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Loudoun County Public Schools, Performance Monitoring Committee Meeting, Tuesday, October 21, 2025

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Place LCPS Administration Building / School Board Room, Ashburn, Virginia
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[00:00:25] - All right, good evening everyone. Hope you're all doing well. I wanna welcome you all to the Performance Monitoring Committee. My name is Arben Estreffi and I'm chair of this committee. We'll officially call the meeting to order and then we'll start off with public comment.

[00:00:42] I introduced myself but I also wanna mention that we have Chair Mansfield here as well as Mrs. Chernoff as a part of this committee and just wanna check if we do have any public comment, I believe. - No public comment. - Okay, so seeing no public comment, we'll move on to approving the meeting minutes from our September 16th meeting.

[00:01:03] Do I have a motion to approve the meeting minutes? - Yes. - Motion to approve the September 16th, 2025 PMC meeting minutes. - Thank you. Motion has been made by Ms. Chernoff. Do I have a second? - Second. - Seconded by Chair Mansfield.

[00:01:19] Is there any discussion or any revisions to the meeting minutes? Seeing none, we will go ahead and vote. All those in favor of approving the meeting minutes, please say aye. - Aye. - Aye. That motion will pass unanimously, and the meeting minutes have been approved.

[00:01:35] And we'll move on to one of our information items for this evening, and it is Division of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility, Creating and Sustaining Positive School Culture. We have many presenters for this afternoon, and I will go ahead and list them all.

[00:01:55] We have Ms. Gonzalez-Sales, Director of High School Education. We have, oh, okay. I will pass it on to Dr. Ellis and Dr. Ellis Williams to present.

[00:02:13] Thank you. And I'll kick it right over to Dr. Ellis Williams and Mr. Muhammad, and they'll introduce our school-based guests. So I have the opportunity. Thank you, Charest Jeffrey and other board members assembled. I have the honor and pleasure to introduce my colleague and director of the Division of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility, Mr. Shaheed Muhammad, and later in the presentation, we don't want to not have the affiliation with the school and the proper identification of the persons presenting with us, so he will actually introduce our guests later.

[00:02:48] So to get us kicked off, we are here to present on Creating and Sustaining Positive School Culture. So as we all know, next slide. So as we know, LCPS is a model school division for many reasons, a foundational expectation for all students to create a sense of belonging for all students and so that they can thrive during their educational experience in LCPS.

[00:03:12] A positive school culture is the linchpin for that success. Key components of a positive school culture include a shared vision, strong and respectful relationships, a sense of belonging and safety, high expectations with tailored support, inclusive environments, and a focus on academic and social-emotional development. So when we think about cultivating this culture, it involves leaders modeling positive behaviors, empowering students and teachers, promoting collaboration and healthy traditions, and ensuring effective

[00:03:47] communication and family involvement. So we know that this is in alignment with strategic plan goal one which is empowering students and the statement reads the following students are at the center of our work valuing all students hopes and dreams and preparing them to make meaningful contributions to the world next slide you're here thank you um so as lcps is a model school division

[00:04:20] it is uh not um hard to understand that we as a school division work very hard on school culture, and one aspect is eradicating racial slurs and hate speech. Listed on the slide is two definitions, one for racial slurs and one for hate speech.

[00:04:43] I won't read it to you, but this behavior is defined by the Student Behavior and Administrative Response, SBAR, and it falls under relationship behaviors as a code. These behaviors create a negative relationship between two or more people that does not result and physical harm. Relationship behaviors affect the whole school community in that the school climate is often a reflection of how students and people treat one another. Students who exhibit difficulty with relationship behaviors may also have difficulty with other social emotional

[00:05:20] competencies. The relationship behavior number nine description, which we'll be focusing on during this presentation, is using slurs based upon the actual or perceived race, ethnicity, color, national origin, citizenship immigration status, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, religion, or disability. Next slide. So as we were talking about the possible

[00:05:55] negative impact on school culture, as a school division, we have a standard operating procedure that schools will be able to use when mitigating and handling incidents of racial slurs and hate speech. There are eight steps in this document, beginning with informing parents of the victim and offenders, and beginning a thorough investigation of the situation. We always denounce the act within the school campus or with the broader school community. Sometimes that

[00:06:34] requires messaging to go out in the form of connected messages emails etc we also provide supports for the students who were harmed we in use the united mental health team in schools our counselors who work very hard to ensure that they're providing the supports needed to students when harm has occurred then assistant principals principals and deans plan and consider appropriate

[00:07:07] disciplinary action. Input information into the Phoenix, the SIS, is the sixth step once the information has been decided upon. And it is important that we always use the appropriate detail codes for the violation. We also provide learning with a reflective lesson for the student who caused harm or students. This is a very important step because we know as an educational organization. It's important to make sure that we are providing the proper opportunities to learn

[00:07:44] so that students who make these mistakes do not continue to make the same mistakes. And then lastly, you always consider any additional supports as needed that the school-based team can reach out to central office for in order to support them on an ongoing basis. The next slide indicates racial slurs and hate speech data as of October 14th 2025 we have delineated it out

[00:08:17] by level so as you see elementary at that time had no I'm missing a slide okay pardon me yes please okay so depicted on this slide is as of 10 14 25 we actually have broken this out based on

[00:08:49] race color national origin and as you can see for the number of incidents we had 101 and as of 10 14 25 a total of all schools 545 based on gender we had one sexual identity six and 25 26 based on sex zero disability two religion teased out in particular for our jewish community two

[00:09:22] and Islam and Islamic community zero. When we look at the number of incidents that were as of 10-14-25 by the school year based on race national origin again 545 an increase to 11 based on gender 57 based on sexual identity 11 based on sex 24 based on disability religion Jewish three and from zero to six for our Islamic students I'm sorry Dr. Alice Williams I see that the number of

[00:09:59] incidents in the column is 24 to 25 and then the next one is 25 26 right yes so they are flipped so they're flipped okay thank you thank you thank you for catching that um in our elementary school as of the the date 10 14 25 there were 39 incidents combined 44 in the middle school as of this year, since the beginning, and 20 not in our high schools.

[00:10:27] Next slide. I think I know why. Sorry, we could speak to it.

[00:10:50] So there were multiple copies that were sent. The next slide is not aligning, so just give us a moment for some technical difficulties to be acknowledged and addressed. This page, Relational Behavior 9, Violations Count by School.

[00:11:26] It mirrors the document. Can you just reference the document? Sure. I mean, I don't have it. Okay, so in your addendum, you have a purple guide, and it depicts the behavior nine violations count by school.

[00:11:47] It is in the attachment, and I'll give you a moment to pull that up.

[00:12:02] Which one are you talking about? We have the 2025 high school survey. Hold on to that one, and I'm going to reference this document, which we'll give you copies of after, because this is actually depicted in behavior nine violations. This is RB9 violations that count by schools as of today.

[00:12:20] So I won't make you keep looking. No worries. So by elementary, middle, and high, and I'll begin with elementary. Arcola has four incidents.

[00:12:36] Ashburn, one. Cardinal Ridge, one. Cedar Lane, one. Cool Spring, one. Countryside, two. Creighton's Corner, one. Discovery, one. Elaine Thompson, one.

