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Loudoun County Public Schools, Minority Student Achievement Advisory Committee (MSAAC) Meeting, Wednesday, September 17, 2025

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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.

[00:00:02] I'll give it two more minutes for everyone to get settled, and we'll get started.

[00:00:26] And as you're settling into your space, I want to bring to your awareness that there is a sign-up sheet in the back. You'll notice that I am asking for your name, your email address, as well as whether you are a parent, staff, whatever your role is.

[00:00:49] I know I ask that of some of you in email, but until I become familiar with who's in the room and who is being represented, I'm going to keep asking. All right. So we'll get started in a minute.

[00:01:21] I should probably have a countdown.

[00:01:27] All right.

[00:02:08] We're going to go ahead and get started. I understand that some of you are still signing in, which is perfect, but I want to go ahead and get started because I'm very conscious of time. I don't want to belabor your time, and I value mine as well.

[00:02:24] So I am Tammy Jones, and I am the incoming chair for MSAC, and I'm happy to be here, very happy to be here. Before I go any further, I do, for those of you who are familiar with MSAC, who were a

part of MSAC last year, Let's give the outgoing board a round of applause because they did such a wonderful job.

[00:02:54] So I bring you greetings. Again, my name is Tammy Jones, and this is my first year serving in this capacity, but I served as a delegate previously. You will have to excuse me because I'm getting over a sore throat.

[00:03:13] So I won't be doing much talking tonight. We're going to all do some talking, okay? But a little bit about me, I come to you from the federal space. I had over 20 years in that space where I worked for the Department of Transportation, also at NASA, starting out as a student intern.

[00:03:32] So I've had quite a number of years working with students, working in HR, working with the public. And so I'm no stranger to being in front of a microphone. Sometimes you may say I'm a little loquacious, that I talk too much.

[00:03:50] But it's only because I'm anxious to get to know people. I enjoy getting to know people, getting to know their differences and how we are the same. And so we're going to do that a little bit tonight. But I do want to say welcome to everyone.

[00:04:08] Welcome to our kickoff meeting. And there's going to be more to come. So before we move a little bit further into this session, I don't like to refer to it as a meeting, but a session. I would like to call Mr. Muhammad up, who is one of our liaisons, one of our partners within the DEI office of Loudoun County Public Schools.

[00:04:42] Thank you. Greetings, everyone. I hope everybody's feeling well. Hope that you are navigating some of these times today that we're kind of experiencing, because it's very important that you are full, so that when you come to these meetings and you do the important work that you're doing in schools, that you're able to do that successfully.

[00:05:02] So I wish you all well. I want to bring also greetings from our assistant superintendent, Dr. Leticia Ellis-Williams. She was unable to be here this evening, but she is committed and plans on probably being here at every other meeting. So if you haven't met her, you'll have a chance to do so later, as she is the primary liaison to the committee.

[00:05:24] And as Ms. Jones said, I'm the secondary. I also want to introduce some of our team that are here with us this evening. Can you all stand up? So remain standing, remain standing. We have Ms. Michelle Fresina, one of our specialists.

[00:05:43] Cynthia Lewis, the supervisor in our division. Dr. Elizabeth Whitehead, one of our specialists. Camille Jones, another specialist, and all the way in the back, Ms. Helen Randolph, the executive assistant for Dr. Ellis Williams. So hopefully you're going to see us at meetings, put names to faces.

[00:06:02] And the reason why we do this is that we've kind of structured our office, our division, so that we have direct support to clusters of schools. And so it is probably highly likely that you might be working with one of us as you're doing your work as a delegate and maybe transitioning or segueing some of that work with the school team and the equity leads at those buildings alongside someone from our division.

[00:06:30] So I just want to make sure. And we have a few other members weren't able to make it tonight, but you'll be able to get a chance to meet them. So very, very excited about the theme this year, our theme,

and also a theme that's going to be kind of woven through a lot of the work this year in schools, which is creating and sustaining a sense of belonging for students, staff, and families.

[00:06:56] And our team is going to be collaborating a lot with schools in ensuring that there's some structure, there's some conditions to make sure that all students feel seen, heard, loved, and valued in their buildings.

[00:07:13] Because we know there's research that really dictates how important that is to academic success, how important that is in terms of the enjoyment and fulfillment of their educational pathways through school. And so we will be helping and supporting this initiative with you all as well. And as delegates, I just wanted to make sure that you start thinking, if you haven't already, what does belonging mean to you? What are some of those characteristics that make you feel like you belong? And hopefully that we'll be able to talk about that a lot more, maybe tonight and in future meetings. But I think that's really important

[00:07:53] because there's things that we want to make sure are happening in schools and working collaboratively with school staff to make sure that happens for all students. So once again, we just want to be partners in purpose this year, really making sure you all have what you need from like the staff side in terms of maybe data maybe guest speakers some of the things that I think are really important is how are we going to amplify your voices the collective voice of the committee to make sure that it is being communicated in other settings and other spaces because the work

[00:08:32] that you do is so very important like I mentioned of course the themes throughout the year equity belonging positive school culture which does subsume racial slurs and hate speech and so that's something that I think is information that you would be able to use because we know you can't have that positive school culture if there's pervasiveness with inappropriate language and students harming each other through the things that they say and so that is another aspect that

[00:09:07] we can work on together. And lastly, you know, academic pathways for all students, academic rigor for all students is very, very important. So I just wanted to say greetings. Kasarian Ingera, has anyone ever heard of that before? From the Maasai tribe? Yes. From Kenya and Tanzania, and it means how are the children? And so when a community member said that to another community member, they would respond, the children are well. And I think that's important for us to keep on top

[00:09:45] for ourselves in the work, because it creates a focus on community. It creates a focus on the generations to come, and the work that we do, and how important it is. So, Kassari and Ngera, and thank you for the time. And we'll be around tonight and every night that you come together to support you in the work. Thank you. All right, thank you so much. Now, you've heard from us.

[00:10:21] Guess what? I want to hear from you. I don't know all of you. I know some of you, but I want to hear from you. So what I'd like to do is, it's kind of like an icebreaker. I want you to introduce yourself, who you are, the school that you represent, what your role is, and then in one word, What are you hoping for this school year?

