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Loudoun County School Board, Specialized Programs & Centers Committee Meeting, Wednesday, June 3, 2026

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[00:00:00] Good afternoon everyone. My name is Lauren Chernoff and I am calling this June 3rd, 2026 Specialized Programs and Centers Committee meeting to order. I am joined by my colleague Mr. Pepper and Ms. Donahue will be absent for today's meeting. We are going to start, we have a very full house today. Welcome to all our guests. We're so happy to see you.

[00:00:20] We have some students here as well. So we're going to begin with item 2.01 which is procedures for public comment. So we value the public comment process and we are so glad that you are here today. We have three speakers and we're going to give you each two minutes. So I will call you and you can come up and just make sure that you turn on your microphone so that we have you on the record, okay? The first speaker is Sana Saeed.

[00:00:48] Good evening, board members. My name is Sana and I'm a student in the Biomedical Technology Pathway at MATA, the Monroe Advanced Technical Academy. Before we share our experiences tonight, I want to take a moment to make sure everyone has a clear picture of what MATA actually is, because I think context is essential to everything that follows.

[00:01:15] MATA is a specialized career and technical education program within the Academies of Loudoun. MATA offers programs like biomedical technology, auto-collision, and cosmetology, each

designed to give students professional-level training in a specific field. These pathways are either one year or two years in length.

[00:01:33] Students spend six hours every other day inside a single specialized program. Let me put that in perspective. In a course in one's homeschool, a student accumulates roughly 128 hours of instruction over the course of a single academic year. On the other hand, one year in a MAD pathway totals approximately 540 hours.

[00:01:53] A two-year pathway, like biomedical technology, totals to around 1,080 hours, nearly nine times the instructional time of a course taken at homeschools. This time commitment exists for a reason. All MATA pathways send their students off with collegiate level skills, with some even having end of course certifications, which include CNA or an HVAC certification.

[00:02:14] These skill sets allow students to directly carry their qualifications in the workforce the moment they graduate high school. Opportunities like that don't exist in most of the county. So when we talk about MATA, we're talking about half of a student's high school career dedicated to a single professional pathway.

[00:02:32] now i want to be transparent with the board about something because i think it matters to the credibility of everything i've just said i entered the biomedical technology pathway through the lottery system i did not go through the original process of submitting an essay or my academic scores my number was drawn and i was given a seat i am genuinely grateful for that opportunity being in this program has confirmed for me that biomedical science is exactly where i want to be and i do not take lightly the fact that i get to be here i don't think that the system any of us ultimately wants for saying thank you your time is up but you can email us the rest of your comments we would love to hear the rest of them thank you for being here all right our next speaker

[00:03:12] is sahil sambagi good evening board members my name is sahil and i'm a current student in the biomedical technology pathway at matter my path began here in sophomore year when i applied for the intro to health and medical sciences program under the previous non-lotry based admissions system. That process asked me to demonstrate my interest and articulate clearly why I wanted to pursue this field. It asked me before I ever set foot in the program to decide whether this was

[00:03:49] truly where I wanted to go. I went through this process, displayed my passion, and spent a year in IHMS building that foundation. When I later applied to continue in biomedical technology, the system changed to a lottery. I want to be clear, I got in and I was fortunate to do so.

[00:04:05] But I want to spend my time tonight talking about not my own admission, but what I observed in the classroom during my time in HMS, because I think it speaks to something important. What the non-lottery process created was a room full of students who had already made a decision.

[00:04:23] Everyone around me had been asked the hard question before they arrived. Is this the field you want to dedicate yourself to? And then answer it with intention. That shared sense of purpose shaped everything. It shaped how students engaged with the material. It shaped how we supported each other. It shaped the energy of the classroom where everyone had chosen to be there.

[00:04:42] I want to be careful here because I can only speak to what I personally witnessed. But what I observed in that environment was students who were not only present, they were invested. They asked questions beyond the curriculum. They talked about where this pathway was going to take them. The

program brought out a level of dedication that I genuinely believe was connected to the fact that everyone in that room was devoted to their spot.

[00:05:03] This is why demonstrated interest was required, not exclusivity, not hierarchy, a room full of students who knew why they were there and who pushed each other because of it. When I applied to biomedical technology and the system had already changed, I entered a program that still had the foundation because many of my classmates were from that IHMS program.

[00:05:23] But what I noticed was that some of my new classmates seemed to be encountering the reality that this commitment for the first time, Not because they lacked ability, but because they had not had the opportunity to decide what is actually for them. I would let my colleagues speak on that.

[00:05:38] Appreciate you. All right. We have one last speaker, and it is Anish Ramasamy. Good evening, board members.

[00:05:55] My name is Anish, and I'm a student in the biomedical technology pathway at MATA. Like Sahil, I entered intro to health and medical sciences my sophomore year through the non-lottery admission system. I made the case for why this was the field I wanted to pursue. and I meant every word of it because I genuinely asked myself the question before I put pen to paper. When I applied to continue in the biomedical technology pathway, the system had changed. I entered through the lottery, and I want to be honest with the board. I am grateful that my number came up. I am grateful every single day that I get to be in this program. But there is something that gratitude can never be able to quiet, and that is the reason I'm standing here

[00:06:30] tonight. I watched classmates from my intro to health and medical sciences pathway, people I'd spent a year learning alongside people who had done the exact same process that I had gone through not getting into biomedical technology not because their passion had changed not because their work had slipped not because anything about their commitment to this field wavered because their number wasn't drawn I sat with that and I still sit with it because I know what those students put in I was there when they put it in I saw how much this pathway meant to them and I know that this skill set and they I know that they know that there was a skill set waiting at the end of it the kind that doesn't exist anywhere else in this county was something they wanted just as badly as I did, and I am in this

[00:07:08] classroom and they are not. Not because I wanted it more, but because I was lucky. I want to be very clear about what I'm saying. I'm not saying that access doesn't matter. I'm not saying that this program should only belong to certain students. I believe with my whole heart that every student who has a genuine interest in these fields deserves a path towards them. That's not what brought us here tonight. What brought us here is something quieter and harder to name. It is the feeling of sitting in a classroom knowing that the person next to you was not truly immersed in the program and knowing that somewhere outside of this building there is someone who has demonstrated passion and commitment to this program and was never given the chance to attend it is the question of whether luck pure arbitrary luck is the right mechanism for allocating an opportunity this rare

[00:07:48] and this significant we trust the board with that question we are not here to tell you what the answer will look like we are here because we lived it and because we believe you deserve to hear it from the students who did thank you thank you you made it under the wire i want to thank you so much being here I think it takes a lot of courage and bravery to come and speak at a school board meeting and we really value your perspective you're in the trenches you're living it every day and so I'm very very grateful

for your presence here today and to the educators that encouraged you and brought you thank you so much this matters so thank you alrighty with that we will move on to item 3.01 the approval of the draft minutes from our May 6 meeting do I have

[00:08:28] any changes or a motion madam chair I move to approve the draft minutes from may 6 2026 meeting of the specialized programs and centers committee and i will second that all those in favor aye aye it passes unanimously and now we will move on to item four which is our only action item of the night 4.01 charter school annual technology services and support services contracts and we have staff here to speak to that if you have anything to add but if not um i'm actually going to just go ahead and make a motion to move the Charter School Annual Technology Services

[00:09:06] and Support Services contracts to the full board. Do I have a second? Second. Excellent. Is there any discussion? I will just make some brief comments. I have been in communication with our charter schools, and I think we are all in agreement that the timeline of this is what is key and needs to move forward, and I appreciate all of staff really, you know, illuminating that context and that the changes really are minimal. I think where the growing pains, literal, that we're feeling is that as systems come closer to failure, the worry that this contract could become

[00:09:43] unsustainable is what most of the charter schools are worried about. And I think that that is a conversation that we can continue to have while we still move this forward. And so I will be supporting moving it forward. And I believe we have their support behind us at this time. And I look forward to kind of level setting as we mentioned last time on just contracts in general and kind of getting everybody on the same page that we can work towards a more efficient and realistic um expectation in terms of those things so it has been properly moved and seconded all

[00:10:15] those in favor of passing this to the full board say aye aye aye that passes two two zero with miss donahue absent from the vote which i did not say for the minutes but it's the same thing Ms. Sandra. You got that? Okay. All right. So that will move forward. And then tonight we just have one information item. It is jam-packed, I believe. So we will have our guests and speakers move to the microphones. And it is a special programs yearly update.

