



MACHINE TRANSCRIPT • CORAGGIO CONSULTING

Loudoun County School Board, Performance Monitoring Committee Meeting, Tuesday, September 1, 2026

Date	Tuesday, September 1, 2026
Place	Loudoun County Public Schools / School Board meeting (see BoardDocs / LCPS-TV)
Length	1h 3m (video)
- Official meeting video (Vimeo / LCPS-TV): https://player.vimeo.com/video/1223157824?rel=0 - BoardDocs (School Board): https://go.boarddocs.com/vsba/loudoun/Board.nsf/Public	

Machine transcript (speech-to-text) produced by Coraggio Consulting. Not an official county record. Names and numbers may be misspelled; check the video at the timestamp before quoting.

Speech-to-text: whisper.cpp, model large-v3-turbo. Produced 2026-10-11. Each paragraph starts with its time [HH:MM:SS] in the meeting video.

[00:00:00] all right good evening everybody i am amy ricardi we are calling to order this september 1st 2026 meeting of the performance monitoring committee i am joined by ms chandler and ms shirnoff and we appreciate everybody's attendance here today we are going to move into item three because we don't have any public comments so we're going to move into 3.0 approval of the draft minutes of the august 4th performance monitoring committee is that the correct date it is yep great has everybody have a chance to take a look at the minutes great I will entertain that a

[00:00:38] motion to approve the minutes so moved second thank you it has been properly moved in a second all those in favor say aye aye great the meeting minutes have been approved we'll move on to item 4.0 our information item for this evening with the Department of Academics the attendance and sense of belonging data and miss L miss Ellis I'll dr. Ellis I'll turn it over to you great thank you so much chair ricardi so this afternoon i am joined by several amazing colleagues from various

[00:01:13] departments and two schools so we are going to continue the format that we tried out last month and i think was received positively by the committee and that is we are going to talk about a couple of data sets that you have in board docs for you and we're going to focus in on chronic absenteeism and the belonging scale metrics that dr blakelock shared last month last month we'll talk a little bit about

belonging and attendance and how the division supports those efforts at the school level and then we will hear from the amazing jen short and jeff adam from

[00:01:53] sterling elementary school and heritage high school respectively and how they are working on this really in the context of the school building day to day so with that I'm going to turn it over to dr. Blake lock who will share the data specifically I do want to point out at the spreadsheet with the school by school data ended up in executive content that was unintentional we did mean to publish that so feel free to talk about it and I will get with the clerk and get that changed as soon as possible and with that I'll turn it over to dr. B thank

[00:02:30] you dr. Ellis so if we can go to this chart right here shows the students who are chronically absent percentage of them over the last four years as you can see the overall rate of chronic absenteeism has been trending downward both for the division and the two schools will be presenting tonight we saw a very high amount across the Commonwealth when we look at the 22 23 I think the it was in the mid 20 percentage as well we were about 19% and the other thing I'll note is when we look at our chronic absenteeism data and this is a fairly common phenomenon but really the highest rates are at the book ends of the of grades so it's a lot of kindergarten and first graders and 11th and 12th graders

[00:03:08] that where you see the highest rates of chronic absenteeism slide so this slide shows the relationship between sense of belonging and chronic absenteeism for the past school year the y-axis represents the overall percentage of a griever strongly agree on the secondary survey and the percentage of yes on the elementary survey for the questions on the belonging scale the x-axis represents the percent of students who are chronically absent for each school so you see that a correlation of negative point zero negative point four three which is considered a moderate correlation and just you see that there's a relationship between those two concepts we can't say there's

[00:03:47] any kind of conversation but there is a type of connection a moderate connection between the sense of belonging and chronic absenteeism based on that data based on the data I'm now going to turn it to Mr. Madison who will talk about the attendance practices. Thank you, Dr. Boylock. Good evening. I'm Darian Madison, Supervisor of Student Assistance Services, and I'm going to talk about our division-wide attendance practices, starting with our meetings and systems. For some of you that have had the opportunity to have previous attendance presentations, you know that starting with our attendance teams is

[00:04:27] really the cornerstone of the work of our division attendance practices, whether it's team meetings to track data to make informed decisions about their respective school communities or it's engaging with a family individual or some kind of family meeting our attendance team Members are actively engaging in providing services and resources for our family this is the foundation of our attendance work that Decreases our chronic absenteeism, but also increases that sense of belonging amongst our students and families from a state in our regional

[00:05:05] perspective and our practices we meet monthly with our video we attendance representative in addition We meet with all the attendance leaders from region 4 so in those means we're able to discuss best practices Receive attendance updates and those meetings have been proven to be very helpful our IDT meetings are meetings that occur after a student has been adjudicated with a chance truancy petition and And those meetings occur monthly.