[00:10:49] So we're going to start all the way over here. And by the way, so those of you that are sitting at the table by yourself, it's a sense of belonging, right? So we're going to come together, all right? We're going to come together. You can carry your placard with you, but eventually we're going to come together, all right?

[00:11:10] So we're going to start all the way over here. Please use your mics. Okay, good evening, everyone. My name is Lynette, and it's my third year in Loudoun County. I have a fourth grader in Pinebrook, and then I have a sixth grader in Gumspring.

[00:11:29] And I'm hoping to serve in communication this year, and then I'm hoping for a success in this school year. Thank you. All right, my name is Jeff.

[00:11:48] I'm the delegate for Seldon's Landing under the Riverside High School cluster. This is my fourth year as a delegate, and I'd say the one word would probably be hope. Good evening, everyone.

[00:12:13] My name is Dara Logan. I have a fourth grader at Goshen Post Elementary, and I actually have a sixth grader at Gum Spring as well. This is my fourth or fifth year as an MSAC delegate. I am here for Goshen Post, and I would say my one word for the year, building off our theme last year, but we really need it right now.

[00:12:35] is joy. Well, hello, everyone. I'm Ashley Tyson. I'm the principal at Goshen Post Elementary School. I am super excited to be amongst all of you. So I'm looking forward to the work this year that we're going to do with MSAC. And my one word would be purpose. Hello, everyone. My name is

[00:13:09] Debbie Wheeler. I am a delegate. I'm going on my third year. I have a granddaughter at Smartsville and my grandson is at Kenneth Colbert, and I'm the delegate at Kenneth Colbert, and my purpose is continual change.

[00:13:30] Hyphenated. My name is Jackson Roberts, second year as an MSEC delegate representing J-Lefton Simpson Middle School and then later Lyman County High School. My word for the school year would have to be renewal.

[00:13:48] My name is Jennifer Heron. I'm at Simpson Middle School. I'm the co-equity lead. This is my second year attending the meetings. My word, of course, is empowered. Hi, good evening. My name is Eloise Simmons, and I have a seventh grader at Harper Park Middle School.

[00:14:15] I'm under the Heritage High School cluster, and this is my fourth year as a delegate, and my one word will be success. Hello, everyone. My name is Crystal Haynes. I have a kindergartner at Balls Bluff, so this is my very first year.

[00:14:38] As a delegate, I am the Balls Bluff delegate, and I would say my word for this year is safe. Hey, everybody. It's me.

[00:14:56] My name is Erin Kunkel, and I am going into my fourth year as an MSAC delegate. I have three students, one in high school at Loudoun Valley and two in middle school, seventh and eighth grade at Blue Ridge Middle School, and you wouldn't be surprised at what my word for the year is.

[00:15:15] It's joy still doing that thing, but it's good to be here, and I can't wait for this year. Rodler Julo. This is my fourth year as a delegate. I have a ninth and 11th grader at Heritage High School.

[00:15:33] I'm the MSAC Policy POC, so if you do get emails, it's Rodler Julo. That's me. And my one word is accountability. Hi, my name is Kevin Throckford, and I'm the assistant principal over at Freedom High School.

[00:15:57] This is my first year here with MSAC. I'm really excited to be working with everybody, and my word is community. Are not at the tables, but I still want to know who's in the room.

[00:16:15] So, I know you're hiding in the wings, but if you wouldn't mind, please. Hi, Trefilia Parker, and I am a parent of two students, both at Breyer and then one at Breyer and Academies of Loudoun.

[00:16:36] And I am the delegate for both right now, so glad to be back. I feel like this might be my 7th or 8th year with MSAC as delegates, so just excited about the new year. Dr. Ellsworth, Assistant Principal at John Chump High School.

[00:17:01] This is my first year at Chump, coming from Tuscarora High School for six years. So my word this year is going to be care. Thank you.

[00:17:19] My name is Samara Rashid. I'm the school board liaison for MSAC. I have a 10th grader at Heritage, and I have a 8th grader at Stonehill Middle School. And my word is motivation.

[00:17:35] Love that. Okay. Hello, my name is Jaleesa Johnson. I have a 1st grader in the DLI program at Sanders Corner. I'm the MSEC lead, and I would say my word is learn. Good evening.

[00:17:56] My name is Nellie Smith. I have a sixth grader at Belmont Ridge, sorry, Belmont Ridge, I'm getting used to it, middle school, and my word for this school year would be growth.

[00:18:19] That's it? Yeah, I mean, we were introduced to you, but we didn't get your word. Okay, I'll go, I guess, since I got the mic.

[00:18:35] My name is Helen Randolph, and I am the executive assistant of DEIA, and my, I don't know, now I'm worried, because I don't know if you guys already said this word, growth. Yeah, somebody said it, but that's good. Nellie said it. I was trying not to say the same thing, though.

[00:18:52] No, that's excellent. All right. Yeah, all right. Here you go. Hi, everyone. My name is Dr. Elizabeth Whitehead. I'm one of the new DEIA specialists coming from school counseling. I would say my word is brave.

[00:19:09] I'm sorry again? Brave. Brave. Hello again, everyone. I'm Cynthia Lewis, and I'm the supervisor in DEIA, and I will say that my word is community, and I'm overjoyed to be in community with you this evening.

[00:19:25] Hi, everyone. I'm Michelle Fersina, and I'm a DEI specialist, and my word for tonight would be together, because I think together is where we can bring possibilities here. I love it. Hello, everyone. Again, Shaheed Muhammad, director of DEIA. And I would say the word for me for this year is action.

[00:19:44] Good evening, everyone. My name is Camille Jones. I am also a DEIA specialist. And I think my word for this school year would be nurture. All right. All right. Is that it? Oh, yeah. No, that's it. All right.

[00:20:22] Oh, you're a possibility. So we're talking about the word of the year? Your word. Yes. Okay. So my name is Lee Johnson. The word of the year for me is elevate. Okay. All right. Anybody else? Once, twice. All right. All right. So I'm loving this because these words are powerful words. And these words are words that I'm hoping you didn't just come up with, but you were intentional about it. And I believe that you were. These words serve purpose.

