actually putting into the dashboards and then how are we going

[00:33:23] translate translate that over and make it accessible thank you so I guess then we'll move on to 4.02 Department of Academic strategic plan goal 1.3 update student sense of belonging way too many names on this item so I'm gonna pass it

[00:33:55] on to you dr. Ellis or maybe folks can introduce themselves yes sorry about that okay so I was gonna move out of the way so you could see our guests but I'll do that once I stop talking so we are very excited to talk a little bit about student sense of belonging with you this evening and I really appreciate your patience you've been sitting so quietly and we can't wait to hear from you before that I just wanted to provide a brief update around sense of belonging

[00:34:32] and how we've been talking about sense of belonging across the division. So this is and has been a focus area for Dr. Spence coming out of his first year as superintendent. So it was one of his post entry plan goals is to really focus on sense of belonging.

[00:34:53] We spoke with principals at monthly meetings. Dr. Spence spoke very passionately at a meeting describing the importance of sense of belonging to him and its connection to student achievement the amazing research team did created a white paper on sense of belonging and how it is how it impacts students success we also in that research determined that there were some key practices that really positively impact sense of belonging and you can see those listed on the screen also it's

[00:35:32] one of the focus areas of our instructional framework so if you remember hearing a presentation from mr. Roundsley and teaching and learning he talked about several key focus areas and student belonging is one of those key focus areas so we currently have some key questions in our annual student survey that is administered through the research office every year we monitor those questions and Dr. Blakelock has pulled the responses for this year and is working on comparison to last year.

[00:36:07] But I wanted to, before I turn it over to him and then to our very patient students, talk a little bit about this concept of a belonging gap. So the principals and Dr. Spence and central office leaders have been reading a book called *Belonging Through a Culture of Dignity*.

[00:36:26] If you don't have it, I highly suggest reading it, particularly chapter three really speaks to this belonging gap, and I'm happy to lend you a copy. Just simply put, if you think about Maslow's hierarchy of needs, you start with physiological safety all the way up to self-actualization, and the book talks about this gap between safety and achievement and if students don't belong if they don't feel like they belong we're asking them to sort of make this leap to achievement without taking

[00:37:02] care of their needs to belong in the school or in the classroom so that's that just really struck me and stood out to me and and I think it has also really struck stuck with some of the principles so as we're looking at these achievement gaps and and how we support students in achievement we really need to go back and make sure they also have a strong sense of belonging and so you'll see numbers that are very positive very very positive like our schools do a great job and we want every single student 100% of our students to feel

[00:37:39] like they belong in school so while the numbers are absolutely something to celebrate, I think it's still really important for us to talk about. So I'll turn it over to Dr. B to talk through the data. Thank you, Dr. Ellis. When you look at the literature on sense of belonging, much of it is connection to teachers and staff and connection to peers inside the school comprises the sense of belonging. So what you see here is four survey questions we have from our student survey. This is for the elementary one. And the percentage of positive responses, which in

[00:38:12] this case is the percentage of yes. And as you can see here, over 90% on all of them, very consistent from this year to last year. We see a decent consistency over time. So you can kind of see what that comparison looks like and where things grow. You can go to the next slide. In the middle school, we see something a little bit similar. We do the middle school every other year. So we actually did them last year and then two years ago, or three years ago. So there we still see a similar, very high percentage of sense of belonging across the board. A little bit of growth from

[00:38:52] one administration to the next. And then again, for the high school, same thing. They go every other year as well. They did this year and two years ago. So very similar as well. You've got that growth. They were in the 80s for the most part two years ago, and now they're up in the 90s as well. We still have a little bit of data flowing in right now. So we might see these numbers tweak just a little bit, but all in all, some very favorable responses. We think about 80% is what we look at as that threshold, and in this case, we're high 80s, 90s, 95 on the whole for these

[00:39:29] concepts around sense of belonging. I'll now turn it back to Dr. Ellis. All right, so at this point, I am going to turn it over to Dr. DiNicola, principal of J.L. Simpson Middle School, And he's going to share some information about how they are creating sense of belonging in their school.

[00:39:56] Do you guys want to just use those seats? Good evening, everybody. Oh, that's loud. Tripti Nicola, principal at Simpson Middle School. I think this is a good opportunity for everybody to try out their microphones. So just to have them introduce themselves would be very helpful.

[00:40:14] So we'll go right here to my left to one of our Mustang professionals. Hello. Thank you for having us here. My name is Deanna Lopez, and I teach Spanish and Spanish Perfluent Speakers, and I am

the advisor of Latino Student Association. Good evening.