[00:10:45] This is part two. And I'm going to pass it off to Ms. Catherine Clark, Director of Academic Programs, and she will introduce our guests. Good evening. As everyone gets settled, I'll kick us off. Thank you for having us back.

[00:11:09] This is part two of our special programs yearly overview. This evening we have all three of our ACL programs. We have our Academy of Engineering and Technology, we have Academy of Science, our MATA program, along with our NJROTC that we weren't able to get to last time, and Access Academy.

[00:11:30] So as we move through the presentation, I'll have each individual introduce themselves. And we are going to kick off with Dr. Grazita with NJROTC. Thank you, Ms. Clark.

[00:11:49] Good evening. Surprise? That was great. Well, good evening, everyone. I'd like to give a few updates for our NJROTC program.

[00:12:08] Next slide. Of course, we have NJROTC at one of our high schools, Loudoun County High School. Rising 9th grade students, public, private, and homeschool, can show interest in this program. Out-of-zone students are selected through the special program's lottery process.

[00:12:27] Starting the 26-27 school year, there are 25 seats for the incoming freshman class available to zone Loudoun County High School students to have access to this program. Those are our students that come from J. Lupton Simpson Middle School.

[00:12:44] And this is a four-year commitment, and students who are from out-of-zone become full-time students at Loudoun County High School. Next slide. So what we're looking at here is entered in ninth grade students going from Naval Science 1 to Naval Science 2.

[00:13:03] The data is approximately September 30, 2024, to September 30, 2025. So that's why we have just a single year. you can see that we have a 75 percent retention rate for those students for that one year that we've captured this data next slide please so this year was an eventful year we had the annual njrotc military inspection was actually canceled because of a snow date and so what we had to do was tell the admiral that we will submit the inspection via video and so we had a plethora

[00:13:40] of students and staff from the cta division developed that video and the inspection uh was really really well received by the admiral they were thoroughly impressed by that video so we're happy to share that with you all later on if you're interested um we're looking at getting some snippets later on for recruiting material it was quite impressive uh we had four njrotc sea perch teams competing at the national level this past weekend uh three teams actually uh participated to university of maryland this uh past weekend and i want to report that the sea turtles one of

[00:14:16] our teams earned third place in the high school admission course competition and fifth place in the technical design report category so very very cool stuff with our sea perch if you haven't seen it it's underwater robotics the team did have a chance to practice uh here locally in leesburg at the swim kids school it's quite impressive so i invite you all to come out and check it out we had multiple district ceremonial events supported one school board presentation by the color guard as you all saw they also supported the school business partnership breakfast which

[00:14:53] was fantastic and then we had 100 program compliance with uniforms curriculum credit and certified instructor staff next slide please so just a high level snapshot of achievements highlights and opportunities we had two cadets earned service academy appointments so far captain shown is expecting more but as of right now we have two to report the cadet leadership team has been selected for the 26-27 school year we're very excited with that leadership team as you all know

[00:15:27] this is student-led they lead all nine of our teams in the morning and they also lead they have opportunities to lead during class time family engagement families participated in structured intake meetings ongoing outreach supported informed enrollment choices Mr. Schaefer led several meetings at Loudoun County High School in the cafeteria in the auditorium and they were really well received by the public it was really great our inspection was successfully completed as I just relayed program operations sustained despite restrictions you all might have been

[00:16:01] aware that uniforms were restricted earlier this year that ban has been lifted and our students are in full uniform again we did get a distinguished unit status expanded through academy access as i said cadets competed in the njrotc competitions as i said and this past sunday our color guard was represented at the nationals game so we have had some really great opportunities to show off our njrotc program that's all that i have to present for you all tonight i'm happy to

[00:16:37] to answer any questions that you have thank you so much mr. pepper so let me begin with thank you for the presentation it's always good to see that our and Jerry NJROTC program is doing well because from what I see it looks like it's doing really well you had mentioned there are 25 zone slots so those are students that are directly going from Simpson up to a lot of County high schools how many total slots are in the program 50 per year so we can have 25 from out of that okay I was just want to make sure that I get those numbers right and then that one slide even though it's the one-year cohort

[00:17:14] that's just one year of the cohort yes sir so I'm assuming that we could track that data of multiple years as it kind of builds out yes and then I do want to know about these uniforms why could they not wear the uniforms there was an edict sent out by Navy command due to issues abroad that students in NJROTC or JROTC programs not wear their uniforms and that ban was lifted at the end of April. Thank you. You're welcome. There's nothing we did. No, not at all. All right. I have a few

[00:17:54] questions. This program happens to sit in Leesburg, so I had a chance to follow up with Dr. Luttrell and Captain Schoen. Is that how you say it? Is that right? Okay. Just to sort of get a pulse on where things are at. Again, I haven't really had a deep dive on these things, so I know that I think you're going to sense a theme tonight from me, and the theme is to lottery or not to lottery.

[00:18:18] And maybe it's in the middle. I don't know. But I think that there has been a little bit of a struggle with the transition to the lottery, and I don't think that's a secret to the team because it sounds like you guys have been really engaged with them and they've been very appreciative. But I do wonder how we can reflect on that and think about that going forward in terms of, And, you know, our MATA students also spoke to this tonight, and I sort of thought I've heard this this week before, but it was about JROTC, is the level of commitment, the desire to be involved in something that is military-driven, the hours that it requires, the discipline and the structure.

[00:18:58] It's really, we don't want to, I don't, I agree with the students. I think you said it so delicately that it's not about we don't want kids to have access. We want kids to have access, but we also want to maximize the integrity of the program. And something that has struck me over the last few months being on this committee is just how precious it is to have a true NJROTC program here in Loudoun County.

[00:19:20] Just the difficulties that we have faced in trying to get a program outside of that. So I guess I want us to think about, and maybe you can shed a little bit of light about what some of that tension has been in terms of making that transition. But how can we keep the integrity and authenticity of the program while still informing people that are applying to the lottery about what the commitment really is?

[00:19:47] And I know we do information nights, and I know we do things like that. But through the selection process before, it's my understanding that the family sat down, they had a full conversation about the requirements. Is that something that we still do, that we can still do to make sure that we are keeping kids in the program?

[00:20:05] because I know that also is impacting staffing, which is another thing that has come up. So just kind of in general, if you could speak to sort of what that journey has been like as we have transitioned to the lottery. Absolutely. It's a great question. And, yes, there has been a lot of conversation about the lottery and how that has impacted student interest, student enrollment.