[00:20:59] Some of you actually did say your word was purpose. And so I'm excited to hear that. I'm excited to hear that because that's what we are as MSAT representatives. We serve a purpose. We are the bridge to those students and to those families.

[00:21:18] And so I'm excited to get to know each of you. I'm excited to hear what some of your ideas are. I'm excited to bring in this new school year with you because it's all about the words that you use.

[00:21:36] Care, right? We're here because we care. We're here because we want to see our students be successful. We're here because we have so much joy to spread. We are here because if we didn't do this, there would be no growth.

[00:21:57] We're here because we are determined to take action. And we're here because we want to elevate not only the students, but elevate each other. I think it's important that we do that. And so the reason I had you to go through this exercise, and by the way, my word for the year is purpose as well.

[00:22:18] I had us to do this exercise simply because we have to know why we do what we do. It's important to not just go through the motions, but you're here. You're here after 6 o'clock, after working all day.

[00:22:35] And so you do have a purpose. You have a reason for being here, and you need to know and be reminded of what it is. I think that I know that it's important that you have a mission, and your mission is tied to the mission of MSAC.

[00:22:55] And I believe that this year, that is what we're going to do. It's all centered around the student voice, all centered around the student voice. And every decision that we make, every initiative that we champion, it's all about the students.

[00:23:11] And so I want us to, when we're working this year, to be reminded of those words. Now, I did my best to capture everyone's word. And so the next time that we come together, you're going to see these words.

[00:23:28] You're going to see these words, and we'll have an activity around these different words. Somebody said learn, right? We're here learning about each other, learning about what we can do as a community. Somebody said that word, a couple of you did, and the possibilities that we can create for one another and especially for our students and families.

[00:23:55] So you've shared your word, you've talked about it, you've shared it out loud. I'm excited about that. Let's talk about our focus. Our focus is I've come up with three of our focus areas for the year, and some of it is definitely tying back into the goal and the focus of the DEIA office.

[00:24:19] So one is student belonging, creating those environments where every student feels valued. It's important. Every student feels connected. Somebody said that. And empowered to succeed. Again, those are some of the words that you all spoke of.

[00:24:36] We're also talking about an inclusive school environment. So we want to make sure that we're building those systems and practices that celebrate diversity while addressing those barriers to full participation.

[00:24:52] And then we wouldn't be MSAC if we didn't talk about equity partnerships. So strengthening and collaborative relationships between our families, our schools, and the community. So again, those words were words, buzzwords that you used, the words that you felt was your word for the year.

[00:25:13] And as you, again, go through working with MSAC, working with as a delegate, working with your schools, working with the representatives I want you to keep your word for the year at the forefront

and and in your mind even when you get frustrated even when you get frustrated it's important to know that this is my reason for being here so i have an activity all right so um i'm going to go back to

[00:25:45] what those focus areas were as soon as i figure out how to go back let me see okay so i want you all to, and there should be some post-its in these little boxes on your table, but I want you to take a look at the different focus areas. And then I want you to write down these focus areas and which one, number them, the ones that you are most passionate about and why it resonates with you

[00:26:21] and your experience okay so those of you that are at a table by yourself please couple with other tables please because this is the interactive piece where you will be talking among each other I'd like to hear you know for you to talk about your thoughts around the different focus areas

[00:26:50] anybody have questions I'm going to leave that up I'll leave it up and by the way there's water at

[00:27:10] the back of the room in case you want um a bottle of water uh folks so i'm not asking you to change

[00:31:12] anything i'm just asking um which one do you um identify with or are are more passionate about which one right and then discuss them among yourselves why and then later what we're going to do is we're going to look at the ones who are most passionate about the student belonging

[00:31:36] focus area and then you all will get together all right maybe five more minutes are we ready to move

[00:35:12] on yes all right okay all right so um the question was or the exercise was to write and reflect um write down a focus area that you're most passionate about and why it resonates with you and your experience and so i'm gonna go over the first one student belonging anybody all right oh i love it

[00:35:42] i love it okay all right anybody want to say why i think it's obvious but anybody um i don't i can't imagine a school where kids don't feel like they belong it is truly something that needs to happen at the forefront if they don't feel seen heard loved all of those things they are not going to learn they're not even open to anything else they've got to feel the connection to the school

[00:36:11] absolutely all right thank you anyone else okay okay go ahead I was just thinking that student belonging is kind of like the umbrella of the others so you when you have student belonging you automatically have that inclusive environment yeah when you have student belonging you also have that collaborative partnerships with families other schools in the community all right I love

[00:36:44] that i love that yes definitely um the goal was for each focus area to serve as an umbrella to the other and so um if that's what you got from it then um kudos to you and and that means we're all on the right track anybody else want to share before we move on all right so not every go ahead i'm sorry are we moving on from yes student belonging to inclusive yes okay yes i was just about to ask um so who um was more passionate around that one inclusive school environments

[00:37:24] okay okay do you want to tell us why uh yes so we discussed and i'm passionate about an inclusive school environment as i am new here to virginia i moved here from georgia and i'm i understand there's a lot of different cultures here and i love celebrating all the different cultures but I just don't want the black culture to be lost amongst the other cultures.

[00:37:59] So when I moved here, I was kind of taken aback that there was no celebration and no education specifically for Black History Month. While at my student school, there was a multicultural

event during the month of February, but yet there is no education for the entire month of February for Black History Month.

[00:38:19] And so that, to me, is very important that I want to see that inclusivity, that inclusive school environment for my students, whether there's a teacher, a staff member, a cafeteria woman, anyone who doesn't look like them. But we're still going to hit on Black History Month.

[00:38:37] That's very important to me. Okay. And what's your name? I'm sorry. Oh, I'm sorry. I'm Brittany Dandridge, and I have a first grader now at Sanders Corner and a sixth grader at Eagle Ridge. okay all right thank you Brittany anyone else okay go ahead okay I have to say what was on my mind sorry thank you no you're fine go ahead just a different perspective with inclusive school environments and I love what Dr. Whitehead said about the umbrella and also Ms. Jones which you

[00:39:16] said the but I feel like for all students to have a sense of belonging you got to have inclusive school environment because we do know some students come to school and they they automatically have a sense of belonging for various reasons and factors.