[00:40:34] I'm Emma Bevins, and I'm a sixth grader at JLS. Sorry. I'm Jennifer Heron. I am a seventh grade history teacher, as well as sponsor of Empowered Girls, part of the co-equity lead, as well as sponsor of a lot of the groups that the kids are here with, with student equity ambassadors and a couple of others.

[00:40:57] Hi. I'm Garnett, or Greta Stoltz. either. And I'm an eighth grader at Simpson. Hi, I'm Amira, and I'm an eighth grader at Simpson. Hi, I'm Angela, and I'm an eighth grader at Simpson. Hello, I'm Jackson Roberts. I am a seventh grader at Simpson. I'm in Student Equity Ambassadors along with this girl right here.

[00:41:28] I'm also in that one too. I'm an MSAC student delegate. MSAC stands for Minority Student Achievement Advancement Committee, and I am in the Mustang News Crew, along as many other things outside school. My name is Alex Bird. I'm a part of Sources of Strength, Student Ambassadors, SCA, and I was also the team captain for the basketball team. I am JJ Bowser. I'm part of

[00:42:07] Principal Student Advisory Committee, Student Council, and Sources of Strength. I'm Emma Bevins again um i'm part of um student advisory planning team uh the yearbook committee level up i'm the sixth grade representative for student council i'm part of the photography club and for sports i was

[00:42:39] in the volleyball intramural program i am a catcher for the simpson softball team and yeah there's some others but me again sorry I'm in NGHS National National's Junior Honor Society I'm in the eighth grade orchestra and I'm in the marching band at Loudoun County High School I'm in eighth grade orchestra I'm in student ambassadors empowered girls and I was in

[00:43:17] intramural sports for volleyball and flag football um I'm in empowered girls national honor junior society latino student association uh what else student equity ambassador msac in the flag football too oh in the yearbook staff so what you just heard and thank you all i'm so proud of you all these wonderful mustangs and i call all of our staff members mustang professionals can we give

[00:43:53] a round of applause it's very cool right so simpson middle school is turning 50 next year i like to say that it is one year younger than I, because I just hit that number not too long ago. When I first arrived at Simpson, it was the fall of 2023, following some wonderful principles. And within minutes of being in the cafeteria with the staff, I used the word vacuum because I was vacuumed up into the family. And it really does. The community, that entire community, the cluster with which we work is very much like a family. You can feel it everywhere you go. It's a sense of belonging that is really very contagious. I'm going to test our students here. We have an acronym behind

[00:44:33] which we live, and it's kind of hard to read up there, but I bet if I say H, you would say? Honorable. Honorable. E is? Engaged. R is? Respectful. And D is? Determined. So where do you hear that every day? You know where you hear that every day? It's on the morning news. The morning announcements in the news. So we try to make sure that everything that we do is behind that initiative. The mission and vision that you see before you, the top mission is Simpson's mission, and then we embedded some core values and commitments. And Dr. Ellis, if you go to the next slide, of course you see the LCPS mission and vision at the bottom. But last spring,

[00:45:12] we had all of our students who wanted to join the team, and many of our students who were specifically chosen for the team are oftentimes students that are not the ones who would come before you and would say that they were interested in doing this kind of work. So we're very intentionable, intentional

rather, and very specific about to whom we reach out. It stopped for you there, but essentially what they're doing there is designing the mission and vision that you just saw. So we recentered a lot of our work behind the instructional framework, behind a lot of the data actually that you were just talking about in terms of what we're focusing on. But our goal as a school is to really work as a staff to build student capacity as leaders, engage kids' voices

[00:45:51] and their efforts, and to really make sure that kids, every child, has something that they can tap. We have a program called Clubs During the Day that we're reinvigorating next season, and our after-school programs, which you've just heard a couple of examples of, are pretty vibrant.

[00:46:08] You can go to the next one if you like, Dr. Ellis. That's everybody. We're very proud to win the countywide spirit contest this year. Oh, yes, right, we did. That was pretty cool. I won't tell you how I got that picture because I'll get in trouble with facilities, but it's a really great picture. It was on top of the school. I'll leave it there. 892 students this current year. We have about 144 staff. I mentioned 50 years, but we're going to go over 1,000 within the next two years again, so a fluctuating population. To go to the next slide, Dr. Ellis, it will show a great sense of diversity at Simpson. It is a beautiful diversity, I would say. We say this all the time. It's something that we integrate in all of our morning announcements.