[00:05:37] Those meetings are part of those meetings are the schools, the attendance officers. Sometimes we have principals that attend those meetings. Also, the Judon Court Service Unit, Lion County Mental Health Department of Family Services. We're all at the table to make sure that we come together, we come up with resources and recommendations for the judge so when the family does go to the disposition hearings, we have a report ready and recommendations to expedite those services and resources for our families and students.

[00:06:06] A legal alignment, we meet with our common attorney's office quarterly, just to make sure that we're in line with any new codes, but also to discuss truancy and attendance gaps that we may be having between our offices.

[00:06:21] In terms of agency collaboration, we are now meeting monthly with our Department of Family Services, Mental Health and CPS and Juvenile Court, and discussing cases to make sure that we are aligned with our systems and discussing best practices.

[00:06:40] Restorative practices, we approximately three years ago, we started our attendance and engagement circle. So it started as a pilot program. Last year, we opened it up to the whole school division. We had 13 schools that participated having attendance and engagement circles, And we saw increases in attendance and engagement with those students that attended those circles.

[00:07:03] Those circles are facilitated by teachers and Unified Mental Health Team members. Our Judiciary Best Practices Team, this is a new collaboration, new team that is led by Judge Kohler. He's one of our juvenile court judges.

[00:07:20] Ms. Evans and I had the opportunity to attend the first meeting that was on August 18th. During that meeting, all the judges were present, the Chief Judge, Judge Robinson, Judge Brooks, Attorney's Office, Defender's Office, the Clerk of the Court and Juvenile Court.

[00:07:35] Within this meeting, we were able to talk about some gaps that we're having between, particularly between the schools and the courts. We were able to come up with some solutions, actually, in our first meeting. And I would say, within my 30 years of both working in the court system and in the school system, this is the first time I've seen this level of transparency in collaboration between the two systems.

[00:07:58] So it was very, it was a great start. Our family and community practices, we continue to collaborate with our face office and our parent educational partners who provide services and presentations around chronic absenteeism and attendance awareness to those families that are part of those programs.

[00:08:18] Our parent coffee is just one of our ways that we engage parents within our schools, but we do provide informal, formal sessions to our parents to raise awareness around attendance and just meeting them where they're at. So really our community outreach is about meeting families where they're at, whether that's doing presentations at parks and rec centers, at the libraries, the juvenile courts.

[00:08:42] We go out and we do that community outreach to make sure that families are aware, but also that they're connected to the resources. Thank you. And I will turn it over to Ms. Evans in-- OK, you have three.

[00:09:01] All right, well, good evening, Mrs. McCarty, Mrs. Chernoff, and Mrs. Chandler. I am Shaheed Mohammed. I'm the acting assistant superintendent in DEIA, if you didn't know. And I wanted to-- just want to make sure. And I wanted to just give a little bit of overview of the connectedness of belonging and inclusion in this work, as well as we will give some high-level overview of work that's being done in the division as we kind of scale down to some of the great work that our esteemed principals will be sharing with you.

[00:09:34] So we want to differentiate belonging as a feeling versus inclusion as an action. So belonging is about feeling accepted, valued, and treated as a full member of a group. Inclusion is about what actions can be done to increase the likelihood that students will feel a sense of belonging.

[00:09:53] And that's very important and key to this work. You will hear about the specific actions that the division is taking to support schools with attendance. Schools are taking action to create a culture of inclusion and to know and understand the individual needs of students and families for whom chronic absenteeism is an issue.

[00:10:13] I'm not going to read this slide to you, but you've heard from Dr. Spence and lots of our incredible various leaders within LCPS that building and sustaining a strong sense of belonging in our students is everyone's responsibility.

[00:10:31] And belonging is a leading indicator, not a lagging indicator, for student social, behavioral, and academic success. Addressing student absenteeism, as you well know, is a complex issue. Creating and sustaining environments where students feel they belong is a factor that schools can leverage and central office and school personnel can leverage and control.

[00:10:57] This slide and the next two slides will provide a high-level overview of the collaboration and work our schools, district offices, and entire school division does to actualize belonging for all students. And I'll turn it over to Jen.