[00:39:32] But when we talk about all, and we talk about some that don't get the opportunity to really express themselves or dig deep into their culture and identity, without the structure and the systems in place for that to happen, it's hard for all students to feel a sense of belonging.

[00:39:52] Okay. So that's why I was more passionate around inclusive school environments. Okay. All right. Anybody else? All right, don't be quiet. Now, I've already told you I'm getting over a sore throat.

[00:40:09] So that means you all have to talk to me, all right? Or we talk among each other. So let's move on to the third bullet, equity partnerships. Anybody? All right, Trufilia.

[00:40:30] This really resonated with me because, one, I've seen the impact here in the county when the community comes together around student issues, student voices, and it has been very positive.

[00:40:51] I also had opportunity, we were sharing that during the equity walks that take place at the schools, you have opportunity to see, you know, the collaboration and the relationship in that individual school and how the students, the equity lead, the MSAC delegate, the school's leadership work together to achieve equity in education at that school.

[00:41:15] So, and the work we do with families. And I also feel that the partnerships and the collaborations really supports success in student belonging and creating inclusive school environments.

[00:41:30] - All right, anybody else? - Can do what? I'm good, Heather.

[00:41:46] So as it pertains to equity partnerships, I kind of got involved a little bit late, but my understanding as far as Loudoun County is concerned is that it is one of the most absolute communities in the United States, right? But my concern in Loudoun County is that there is no inclusion as a whole for certain types of students because they don't have a sense of belonging, right?

[00:42:12] So I believe that the partnerships are necessary for those in the community that look like them to allow them to understand that they are important on a day-to-day basis so they don't have this sense of I don't belong here and I don't want to be here.

[00:42:30] Right. Whether or not you're coming as a transplant like myself from Detroit, Michigan or Georgia or wherever, you're still in a position where you're not going to believe that you are important until

people that are external to your school environment that are in the community tell you that, in my opinion.

[00:42:51] OK. OK. And so how do we fix that? Anybody? Thoughts? How do we make it better? So these are things that we should be thinking about, things that we should be thinking about. Go ahead.

[00:43:10] So I think this isn't like the single way, but I was sharing my table mates that I was at a candidate forum last night for the Loudoun County School Board. And some of the things that resonated with me there that I think are appropriate here are, you know, having conversations, courageous conversations, starting in this room, right, and then with other partners, but transparency.

[00:43:37] So there was just a lot of conversation around transparency with data. If I'm honest, the conversation was that LCPS is not transparent with data. I have a different perspective with that just because of my involvement here with MSAC and at my school.

[00:43:58] And I also know kind of what questions to ask for data and kind of where to look for it. So, you know, my response to that was, I think there's opportunity for us to improve our communication, LCPS. And some things are working now, but some things we may need to, you know, tweak so that parents know.

[00:44:17] The data that last night was discussing the, like, hate speech and bullying, and I can't think of the platform that is used now, but I know Dr. Tyler has come and briefed MSAC on it a few times, but I was like, no, that data is available, and it is there.

[00:44:33] It is being collected, but I couldn't think of the name of it. But just communicating out to families how to access that information, how they can use it for knowledge at their school. Yeah, yeah, I like that. Anybody else? Okay, I see a hand over here and then right here.

[00:44:49] I think the first thing that we can do is be present, show up, to get a little bit philosophical. None of us have been through this life thing before.

[00:45:08] like all of this is figuring out as we go. And especially with something as important as our children's education, we don't have to have all the exact right answers. We don't have to have the full plan. And I think we get so caught up in the things that we feel passionate about because it's important, but it doesn't have to be perfect.

[00:45:30] And so just showing up, being in community with each other first and then figuring out how and what is that. The first step is just being there. I agree. Very good. All right. Right here. So my response to your question is for the action plan of these three components to actually gain some type of momentum, we must, each one must reach, must reach one to be able

[00:46:03] to teach one. Right. So I was invited to come to this only because my chapter is, this has established a scholarship application okay so it was like hey get out loud loud and county public schools okay cool how about you come to this no idea i just showed up and i participate right to this tonight to this okay i have no idea what this was so what i do know and what i do see as far as this as being an opportunity for people in the general public just to come out and support

[00:46:41] it but we have to know right i don't know if you have social media i don't know if you have any flyers posters anywhere i've never heard of the acronym or seen it in any of the public schools so i am i'm a part of certain newsletters i'm a part of the bs the bsu at john champ never seen it so i'm working to that's

my thought process how can i get to more people here right yep so that would be the action step to be able to get more voices to be able to elevate that one student you

[00:47:18] need at least 10 voices to be able to come in this room when they're having a meeting and talking about things important to this organization okay all right so um let's talk about that so those of you who don't know so and if you missed it i do um my background is um from federal service and i as an HR, and I was responsible for transportations, recruitment, and outreach, and very big on it.

[00:47:55] So again, if you think I talk a lot, you should see me at an event. But outreach is very important, and your role here is important. It is important that you not only show up here monthly, but you show up at the schools that you are representing, that you show up at events and talk to individuals about MSAC and about who and what MSAC represents and how their voice matters, right? It's important

[00:48:35] that we do that. I always share the story that, so Department of Transportation, FAA, We were buying a car, my husband and I were buying a car one year, and I worked a lot with the student programs, and the salesperson, he was in college. So the first thing I asked him is, so is this what you want to do always? He's like, no, you know, I'm going to George Mason, and this is what I'm majoring in. I said immediately, have you thought about working

[00:49:10] in transportation. So at your core, at my core, I'm always looking for ways to help individuals learn about what is accessible to them. And they won't know unless we tell them.

[00:49:30] So whether you're at grocery store, whether you're buying a new vehicle, doesn't matter. You had a gang, you can find an opportunity to strike up a conversation. Now I know a lot of you might not be as talkative as I am, but I can talk to anybody, honestly. My husband is the opposite. He's not going to do that. But as representatives, and I used to tell my recruiters this all the time, as a recruiter, it is your job to get out there and talk. They didn't like

[00:50:07] social media. I don't want nobody finding me. Well, you work for the federal government. They're going to find you right and your job is to get out in front of people as delegates that's your responsibility is it not anybody is it not that is your responsibility so it's important that we have the the tools the strategies to do that and so later at one of our meetings in the future

[00:50:35] We will have some training sessions on how to go about what your role is as a delegate, as well as how to speak, I'm going to say intelligently, about MSAC and how to – go ahead.