[00:20:28] The meetings that Mr. Schaefer set up for the families who were accepted into the program for the 26-27 year those were mandatory meetings so all the families did have to attend we did have near

perfect attendance there was one family who was not able to attend and they decided to decline acceptance into the program so in essence we do have 100 participation in the mandatory meetings the program overview was given by captain shown gunny chief martinez the student leaders the cadet

[00:21:01] leaders for 2627 also participated in answering questions and guiding families through the actual program so they were there to answer all questions they stayed there extensively dr luttrell was at both meetings so i feel like we've given all the information and answered all the questions that the families have had mr schaefer and i continue to be on correspondence with families with captain shown about uniform pickup about what summer pt is going to look like so we're still engaging in those conversations and i feel like our communication has been on target i appreciate

[00:21:39] that and i do think that as we continue down this path i think we have to continue to be reflective about where these different structures fit and i'm not sure i'm totally sold that a lottery system for jrotc is the right approach but i also see the benefits of casting a wider net if you will and to offer selection to students that may not even i mean i think there's a lot of kids that could benefit from a very disciplined approach that they might not realize that otherwise I'm also hearing from my you know community as it that there are

[00:22:15] some kids that did get left behind and they really had always thought that this was going to be their path and maybe you know mr. Slevin and I were speaking early maybe that includes some conversations about how we look at kids at the base school and what percentage of the slots they get if we were to change that so I'm open to the dialogue I think the process right now is the process obviously but i think over the next year like i would like to learn more and understand a little bit better where some of those needs might arise and how we could evaluate that and i would also be interested in the data year over year just to make to see that transition of are we holding

[00:22:54] on to kids i think 75 is decent but um i'd like to see that be a little bit higher so i just want to add to that 75 percent that was um you know there wasn't a process prior to this year for zoned students to apply so that was part of what we initiated is all students had to put in to apply before they were just scheduling loudoun county students into naval one so we worked diligently special programs and dr grubs to make sure we had a clean process

[00:23:30] So that 75% might have been kids who were Loudoun County High School students who only took one year of that course and did not go through the formal process. So, again, we also were not using our system where we now have student needs for all students in all programs.

[00:23:51] So we've kind of come a long way. So we will have that data to show who's been in the program over time for all programs. I appreciate that clarification. And I think that's the kind of data that will really help guide us in the future about these processes and seeing where we are.

[00:24:08] And just to put it on the record, I know that, of course, they always want more instructors. And I think part of that retention rate would help lead to the numbers that they would need to have more instructors. So retention is also important to staffing, correct? Is that a fair statement?

[00:24:25] Yes. For every 50 students we have in the program, we get an instructor. So right now we have three instructors. We have over 150 students in the program, so right now we're meeting all the needs of the students. I appreciate you all so much.

[00:24:42] I'll look forward to learning more, and thank you for being here. Thank you. All right, Ms. Clark, I'll let you pass it over to the Academy's crew. All right, awesome. Yes, we're going to pass it right on to Academy of Engineering and Technology. Mr. Markley. Good evening, Ms. Chernoff and Mr. Pepper.

[00:24:57] It is a joy to be here and kick off the Academy's presentation. Not to steal Ms. Chang's thunder because our two programs are very similar, But the Academy of Engineering and Technology also culminates in student research. And so AET, as we affectionately call it, has three different pathways.

[00:25:15] Information Technology, aka Computer Science, Engineering, and Entrepreneurship. Those are four-year pathways where students can enter as ninth graders. AET is unique for MATA and AOS in that there's two different entry points. Ninth graders can come from the four-year pathway.

[00:25:30] We also have advanced AET and IT and engineering fields for rising juniors. They are research focused programs that culminate in students conducting independent research, although it looks different than bench science, there's technical research and also students in entrepreneurship pathway pitch projects.

[00:25:48] And so it is a great program. It's great to see where our students can really explore and live up to that motto that we have, our mission of making meaningful contributions in the fields of STEM, science, technology, engineering, and math.

[00:26:13] On the next slide we have some data retention. I'll try to give this a little context. What you're looking at for each year is the year that that cohort entered as freshmen. So when we see the 2022 year, these are our current seniors. So we had 100% retention retention as of September 30th of that year for all the freshmen in that class were still there. Over the course of their four years, you see that the size of that cohort has decreased. And so I'm going to talk a little bit more about that when we discuss entrepreneurship on the next slide of opportunities for AET.

[00:26:34] But, for example, of the 30 students who have not stayed all the way through their senior year, 19 of them are from the one specific pathway. And so I want to talk a little bit more about that. When you look at the class who will be seniors this coming year, you see that drop again from sophomore to junior year.

[00:26:50] Of that 11%, two-thirds of them are from a single pathway where we're seeing they're not continuing beyond their sophomore year. And so I want to speak to that. But overall, retention is mostly positive. When we go in the school year, AET has always had excellent retention.

[00:27:07] We shared that data last year at this meeting. And so overall very positive, but there's one specific use case I think that's worth exploring as a possible opportunity for AET. And so, of course, 2024, 2025, those are our current sophomores and freshmen. We still have high retention with historically similar data.

[00:27:28] So there's a lot of text on this slide, and so I'm going to try to speak to it casually without reading from it. There are amazing accomplishments that can be shared. of course explore research collaborate and innovate those are the four pillars on which our mission is built around students do incredible research we recently had our acl research symposium at the end of may it is breathtaking to see the research that students are doing across all three of the academies with their programs our students have experienced success at the regional science and engineering fair and we had for the first time this is

very exciting one of our advanced AET student pairs conducted a research project and were ultimately named ISEF finalists and

[00:28:08] then placed at ISEF. And so it's really cool to see students in our two-year pathway independently taking on a research project, being mentored by our faculty and experiencing high external validation for it. We, of course, don't believe that the external validation is the purpose of doing research.

[00:28:25] We really think it is about all the skills that our students gain throughout that process, but they are successful there. We have international collaborations and research partnerships. This was an inaugural year for AET to have this curriculum-embedded research partnership.

[00:28:41] This is similar to what AOS has had for many years in Singapore that Ms. Chang will talk about, I am sure. And we had students that are juniors in the engineering and IT pathways collaborating with peers, and we were getting ready on June 16th to travel over to Austria to go present that year-long research and also have some cultural exchange activities.

[00:29:00] I also need to shout out our Computer Science Honor Society as well as our two faculty leads that lead that program, Ms. Erin Whistler and Ms. Toby Jollow. This group of students under their leadership has led high-quality STEM experiences for nearly 1,000 students this year between the Hour of Code for the Propel and Level Up programs as well as the Academy's Hackathon and recently the Academy's Informatics Tournament.

[00:29:25] In addition to that, students from those programs have also contributed to community outreach support in a robotic showcase and Amazon girls and stem so those are not our events we don't own them but those CSHS students among other academies and volunteers have been instrumental in making these opportunities for our community happen and I just want to celebrate those accomplishments family engagement is always a thing whenever you interface with the entirety of Loudoun County Public Schools we have quite a geographic spread in our in our building and so each year before this school year starts our ninth graders our faculty goes out and visit their rising ninth graders for advisory visits To answer any questions they might have we might invite those students to come into the building it might be home visits

[00:30:05] It might be at a library depending on what families choose to do That's a great way for us to start getting kids in a door helping them feel seen we had the inaugural entrepreneurship gala recently on May 18th Previously students in the entrepreneurship program when they did their final pitch it was a during the school day events It was really we do have our shark tank our board of advisors that was there, but it wasn't open to families wasn't open to the community and it was great to have the support of dr spence dr ellis dr grubbs and others who came out to support the entrepreneurship gala in a way to showcase the amazing work that our students are doing our project that was selected made the quarter

[00:30:41] finals of the national pitch competition so they were one of the top 25 projects in the nation in terms of their business pitch for their entitled business funk off it was a very catching name for the second year in a row we've had an admitted student orientation that is different in that Both Ms. Chang and I have led special information sessions to launch that visit to the academies to really try to help provide some clarity of information to families and to students, answer some of the questions that we know are frequently asked, and then, of course, I already spoke about our research symposium.