[00:46:46] I know that when we work with one another, we talk about kindness being the answer, kindness being the choice. The kids have an overwhelming numbers come to me to say I want to be on the morning announcements how can we get involved in that way to be seen and heard in front of each other. The next slide shows that we have yes a very large population about 20 percent of our population is L students and if you go to the next slide you can see a project that they did recently. So we had many of our L students and many of our students and resource come together to put together a beautiful art project.

[00:47:19] It's a mural, and if you keep going, Dr. Ellis, you see some more pictures, and then I hope the video works. It is a mural that showcases the expression, we belong, that's my timer, sorry. I told you I'd do seven minutes. All right, let me turn it off.

[00:47:37] We belong is what it says in 52 different languages, and it represents our school, represents all of our students, and it's quite amazing to see them put the work into it. It was all theirs. And then finally, if you take a look at the next slide, those are the core elements that at day one, when I was at Simpson, our staff picked out what was most important to them.

[00:47:59] And ironically, a lot of what you see up there is what I had written on my paper. So that united us. And then we use that same terminology with all of our students. The very next slide will show you all the different organizations, some of which they mentioned as well.

[00:48:15] I think the essential, we just did some interviews today, and we embed all those previous concepts that you see there, but most importantly, communication and relationships. When you go to that distance and make sure that people know what's happening and you show what you care about them, I think that's what makes the population, the teamwork at Simpsons so beautiful.

[00:48:38] That's all from me. This is a video that Dr. Ellis has seen. I just put it in there for fun. She knows it's too long, and you can watch it later. We post it in an Instagram. That's for you to have fun with later. It goes more in depth with our, I'm sorry.

[00:48:54] Yeah, it's not there for you. But if you have any questions for them, thank you for welcoming us. We appreciate it. Thank you all so much. Really appreciate you sharing a little bit about your school

community and for you all coming. I'll open it up for any discussion.

[00:49:12] Well, thank you for being here. I love Simpson. I've had several wonderful visits where we've always talked about these kinds of things. And it really excites me about how you're integrating the clubs to give access to kids because it shouldn't necessarily have to be a choice after school or before school.

[00:49:31] There can be barriers there. So I love how you've done that and integrated that. My question is for the students. Sorry, Tripp. But my question is, how do you leverage what you've learned in these different clubs and activities?

[00:49:46] obviously the things that you mentioned sources of strength equity ambassadors all these different things are centered around making sure kids have access and feel welcome and and supported in school so how do those kinds of skills lend I want to say this the right way when you see someone who's sort of on the fringe or someone who might not be included what kinds of things have you learned and ways strategies that you can help draw other kids in um I would just say like from Being in Sources of Strength, we try to make a lot of campaigns for all kids.

[00:50:23] And it's kind of like, it's really like, how do I say this? It's like welcoming so all kids feel comfortable trying to join. I love that. Anybody else? Things that you've learned to help draw in others?

[00:50:40] Challenging question. It's, I'd have to say, it's pretty easy to get involved. Nobody's going to turn you down. I don't think any of our programs do cuts from anything since you'll just get sucked right in in what Dr. D said.

[00:51:03] It's a family. The reason why herd is our slogan is because it's really a Mustang herd instead of being a community. I think everybody belongs somewhere in a herd, and you just need to feel where you're going to be.

[00:51:26] Any teacher will sponsor anything for you, as long as you ask. You don't really have to say no to anything unless you've already been booked up with everything. All of our orchestras and performers, they all have something to do, whether that be performing.

[00:51:52] If you see the growth from the start of the year to the end of the year with the 6th grade band or orchestra or anything, It's really amazing because they put in that work. In our clubs, there's a lot of them.

[00:52:09] Most of them are advisory and planning. Dr. D has a committee that is Principal Student Advisory Committee that makes a lot of the decisions. A great example is that last year our transition time was four minutes and the Principal Student Advisory Committee wanted it to be five.