[00:50:52] I didn't mean to interrupt you, but I would like to also be – I think it's important to tap into your resources, but I would like to be your resource also. I'm very findable, if you know what I mean. You can always find me on the LCPS website. i'm a school board member just write in rasheed because for some reason my last name is more easier to remember than my first so just say rasheed lcps and you'll find me yes but i would like to connect you oh yeah thank you so much she's my she's my ride or die shannon um she was the one that didn't give it the word for the year yeah she was like no i had to call you out shannon sorry but um but yeah i'd like to be a resource for you all um and i want to help you all but so

[00:51:32] please come forward and I'll also have my business cards to hand out but I didn't mean to interrupt you thank you no no this is perfect this is fine because it's important that we utilize the resources and so that was another reason why we had the exercise at the beginning of um at the top of the hour the word the one word right that's representative of you for the year because it's important to see to learn what

you have in common with the folks in the room I want to know I don't want to be a talking head and not know anything about you all in the room. It's important. It's

[00:52:08] important for me to know who I'm working with, right? Because then I'm able to refer somebody to Dr. Rashid, right? To Mr. Muhammad over here. I'm able to say, oh, you can go over here to Selenet. She's got this for you. And so it's important that we in this room start and learn how to communicate with each other and then we can go out there and get the word out anybody have yes go ahead aaron so i have one small thing um i know some of you've heard me say this um in the

[00:52:46] last couple years but if you're new here as a delegate or you're even interested in just coming along and partnering with us and working with us the hardest thing to do is that first step and it's actually two first steps the first step is coming here and saying hey i want to help out And the second step is probably the hardest one for any delegate.

[00:53:06] That's opening the lines of communication with your school. It can be the scariest possible thing. I don't know about you, but I grew up that if you were in a principal's office, that was not a good thing. And I'm still to this day like when a principal's like, oh, aren't you? And I'm like, yeah, what did I do?

[00:53:22] Or what's happening? You know, it's just in my brain that that's not good that you're talking to a principal. But if you're talking to your school principal or even your PTO, you've done a million miles of work. Everything else is what you make of it. And you have the opportunity as a delegate.

[00:53:38] It's not a one-size-fits-all. What I did three years ago at Round Hill is not what the expectation is for you to do at your school. You know your school because your kids go there. You have the opportunity to work with them. And again, as an MSAC delegate, you have the immediate role baked into you that you're helping to make your school environment more inclusive.

[00:54:00] Like I just shared that one of the things that I did with my PTO was sometimes just sitting in there and providing feedback like, yeah, that's not going to work for everybody. Or no, I'm not going to sit in the giant auditorium or the cafeteria for bingo night with a thousand people on a hot May afternoon.

[00:54:19] we can go outside maybe and it's just reminding them to think of everybody else but you have the ability don't be scared to take that first step you're here so you did the first thing and that's the best thing and we're so happy you're here the next step is to just go into your school and say hey I'm here to help this is what I'd like to do what do you need from me as a delegate and then watch what happens it's entirely possible to make change you just have to take those first steps. All right. That's a great segue into our next exercise. And so among yourselves at your

[00:54:56] table, I'd like you to discuss what motivated you to serve as an MSEC delegate and what experiences shaped this commitment that you have. So we're going to spend some time on that. Any questions

[00:55:16] about that?

[01:04:28] How are we doing? Well, we'll spend a couple more minutes on that. Probably two more

[01:04:37] minutes.

[01:05:56] All right we're going to give it about 30 more seconds and then I'm going to go to each

[01:07:10] table and ask you to provide me with reasons. So first I'm going to just ask anybody want to share what motivated them to serve as an MSAC delegate this year? Right here. I think one of the things

[01:07:50] that motivated me to be a part of MSAC and serve when I was at Dominion High School prior to moving to Freedom, one of my big things they wanted me to work on was promoting student belonging and closing opportunity gaps for students by having them going into higher level courses and kind of changing that culture and helping those students feel connected and belonging through all of these different academic experiences that they could come together with.

[01:08:16] And it's something I want to continue at Freedom. And one of the biggest things I found was through that student belonging was not only connecting students to students, but also changing the teacher culture to make sure that everybody felt welcome in a classroom when they walked in the door.

[01:08:31] So that's one of my things, and being a part of MSAC, I feel, will help me continue that mission while I'm at Freedom High School. - Thank you. Anybody else from that table? I know you all have been doing this for a minute, so.

[01:08:56] - As for me, I'm not sure how I found out about it, but the first meeting I went to MSAC, I was just drawn to what they were actually doing, you know, the mission, the vision, and how you had actual parents, you know, going to work for their children.

[01:09:15] So having two kids in LCPS, you know, I thought, you know, it was a duty as a parent to make sure I stay abreast of everything that's going on with LCPS. And then as I got into MSAC, you know, working as a policy POC, I just saw how you can have direct access to LCPS staff and the school board just through, you know, reviewing and providing comments on your policies.

[01:09:45] So that made things more available to me, more within its arm reach. All right. Thank you. All right. Trufilia, did you want to share or you could? So I just shared that my motivation for MSAC that keeps me coming back and started, My son was coming from private school to LCPS for first grade.

[01:10:15] At the time, LCPS didn't have the full-day kindergarten and all that, you know, scenario. And so when he was transitioning in, it was recommended that he complete a child find study. He was diagnosed with ADHD, needed IEP and all that. It was a lot of information coming to me fast.

[01:10:32] I didn't trust any of it. I didn't trust anybody that was communicating that with me or to me. And a friend invited me to an MSAC meeting, and it happened to be MSAC and SEAC would sometimes have a joint meeting. SEAC is a special education advisory committee.

[01:10:49] They would have a joint meeting, and so they had, the one I went to was a joint meeting, and my eyes were open. It felt like a very safe space. I received a lot of support, information, resources, and I've been hooked ever since. Okay. All right. Great. All right.

[01:11:05] Anybody from this table? So I can just summarize our conversation. So we just talked about how really our experiences as students and as parents have really led us to be in the space and want to be a part of the work of building belonging, building equity in LCPS.