[00:31:16] Some major highlights in AET this year and for the academies in general, ACL Raptor Time is a new structure that we have to support students. Students sacrifice a lot to come to the academies in each of our three programs. They frequently give up a study hall. So what we've done is one A-Day and B-Day each week.

[00:31:36] Students have the opportunity to go get specialized support in learning labs for science, math, or research teachers, or engineering, or computer science. And then we also have places where students can take reassessments because not every student has access to transportation before or after school. And it's a dedicated time where they don't have to give up lunch to go get that support.

[00:31:53] It was highly successful, and I'm sure there's lots of conversations about how it can continue to develop or expand. For AET, looking to next school year, advanced AET, that two-year pathway is moving to A-Day. This is a significant accomplishment because they have always, the juniors and seniors in that program, have always attended on the same day, B-Day, as the freshmen and sophomores in the four-year program.

[00:32:13] That's contributed feeling like a little bit of a side, like afterthought, and not being there with their peers. It also affects our homeschools planning because they have juniors and seniors now that are attending the academies for at least AOS and AT, or AT specifically, on different days.

[00:32:28] And so this is a big change. It opens up course flexibility for the students in those programs. We couldn't offer all the science electives to them, and so now that they are attending on the same day as their four-year counterparts, they'll be in some of the same classes together and they have the full access to all the course offerings that we have as a program.

[00:32:45] So that's a big step in terms of access and opportunity next year. We have enhanced student choice in electives. Previously, all juniors in our program took AP Physics in the Academy of Engineering Technology. We've opened up. Now, over 80% of our juniors are still going to take that course because they believe that fits their career path. But providing that flexibility helps because one of the secondary reasons why we're seeing some attrition from sophomore to junior year was that forced move into AP Physics where some students didn't feel like their math skills were ready. Because not only do they have to understand calculus, but they're now applying in that course.

[00:33:19] And so that extra year of growth gives them a chance to, number one, choose the science courses they're most interested in and maybe have some mathematical maturation before they take that course. And then we also have a revised scheduling framework for AET specifically going to the next year to provide some common planning time. One of the mottos of the academies when the building was constructed was unintentional collisions. We now are trying to create some intentional collisions to support our teacher collaboration and ultimately be responsive to our students' needs. And then looking at opportunities, so some programming considerations.

[00:33:52] AP Physics C, electricity and magnetism, is not currently offered. We have submitted the request through the science office in teaching and learning, so that is being pushed out there as a possible additional course that students can take. It's another high-level course, but there is a lot of interest in that field specifically.

[00:34:11] Looking at entrepreneurship pathway evolution, so if we went back to that data, you see that drop between sophomore and junior year. So again, 31 of our 50 entrepreneurship seniors this year still

remain at the academies. Of those 19 who did not continue to their junior year, many of them said they wanted to continue with their business interests or things, or some of them were looking for courses that weren't available because of the day they were scheduled with academies we have some thoughts about how inverting the pathway might help in terms of when they take their entrepreneurship coursework and when they take their technical classes in retaining those students for all four years and then also looking at the it pathway evolution computer science has changed a lot in

[00:34:51] the last decade and so as that field continues to evolve our courses and how we integrate with computer science courses across the county and provide access to advanced computing opportunities we are constantly evaluating and looking for refinements there and then international research we continue to seek those opportunities or evaluate the ones that we currently have in place with germany and austria to see are they the best fit and which ones might better fit our students needs both from an academic standpoint and a cultural exchange standpoint so there's a lot going on at aet if you have any questions we'll pause here mr pepper certainly

[00:35:28] thank you for that presentation at aet super interesting would love to get out there in my my short time having a chance to hang out with you guys yet, but definitely that's my wheelhouse. So like love science and particularly this, the AAT and what you guys are doing. I was a little, maybe we need a little clarification because I don't have your schedule like in my brain, the flipping of the A day and the B day and why that, so what is it, so who goes on A days now? So on A days in our four-year pathway, juniors and seniors are coming on A day and then in the four-year pathway on B days when we see our freshmen and sophomores. And so as those students move through the program, they then go to the alternate, attend on the alternate day.

[00:36:06] Advanced AET historically has been held only on B-Day. And so those juniors, it's a junior-senior program. They were only there. And because you're looking at a cohort total between the two pathways of 50 students, it's hard to offer the full range of courses if there's only 50 students taking a science class. And so by moving into A-Day, it allows some optimization so that they can take more classes. They can be integrated some with their four-year counterparts and feel like they're Okay. That's much more helpful. You definitely offer a wider range of glasses, which is awesome.

[00:36:38] So if they're not going to take AP physics, calculus-based physics, what would the juniors take? So juniors have the options of taking AP biology, AP chemistry, AP environmental science. So any one of those four AP sciences that they are qualified for. There is a prerequisite for AP biology, but they are eligible already as a result of their coursework for AP chemistry or AP environmental science.

[00:37:00] science. Okay. That's also good to know. And then do we, and I know you kind of alluded to this at the end, have any reason why entrepreneurship is struggling? Is it just because it's so different than kind of everything else that goes on at AT? Is it attracting it from your students? So, I mean, it is unique, right? Engineering and IT are four-year single-focused pathways, whereas entrepreneurship had a two-by-two model, where the first two years they're taking entrepreneurship courses, and then they move into either engineering or IT. And so it's at that pivot point that we are seeing some changes and so last year we did a big survey we surveyed our

[00:37:36] current seniors and then the subsequent three classes before so are the freshman college sophomores in college and juniors in college we had all their contact information sent out a student survey to collect data to understand what kind of preferences they had in terms of pathway and there was

two leading options and then what were some of the reasons behind their decision to either stay or to return full time to their home school that's interesting and also very very helpful right and just thinking about planning for the future So I'm glad that you're looking into this because, you know, these are special programs.

[00:38:07] We've talked about this going back up what Ms. Chernoff said about, you know, lottery or not lottery, who wants to be in the program, making sure that, you know, these are special places and they're hard to get into. And so we want to keep the kids in them who want to be there because they're taking spots from kids who could also want to be in the course.

[00:38:25] So I appreciate you guys looking into this. And thank you for that really informative presentation. It's good to see you guys doing so many cool things. I'll just quickly echo what Mr. Pepper said. I really appreciate that you presented the data, but then you presented how you've looked at the data, you've reflected on the data, and you're going to try some new things to get a different result.

[00:38:43] That's really refreshing. We do a lot of that work in our PMC committee where we look at things, and then we're, like, trying to push. How can we be reflective? So the fact that you kind of have already front-loaded with that, I mean, you're the ones that know the program. So I appreciate that, and I feel like in a year we'll look back and say, you know, let's see how these couple of things really helped.

[00:39:02] It sounds like you've been really thought forward, and I know I feel like I'm hearing some of what Mr. Sackett presented to me with my visit through what you're saying. And so it's nice to see that you have that reflective voice. And just to clarify for the record, your program is not lottery, correct?

[00:39:18] It is not lottery. That's correct. Okay. All righty. That's all I have for you. Thank you. We'll move on. Hello. Which direction? I'm Jennifer Chang. I'm the director for the Academy of Science program.