[00:52:35] so this year it's now five and it gives a lot and gives you a lot more time to get in between places um i i don't know does anybody else want to go okay go ahead um something like with orchestra and the marching band um you kind of start to realize that they're everyone's a little weird and there's a bunch of weirdos you can relate to because it's if you're able to like find at least one thing that you have in common among like a bunch of different kids like oh everyone plays strings and instruments everyone likes marching band everyone likes the same anime like random

[00:53:13] things um they can kind of start to you know relate to each other and find more ways they can relate and develop like a more like community like um orchestra and the marching band we all like everyone cares about each other and everyone very much like wants everyone else to be okay and make

sure that everyone else is like thriving in their own way and yeah does anyone else have anything so coming from principal student advisory committee every student in there has a voice

[00:53:50] they choose to speak up make changes and i my favorite is when we have open-ended discussions about a certain topic in the school we can decide whether we want to change what's going on every student has yeah like I said a voice they can change something what was a challenging question but you rose to the occasion that was absolutely beautiful well done on all of you and to the leadership as well thank you for being here I just have a quick question kind of more of a curiosity

[00:54:30] you know for the team and the staff often think about a lot that's been written about belonging versus fitting in and how do you think about those two I mean for me I don't want to oversimplify things but just thinking how busy the team could be in any school any LCPS school one of the core thing if you have space for differentiation and if you don't feel suffocated I feel that that trickles down to being able to be more curious with your students spending more time focusing on the relationships what do you really helps get in front of that culture giving students more voice

[00:55:10] and all of that um i think it's ultimately when it comes to uh fitting in versus um cultivating belonging it's this idea that fitting in requires you to conform or to meet some expectation or to change something about yourself or there's some condition or exception that you have to meet um in order to have uh you know to to be able to survive within a school or thrive um just wanted to hear your thoughts around belonging and um what you think is that magic

[00:55:44] recipe or formula that that's made things work so well i think it starts and i would love if anybody else wants to jump into about about this but i think it starts with that kindness and care for each other and getting to build that relationship with each person in the building I'm very detail-oriented, and I think I always have been.

[00:56:06] I think everybody knows it that I am. Yeah, they know it. They all know it. All the students know it, too. I think when you have that focus on making sure that you're finding out the intricacies of what makes people work and helping them find their place, it just makes your school that much richer, if you think about it in that fashion.

[00:56:24] So as an example, we had a young lady who won a first-place award. It's the first time she's ever been recognized for anything. she did this beautiful artwork, and she's very, very original about everything that she does. And her family said she'd never been recognized before. So we brought her in, we actually are framing her artwork, putting her name up, and she was just so proud of that. And it makes a difference, I think, when you can try to identify pieces of maybe an accomplishment, however small it might be. And it can happen in the classroom. I think when we walk through and watch our teachers at our school, I think the kids would tell you that they feel like it's enjoyable to be with

[00:57:00] them. They ask them questions about who they are, what they enjoy, and what they want to do well before they ever ask any SOL-related question. And that alludes to the gap piece that we were talking about. So once I think kids feel like you care about them, and that also is the same thing with the staff. I try to shower them with love, right? And so do the kids. We recognize them with what kind of award do we do? Remember the countywide awards starts with an s shine shine yes the shine awards so i know that carrie sims i probably drive her crazy but i share that link out during advisory and we will have hundreds of kids

[00:57:39] give teachers awards and they walk the awards to them in the spring i think when they do that it personalizes it we do honorable ceremonies that way too they get little wristbands and i know i'm talking a lot but is there anything else that you feel like from your yeah sure go ahead I think the key word is connection the connection that we made with the students and that relation and that conversations that we have in the classroom when we are teaching them not just the content but sometimes we just go out of the content and

[00:58:16] talk to them and and ask them questions and let them speak and sometimes they share with us things that are important for them and when they know that we care and they feel more comfortable they feel secure they feel safe and that have that connection between the student and the teacher is what make them feel more comfortable and to be in our classrooms in our schools. I will echo that exactly it is amazing how children will want will recognize you real quick that I can ask you

[00:58:56] anything I can come and talk to you and they say that about all their teachers when they have to decide who their trusted adult is I think a lot of them struggle trying to find just one at Simpson they are very open they are they bring out the best of us so it makes it easy and being in a building that allows the diversity to be celebrated and not stifled and if a kid wants to create a spirit day or a kid wants to do something any kid can come up to any adult and ask them hey how do I do this, we can help point you in the right direction. We had bring your child to work day

[00:59:30] and my goddaughter came with me and she goes to another middle school and she said even though Simpson's got no windows and it's old, it feels more homey than my brand new school does. So she felt the sense of belonging just being in there just for a few minutes. So we are very lucky to wear these kids. Again, this just tells you this is beyond their day. They're counting down because some of them have a core um strings concert in about an hour so they are extremely excited to be here but they're also thinking of this but they gave up their time at night to come here this just