[01:11:33] Because our kids have experienced some bullying, our kids have experienced some marginalization, or just general lack of knowledge around what some of the students' needs are. whether that's around, like, religious needs, different calendars, different holidays, fasting.

[01:11:53] So just having those experiences and trying to work with schools and trying to be a parent that goes in to advocate because we know we're the best advocate for our kids or we're supposed to be the best advocate, that's what's really making us really want to be participative and be a part of the MSAC work.

[01:12:14] Great. Got a new word for you. Yes. participants. I like that. I like that. Anybody else? Okay. How about right here? So similar to what she just said, just our personal experiences and experiences in the positions that we're on now and what we see going on kind of motivates us to be able to come here and provide those supports and learn and meet with everyone else so that we can go back and give back to our students and

[01:12:48] provide that motivation and model and expectations for our students to go and be successful and do greater things with their lives. So many times we get caught up in like the social media and what's on TV and things like that, but then having professional role models to be able to model what success looks like for the students that look like us, and then they look up to us and they see how we got to where we are. And a lot of times, you know, they look to see, especially for me they see me in my suit every day and they think that my life was easy yeah so then once i get to know them a little bit better and i start sharing some tidbits on how i was brought up and how and

[01:13:28] what my life was like as a kid then they start to relate a little bit and can connect with some of their experiences to my experiences and see that they can be successful thank you anyone else here okay okay how about this table right here i appreciate y'all i know lee you didn't know about it's on me it's on me right so it's three questions to answer as we speak about becoming

[01:14:04] a bridge builder right so william allen dromgold said in his last stanza that um their father was after me today a youth whose feet must pass his way right this chasm that has been as not to me to that fair-haired youth man pitfall fee, right?

[01:14:26] So that is my motivation. It's the uplift component of it, right? So I'm here to ensure that even though I am childless, I am thoughtful, right? And what I have to gain from this and to give to this is the ability to show that I care about my community, right?

[01:14:50] And you don't see many black men in general in Lyon County. let's know in the school system right so that is that is my premise right in the process of what i can give one of the things that we cultively talked about was the fact that the educational system is a little different depending upon what component you go to right so dosing and theta sorority incorporated had an event at the cascades library two years ago not

[01:15:27] this last year but the year before right and at the event the librarian came out and spoke about books that were being taken off on the naughty list right the component that I that I understood more in this conversation about the public school systems libraries versus the public libraries there's there's no similarity so different minorities don't have the same experience so to get an actual multicultural experience you have to go outside of the school system and go to

[01:15:58] a public library which doesn't make sense to me my thought process is why don't we as msaac go through the process of going to every school and speak to having just five books about every culture not the trauma let's not speak about slavery until we get to high school to where they're more mature to understand that right let's talk about okay we talk about hate speech having a swastika. Cool. Swastika, Hitler. Before Hitler was born, it was a sign of peace. Let's talk

[01:16:34] about that part. Let's talk about the other Freedom Riders, like one of my frat brothers, his mother, white woman, Freedom Rider. Remember, that's the word incorporer, right? Let's talk about, who was it? What was the lady on the bus? Rosa Parks. So Rosa Parks, right? Everybody talks about Rosa Parks. Everybody talks about Rosa Parks. But what about the lady the week before who did the same thing that got arrested what do we really know about our own history so we can actually communicate that to our children right and the last part the support i need is the support i have at the table already got somebody from the school's school board have you all and

[01:17:14] i have these ladies here to help you so that's that answers and surmises everything that i want to respond to this table does okay all right and that's the consensus of the table hundred percent okay all right how about this table right here thank you how about this uh something personal is that it just felt right to join it did there's um no way to describe that

[01:17:45] first feeling or that first uh call um and uh being an msac msac delegate is um just doing what's right when it's right and talking about it to the students and things like that and And with some of the issues that you've talked about, my school doesn't really have any of those problems, but I'm open to help everybody else.

[01:18:18] And I think all the comments are welcome. And if anything is wrong, just do what feels right to you. Go what's right with what's in your jellies.

[01:18:35] Your jellies are up here. So go with what's right, what's in your jellies. All right. Thank you. Thank you. Very good. Very good. And I will tell you, the goal is to hear more from student delegates, to get student delegates more involved in leadership positions.

[01:19:02] So we'll talk a little bit more about that during other meetings. But because I'm very curious to learn how you share information about MSAC with other students and what their responses are.

[01:19:24] So we'll talk about that. All right. Anybody else from that table? Yes. My name is Debbie.

[01:19:33] I'm the delegate at Kenneth Colbert, and I joined it a few years ago because my granddaughter, she was misunderstood, and she would come home all the time and tell her parents that, you know, they said she wasn't black because she was fair-skinned, and they just didn't like her, so she said, well, well, guys, you guys need to go up to the school and see what's going on, but mom and dad is always busy.

[01:20:05] You know, they were trying to make things right in the family. And they had three other kids and a senior that was going through some things. So grandma came and stepped in. And I went to the school. I was there every other day. I'm still there every week.

[01:20:23] I meet with the principal every other week. So I became the grandmother of the school. So all the kids called me grandma. And so I started seeing some of the things that was going on, and I just started making some suggestions on how we can change it.

[01:20:40] And the principal is very open. And we do a lot together about diversity and kindness and all those things that come up. When an issue comes up, we rally together and resolve it together. And I've been there ever since. So that's why I became a delegate.