[00:39:38] And just a little context, the Academy of Science program actually started in 2005 with only 60 students embedded in Dominion High School. In 2018, when the Academies of Loudoun opened, there was an opportunity to expand the Academies of Science program.

[00:39:57] And so it was doubled in size to 120 students per class. And then the following year, we recognized we had some capacity to expand, and so we equalized enrollment, 150 students per class. And so one of the exciting things that I'm here to share is that for next year, we're also going to expand again.

[00:40:19] So there's lots of opportunities for growth and refinement for the Academy of Science program. You'll be hearing very similar things about the Academy of Science related to the Academy of Engineering and Technology. We are sort of twin programs, very research focused, but the Academy of Science Differentiator is the focus on scientific research and everything through the lens of scientific research.

[00:40:46] It's facilitated beginning in ninth grade, those research skills are developed in their courses, math and science are connected, and there's a through line through all four years. So it is a four year program, similar A-B schedule.

[00:41:02] On A days we have juniors and seniors, on B days we have freshmen and sophomores. So a hallmark of the program is the guided inquiry, pedagogy, and novel problem solving scenarios that students are presented with through the lens of science, through the lens of asking questions through the

lens of being curious about the world and finding their own question to solve that they will dedicate two years in their junior and senior year

[00:41:34] to study. And in many cases, they become one of the world's foremost experts in that very tiny slice of science, but they dig in very deeply and have two years to investigate that project.

[00:41:50] So, our retention trends. So, similar to AET, each year represents a cohort. So, the 2022 cohort are our current seniors. And you will note that there has been some attrition over the four years, with the most significant attrition happening between the 9th and 10th grade year, and then additional attrition between junior and senior year.

[00:42:21] We have had some modest success in that our current juniors, I'm sorry, current sophomores, we were able to retain 93% of them. That was the students who entered in 2024.

[00:42:37] So there's a slight upward trend, but you can see that there is definite areas of improvement. In looking at this, we recognize that we receive students from all middle schools across the county. They come in with a variety of skills, and we're trying to figure out how to support those students, where they are, to develop those skills so that they all feel that they come prepared.

[00:43:05] We think they come prepared, but many times students feel imposter syndrome. They are used to getting A's in their middle school courses. And so developing that self-efficacy where they feel that both they belong and that they have a connection is something we're really focusing on.

[00:43:28] The next slide are program achievements and highlights. We've had some great success this year related to research. We do have a very long-standing partnership with a school in Singapore, Huachang Institution.

[00:43:45] our 15-year program. Students do an exchange and they work on a shared research project. We also have students participate in the Regional Science and Engineering Fair, the Virginia Academy of Science, and then our freshmen, we have them participate in the ExploreVision competition by the National Science Teachers Association. Family engagement is very similar. That is one of the joys of being at the Academies of Loudoun. There's a lot of synergy and opportunities for all of our students. We can sort of align and capitalize. So

[00:44:23] similar to AAT, our teachers do summer advisory visits for rising ninth grade students so that those families have the connection that advisory teacher stays with those students for all four years. We have a ninth grade symposium where we invite families in to see what students have produced in such a short time in 9th grade. We also have an admitted students orientation where families can come when they're making those decisions so they understand more about the commitment to the program. We recently had our Academies of Modern Research

[00:45:00] symposium where we had many industry partners, community partners, staff that supported that interaction. I mentioned at the beginning, we're growing. So for the coming school year, our entering freshman class, instead of 150 students, we'll have 200 students. Really taking a close look at the attrition rate, we've been working with the admissions office to review and align math criteria as

[00:45:36] well as other indicators to better make sure that both what students are anticipating and what our program offers align so that what we're telling students and what the indicators are used to select them match to what the program outcomes and so we're hoping that that better math alignment that closer look

at those mathematics skills will allow us to reverse some of the attrition Mr. Markley mentioned our raptor time that we've instituted that really provides some extra support for students during the day feedback from

[00:46:12] those students is that they greatly appreciate having that extra time during the school day to catch up or get some extra help and then we also have the summer a summer math boot camp aligned to some of the resources from the LCPS mathematics department so that we are reinforcing those algebra one skills that students have just so that they can practice some of those some opportunities for next year, expanding various research areas. Students always come with

[00:46:52] very lofty goals in different areas. Artificial intelligence is a new frontier. They're highly interested, so we're figuring out how we can capitalize that interest and funnel that to a meaningful research project. I mentioned strengthening student self-efficacy, making ensure that they not only feel that they belong, but then they see some actual success.

[00:47:19] We also want to expand some of our international research partners, having 50 more students. It's a very high demand opportunity our families and students seek, and so finding additional international research partners will be very helpful.

[00:47:35] And then our students also are very interested in having perhaps a dual enrollment or AP and physiology course many students in the AOS program are research focused in medical areas maybe pursuing medicine as a career or medical thank you so much don't have much I mean parallels so much with AT really interesting and I really like one of the things I really like is that you're looking at the math

[00:48:12] component and I will tell you when I get a class list for an honor science class the first thing I'm not looking at is how they did the previous year I'm actually looking at what math the students are in because it's a much more predictive indicator of success in science and I love that you're talking about belonging the other question kind of what I would piggyback on is I know you talked quite a bit about the imposter syndrome and you know we have such a diverse group of students from all the county I'm assuming we're not this is also not a lottery program right this is it is not yeah this is a mission right so we have such a diverse group of students that have different

[00:48:48] experiences at their middle schools um have you maybe this is the question have you or your your teachers found there's just a difference in basic research design skill right because I know that when we talk about just coming from the perspective that I come from one of the things that we do in every science class we start with you know independent variable dependent design a controlled experience how do you really think about in research design controlling the variables and separating what makes a good experiment from you know an experiment that can often be confounding and and not follow exactly so has there

[00:49:23] been is that where you're seeing a lot of difference or is that I think some of the difference is students willingness to to ask questions okay they're they're very used to you know performing what is asked of them and so when we instead of giving them a lab procedure we give them the question that we're seeking to answer and ask them to design the process to answer that question guided along the way, that's where they're like, what? What am I supposed to do now? And so that's where we

[00:50:01] develop those skills and sort of reinforce. I love that answer. So I'm going to give you a challenge. Okay. So as you know, I know, they're all laughing at me. We are implementing and just starting

IB education across several of our school, Heritage, Valley, Parkview. That is the crux of IB science investigation right students have to on their own come up with a question and flush it out and develop it and write a report for that so if there could be some sort of lovely partnership between your team who is so good at doing this and have been doing this for two decades now and these

[00:50:41] teachers who are new I'd love to see us foster some sort of growth in that area and I know that you are AP focused but that individual design is such an IB focus. So I'm going to just challenge you for that. Perfect. And I'm going to leave it on that note. All right. Well, I will take up that challenge and next year we'll let you know how it went.