[01:00:03] shows their dedication to the program and to simpson and that's where he's going and dr d is playing with them tonight i'm sorry to spoil that for some people but he even shows he leads by example he's willing to put out that extra uh time with the kids and he's not at nine to five he doesn't clock in clock out he's there he's doing the work he's sending those emails and he's doing but he will communicate so that's what I think they realize that we're there for them so they step up for us this is amazing one tiny thing we do all of it yes trust is another word

[01:00:40] you know our our school leadership team it is a we concept we don't say my students we really do use our whenever we're talking about our students so anyone can help anyone and the leadership team the contagion there the care we have for each other it's i think it's all very much trickle around rather than trickle down i think everybody just feels for lack of a better term i think we all feel like we're surrounded by each other in good ways so it's a real lesson for us and how we show up for each other because my five-year-old knows when he's being managed over if i'm really

[01:01:16] engaged with him and so I mean I think this is such a such a I mean such a lesson for me and all of us really want to thank you for coming. Chair Mansfield if you had anything else to add feel free. I appreciate all of this I think as a society right now we're losing connection and communication and all of those kinds of things because we were separated for a little while and um and then we lose our humanity and i think that bringing this back is really important and

[01:01:50] providing the students um different ways to do that because you know like i tend more toward the quirk and dork than other people and um and it's important for me to have my dnd and my singing and my music and everything and my art artists at my art as well um to make me and that's how i felt connected in middle and high school well it was junior high when I was there because I'm older than your school but um so I really appreciate it and I love that you guys are so open and

[01:02:23] willing to discuss that too because that goes to your um your principal and the leadership there um if if they are modeling that behavior then you guys are modeling that behavior I do have one thing for these guys over here a little bit when we're talking about those questions on the survey. Do we look at different things like special education or EL or anything like that? Do we separate any of that to look to see if there's differences between populations or anything,

[01:03:02] or we just assume that it's just a group? So the way we have staff consume that data is we actually do build it all into a click app, and we are able to load those data on the back end of the survey so it can be filtered by students with disabilities versus students without disabilities.

[01:03:19] So the ability to review the data that way is available as well as English learner and by the different ethnicities as well. Cool. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you so much for coming and spending your time with us. One more thing that I'll say is that even though parents may not know it, their child feels like their belonging, and they may not know it, but they also know more than they do and things like that.

[01:03:51] In regards to that, I'm getting pushed out because I have to ride with somebody, but I'll see. Thank you. I love how you made sure that was put on record. Are you going to be here tomorrow? I think he's going to be here tomorrow. I just want to package them up and place them on the shelf.

[01:04:11] Thank you. My question is about the data also. When you do get the school data, I would be interested in seeing some of those breakdowns and seeing school-to-school. One of the big, when I, you know, we talk about sense of belonging a lot. And as the gap shows, if we're seeing, I mean, our numbers are pretty great.

[01:04:33] I agree with Dr. Ellis. We always want to strive for every single student to feel a sense of belonging. But my question really becomes when we have that that's solid and that's in place and we see buildings like Simpson doing these great things, but we are seeing the achievement gap still, what do we do, right?

[01:04:52] Because once we know that that's not the core issue and we still see drops in achievement, I think that that's where the conversation about resources and different things could turn once we have that in a solid place. And so I would like to see, you know, school to school. Because I would imagine that if you saw low achievement and low sense of belonging, you would say, okay, well, that gap exists.

[01:05:13] Let's go address that. But when we have a high sense of belonging and then we see schools that are struggling in achievement, that's a different conversation. So that's kind of a piece that I'd like to dig deeper into is if we're really crushing it on the belonging end, which I love, then what for achievement?

[01:05:31] Well, that's where I'm wondering if there's different reporting groups and if that makes a difference as opposed to just the general, you know, an average or general behavior. And just to contribute to the conversation, I also am imagining what Mr. Smith was talking about in terms of the next iteration,

you know, dashboards 2.0, looking at sense of belonging and achievement over top of each other, being able to drill down into different student groups, really looking at the whole child and all of the pieces.

[01:06:06] are we those particular questions like i feel like i belong as a parent we always say okay well how was your day at school great but um or but what we really should be asking is who did you sit next to at lunch did you talk to someone at lunch and so i'm wondering if some of those if and i don't know you guys are much more uh tuned into this than i am but if there are some better questions to look into. So we spent some time this spring doing a little bit

[01:06:45] of research and looking at the literature to see what some of the other concepts are and we have actually drafted additional questions that will get a little bit more precisely at that sense of belonging concept as opposed to just the four that we've been using over the last you know number of years that we were just able to show tonight. And two additional items so a quick follow-up.