[01:20:57] I'll be there until my grandson graduates. Okay. All right. anyone else at that table good so something as I was listening to this conversation it really for me what highlighted is the impact so and not even realizing the impact that these three people have had on their schools and thinking that's what's

bringing you back is that you're seeing and experiencing the impact that you're having within your school communities

[01:21:34] and that really needs to be highlighted and and recognized all right thank you right how about the table back there can you hear me yes I will motivate me to serve I had moved to Loudoun County from New York going from New York to here was different we had a situation in the school and I was told between my son and

[01:22:12] another student and I was told by previous delegate that I should join MSAC and then from there I became the main delegate that's about it I think for me what I need to gain is gain more be more vocal I don't feel that I am when it's when it comes to the school elementary school and middle school is different elementary school there were more parents involved so they were a

[01:22:48] little bit a little bit more receptive now in middle school not so much we don't have that many students I mean parents that attend the PTA meetings so when I bring the information to them it's more of okay and they move on I think like they suggested I need to be a little bit more vocal maybe worded a different way make it a conversation mm-hmm so that's something that I need to work on okay okay thank you thank you for sharing anyone else at that table

[01:23:24] okay and then this table right here last table on okay I'm nervous to do this um so what motivated me to serve was uh last year my son came from a private kindergarten and went into first grade at LCPS I had um I found a massive amount of anxiety about it um I his kindergarten there was

[01:23:59] like a lot more communication uh it was more diverse um yada yada yada so i found myself with a ton of anxiety and i was like i don't i need more information i need more information about what his experience might be like i need more information about what it's like to be a black child a black boy going through school uh at lcps because i don't i know that you know there are like there's bullying incidents i know that there's hate speech i know all of those things happen but there isn't a lot of information or I mean it's not easily found so like I was like I need more

[01:24:37] information about this for my son so I also realized that I need to be a visible face in his school I was like you know if something happens I don't want you know his concerns to be pushed aside I don't want him to kind of slip through the cracks we're dealing with uh getting him diagnosed with ADHD so I've got that going on and I was like at some point he's gonna hit like a little bit more of a struggle and I was like during that time I don't want this I don't want school to become like a hostile place like I want him to continue uh to enjoy learning he loves to

[01:25:13] learn like I want his experience to remain positive his entire time through LCPS but definitely through elementary school during those formative years so um I started coming to meetings and it suggested oh go to a pto meeting and our pto is our pto and i went and um i was like i need to be more involved so i was like i would like to become a delegate and i'm here every month i'm learning

[01:25:46] i'm trying to do more i'm setting some goals i want to increase like our pto diversity for example things like that um and as far as support i think we're gonna get to that because i think you said we're gonna talk more about like ways to approach people and things like that how to have conversations and that i need to our principal makes me nervous so i'm like mr mills hey i was like you know like awkwardly because i don't know it's weird for me so i need help with the hunt so i'm looking forward

[01:26:24] to um learning how to be a better delegate and to better represent our interests within my school which is hillside and uh i mean i've got three boys the youngest is still one so i'm gonna be at hillside for a while so i was like i need to i was like i have like long-term plans so Um, so that's, uh, where I'm at and, um, yep, I'm happy to be here with all of you.

[01:26:56] All right. Thank you. Anyone else? Did you, okay, go ahead. Okay. Um, hello everyone. Uh, sorry I came in late. Uh, my name is Benan Melkawi. I'm a delegate from Potomac Elementary School.

[01:27:12] This is my fifth year as an MSAC delegate. I started during the COVID year, which, as a lot of us knew, the meetings were online. We didn't know what we were doing. What motivated me to become an MSAC delegate, like many of you, was an incident.

[01:27:29] It always kind of starts with an incident. I'm a researcher by profession, and so I always look at numbers and data and statistics. And our school principal kept saying that our school is 43% diverse, 43% diverse. And then year after year, I would look at my child's classroom, and there is no way we're 43% diverse because the numbers of students, it wasn't adding up to the numbers he was giving.

[01:27:55] And so when I would talk to him about it, I recognized that I was part of an invisible minority within the school. I am Arab American, and Arab Americans, Persian, you know, Iranian Americans, Afghans, for a lot of Pakistanis, we don't even qualify as, you know, we don't put down as Asian American, right?

[01:28:15] So there was a very large number at Potomac Elementary School of our students' body that wasn't represented in the numbers, in the data, not just in our school, but for Loudoun County as a whole. So then I would reach out to the DEIA department and say, well, how many Arab Americans do you have in LCPS?

[01:28:33] We don't know because we don't have a data statistics for that. So that incident of the principal always kind of being fixated on a number, but then even within that number that he was using as a, you know, a badge of honor for our school that we're diverse, and we were like, no, we're actually a lot more diverse than we think we are.

[01:28:53] But you're also excluding a big part of our student population because of this data discrepancy that was happening. And then, of course, within that, there's a range of incidents that were happening of cultural exclusivity that was, you know, not, you know, a lot of students that didn't feel included or didn't feel like they were represented in the school.

[01:29:14] Whether it's having certain flags and not other flags in the school cafeteria. Whether it's, you know, having certain language, family engagement activities for certain minority, majority in our school compared to others.

[01:29:31] The other thing for me, you know, this is my fifth year, so trying to figure out how to put my foot in with the PTA. Yes, I had to really, like, tread my way in there. I had to pave my way in there.

[01:29:48] Repeatedly, I had to ask to be part of the meeting. I had to ask to have a space in the meeting to speak, to give a report on the MSAC meetings. And so when I finally started having space, they would always put me at the end of the meeting right after all of the carnival and the fundraising talks and the spirit wear and the spirit nights.

[01:30:05] Nobody wanted to talk about equity reports or racial slurs that are happening in school. This is not really a conversation that the PTA click liked to talk about. So I had to repeatedly ask to go first in the PTA meetings.

[01:30:21] And it just reached a point as of last year where the equity or the MSAC report from the PTA meeting set the tone for the rest of the PTA meeting. And so it just felt like it was becoming a lot more serious. And from there, all of a sudden, our PTA, and I'm very, very proud to say that our PTA last year has taken a role that it has never taken before.

[01:30:45] advocating for families who were struggling with racial slurs in the school, really taking on the principal. We took on the principal, but the reason why is because I reached out to MSAC, I reached out to the chair, I reached out to the vice chair. What can we do about this principal who has not taken these increased incidents of racial slurs seriously?

[01:31:05] How can we handle that? I reached out to DIA department. I got a lot of kind of support by knowing who's who and who to talk to and come back to the principle with the, I'm going to say it, with the audacity of being an MSAC delegate. Like for once I felt like it just comes with a sense of not just responsibility but a trust that those students and the families and the communities were putting in me as a delegate.

[01:31:31] And so for once I felt, no, me as an MSAC delegate is not just about coming here, you know, one Wednesday a month and listening to a bunch of presentations and then going home, but that there is an active role that I can change to even change the tone of the school and to allow the families to feel, oh, if there are other people you can talk to, and now all of a sudden the PTA is taking on this role that it never really did before.