[00:12:51] Evergreen Mills, 3, Forest Grove, 1, Henrietta Lacks, 1, Hillside, 1, Horizon, 4, Hutchinson Farm, 2, Leesburg, 1, Liberty, 3, Little River, 2, Lowe's Island, 1, Madison Trust, 1, Mill Run, 1, Potomac, 5, Richard and Mildred Loving, 1, Sanders Corner, 1, Settles Landing, 3, Stuart Weller 4

[00:13:27] Middle Belmont Ridge 1 Eagle Ridge 4 Harper Park 5 J.L. Simpson 7 J. Michael Lunsford 7 River Bend 3 Seneca Ridge 3 Smarts Middle 5 Sterling 2 Stonehill 5 Trailside 9 Watson Mountain 2 High School Broad Run 1 Dominion 4

[00:13:58] Freedom 4, Heritage 5, John Champ 5, Parkview 1, Potomac Falls 2, Riverside 3, Tuscarora 3, and Woodgrove 1. And the slide is actually up and available at this juncture. So as of today, 48 out of our 100 schools have at least one incident so far this year. Next slide. I always

[00:14:32] want to center us into the to remind us that we are working with adolescents and students and there are going to be mistakes that happen we hope that we're able to help them grow through to become the best citizens that we can put out into society and so when I saw this quote I thought it appropriate to remind us of the work that we have ahead and the work that we're currently engaged in correction shapes behavior for a moment but connection shapes character for a lifetime When children feel understood, they're more open to guidance.

[00:15:06] And as all of us in this room contribute to the lines of effort to guide the behaviors that we want to see, not only in our students, but in our citizens once they leave the corridors of LCPS is important. Next slide. So as we think about the ways in which we collaborate with DOSL, which is our division of school leadership, and I believe that acronym is DSL.

[00:15:33] I tend to put the O in there. The work that we do at our High School Leadership Office and School Leadership and Collaboration Division of DEI. Some of the acts are to review racial slur and hate speech data with level directors. Cynthia Lewis works with Beth Robinson, Jessica Heifield with Miss Elaine Layman, Mr. Shahid Mohammed with Miss Nerietta Gonzalez-Sales, and Kevin Tyson, as well as Dr. Brandon Wolf.

[00:15:58] The information is used for collaboration efforts such as equity walks, which you'll hear a little bit about later. restorative conversations, principal consultation, and schools-based supports as needed. Principals collaborate with the Division of DEIA frequently as a collaborating support for their lines of effort, i.e. community messaging aligned with the individual school's core values and the language that supports the sensitivity of language for their particular community, just to name an example.

[00:16:29] We look forward to the data talks informing our school improvement plans as we move forward. Next, we'll look at our three-year school data trends, and this is based on elementary, middle school, and high school.

[00:16:55] Next slide. The data table depicted is a comparison of a three-year trend by elementary, middle, and high, And it notates the impact of the initial intentional strategies with consistent actions taken to reduce and to eradicate racial slurs and hate speech.

[00:17:18] This is from school year 23-24. And as we see, there's still work to be done. So if you notice that we see for our elementary students, we had an increase that peaked in 23-24. And it started to ascend, but

we saw a significant decline, at least I would say significant in comparison to the trajectory we were on initially.

[00:17:41] When strategies on reducing and eradicating racial slurs and hate speech were introduced, we saw a decline within our elementary schools. We can say the same for middle schools. They were on a higher trajectory of roughly 380 incidents peaking to close to 550 and then declining to 370 after implementation and collaboration with our office as well as others.

[00:18:07] We will not ever hide anything that's happening. Our high schools have also implemented a tremendous amount of lines of effort, and we still see an increase. So it's not a one-stop shop or one solution. We have lots of endeavors that are happening simultaneously, and yet we still see that we have an increase, although not as high initially starting out as our elementary and middle schools, who we often pay closer attention to because their numbers are coming so high initially.

[00:18:38] But we recognize that although high school has a lower amount over a continuum, it continues to increase incrementally. I'm going to stop and ask if there are any questions with this slide in particular. So what do you find with high school that makes it, I mean, I'm glad there are lower incidents at the beginning, but what is different about high school as far as stopping hate

[00:19:11] speech and racial slurs, that you're still seeing an increase as opposed to middle and elementary? I mean, is middle and elementary more explicit instruction? Are we able to go into those schools?

[00:19:28] Are high schools harder to get into? I mean, what is it about it? Or is it because they now know, and so then it raises the data? So I'm never going to speculate as a researcher and as we're looking at data, but I can tell you the experiences from our office in a collaboration stance.

[00:19:48] Our middle school students tend to have the highest rates of RB8s and RB9s, you can see depicted, followed by our elementary school students. Our high school students have a lower number, and if I were to correlate a rationale as to why, that is when they're put in their leadership roles and they're challenged to help mitigate. Although we see an increase, they don't start out high because they have student leaders, student leaders that work with our student equity ambassadors, MSAC student leaders, as well as the superintendent and student cabinet members. So

[00:20:23] they're often challenged to help mitigate in spaces that adults traditionally are not in. As we see in elementary and middle schools, they have closer supervision, but sometimes things just get past them. And I think that in the spirit of each striation, having taught each of these age groups, there tends to be more information shared when you're younger as to what happens to you. And so that creates that level of reporting that increases. And in middle school, I believe the way in which the brain is developing, you're more emboldened to utilize or

[00:20:59] misuse language and trying out different versions of yourself. So that would not be my one answer as to what's happening correlationally, but based on the reports that we get, what's reported is reported. And sometimes it's really just trying out language. It's not always intentional, as intentional as it may seem once reported. Which leads me to also share, there are times when our students engage in reporting about incidents that happened to them or to their peers, and they summarize it with adult language. For example, I think I can use an example when bullying became

[00:21:39] the new zeitgeist word, everything that happened was bullying. And I think that in an effort to be able to mitigate and not under-report, sometimes we have a misalignment with what is reported for the type of incident. So for example, an RB8, as Mr. Muhammad discussed in the previous slide, is when you use hurtful or harmful language. An RB9 is when you use hurtful or harmful language based on a protected class. So when we delineate to that level to find out what exactly is stated,

[00:22:14] what exactly transpired sometimes we see that there may be a differential in what is actually transpired i mean coming from you know my area south riding i have to say when i look at these numbers of the racial scholars by school the trend data for liberty elementary we go from two to 21 to 34 and now you've said i think three but we're still in the first quarter and then we go to lunsford which is that feeder school and that feeder school has 33 40 and

[00:22:45] 37 and so it's increasing and then of course that goes to freedom which is 12 9 9 and 21 and this year we have four so but again it's first quarter and things can get we have three more quarters to go so i will also say for champ which is also the feeder school for liberty as well you have an increase there to 3711 and now we have five so it's it's concerning to me being in that area

[00:23:20] what are we seeing going on in those schools that is so much higher than a lot of the other schools so what is and are you able to get in there are you able to do walks that you're talking about other admin are they invited to go with you do they need to go with you i is it principal i just don't know. Concerns me. So one of the things that as a division we did last year is we broke out into six clusters. They don't perfectly align, but we wanted to keep, to your point, the feeder schools together so that we can actually see what's happening. And what we see, I'll start

[00:23:58] with the positive, is when we have a positive trend of intentionality around these particular incidents at the elementary level, it tends to follow that pattern into the middle and into the high. So it's almost an old answer. It's like, let's catch it while they're young. We also are a microcosm of the larger community. And our students are a microcosm of the larger community.

[00:24:20] When we see and they're exposed to unkind dispositions, language, and rhetoric that they're barraged with, be it through social media, be it through engagement with adults around them, they tend to emulate what they see. And I'm not saying that is the sole, you know, catalyst for what we see happening but as an office we pay close attention to what's happening in the world and what's happening in our schools and tonight I'm not prepared to share that correlational data but it is something that we're taking a closer look at because we recognize that our students

[00:24:53] are behaving like society right now and the emboldened dispositions is something that we're starting to see an incline in our high school students and our mitigation for our middle and elementary schools which we'll hear more about from our guest presenters this evening there are very specific strategies as well as initiatives that they're working to create a culture where that's not acceptable where it's not okay to engage with one another in your school

[00:25:29] community individually and then of course collectively under the office of what we expect for all of our students across LCPS. So I don't think we're blaming a segment of, and I know that that's a near and dear segment because it's your segment, and yes, of the school division, but it's not an indictment.

[00:25:50] It also seems like an outlier, too. Right, it's not an indictment, yes. It is an outlier, and it's not an indictment for the parents and how they're raising their kids. It's really about being intentional,

intentional as the leader and leaders Having communication with your delegates from MSAC, looking at data, tracking that data, having actionable steps to mitigate.