[00:50:57] I love that very much. And I appreciate that you bring that lens, Mr. Pepper. And I saw you noodling over there. So just add it on your list. Mr. Slevin has you covered. I agree with everything that has been said. I'm excited that there can be some growth here. The imposter syndrome is very interesting to me. One of the questions that I'm sort of wrapping my mind around as I myself have a high schooler who is entering high school next year is just the immense amount of pressure that is on these kids, but that paired with this CTE pathway sort of, I'll call it a push, that we're

[00:51:35] headed in, in Loudoun, and it's almost like when I, when kids get into the academies, it's like, I got into the academies, you know, and so is that part of it too, is like they've reached that pinnacle of like I got in and then it's sort of like oh holy moly this is a lot of work and a lot more than I anticipated it is that a piece of the puzzle I think it is I think for some students they view that okay now I've reached the top yeah they're like but to stay at the top no it's it's not really the honor isn't getting accepted the honor is the work that you're doing yeah yes and

[00:52:11] so that is part of the sort of a mindset shift yeah I think there's a lot of feeling that for these kids in Loudoun that have so many opportunities that there is a lot of pressure to have the label on the application versus really thinking about what that means what the commitment level is and I touched on that a little bit with JROTC and I know that the IB program is the same you know they and especially with our programs at lottery which we will move to that conversation next um clicking that button to enter the lottery sometimes it's like do they really know what they're signing up for so i appreciate you sharing that because i think that that it resonates with

[00:52:49] me and you know i do see that with our students so um well done though i hear excellent things and i have been out there to see the research and studying the mosquitoes and all the different things and it's it's just it's mind-blowing and it's exciting and so i'm very happy to see that this is in a growing direction so thank you for being here and next up i'm going to jump in oh i have one slide here from the admissions team so as part of our ongoing efforts to strengthen access consistency and student experience we are making a few updates to the acl admissions process

[00:53:23] specifically for aet and aos for the 26-27 school year so first students applying to our academy of science and academy of engineering and technology programs will continue to participate in the stem thinking skills assessment however we are working with insight assessment to create a custom ACL STEM Thinking Skills Assessment.

[00:53:44] This assessment is designed to measure critical thinking, problem solving, STEM-related reasoning skills that align with the expectations of our programs, as Mrs. Chang mentioned about that math indicator. Secondly, we are moving to a single testing day in the fall for all middle school students or applicants, I should say.

[00:54:04] The goal is really to create a more equitable and efficient process for students and families while reducing barriers to participate. Students enrolled in our middle schools will test in their home school environment, while home school, private school, and virtual students will test on the same day at the Academies of Loudoun.

[00:54:25] Lastly, I want to share that one of the most exciting components of all of this really affects all of our special programs across the district, as along with the testing that day, we will be doing a district-wide future-ready middle school lesson that will occur that same time.

[00:54:42] So while 8th grade applicants who are participating in testing, all 6th, 7th, and non-testing 8th grade students will have an opportunity to engage in a structured Future Ready Lessing experience. This initiative is a collaborative effort across academic programs, career and technical education, school counseling, and school leadership.

[00:55:05] This approach enables a district-wide, future-ready experience that aligns with our commitment to college, career, and life readiness for all students. We do anticipate to really emphasize the RIASAC model through this, so students start realizing their interests so we can know what they're signing up for, and also really advertising the special programs at an earlier age so that students know what's available to them.

[00:55:33] Mr. Pepper? Thank you for sharing that update. Really appreciate it. I'm assuming, and this assessment is just one part of the admissions process because, and I know that we're talking about lottery, but one of the things that I would hate, no lottery for this, right, but I know that, I understand that.

[00:55:58] Okay. One of the things that I would hate to have happen is for this test to become such a significant part of the admissions process that students become reliant entirely on scoring well on this test.

[00:56:14] And I'm going to preface it with the idea that some students have inherent advantages where they can pay for things like private tutoring to give them a leg up on this test on some of their peers who might not be able to afford the same thing. So I just want to keep that as a consideration as we look at a testing requirement.

[00:56:32] Take a quick moment to respond. So this assessment is something we've already used in our admissions. It is not new. It's just instead of using the same assessment that is used all across the nation, it will be a custom test for academies allowed. No one else will utilize it.

[00:56:49] No one else will have access to it. It's really that test security piece so that we can make sure we're accurately assessing our students. However, it's always been part of the admissions process. No, I understand that, and I appreciate that. I'm just, what I'm saying is that testing is not, there's an inherent inequity in the testing process.

[00:57:09] That's all I'm going to say, and I'm going to leave it at that. Thank you. Okay, we are coming up on an hour, but I really want to honor the students that are here. Our event doesn't start until 630, and we're 20 minutes away, so I think we can still make it. So I'm going to ask that we stay, if everyone's okay with that.

[00:57:26] I don't know what your time commitment is. Usually we're an hour, but I would love for us to stay and have this conversation. So is that good for everybody? Yes. So is that, yeah, let's do it. Close out the

year here. I'll condense things down.

[00:57:45] So I want to say thank you again for welcoming us here. Also, but I can say that earlier to this day, our first speaker did an excellent job of summarizing everything that we're doing at MATA. So that will actually cut back on some of the things I need to present here.

[00:58:00] But MATA, the Monroe Advanced Technical Academy, has 25 different pathways across 10 different career clusters. Like was said earlier, our goal is to move students and prepare them to their workforce as well-trained and industry-certified employees.

[00:58:15] And that's either straight out of high school or when they go on to training or two- or four-year colleges when they come out at any point that they enter the workforce. Our capacity at full enrollment is just shy of 1,100 students across 17 one-year pathways and eight two-year pathways.

[00:58:33] And we have over 50% of our pathways are dual-enrolled credits through Northern Virginia Community College. As far as attrition rates, we do a great job of students come in and enter. We generally retain them for the full year, so only a 2.2% loss over the course of the year.

[00:58:54] This is the breakdown, historic breakdown of the demographics on our accepted data or accepted rates. And to answer some of your questions of how the recent changes in the emissions process has impacted things, you can see a breakdown there of the different categories.

[00:59:12] that we look at as far as demographics of students taken at the acceptance time period. The last slide that I have is I just want to share some of our highlights from the year. We talk about all the time that one of our major things, all of our MATA pathways have an industry credential attached to them.

[00:59:32] Those are industry standards, license, or accreditations that students can take with them out into the workforce. This was done last week, but as of last week, We're about 50% finished with those going into the end of the school year, so we don't quite have all the data that's there. Our career and technical service organizations, about 50% of our students are active participants in those.

[00:59:54] We're very, very high competition at the state and national levels. Had close to 100 students that were award winners this year at the state level, and another 70 students or 68 students moving on to national competitions. Work-based learning is something that occurs on a daily basis just today.

[01:00:11] Our auto service was over at our transportation office, walking through with them and looking at the buses and going through a full two-day breakdown of motors and things there. That's an everyday occurrence when you come to the building. You're going to see different people from industry in the building working with people.

[01:00:28] We have a house. Our house build on Weird Street in Leesburg is going to go to completion this summer. It should go on the market next fall. If any of you are looking for a house to buy, it will be on the market and looks great. You're welcome to swing by and take a look at it. It's on the Catoctin Circle side of Weirte Street over there.

[01:00:47] So swing by and see it. We do clinical experiences in several of our HMS classes, Loudon Skilled Jobs Trade Fair. We do monthly salon days with our cosmetology students to bring in their parents and friends who are brave enough to allow them to do different services on them.

[01:01:07] National certification boards for several of our different programs. New this year, we did an ANOVA day in coordination with HAMSI where ANOVA representatives came over from all different types

of health care industry, did a full presentation at our school for our students to talk about, actually a two-day presentation to talk about different careers that students might not think about.

[01:01:30] And then we have State Board oversight on several things. As we advance, we're moving through, not next year, but the year after that, we have several new pathways coming in. We have advanced computing that's going to add on and advance currently our cybersecurity as well as our Cisco networking classes.

[01:01:46] It's looking at advancing those. A mechatronics pathway. Respiratory therapy is one that actually Innova brought forth to us saying that it is a high needs area in health and medical science as our population grows in age. Game design is going to be an addition.