[01:07:08] The schools now have begun their needs assessment where they're looking at everything from preliminary SOL data and looking at climate data and making the connections between if we have 10% of students who do not feel a sense of belonging with the building and we see it correlated eventually with other patterns of behavior, schools are starting to do that analysis now.

[01:07:32] So they're looking at data as it comes in, in their needs assessments. We're calling them data days now, and they'll do that throughout the summer. And as Dr. Blakelock has spoken to, I've actually spoken to Dr. Ellis about a conversation with senior staff about really taking a look at what matters in schools, what matters for staff, and even rethinking the items that we gather data on, on our stakeholder surveys for multiple groups, sense of belonging, and even from the teacher perspective.

[01:08:03] So the schools are looking at that data now, making the connections, finding pockets of students that we're not reaching the way we want to. And later on this summer, early fall, taking a look, a broader look at how we gather data on climate and what matters from different leaders at the division level and also feedback from other leaders at the school level.

[01:08:26] Dr. Tyler, do those then lead into the conversations around school improvement goals? They do. So there's schools looking at the climate data along with student achievement, looking at getting kids into advanced course pathways.

[01:08:43] We'll be unpacking the new school performance and support framework data. The MTSS-PBIS teams are looking at that climate data as well. So the schools are doing what's called a root cause analysis where they're trying to make all the connections between multiple data points, indicating maybe a group of students in our buildings that we're just not reaching in different ways.

[01:09:03] And some of these strategies are instructional, but some of them are climate and connections with students. Yeah. I think we talked about this a little bit as a follow-up, but last meeting when we had the MTSS team here, we had a huge stack of data that we actually didn't end up talking about at our meeting.

[01:09:19] But one of the things was there were some data points in there about SEL, which I'd never seen data on SEL before. And so kind of, again, talking to that overlap, it's, you know, how does this, if the sense of belonging survey is high but the SEL isn't, like what questions does that raise? is it is it the right questions that we're asking or is it that there's a disconnect or is it that resources need to be funneled in different places and so I think as a school board member at first I was struggling with like it being my lane

but I think it kind of is important for us to understand the implications of all of those things as they relate to one another so that we know that we are making sound decisions about where those resources are being

[01:09:57] applied so that all facets are covered so very interesting as it relates to the dashboard too I sort of feel like this is all a bigger story and and that we're just sort of at the beginning of that journey I agree I'm also curious one of the threads that I noticed from the students is that they were all very active and participating in the different groups and I loved how what was mentioned is that we they try to make sure that there's something for everyone you know for for any student to tap into their curiosities or interests so is Is there data, do we look at that data as well

[01:10:36] in terms of participation in groups and clubs and music and stuff like that and then correlate that with other types of data? - So one of the things that we're going to talk about at our June meeting is student involvement in activities and clubs.

[01:10:53] So Lynn Fiskas is going to come and talk about all of the different opportunities students have along with the variety of clubs and activities so that each student can find something that they're passionate about, and how they can go about engaging in activities if it doesn't exist.

[01:11:09] So that's just all a preview of what's to come next month. - Yeah, thank you. - And we will have some data. - It would be interesting to see if there are specific groups of students and reporting groups within schools that aren't taking advantage of or aren't able to access different types of opportunities.

[01:11:25] That would be another kind of data point as well, but yeah. - Something that we have been a little worried about is like the 10% of an SOL being put into a kid's grade and whether that's really a motivator.

[01:11:45] And, you know, something that I've been looking into is intrinsic versus external motivation. And that's what I've been looking at. Something that I was thinking that I found is conscientiousness.

[01:12:01] That personality characteristic is positively associated with motivation, extrinsic motivation. And so I'm wondering, which is also with achievement, linked with achievement.

[01:12:18] So I'm wondering if there's another piece that we could be looking into, conscientiousness being one of them. There might be some others. That's also linking, putting into this.

[01:12:38] That's also part of this equation. Because if you're conscientiousness, then maybe you're more apt to go and, you know, go to a club. And then you're more apt to achieve more. So, anyway, that's just some of my thought when I was making connections.

[01:13:02] Any other discussion? So then we'll move on to new business. Is there any new business? Seeing no new business, we'll now adjourn the May 29th Performance Monitoring Committee meeting. Thank you all very much. Thank you.



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