[00:26:19] Now, there's a collaboration that happens with our office and schools as well, and we are not often always privy. We take dives into this data, but sometimes we're just not privy to what is transpired. So then that becomes a conversation with our level directors, and they'll bring it to us to be able to mitigate and come up with some viable solutions for support.

[00:26:39] so I think it works both ways the lines of communication the ways in which we engage with one another the frequency the duration in which we engage with one another as well as with the level of fidelity it can't be one if I have a colleague and they're working in the Dulles South area and they're as they're hopping and they have everyone on board and things are moving it's going to look different when we're in an area where there may ever be a reluctance or a misalignment or a misunderstanding as to the importance of what is happening so I don't think that it's as intentional as it may read data wise but it definitely is something that we are taking

[00:27:18] a closer look at now that we have six regional clusters that have one member from our division that's getting to know all of the schools in that area understanding what's happening reaching out to the leadership making sure level directors are in communication and DEI leadership so that we can actually to the point you made yes we get into schools and to do so with intentionality not just to be there for the sake of being in a space but to be there with intent and I'm sorry but the other thing is social emotional learning studies just came out a big huge meta study and meta analysis

[00:27:55] about it and that goes into our belonging and it looks like there's evidence-based practices for social emotional learning and that's could be another part of it and it has to be explicit in the early grades and then you get different when you are older so I mean it's multifaceted like you're talking about I mean you got to look at a lot of a lot of different areas so anyway okay I'll stop talking y'all can continue I'm

[00:28:28] sorry next slide so one of the things that we have a lot of discourse about and I think that it will help clear up the role and the way in which the division of DEI operates within the continuum of the larger LCPS division, so we decided to use a sphere of influence to help garner the understanding that our division collaborates and coordinates with central office leadership, select student leaders, and that's not by selection process, that's

[00:29:08] by the aforementioned groups of student leaders that we have identified within our community that help move this work along, such as our MSAC student delegates as well as our student equity ambassadors and our superintendent leaders as well as our school leaders which includes the deans principals and APs as well as the larger LCPS community those are business partners the chamber everyone else that's an invested party into the success of our students we don't just take and drop off at the four circles in the middle it is a real collaboration to be able to move from that space to the endeavors for each and every student to succeed.

[00:29:48] So everyone has lines of efforts that have existed under their own auspice, and then we collaborate with them, and the two combine, be it DEIA and Central Office, DEIA and Select Student Leaders, DEIA and School Leaders, DEIA and Community, and at times, all four with us, to be able to move an initiative or group of initiatives to be able to mitigate for the intention of this presentation, RB8s and RB9s, specifically RB9s.

[00:30:18] So it is the goal and the lines of effort from all within this sphere of influence to be able to help that come to fruition. So to the point you made earlier, Chair Mansfield, it is important to think about the ways in which we are intentional with all of those auspices as we move forward because that sphere of influence is really lines of effort, combined lines of effort.

[00:30:42] Sometimes it's a 2Z, a 3Z, a 4Z, a 5Z, but they are continuous and ever evolving. We've also moved from the mindset of having an invitation to come in to help support a school. We're moving towards authentically looking at the data and identifying the hotspots to say, hey, we're noticing an uptick here to the point you made earlier.

[00:31:06] When you walked up, we knew exactly what you were going to ask about because that's something that we're digging our hands and rolling our sleeves up and calling out all of our colleagues to be able to help us mitigate what's happening in that particular area as well as across the division. Next slide. Okay so at this point we're going to talk about some school strategies and initiatives and we are very pleased to have four leaders here with us this tonight for to help with this presentation to share information on strategies

[00:31:42] and initiatives that they employ to create and sustain a positive school culture in their buildings where racial slurs and hate speech have no place in that environment. First, I'd like to introduce Dr. Mojisola Adejumo, principal of Cardinal Ridge Elementary School. Doctor, I'm sorry, and I know that. I said doctor, okay. Well, it's better than what my drill sergeant used to call me, which is private alphabet, so you're perfectly fine. Yes. We also have Mr. Eric

[00:32:16] Stewart Harmony Middle School principal, Ms. Joan Lewis Osborne, social science and global studies teacher at Freedom High School, and also a co-equity lead, and Ms. Rebecca Pierce, principal at Ashburn Elementary School. And we're going to start with Dr. Adejumo. Well, good evening, everyone. Thank you so very much for having us here today. I'm going to be swift with the 30 minutes that was given. Just joking. She's like seven minutes. Today I'm going to talk to you about the journey

[00:32:53] of Cardinal Ridge and how I was able to, alongside with our staff, our scholars, and our community, engage in a school turnaround initiative. So we built a school culture of love, which stands for leadership, opportunities, voice, and empower. Here you can see that I've been at Cardinal Ridge for seven years, making me the longest-standing principal, as well as the first principal to graduate a class from kindergarten all the way up to fifth grade. So the 2019-2020 school year,

[00:33:28] six months in, started this up. We had COVID, which segued into school closure. And then you could see some of the things that we all went through as a division, as a school, as a community. As you rightly said, Chair Mansfield, that Cardinal Ridge, along with Liberty, Hutchinson Farm, Little River, Gumspring, Lunsford, Freedom, as well as Champ, our entire community, along with the entire LCPS, engaged in hybrid distance learning, six feet apart, wearing masks, then

[00:34:07] to no COVID protocols, whereby we finally had the opportunity at Cardinal Ridge to identify our core value which was love or which is love. During the 22 or 23-24 school year our school focused on building a school culture a foundation of love and I'm going to share a little bit more of what that looked like. The 24-25 school year we started to really articulate that our culture the culture at Cardinal Ridge was centered in love and this school year we are focused on walking

[00:34:42] in love. As you all may know, that it is easier said than done. And so there are several things that we've done as a school, as the principal, myself, staff members, our scholars, and our community, things that we've done to really not just articulate that love is our core value, but to also demonstrate it. One of the things that I always say at Cardinal Ridge is that love is a decision. It is not an emotion. It's an action word. It's a verb. It is something that you do and so next slide here you will see the different ways in which we have demonstrated love

[00:35:21] for our staff our scholars our community as well as the intersectionality of it all being our staff our scholars in our community in a few seconds you're going to see a video that really highlights just real time how this happens I felt like it would be it's one thing to say we do these things and it's another thing to actually see it in live and living color, in reality.

[00:35:50] So just to speak to a couple of things that you're going to see, with regards to our staff, one of the things that has been important to me as a leader is ensuring that we reduce our teacher turnover rate. At the time that I was hired, I was the third principal in three years. I onboarded 25 staff members, and every year up until the past two years, we onboarded at least anywhere from 15 to 20 staff members.

[00:36:18] I'm grateful to say that last school year or this school year, we onboarded three staff members. And that is as a result of being intentional, is as a result of understanding and the power of dignity, belonging, and love.

[00:36:35] So some of the things that I do with our staff is ensuring that when we are building their capacity, that we do that during the school day. And by doing that during the school day, it means that I'm intentional about our substitute teachers, ensuring that our substitute teachers know that they are welcome and loved at our school.

[00:36:51] And when I typically ask our subs, like, why do you come here? They're like, Dr. A, your staff is so kind. The scholars treat us well. They don't make fun of us. And that was something that was really hard to hear from substitute teachers, articulating that there are schools where scholars make fun of guest teachers.

[00:37:10] Other things that we do is to ensure that we grow our staff. Today, I have taken, to date, I've taken over 25 teachers to national conferences, and that's through spinning cotton candy, it is through fundraising, it is through by any means necessary to ensure that our teachers know that they are valued and that they are loved and that they are professionals, and they deserve to have those experiences outside of the state of Virginia.

[00:37:37] For our scholars, this is a trifecta. So we work with our scholars who are within Cardinal Ridge. We also work with our scholars from Gum Springs, from Lunsford, Freedom High School, and John Champ.