[01:02:04] We're actually combining that with our digital animation class. And then we're also looking to add in a second section of our nurse aide class, which is probably one of our most sought-after positions that we have in the building. With those classes coming in, we're going to be required to sunset a few of the pathways to make room for them in the building.

[01:02:23] Intro to health and medical science with the addition of HAMSci and looking at those that maybe can be offered at different locations. Health informatics is another one. There was a niche in the community as the health community went to digital records. We've sort of sailed past that now, and it's sort of something that can be looked at in different areas and fields.

[01:02:42] And, of course, computer and digital animation is going to evolve into game design. Some of the challenges or opportunities that we see is support staffing, looking at our support models for EL, as well as our special education support models with our students, differentiation of classes.

[01:03:01] As it was said earlier, when students are in the same classroom for the entire class day, It can pose a challenge in having different supports there. Also, looking at expanding our dual enrollment opportunities, one of the biggest challenges we see with that is prerequisites that students have to have in order to reach some of those advanced classes at the North Virginia community college level.

[01:03:19] So looking at expanding those opportunities both with us or talking with the CTAE office about maybe opportunities at home in high schools to do that. Pass it over to you for questions. Okay.

[01:03:36] Mr. Pepper says I should start. I appreciate, this is, it's amazing. I think MATA is so, the fact that you're housing all of that in one building is so incredible to me. And I know that, I think it's great that, again, that we're seeing some reflection here about what's needed and how we can tweak it and change it and prepare for those shifts and changes.

[01:03:56] It's no surprise. My question is going to refer back to our students and what they said. Can you elaborate, and I know some of you got cut off, so I'm sorry, you might have had this in your comments. can you elaborate on how the lottery process impacts these classes that they're speaking to where there was a biomedical class one year and then a biomedical it's a different class it's a different track it's not a two-year program like how is that happening um i'm not sure i understand the question as far as like the lottery did not impact any of our actual classes as far as when

[01:04:34] they were offered or how they were were put in there i think with them if you were asking my opinion on the lottery and the impact that it has on the academies or on the MAT Academy in particular I think it is much more complex than a one one-stop shop for all pathways so what I might tell you would be

a best fit scenario for one pathway might be completely different let's say what you might need or the skills that would be needed and the impact of the lottery and say an HVAC program would be completely different than the impact it would have in a biomedical technology program and so that's the one thing and then also I

[01:05:10] look at what I what I mentioned earlier is the concept of prerequisites or students having base knowledge coming in and how much further that student can those students can then progress on down the line but I think it's very difficult to if you if you were asking what is the impact of the lottery system I think that could be answered in 25 different ways across 25 different pathways i really appreciate that perspective very much and i think that that's something that we could absolutely think about and we should and explore i agree i think one-stop shop is these programs are built to be exactly the opposite of that they're built to be a pathway

[01:05:50] that you are interested in and that you want to pursue can i ask our staff member because she she might she can i ask her to elaborate because they talked about two different biomedical classes and i'm just okay i can actually answer that so we have biomedical technology that is one of our HMS classes. That's a two-year pathway that's through HMS. We also have biotechnology, which Yeah, come up. Come on. I'm Jennifer Gardner. I teach the biomedical technology program for

[01:06:27] the juniors and seniors. Half of my class this year had already taken the intro to health and medical sciences that they're talking about, Sunseted. That was the class that was for 10th graders coming in as a chance to sort of learn an overview of what the health and medical classes were about. And then after they do that, we have radiology, pharmacy, biomedical technology, and a different core group of two-year programs that are much more in-depth. And so what they were referring to was some of them came in and did the intro to HMS health and medical classes and then have been accepted into now my biomedical class. So they were coming in through the

[01:07:02] traditional acceptance program, but are in a class now where kids came in through the lottery program. And some kids that were in that first year with you were lotteried out. No, mine, once they're into mine, I have them for both years, but they were into the introductory class as sophomores, and they did not get to come back to do the two-year programs.

[01:07:21] Okay, that's what I'm wondering, too, then, and that's, thank you. My wondering is, are there some things that we need to then also hitch together as multi-year programs so that we don't have this issue of kids dropping out?

[01:07:38] I'm not sure I know how to answer that, and I would defer to your expertise for shaking your head. But these are the things that I'm thinking about, and I am really glad that you said what you said, and I appreciate the comment because I think we swung one way, and we're hearing from a lot of students and families about lottery across not just here.

[01:07:58] You heard it tonight with JROTC. So I think that it is something that we need to continue to evaluate and see what for each individual pathway. May I add one more thing? I'm fine with that. One thing we had discussed just casually in sort of brainstorming how to make this successful is offering at the homeschool an introductory snippet.

[01:08:19] One of the things that they were speaking to is two years of six hours every other day of togetherness. If you didn't know what you were getting into, that's a very long time to be studying

something that you decided you weren't interested in. And in the seven years that I've been teaching this course, I haven't had attrition, But I'm concerned now that sometimes it's not the student that is desiring to be in the class.

[01:08:39] It's maybe a push from a family that says this will look good on your resume. Yes. And we've heard that. Yeah. And so if there was some way to introduce them to the topic, maybe even at their homeschool as a one-block class of this is the introductory class to health and medical sciences, then they would know, do I have a passion?

[01:08:55] Is this something I really want to go do two years and give up half of my high school career to do this? Or is it something that was interesting but it's not really what I want to do? So just something to consider as you're moving forward, not, you know, to get rid of the lottery, but maybe to make sure that kids applying to it really know that they have a passion before they're locked into a two-year class that they may not stay with.

[01:09:15] Yeah, this is wonderful. Thank you. Thank you. It's really important for me, I'll speak for myself, coming into this to try and understand, you know, where we are. And I feel like this has been very reflective. And so I'm very grateful to the team and for the ideas that are kind of marinating and going to be tried over the next year.

[01:09:32] and I'm anxious to see how all that plays out, but also for the real-life experiences that you have had and you bringing that to our attention because you are living it, and to you, too, as an educator, to put an idea on the table. So I am so appreciative of this team. I find it all very impressive.

[01:09:48] There's obviously good work happening over at the academies. So I'll kind of leave it there. I think over the next year these are the conversations that I would like to start having in SPC. So hopefully the committee will be supportive of that dabbling in as we go. So did you have anything for – you let me go first.

[01:10:06] I did. I always feel like I can go first. I just want to piggyback off a little bit of what was said, and I appreciate the idea of offering some sort of introductory course because one of the things that I see and I think that we're seeing as just a school system at large is that there's so much more interest in these programs than the space that we have available.

[01:10:24] So if we can do some of these things, even in maybe a lighter version, in our homeschools as an introduction or as a way to see if maybe is this something I'm really interested in, I think it can go a long way into kind of expanding the footprint of what our academies offer as well as answering the question of is this really for me.

[01:10:46] I'm going to leave it at that. Just so cool that you do all these programs at MATA. I don't even know how you find a way to find culinary instructors and cosmetology instructors and people who can do game design. It's very impressive. Thank you.

[01:11:03] And just to piggyback off of that, I was going to add this in later, but I'm going to say it now because you made me think of it. Going back to the imposter syndrome, I think another thing that we talked about in a previous meeting was how many kids are applying to all special programs across Loudoun. And I think that that is symptomatic of a lottery system.