[01:31:57] And so now the MSAC delegate is an important part of the PTA, which has really changed the traditional makeup of what PTA means to the school community as well. And that has really helped bring in a lot more engagement from families that traditionally do not participate in family engagement or take on an active role kind of on the day-to-day activities of their school, of their children's schools.

[01:32:23] So I do think we definitely need a lot more support in that area of how to, you know, champion yourself and walk in with that badge. Give yourself a badge. Make yourself a badge of being an MSAC delegate. So I'm very proud of that, and I'm very proud of being part of this community.

[01:32:42] So thank you. a minute go ahead um so okay so one thing that i heard from this table that really like a better term it bothered me was the statement that your child is considered to be adhd or avd no no so

[01:33:16] well the reason why it bothers me is because it's considered to be a something that is wrong but But if you look at me, you would have no idea that I can think about five or seven things at one time and compute numbers that don't make sense to the average person, right?

[01:33:38] So it may seem or appear to the standard school board system that someone that has the disabilities that I have, mental disabilities that I have, including those that are autistic, are some of the most intelligent individuals in the world, right?

[01:33:55] And the reason I want to make sure that I communicate that to you is because some people don't know that, right? The only way that I've seen, because my line brother is a special education teacher,

[01:34:29] and he told me specifically that African American children are deemed to be ADHD or have some type of learning disability, when in reality, we don't teach them in the way in which we learn. I'm an auditory listener. I'm a visual listener.

[01:34:46] You have me sit down and write anything, I won't do it. You make me sit down and do anything, I won't do it. But if you have me work out and you want me to talk about something, I can do that, right? So the only reason I speak about it is because I face those same challenges.

[01:35:04] I don't like to do online school. I have a master's degree, right? And I'm working to be a pilot. And one thing that I know as far as being in the air, when your brain has to think 10 times faster than the average person or you want to fall out the sky it's easy for somebody with adhd right so it's more or less a statement of encouragement to have an understanding that your child is not different but special right i just it is really because we need to set and talk about children right

[01:35:41] i really was like does she know that this man is like really special no he definitely is and i know and i'm aware and like i said it runs in i've seen it within the family like i said i've got my sister's son one is on the spectrum and one is twice exceptional with autistic features and he's studying physics so it's just i want to make sure that my son is supported in a way that encourages his growth so that he can learn the way that he needs to so it's you know what i do you know what i'm saying like i'm saying what you're saying but the question then at that point is does Loudoun County have that?

[01:36:19] I've seen academies of Loudoun, that's cute, but do they have a program for that? That's what we'll figure out right now. We're still in the process of going through that. In the meantime, it's like we do a lot of private support and things like that. So we're now at the point where we're going to start getting the school involved when necessary.

[01:36:39] So, yeah. But thank you for sharing. And also, yeah, no, it's also, It's wonderful to see when, you know, you have a small child who's dealing with something like this, when you see a grown man who is, it's like, this is what you want to see.

[01:36:57] It's like, this is not something that is going to, yes, it, there's challenges, but okay. You got me. All right.

[01:37:15] Thank you guys. This has been great dialogue for the sake of me and my coffin. I'm going to wrap this up. But this has been great. I do want, when we come back, I want those of you who have served as delegates for multiple years, you have a success story or you wouldn't keep doing it, right?

[01:37:42] So I want you to come back and share those success stories because I don't want, it doesn't motivate anybody to hear all the bad stuff. And I'm not saying we talked about a lot of bad things, but again, what motivates you?

[01:37:59] there's a reason why some of you have served for four years. It's not just because your child is still in school. It's not just because your grandkids are still there, right? You grandmama or grandma of the school for a reason, right? And so I want to hear that. We want to hear that. We want to hear things that motivate us to keep going. Again, we will have training on being a delegate and then also how do you work with your equity leads how many i think we have a couple of

[01:38:35] equity leads in the room so okay we have one right now but we're hoping that the equity leads from these different schools are present and that we work with them it's important that we do that it's

important that we are seen at these schools and i am and will make myself available as much as possible if you want to go into the school and you need somebody to walk beside you because I'm in the learning phase as well. I'm willing to boots on the ground, right? That's important to me. Boots on the ground

[01:39:13] is very important because they need to know me. Go ahead. Not the song. Not the song. Maybe Fantasia version but I don't know. But not, no. But seriously, it's important. It's important that we do that. It's important that we have a presence, that we are being taken seriously, and that, again, is a part of the outreach.

[01:39:37] The more that we are present at schools and other outside activities, the more the community becomes aware. Yes? No? Dr. Rasheed, go ahead. When a delegate wants to be, like, if you feel like you're not being heard, I'm more than willing to go with you to talk to the principal or whatever, any person that you don't feel like you're not being heard.

[01:40:00] I would love to accompany you. That would be my pleasure if you want to. Yeah. And there are resources here in the room, and we will bring to you during more email messages, during the next meetings that we have, we'll provide you with additional resources.

[01:40:21] So that we are equipped. You see, it's important to be equipped when you go out and represent because nobody wants to go out there without a shield. And so it's important that they know because we want them to take us serious. We want them to take us seriously.

[01:40:38] And so we're going to talk more about that. Our next meeting, we're going to have a lot more. We're going to use our technology a little bit more, right? So I believe in being more engaged, getting up, moving about, not sitting for two hours because it's not healthy.

[01:40:59] It's not healthy. I'm proof of it. So it is not healthy. And so it's important that we move about, again, get to know people, not just at your table, but people in the room, because we are each other's advocates, right?

[01:41:15] We are each other's support systems. And so that is all I have for tonight. Again, thank you all for showing up. I want to make sure that you did sign the attendance roster in the back because I want to send up follow-up email messages to you.

[01:41:33] I want to make sure that I have the correct delegates. So if you didn't see my first email that went out last week, it was to ensure that I have the right delegates for these schools. And so please make sure you respond.

[01:41:49] Make sure your name is at the back. And again, the next time we come together, I'm going to ask you your name again until I remember. It's a lot of you. And so I'm excited. You guys are excited? Yeah, we're excited for our new school year. And we're going to do great things, great things.

[01:42:05] And so, again, thank you all so much. Have a pleasant evening.



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