[00:37:52] There's an initiative that we've done at Cardinal Ridge that we started last year, which is called the Academic Help Desk, where we identify our scholars, our Tier 3 scholars and Tier 2 scholars who are struggling, and we maximize, there's intentionality around providing them with the supports that they need from the 7.10 start time when they get to school up until 7.50.

[00:38:13] And so we ensure that they still receive their SEL time. And then we do have a rotation where they're able to come to the library and they are tutored by John Champ, Freedom, Gumsprings, or Lunsford Scholars. And we also allow our fifth grade scholars to be able to support our scholars who need

help. There's also this idea of belonging and ensuring that our scholars understand um that they matter so we created a drum line um so that they could support freedom high school we actually have a color guard we did a food recovery um some years back where we donated

[00:38:48] over 200 pounds of food um we have our scholar ambassadors and um and that goes from kindergarten all the way to fifth grade and so just you all know um for kindergarten and first grade what that looks like they're like i'm happy i'm here but why am i here um so there are multiple opportunities for scholars to be able to use their voice at our school.

[00:39:11] And then we segue to our community. We have town hall meetings, and you'll see that in a few seconds. I have a vlog where I talk about anything from using our PBIS matrix as a way to celebrate your scholar when they clean up their room or to provide them with growth opportunities.

[00:39:27] The vlog also talks about our school improvement plan. You like that, Dr. Tyler? It also has different things that we are doing in the school because one of the things that we know from our own community survey is that families want to know about what's happening in the school, and oftentimes the school feels like a black box.

[00:39:46] So one initiative that we created, and I believe we are the only school in Loudoun County Public Schools to have done this, is to allow our families to do a learning walk. So we created a family learning academy, and then we invited those families who went through the learning academy to come in and actually engage in a learning walk where they observed engagement and gave us feedback on engagement.

[00:40:09] To have families be able to do that at that level really means a couple of things. Our teachers know that they are loved and that they belong and that they're safe, and our scholars understand the importance of receiving a high-quality education. And then last but not least, the intersection of it all has provided us with the opportunity to do things like the love box where Dr. Ellis, Ray Mitchell, Tedra, so many people in cabinet wrote love letters or notes to as well as our entire school Dr. Spence as well wrote notes to

[00:40:44] children at the Children's National Hospital and we were able to give them love in a place where oftentimes beyond the holidays they're sometimes forgotten it also provided us with the opportunity to be the first school in Loudoun County Public Schools to be a national green ribbon school And that came about from Ms. Traynor, who's over at Tuscarora High School, and myself and a few teachers engaging in the Peterson Field Guide Initiative.

[00:41:12] And that's where I said, I'm going to take all 900 scholars outside so that our teachers could have two extra hours of planning. And that has turned into just a school initiative where we've been able to build a nature trail and be able to support our scholars with outdoor learning.

[00:41:29] So in a few seconds, you're going to see some of the great things that we do and how we engage our school, our community, and our staff members. I'll leave you with this before I show the video. There is no magic elixir in terms of eradicating hate speech.

[00:41:45] But one thing that we do know is that when children, staff members, and individuals know that they belong, then they are more intentional about how they interact with one another. When there's that connection between schools, we have the opportunity to build a collective understanding that really harnesses our collective efficacy.

[00:42:05] And efficacy is not about self-worth. It's about your ability and your understanding to articulate the significant impact that you can make in your day-to-day. So here's our video. Thank you. We're going to give this a try with the old school sound system.

[00:42:22] And if it doesn't work, it's available in board docs. This school year, our focus is walking in love. Walk in love. This is a mandate. It's a call to action.

[00:42:41] Tell yourself you are loved, you belong here, you're purposed, and it is your right to walk in love. Superintendent Dr. Spence talks a lot about belonging.

[00:43:02] One of the things that we know is that research shares that when scholars and staff members know and feel that they belong, they increase in every aspect of their lives. So for our scholars their social emotional and academic standing it increases exponentially and our staff they increase in terms of their efficacy which is their belief that they are making a positive and a substantial impact here at our school. So our CRE Spotlight is one way that we're creating an atmosphere of belonging.

[00:43:35] So all of our staff members they have their picture how many years they've been at Cardinal Ridge what makes them feel like they belong and what their name means right now we are faced with a very serious situation in education as well where we have a teacher shortage and through this program some of you may find that one day i want to be an educator one of you here may be a future principal or a future superintendent or a future director one of you may be supporting a scholar who is learning to read and learning to engage in math so that that scholar can be a future teacher

[00:44:13] 10 CRE educators to Shenandoah University um one educator met us there for the educators rising conference this is my blog courage is one of the most underrated traits of leadership and i'm going to talk to you about courage when i talk about my journey at the principal park

[00:44:52] This is our town hall meeting with our families. Peterson Young Naturalist Program is an opportunity to engage scholars, engage staff members, and just the beauty of our world.

[00:45:15] We are learning about the outside world and about nature and trees. We know that children learn better when they have a sense of belonging. For someone who doesn't have the language yet, this is an awesome way to display what's going on in their mind.

[00:45:32] When they come outside, it's just amazing to see the connections. Our so-called behavior kids don't show these behaviors out here. I see so many scholars who typically have challenges in terms of engaging in what we call the normal aspects of schooling.

[00:45:49] They come out here and they're wowed by the rustling of the leaves. I made the roots, the leaves. The sounds of nature, the smell of the grass. You're writing just these prolific poems.

[00:46:07] Hope one day you grow nice and tall. This program provides so many opportunities in so many different ways. Ways that we can't even account for right now. So this is a school that historically had high teacher turnover.

[00:46:28] A school that experienced a lot of hurt. And now you see today that our school is truly a miracle. It is a place where people know that they belong and that they value and that they matter. And so I'll close with this. What's next? Well, I reached out to Dr. Brewer over at Dominion High School.

[00:46:47] My children go to Dominion High School. And I'm just going to be honest. Maybe I just couldn't cut the umbilical cord. I don't know. But anyways, I asked him. I said, can I come to your school and help

out in any way? And he said yes. And so I have a passion for youth who are at risk, and I'll be supporting Dominion High School there. And recently I was able to support a scholar who engaged in hate speech and help that scholar understand that that was a moment and not a mark.

[00:47:12] And so we did some restorative practices. And so the call to love is not just about Cardinal Ridge. It's about LCPS, finding ways to build those connections and support beyond the school wall. So thank you very much for engaging with me today.

[00:47:28] Thank you, Dr. Adejumo. And now we'll hear from Mr. Eric Stewart, Harmony Middle School. Thank you. Hello, everybody. As he said, I'm Eric Stewart, principal at Harmony Middle School.

[00:47:45] Very excited. Been in Loudoun County since 1987. And as I've told people, I am not retiring and don't want to retire because I love it. I love what I do. And I think you'll hear that tonight from all of us. And part of culture and climate is about love and enjoying what we do.

[00:48:05] And I certainly do, especially at Harmony Middle. You've heard, I'm sure, from other schools of dean talks, counselors speaking with kids about bullying, SEL, PBIS. We do all the traditional things and more.

[00:48:23] So some strategic things that we do are that I believe we were one of the first schools to do the DEIA walkthrough last year. That was the last or second last week of school. We also annually have 40 to 50 clubs that are sponsored by our teachers and staff.

[00:48:41] I personally have four clubs, juggling, chess, public speaking, and cornhole. It's a way for me to stay connected with the kids, and I think it's a way for the staff to stay connected with the kids also. It's really, really important.

[00:48:59] Another very powerful thing that I've done at Harmony, and also when I opened Smart's Mill, is what we call the name game. And that's when you name everybody in the school. So whatever size the school's been, we know all the kids' names, usually first and last.

[00:49:18] and I participate, my guidance counselors, and my deans and assistant principals. It's important for everybody to know who the kids are. Every year I memorize the sixth graders' names, and then the following year as well.