[01:11:20] you know across the board being largely the mechanism because i think kids feel like i got to get it on my resume so i'm going to just apply to all of them but they're very different programs and so i think that's something on the communications end and the front loading end or a possible intro course that could be something we explore to help kids understand that this isn't just about landing a special program and catering your interest then to what that is it's really truly meant to be responsive to who you are as a person and what your passions are and what you see long term and we're always going to have that tension here in Loudoun because the expectations are incredibly high so I appreciate you bringing that to the

[01:11:57] table all right last one let's go well good evening everyone so I just want to share a little bit about the it's okay it's alright because I'm so new I'll be really short so then we'll be we'll be in great shape so just to kind of give a little bit of an overview of the access Academy access Academy is George Mason's lab school. So it's our partnership with George Mason University and Northern Virginia Community

[01:12:31] College. It is a slightly different type of program to and yet still kind of the same as what you've seen at the academies in terms of process and kind of where the students are. We only had a freshman cohort this year. So we don't have any data. So I'm just going to give some high level information about some of the things that we've been able to go through.

[01:12:57] We are, if you could just go back just for one moment, we actually had a significant increase in terms of expressed interest into the Access Academy for this coming year.

[01:13:12] We have a seat size for 30 students per grade level moving forward into the future. With that, we will have, starting in this fall, a freshman and a sophomore cohort. Our program really is kind of building out through Potomac Falls.

[01:13:29] Following two years, once we're able to move to that phase, as you can see, we're connected to George Mason University's Arlington campus at the Pew Center. Their 11th and 12th grade year will actually be spent on campus while they're taking all their courses.

[01:13:46] So it's a slightly different model in terms of the AB schedule, this is a full-time schedule, two years at Shelby Falls, and then two years at George Mason. Our program really is focusing on offering students different opportunities that are similar in nature to some of what you've heard at the academies, and yet somewhat different.

[01:14:10] We focus on pure science and IT. We are offering this summer for the second time a summer camp in terms of AI robotics. You can go to the next slide, this is fine. And so some of the things that we've done with our freshmen this year is some different experiences.

[01:14:29] Most of the coursework is similar to what most freshmen are going to take at any other high school, with the exception of really just one course. But through that particular course, we worked with the Loudoun Education Foundation and one of the grants that they had in terms of distributing laptops to graduating students in need at a couple of our high schools.

[01:14:52] And so our students went through the process of once those devices were delivered to be able to go through the process of re-imaging, setting them up, and then actually helped with the distribution and making sure students were able to access those devices on a particular day.

[01:15:08] And this just happened just a couple of weeks ago where we were able to distribute over 100 laptops devices to students in needs some of the things in terms of like impact other ways was different experiences i don't have it listed up there but some of different experiences as we're building towards what their future might be we're really not dictating that they're going to go into cyber or they're going to go into some level of coding it's really kind of a broader base in this in this instance and so we wanted to give them exposure and so this first year we've provided

[01:15:43] some levels of exposure in terms of of opportunities to compete in ctfs even though they don't have a traditional cyber background or the capture the flag events right so this is that kind of cyber experience they also like many of the other students in cyber were able to participate in george mason's cyber slam so they can kind of see is this really what i want to do right so those are some of the those types of things that we're able to give and have students having some impact in that aspect from a family engagement we have really kind of two major things here just for the freshmen which was one was walking those families in and kind of explaining what the

[01:16:23] experience or what they were going to expect as they come to potomac falls that was at potomac falls we actually had our current or our rising freshmen earlier this week we invited them to potomac falls as well but in the fall once the school is up and running and all of our back to school nights have happened we then invite all the families down to the Fuse Center. One because some of these students and families have not seen what the facility is and offers and last year one of the things that we were able to provide as an opportunity is to take them into the robotics research section of the of the building and there was some actually demos that were done with some

[01:17:00] of the robotics whether that's wheeled robotics quadrupeds humanoids they have a drone space inside the building so the idea was this is this is kind of what your future is this is that talked about that imagined future this is what you might be able to imagine is what your future is as a part of this that kind of ties back to the summer camp as well as students are able to participate in that our students as freshmen this year were able to take their first DE course which was ITP 150 which is a Python programming course so we tie that into their Access Academy

[01:17:35] prep course in summer robotics and we're expanding the cohort for next year kind of the end just the the other you know last couple things that are up there we had students that presented their experiences or at least their initial experiences as freshmen to the Virginia Secretary of Education last fall to be able to go through and demonstrate some of the initial things that they have actually we're expanding just as an example schools still going on we're

[01:18:10] still trying to set things up and so lo and behold we're able to take a tour and actually learn about careers and job opportunities at our local data centers it's a huge industry in the Loudoun County region and so we want to be able to provide students those opportunities and experiences to be able to get them out into the workforce of which they may be choosing to whether that would be internship opportunities in the future but certainly work opportunities and so with that I'll open it up to any feedback or questions so really quickly this is is this open to students the entire county just how's the Potomac

[01:18:47] Falls is that correct or is it just for students so it's an this is another open lottery okay and the one difference with the one difference with this one is is because it is the regional there it is a lab school through George Mason it's actually an open lottery for any student in the state of Virginia. While we only

have students from Loudoun County that are at this point in time that have and are in the program, the lab schools kind of as the state requirements in terms of the guidance and procedures dictate

[01:19:20] how we go through our selection process, which is mandatory for a lottery system. But yeah, So it's 30 students per grade level. We actually have a lottery, and I must not say we did actually open the lottery up for the upper grade levels as well.

[01:19:41] Unfortunately, while we had some interest, expressed interest by students in terms of entering the lottery, we did not have enough expressed interest from our cohorts to be able to hold classes our junior and senior year, kind of as a pilot program for next year as those cohorts progress through.

[01:19:58] And so we're not moving forward with a junior-senior class next year. But, yes, it is open to any resident. For the most part, at this point in time, it has just been, with the exception of one student this year, has been Loudoun County applicants.

[01:20:15] There was one student from a different school division that did express interest earlier. What does transportation look like to the fees center? So the so transportation is similar to what you see in terms of transportation from the hub stop system to any of the other special programs so what it's going to look like for our students at In the access Academy is they'll still function within the hub stop system within Loudoun County to get to Potomac Falls our freshmen and sophomores and our juniors and seniors can ride that bus to get to Potomac Falls But for our juniors and seniors when we get to that phase, which would be 27 28 for our first cohort

[01:20:53] They will then get on another bus and leave from Potomac Falls and go to the Fuse Center They'll have their day at the Fuse Center that actual Academic day would look a little bit different than what your structure is at a traditional high school just because of time Right, so we are timing in terms of transportation to and from roughly 45 minutes because you are talking Arlington the other thing to consider with this is that all of their courses at the Fuse Center or 100% college course work and taught by the collegiate instructors.

[01:21:29] And so when we think about an A-B schedule in the traditional sense, considering A-T and A-O-S because of the loss of the study hall, but you're looking at seven courses. For students that are going to a full collegiate schedule in their junior and senior year, they didn't feel that that was actually the best process to go through.

[01:21:50] Most college freshmen don't take seven classes. And so we certainly didn't want to be able to put that burden onto them as well. And so looking at it and a combination of what type of coursework that they're taking along with transportation We were able to provide transportation to and from the Pew Center back and forth between Pews and Potomac Falls And then they still have the opportunity to have the hub stop Busing process and they have the opportunity to be a part of any of the extracurriculars while they're at Potomac Falls So they'll still be considered a Potomac Falls student even while they may be receiving their education at George Mason during their juniors

[01:22:26] to see this play out so thank you for I agree looking forward to hearing the updates as it progresses what a cool program amazing opportunities here for our students thank you all so much what really enjoyed that all right that is it for our scheduled agenda is there any new business there is not so with that I will adjourn our June 3rd 2026 specialized programs and centers committee meeting have a great evening and have an even better summer



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