[00:49:34] So my retention is getting worse as I get older, but it's important for us to do it, and it's unique, and it's very, very powerful for the climate, very powerful. On the slides, I wanted to do our traditional recognition of staff and students, but I wanted my staff and then the students to make sure they knew what it was, what it looked like.

[00:50:03] You can say be nice, be polite, but there's some actions that are important, like opening the door for people, saying please and thank you, things we learned early in our family that we need to continue, especially in middle school.

[00:50:23] So we looked for examples in the real world for our staff. And so one was Harris Teeter, could be any grocery store. But if you go into Harris Teeter, let's say I want to find the bologna. I don't really know where that is, so I don't shop that much.

[00:50:42] Somewhere in the meat section. If I say to almost any worker, can you help me find the bologna? They'll say it's down on aisle eight, and they'll take me down there and show me where it is. That is being very helpful.

[00:51:00] So there's a sample of any store, any business, any school. We're being helpful to kids. So when parents come in back to school night for visiting, you don't just say it's down at the end of the hall. If someone's available, you take them down there, and that's important.

[00:51:17] And that's a concrete thing you can talk about and teach. Likewise, if I try to buy jewelry for my wife at Ketterman's or any other store, I know they're trying to sell me something, but when I walk in there, it's like they know me.

[00:51:34] And I think, was it from Smarts Mill or Sully Elementary, Broad Run High School? Where do I know these people from? They're just being very, very polite. They're making me feel valued. And so what do we do at school? In the main office, what do we do in our classrooms to make kids feel valued?

[00:51:53] That's the Ketterman's effect. And then giving, paying it forward, hurricanes, relief, anything, helping families out is a third piece of giving that we try to instill in the staff and in the kids.

[00:52:12] So those three together, really, if I'm treating the teachers really well, then they're going to treat the kids really well. It's a domino effect. We have Buzzworthy Awards where kids can nominate teachers for great things.

[00:52:29] We have the Reverse and teachers can nominate students for something. We have the Dean's Dozen. We have the Cornerstone Awards, which are quarterly recognition awards for academics and character. The reason I brought it up, because I know several schools do it, is we do it after school and not during school, because sometimes in middle schools, if you do it during school, the kids go to the auditorium, get a pencil that says honor roll, they go back to their class, and then kids say, oh, you're on the honor roll?

[00:53:02] It's not always a positive peer experience, so we do it with the parents, and when the other kids show up, everybody knows that there's a lot of kids where academics is important and good behavior is important. We also will bring up at the end of each quarter awards, first two at least, are the elementary students, so the younger siblings.

[00:53:24] We'll say, if you're going to come to Harmony in a couple years, come on up on stage. We're going to give you an academic pin and a character pin because we know you'll be here in a couple years. And so they come up there, and it's almost a tearjerker moment because it's really neat to see these little kids up there waving, and they think they're real special because they're at their older brother or sister's recognition night.

[00:53:46] We do a lot with newsletter recognition, with community sports, with family adventures, with anything academic, anything safety-related, and anything climate-related are put throughout all of our weekly newsletters.

[00:54:05] I'm going to go to the next slide. And you remember Arnold Schwarzkopf? We did Operation Desert Storm. Well, I had with my deans and assistant principals Operation Welcome Back.

[00:54:23] So that was our plan. We were going to welcome back the families in person or on the phone. We had to do 20 each, so we ended up reaching out to 140 different families out of 1,100. It's about 15%, I think, but it was just a way in August that we could welcome everybody back, in addition to them coming back to school.

[00:54:44] Then we did Operation Muffin Man. Do you know the Muffin Man? That was geared for our staff. So do my administrators know every staff in the building? We have about 145. Do you know the cafeteria workers? Do you know their first name, their last name? Do you know all the custodians? Do you know which part of the building they cleaned? Do you know a teacher in sixth grade who's brand new, even if you're the eighth grade dean?

[00:55:11] So that was our weekly homework, is to make sure my team of six, the leadership team, knew everybody, because if we knew everybody in the building, they would feel more valuable, and then they're going to do the same for kids. and then we do another one called operation reach out that is also called operation boomerang where let's say I had an incident with a family two weeks ago I'm going to call in about a week and say hey how's it going since our last incident so I want to make sure they know we're thinking about

[00:55:46] them I want to make sure it has improved and make sure we're in touch with the families those are some of the strategies I had four or five slides but narrowed down to two because there's so many of us but I would invite you to our school it's a lovely place I love it and I think you would too thanks for having me thank you Mr. Stewart now we'll hear from Joan Miss Joan Lewis Osborne a teacher at Freedom High School to talk about some student initiatives that they are doing

[00:56:24] um good evening my name is Joan Lewis Osborne I teach AP government and African American history at Freedom High School, also the co-equity lead for the last two years. We have a new principal this year, so that's why I was asked to talk about the initiative that we've done over the last two years to address hate speech incidents at our school.

[00:56:52] Our effort was really focused on the specific incidents that were happening at our school and how we could deal with this. So we brought together a team of equity ambassadors, student council leaders, and then the heads of, you know, the BSA, the MSA, like all of our, and we have many, many student groups, affinity groups, into a room with administrators and people from the DEIA office to discuss what sorts of educational programs.

[00:57:31] And we also, I do not want to not mention our UMHT team as well. They were there as well, because they're the ones who are the experts on a lot of this and end up doing the training. And so we brought all of these groups together in before school meetings for several weeks until we came up with a plan for what we were going to do to counter the hate speech.

[00:57:57] hate speech incidents. And we came up with a lot of student-led initiative, but we came up with the Empower Eagles campaign. And we took student leaders, had our UMHT school psychologist and our school social worker come up with slides and training, which they did over you know two or three hours over lunch and trained students to go into advisories and teach younger students about bullying and how you know

[00:58:36] it's not a good thing we want to stop it talk about hate speech talk about things that you know that you say that you might think are okay but the actual impact is and the students were the ones who said that this needs to be led by students we were happy to be trained by adults but this needs to be something that students bring to other students because you know this SEL slides that they get in advisory once a week they're you know they said no one pays attention to it your advisory teacher reads it they're not necessarily paying attention to it so this was something that they thought that if students

[00:59:14] brought it other students would actually pay attention to it and so we over a a course of several advisories we had about 50 trained students and they went in pairs I'm going to the advisory starting with ninth grade and then going all the way up to 12th grade and delivering the slideshow talking to each other after they delivered it about how they could do it better you know after the first week of delivery they went back to UMHT and said we need to cut some of these slides down like they're too you know it's too much for ninth graders we need them

[00:59:51] to be shorter but in the end we surveyed students and you know asked them what they thought about the program and then we looked at incidents at the school and over that year the number of incidents actually went down so we do think it's a good program we are starting it up again this year and I just today was talking to some of our equity ambassadors and they have different ideas about how we can change the program to make it better from what we did last year.

[01:00:23] And so this year they'll be training because the juniors and seniors this year are the ones who were trained as 9th and 10th graders. And so now they're going to train the 9th and 10th graders that have just come in because we have seen some incidents and they haven't been trained yet.

[01:00:41] And they have other ideas about how to make it more interactive, have the kids interacting with the presenters with games and different things. And so that's something that we're working on right now, and then we're going to roll it out in the new year.

[01:01:00] And I just wanted to mention one thing, because you talked about the incidents at Freedom and in your cluster. And I just want to say, my two sons graduated from another school in this county.

[01:01:16] And they would say, and my younger son has said this to me before, that he felt like the kids at Freedom felt empowered to speak up when something happened. And whereas at his school, he said that they didn't necessarily feel empowered.

[01:01:32] And sometimes I told them, you need to go and talk about this, or you need to talk to someone about this. You can't just come back home and tell me, like, if the school doesn't know what's going on. But, you know, he would say, oh, I don't want to make a big deal or something like that. So I have to say that I feel if there's one thing that we've taught the kids over the last two years at Freedom, it's to come forward when you hear something and say something to an adult.

[01:01:53] And so I think they do feel more empowered to come forward and talk about things that happen. Thank you, Ms. Lewis Osborne. And we'll have here from last, but definitely not least, Ms. Rebecca Pierce, principal at Ashburn Elementary.

[01:02:12] Good evening. Thank you for having me. At Ashburn Elementary, we do something that we call town hall meetings. I actually started doing them when I was an assistant principal at Sanders Corner. And I collaborated with Mr. Muhammad and his team to bring them to the schools that I was working in.

[01:02:31] And we had such success that I brought it to Ashburn with me. When we're noticing things such as racial slurs or an uptick in relationship-based behaviors, we realized that traditional discipline was not helping to decrease those behaviors.

[01:02:50] So we had to figure out another way to do so. And so we needed to figure out a way to have students interact and get to know each other better and rebuild the trust that was broken in some of these

relationships. We needed to have structured, guided conversations and give students a safe space to talk to one another and get to know one another.

[01:03:14] We wanted to do this in a way that wasn't necessarily tied to any one type of behavior. And so how we chose to focus was on the intent of our words versus the impact of our words and having students interact and understand that while they may have thought that whatever they said or did was a joke or it was something that they heard from a sibling or another student, the impact of those words was much greater.

[01:03:45] And the best way for us to do that was to have our students interact with each other and have a safe place where they could speak and learn about how to understand the impact of our words and our actions. So, when we did this, we started it as reactive to an uptick in some racial slurs, and what we realized was that it was so successful that we started doing it proactively.

[01:04:13] So, it morphed into moving into our whole school behavior system, which is a house system, and getting all grade levels together that weren't just individual classes or individual grade levels but students throughout the entire school and having these town hall type of meetings monthly where students get to interact and get to know each other and we do an activity every month where they are able to help foster that sense of belonging and it gives that ability for student

[01:04:46] voice. It also gives us the ability to increase the time that staff members, classroom teachers who only see one grade level at a time, or only teach one grade level, excuse me, to get to know students at other grade levels. And when they have had that connection with students in previous years, they get to foster that relationship again. And we've seen that it has decreased our behavior incidence. It has decreased the amount of conflict that we're seeing both during class, during

[01:05:20] specials where there are multiple classes together and at recess where students from all grade level classes are together and we've seen that when we can when we use this language of intent versus impact and we're able to really connect that and use it with families as well and when we have those conversations it helps to um it helps to educate parents as well on what it means to have

[01:05:50] that sense of belonging and have those relationships among students. When traditional discipline is not enough, you have to sense, you have to figure out the why behind it, and that is what we try to do every day, and we've seen great success, and we're looking forward to everything else that will come along with it. Thank you. So as we move into looking at the impact, one of the things that we hadn't had

[01:06:27] the opportunity to do in the past, but I'm excited that we'll have more opportunities to do so, is to really hear from our schools what's happening authentically, who they're working with, who they're partnering and collaborating with, the impact and lines of effort from our students, our families when they're engaged and involved. We break away from traditional ways in which we engage and give students experiences, how that correlates to a decline. The goal is a decline and again and with complete transparency as we look at this 22-23, 23-24, 24-25 data for

[01:07:03] Ashburn, Cardinal Ridge, Freedom, and Harmony. We want to make sure that we are notating and able to demonstrate that there has been a decline for three out of four schools. Again, this is not an indictment for the school that still has an upward trajectory. Even though they started low, that trajectory is creeping up. But the lines of effort, as you heard spoken to, will continue. And one of the things that I

want to stress is that this work is not a one and done. It is not a go in and have a presentation. It is not a strong finger wagging. It is not a bringing a parent and only dole out

[01:07:38] consequences. This is adaptive change over time. And we need to take that lens and look at this over the course of a year. Yes, we get annual data that we see from our students, the way they feel they have a sense of belonging, if they are engaged in their school community, if they feel like their assets are being welcomed in the classroom. Those are all factors. But to the point that was made earlier by chair mansfield this is a bigger matrix it's larger than that it's not just a one-size-fits-all we go in and we say okay everyone has to just be nice it's a culture reset in some cases and it's also sometimes mitigating the culture that walks in

[01:08:18] the door with a student i was once at a event and one of the leaders that was speaking said that you know sometimes our students learn what they learn on the sofas in their living rooms and then they come to school to us. I like to contextualize and say 80% of the curriculum walks through the door and we have 20% to work with as educators. And I still have that heart as an educator to know what it is that we can do to impact the lives of our students. So again, adaptive change over time. To the extent where I feel so strongly about that, that I'm encouraging us to start to think about this in two-year intervals, three-year intervals, with a goal

[01:08:57] for the end of if it's a cohort graduating to see if we are able to follow the cohort to have that incremental change demonstrated over time because there are so many things happening internally externally and we want to do so with a level of fidelity and commitment as well as in a way that is relatable and to the point that was made here in this panel that makes sense to students sometimes we employ what makes sense to us as adults who have fully developed amygdala parts of our brain. And we're dealing with students who have a range from a lemon through the size of,

[01:09:33] you know, a great big sun-kissed orange. So we want to have that consideration taken into consideration as well when we think about the ways in which we're going to engage with our students. Which brings me to my next slide. When we're talking about what's happening in ongoing endeavors, we've talked about school equity walks, standard six focus, asynchronous learning platform which is an opportunity for you as board members as well as anyone in the community to be able to take a look at the work that is professionally developed by our team in collaboration with other teams and at times in isolation to be able to help move this work along

[01:10:12] student reflective lessons particularly on racial service and hate speech school culture and climate cohorts to the point I just made earlier DEIA menu of supports we have a whole menu of supports that literally you can order a la carte or you can order a multiple prefix depends on what your needs are to support your school direct school support collaboration with all three levels in a division of school leadership professional learning offerings for beginning teacher institute high school assistant principal cohort aspiring principals cohort school social workers network

[01:10:50] student activity coordinators elementary school principals school-based equity leads and all of the aforementioned that we have discussed this evening. Next slide. When we talk about professional learning offerings, the division of DEIA provides support for LCPS staff, families, and students by addressing inequities and barriers to student success, and by striving to create academically rigorous, affirming, and inclusive environments for each and every student.

[01:11:20] Self-guided asynchronous professional learning offerings are available in PowerSchool. These have been here for the last two years, And we are working on new initiatives and looking forward to pushing out those asynchronous works because we're a small team, but we're mighty.

[01:11:37] The score is 104 to 8. So we want to make sure that we can expand our bandwidth for the same learning that any group, be it in forum, be it in principals meetings, for us to be able to spread this knowledge and do so over time because it is a continuum.

[01:11:58] Lastly, but definitely not least, our equity walks, and you can, on your own time, click into what the equity walk tool is, but I just want to tell you the what and why, because I think that this is a new concept, and I appreciate Harmony sharing that they were our first at the end of last year to have this equity walk.

[01:12:17] A personalized school-based approach to ensure every student succeeds, every educator is equipped, and every school community thrives by creating systemic equity. Equity walks are a tool used to empower schools because we know that no two kids, no two schools, no two equity walks are identical.

[01:12:38] The overarching goal is to support the development of each school in LCPS as a standard for equity excellence in curriculum instruction and environment and culture. The equity walks is just one of many tools developed to achieve this goal.

[01:12:55] the how. Your school largely tailors the visits from our equity walks, excuse me, for our equity walk elements, EWE, we love acronyms around here. The DEIA team will collaborate with a designated team, members, and leadership to identify and observe effective implementation and opportunities for growth. And in the recent weeks, we've also had discussions about what would that look like and who would be aligned to be first.

[01:13:24] There's conversations about relating this to our school improvement plan, coordinating and collaborating with Dossel and our team to be able to identify where these hotspots are, as you so pointedly pointed out earlier, Chair Mansfield, what was an aha moment for you.

[01:13:42] So we're doing the same, and we have lots of leadership in central office as well as in our schools to be able to roll up our sleeves and get to work to help support our students on this journey to becoming the human beings that we want to see in the world that we live in.

[01:14:00] And I'll end there, and I'll take any questions. We will take any questions. Thank you all. I just want to, I know that y'all are still here with us, so I will open up for discussion, but I just want to say I venture to speak for all of us and how inspired we are by the work you are all doing.

[01:14:21] And we could probably sit here all night and listen to you. So that being said, we probably have a lot of questions. So I would only ask that if we have questions for folks from our schools that we address those first and then we can maybe give them an exit as well.

[01:14:38] So maybe we can start there. But yeah, thank you very much. So board members, any questions or discussion? - Just wanna say thank you for being here. Thank you for the work, for serving the students that are in front of you. I've had the privilege to be at several of your schools, one tomorrow.

[01:14:55] So I'm looking forward to following up with you tomorrow. And, you know, we appreciate the work that you're doing and the communities that you serve. So I would like to thank you, too. My kids were the first graduating class from Cardinal Ridge. And they were from Liberty, moved on.

[01:15:12] And I'm very familiar with the culture that was there. And I do appreciate all of the hard work that you have done because it is hard work and it takes three to five years for change. And so kudos to you to bring the love back because it was needed.

[01:15:29] And thank you to the rest of you, too. I appreciate you, too. Thank you. And I just want to say that even when we look at, you know, a lot of times there's so much attention brought to whenever we do a presentation around bullying and hate speech and school culture, there's so much kind of negative attention that is inherent in receiving a presentation like that.

[01:15:49] And this flipped it upside down. And although we might have concerns, right, and we might have certain hot spots, I think you said it really beautifully. I'm like a chronic note taker, by the way, so I've probably quoted you a bunch of times, all of you. But that, like, these are moments, not marks, right?

[01:16:05] And we are doing so many things right. And so that intentionality is going to be the key. And whether that we bring, keep bringing that information to the PMC, or we, you know, keep our finger pressed on this button. But, you know, I think being more intentional, I think you are all doing the work and appreciate Dr. Spence as well and the rest of the team that is staying focused on belonging.

[01:16:29] So really appreciate you guys being here. I do want to say that your note was noted as far as people actually reporting because they're not afraid anymore. And I think that's something that to dig into that data to really see if that's, you know, more about that.

[01:16:49] Because I think that's a good point. Once you start understanding and you're not afraid, you do report more. And so I take that note. You all raise money to send 25 teachers to national conferences? Absolutely. So our budget is about \$5,000 for professional development.

[01:17:10] And my prior work has all been academic turnaround, Title I schools. So Cardinal Ridge was my first non-Title I school, but my first school culture turnaround, which I didn't know it at the time that I said yes. I feel like Loudoun owes me about \$40,000 more because school culture is a totally different process to engage with.

[01:17:35] And so one of the ways that I sought to support our teachers and give them the space where they could wear their Cardinal Ridge shirt proudly within LCPS at professional development was to build their capacity.

[01:17:52] And that meant thinking outside of the box, really understanding that there should be no box. And so it first started off with spinning cotton candy for about two hours, and we made \$1,300. And then it segued with us taking on after-school clubs so that we could take teachers.

[01:18:15] So I've taken our music teachers to Connecticut for NAFME, which is the National Foundation for National Educators for Music. Taking teachers to San Antonio, Las Vegas, not my favorite place, Florida.

[01:18:31] And we just recently came back from, actually on Sunday, we came back from Atlanta, Georgia at the NAFME conference, or yeah, no, NCTM, which is the math conference. Just seeing teachers being able to engage in those spaces with other educators from around the world is something so special.

[01:18:54] And I think that if there's one thing that I hope that you all walk away with is how love funnels through. And so as a board loving our senior leadership, loving our superintendent, thereby they're able to love us so that we can love our staff, so that our staff can love our scholars, it really is a chain of command.

[01:19:16] And I would not be sitting here today if I did not have a very special person who supported me as my former director, Ray Mitchell. She was the elementary school director who supported me as well as Tedra Richardson. It takes us all to be able to do this work.

[01:19:33] And so fundraising is one way that I've built the capacity of our teachers. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you all very much. Really appreciate you. And that is the opportunity to exit or continue to comment if you so desire. Mr. Streffi, Chair Streffi, can I just have my division stand?

[01:19:52] They came to support us tonight. Oh, yes. Oh, and they still have questions for me, but I just want to acknowledge that the dream team is in the building and they are my leaders that go out into our clusters and work with these leaders in their clusters. I just wanted, I couldn't do it without them. So I just want to acknowledge that.

[01:20:08] And of course, I'm ready to take your questions. Thank you so much, yes. Thank you all for being here with us and for doing this work. So I know, Dr. Ellis, I know it's a little bit late. Maybe we can go for another 10 minutes and stay till 7.30 and then see how much we can get through and then maybe overflow this to the next meeting and then potentially move the last information item to the next meeting or however you would prefer to handle it.

[01:20:36] So the next information item is not time sensitive. We can do that at the next meeting without a problem and also won't take very long. The next meeting also has a little bit more space than we originally planned because the HR presentation that was slated for November won't be actually ready until December.

[01:20:55] So we do have time if we want to revisit this topic next month. Does that sound good to you all? All right. So with that, any other questions or discussion? Yes. I'm wondering if I should – I'm going to give you a high level.

[01:21:14] So I'll be completely – I'm very great. This is amazing. I mean, obviously seeing these schools and this work. But speaking for myself, and, you know, we touched on this a little bit before the meeting, and I just still feel a little bit disconnected from how all of this works.

[01:21:31] And I think one of the things that I'm really struggling, I hear you say collaboration. I hear you say fidelity. I hear a lot of the words that I know in education. And maybe that's just my educational background that lives in those curriculum spaces and those data spaces. And maybe I just need to be more present in the work.

[01:21:49] Because when I go to the schools, I see the work. I see how our leaders are so strategic in making sure that we're moving the needle for kids. And they're dialed into their communities in a way that we really can't be because they're living it, right? And so that's an important part, I think, of this partnership that I'm hearing tonight.

[01:22:08] And that did shed some light for me. What I'm really wanting to understand and unpack is because so much of it feels a little bit like buzzwords sometimes when we're saying these things over and over, I'm looking for that in practicality.

[01:22:26] And when I hear that tonight, I hear that in a multitude of many layered different ways. So when I hear that up against the word fidelity, I struggle with how are we making sure that those threads

are being carried through, and what is the process for you looking at data? I mean, Chair Mansfield mentioned tonight SEL.

[01:22:43] We've talked about sense of belonging here at our committee, and that wasn't from your department, that was from another department. And then we talk about docile and discipline. So I know that these things live in different spaces. So I guess if we are going to continue this, because this is kind of a loaded question, so it gives you some time, I really would like to understand your process.

[01:23:04] What does it look like when you do a data dive? What kind of data points are you overlapping? What are, how are you pinpointing, you called them hot spots, but how are we pinpointing that? And then how are we following up with a freedom where we see, you know, yes, maybe you're saying that's because of reporting, but how are we tracking that year after year to make sure that that does start to go down at some point so I have lots of just process questions and one sec and I just feel like if I could understand the process better maybe I could understand how we evaluate this because I'll right now it feels like it's very school specific

[01:23:42] and it's different levers that they're pulling but what is the tie that binds from your department and how does that work with the other departments to move the needle on this for our kids so that it's a huge question I know oh it is it is and I'll try to do it incrementally so one is still a work in progress the office of equity has evolved to a division of diversity equity inclusion accessibility with that came some understandings that are still being massaged collaborations that are still being ironed out because for a while the way in which the office operated I used to joke

[01:24:21] and say it was like car insurance you don't need it till you need it right and so we don't want this to be the need we don't want to have repeated accidents to use that metaphor in order for us to have a sense of value for the insurance that you're carrying so what we're evolving to which is why we have this six regional clusters is the getting to know that specific area region and the schools that feed into it it is the work that is intentionality I can speak for the intentionality of my team because I'm the strategic person that's helping to have that come to fruition it is having a level of fidelity of language when we say school culture and climate everyone that's

[01:25:00] saying it should know what it means from the instructional framework threaded to if any of you say it from the dais all the way through if parents are talking about school culture and climate so that's a fidelity an example of that fidelity piece there is six regional clusters and all six regional clusters get the same level of expertise, understanding. Everyone on my team has a library that is curated by me to be able to bring their prowess and expertise to the school.

[01:25:28] The rationale that you spoke to that it's not a one size fit all because there are no two schools alike, no two kids alike, and no cluster that is synonymous, even if it is one that feeds the one feeding into the other. Sometimes this work is represented with other types of buzzwords that create that negative connotation that Mr. Sheffrey spoke to earlier.

[01:25:49] And it's utilized as a mechanism to almost dismantle the importance. But the rationale for us having real life experiences, because I'm a proponent of lived experience data, we can quantify numbers and I can do numbers all night.

[01:26:06] But when I tell you and you hear the lived experience of the students, it gives you another level of understanding as to what the day-to-day experiences are for the students, for the teachers, for the

administrators in a community at large. So the fidelity is actually engaging in the work.

[01:26:22] The language that's utilized, there's a level of fidelity for the PD, when we say what we say, when we say it. Whether it's in a forum with principals, whether it's in an administrative cohort, aspiring administrative cohort, that's that fidelity of language because we have to have common language in order to have common understanding.

[01:26:42] The intersectionality that was referenced in the sphere of work is to embody what it is. We're the supporters of the supported. So there are amazing teams doing amazing work under the auspices that they've been charged through from student services to DOSL to DDI.

[01:27:03] And then there's a layer that comes in with the level of fidelity of language that they have lines of efforts towards, we all have lines of effort towards what we're all doing. So if we're working with Docile, we're aligning the lines of effort with the fidelity of language.

[01:27:19] If we're working with teaching and learning, we're aligning those efforts with the language of a level of fidelity. You see these words, and they're not buzzwords. They're intentional. They're the words that say what needs to happen in our schools. That is research, empirically research, to endorse support and have results that yield the change that's needed to happen over time.

[01:27:42] None of it's a quick sell. none of it's a quick fix. So when we're looking at the data, and I can use our school culture and climate data, we're sitting with Rossi. Dr. Blakelock comes to our team. We have a logic model that's utilized in our division that speaks to the lines of efforts from all auspices to be able to say, this is how we're gonna work with school improvement.

[01:28:03] This is how we're gonna work with, and that collaborative conversation, we are now in a space where we come together and everyone's in this space. docile, student services, DEIA, that hadn't happened prior to this year. So we're evolving to the space in which we need to, and that happens over time, and understanding, because when you're not clear as to the understanding as to the why, sometimes you're reluctant or you retreat when you are used to having what we do carried out in a certain way. So as we evolve as a division,

[01:28:37] as we evolve from being perceived as a, best way to put it, a suburban to a more urban division, with that comes some tide shifting. With that comes some understanding of who we're serving. And so one of the things that we've participated in as a team, and I did it my first 100 days when I was gainfully employed here, was we took a 100 school tour, because at the time that's how many it was, I think 102 when my team went. And we went to go and see who we were serving, where we were serving them, and the building in which they were being served in.

[01:29:12] That was important. Now, some may say, well, what does that have to do with anything? We all know, and I can attest because my research is actually on environment and how environment actually is a motivator. And when you can take pride in a building you're walking into and you have pride in your school for the building and edifice in which it has, there's a correlation to your academic success in that school.

[01:29:33] So when we're talking about fidelity of language, when we are in these spaces, The language I'm using to explain this to you now is the language that we cultivate when we meet in our office. It's the language that's taken out into the spaces and enveloped into what's happening.

[01:29:49] By no means will we say you can only say it. It's not a script. As you can hear, we have four examples of ownership. They took it, just like any other scholar would do, synthesized it, created it to fit the environment in which they're existing in, and they ran with it. And that's all we can ask.

[01:30:06] We didn't ask for a replica of one example. And I think you probably have four more pieces. When I think about it later, I'll send you an email. Something that I think is interesting in how I look at the EIA at this point is, like you said, a collaboration.

[01:30:24] They're looking at special education. They're looking at admin. They're looking at everything. And they're bringing it all together. And that's why I can appreciate these school equity walks that I did look at them. And that's a really good tool to start from, right?

[01:30:41] And that is something that you could take data on if you needed to, or you probably do. But I look at DEIA as, I don't know, it's terrible, like a program manager of all of it. Because you really are taking facets of all of the different things in education, even to the building level, and collaborating.

[01:31:06] And how do you quantify that? How do you take data on that? How do you do that? And then to individualize it, just like you have an individualized IEP, individualized toward the unique student. You have to individualize it to the unique culture. I don't know how you would synthesize that.

[01:31:21] So in a perfect world, we'd have the score be 104 to 104, but I got seven stellar and leaders that dive in as needed to be in the spaces and to do this work. It's not easy, and it's time-consuming because an equity walk takes half of a school day, roughly about two and a half to three hours.

[01:31:43] then there's the processing part where you go back and debrief with the school then there's a strategizing part that comes up well now what so what now what that we participate in so with traditional bandwidth it wouldn't seem as laborious but it is and so I commend my team every day because they will go out and manage and it's not a one-person endeavor they team up in teams of three and four to go for these equity books because we want to have a multiplicity of lenses because when we're going there, we're only looking at VDOE Standard 6.

[01:32:17] We're not looking at if there's cobwebs in a corner or if the bus was late. We're only looking at what is the student's experience, if the classroom belongs to them or does the classroom belong to the educators, the educator, the facilitator, or are they the participant in helping to drive the learning in the classroom?

[01:32:33] They're, as you saw in the doc, they're a very specific look-fors. And with that, when the school has the confidence and courage that was spoken to earlier to address it because there is a level of vulnerability we don't take that for granted no one wants to have their school not succeeding whether it be social emotionally academically or with behavioral incidents and so it is a it's a tender journey and not everyone is ready for it yet and I use that word yet because we're human beings when we have been doing something it was

[01:33:10] referenced by one of the principals for so long and it worked and then a demographic shift new families move in it's really hard to change is hard and when you're trying to do that and you're doing it in a in a space in which you have competing priorities because that's the reality of all of our lives for all of our divisions so we've moved past the space of getting in where we fit in to a more intentional landscape and so that's the incremental change that I was speaking

[01:33:40] to earlier knowing that we're at seven past 7 30 well first i'll just make a quick comment and um i just think the work of belonging just touches on every everything that was just mentioned now it's the it's curriculum it's the learning content it's the buildings um and so it's it's like trying to quantify belonging and when i look at some of the data around like uh you know the data that we have i immediately my knee-jerk reaction to looking at those tables is that even the questions

[01:34:18] that we ask, I question the utility of it. And I know that it's just a threshold. It's a starting point, right? And then we use that to then build. But it allows us to then dig into the work itself, right? And not to lose sight of the importance of that topic on its own as a driving force for students' ability to really learn.

[01:34:40] And so that's the best that I could do to articulate how I feel about this work. And I really like the approach that we have because it's taking a subject that's so important and being intentional about it and making sure that it is ingrained in everything that we do as a division and really making that investment as a large school division as we are.

[01:35:07] But I think I agree. I'd love to dig into that more. I have a bunch of questions of my own, but with the promise that we can definitely discuss this hopefully at the next PMC meeting and just kind of leave some space and then go from there.

[01:35:26] But this was super helpful for me and really appreciate all of your time and the work that you all put in. So any other comments or discussion before we close? Next time. Next time. All right. So with that, we'll move on to new business, having pushed our next information item to the next meeting. Any new business? Seeing no new business, I'll now adjourn this October 21st meeting of the Performance Monitoring Committee. Thank you all very much.



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