[00:11:14] Good evening. it's nice to see you all on this slide I really want to emphasize that we've used schools as a sanctuary when you talk about sense of belonging you're really talking about connection and all of us are responsible for ensuring that we offer that to our students and our families that quote really resonated that came out after the pandemic which we're years away from now but even just having that virtual connection whether it's students during the pandemic or whether they're doing asynchronous learning whether they're having a video class that connection is so important for us and obviously it's not nearly the same as actually being in

[00:11:54] a school building I mean you all have visited schools and you feel it when you walk into our schools that there's just that culture and that vibe in each of our buildings so really what is school connectedness it's making sure that not only our students but our families and our staff feel cared for supported valued and that they belong and have a place at the school so it's a positive contributor for obvious reasons when we see that kids have that sense of belonging their attendance improves their performance improves with their academics and they thrive so the research has really shown that it

[00:12:32] increases the healthier decision-making which are protective factors that we want all students to have so they're making responsible healthy decisions as they as they grow, and they're more likely to have the achievement with higher grades, higher test scores, and overall better attendance.

[00:12:50] Next slide. You've seen this triangle. Again, just to emphasize that the things at that Tier 1 level are things that all students receive, and that is our Sources of Strength program, our prevention presentations with substance use, our counseling lessons, our peer program, our Sources of Strength program, signs of suicide, substance use prevention.

[00:13:15] There's so much that goes into what's happening at the universal level for students. And then when you get to the Tier 2, Tier 3, those are our more targeted interventions when we identify issues. And there's gaps, whether that's with connection or whether that's struggles outside of the school or even in school.

[00:13:33] That's where we do our targeted intervention across the academic, behavioral, and social, emotional, mental health. We have Character Strong as evidence-based curriculum. We have other group curriculum that we provide to students, individual counseling services for students.

[00:13:49] And then if there's crisis, we have our crisis response. And all throughout that, we're engaging with our families to ensure everyone's on the same page. So I really think it's a robust effort to make sure that all of our students are seen and heard, but then when there are things that are not going well, that we're meeting them where they are and addressing the need and including their families.

[00:14:14] So we could go into all of those services, but I do want to end before I turn it over to Jen, is really when we talk about sense of belonging, we've heard a lot about the epidemic of loneliness. And really, it's not an epidemic of loneliness. It's an epidemic where we have a lack of connection.

[00:14:31] So I really think that all of us working together, we're going to see and hear from our schools how much that can make a difference for a student and a family. Good evening. I'm Jen Short. I'm the principal at Sterling Elementary, and you can go to the next slide.

[00:14:50] You'll see on the screen our mantra, what we live by, every child, every day, whatever it takes. And we really do believe in this as a school. We serve a very precious community. It's a very diverse community, and we have seen the need in our community grow over the years. I'm fortunate to be going into my 14th year there, and when I began, we were at about 35% free reduced lunch.

[00:15:10] and now we are one of the schools identified as having the highest percentage in the community eligibility provision that's published by the state so that tells us that the belonging like you heard my colleagues speak about and school attendance is even more important and we take that very seriously you can go ahead to the next slide so as a school we do invest heavily in belonging to start our school year last year that was one of the first things that we talked about coming off of Dr. Spence's keynote with us.

[00:15:40] That was one of the things that he really addressed. We took a look at what that does to student learning, and when students do feel connected, they are more inclined to take risks. We see that in our school, and they come to school. We also took a look even at the research.

[00:15:56] In John Hattie's research, you know, that effect size at .4, and it's just over that hinge point, so we know that we're really in that zone that we're aiming for when we're looking at the belonging. We also, as a school, have established what we call our Sterling Family Norms.

[00:16:11] So these are the things that we abide by as a staff. These are what we agree to when it comes to things like planning, our school community, but also how we interact with our children. And we agree as a

staff that we're going to greet them at the door every single day. So all administrators are outside every morning and all teachers are at their door, making a point to seek the child out, use their name, kind of assess how they're doing.

[00:16:34] If something's not going well, you know, making sure that we're intervening right away. We also have our Kindness Ambassadors who we pair with students who begin after the school year starts. So they have an immediate connection. It's typically a child that's a year or two older than them, and often we try to pair children who speak the same language as well, especially if they're a newcomer, just so they have a familiar face who can communicate with them to help them immediately get connected to the school.

[00:16:59] We lean into our office staff, too. If you've ever walked into our office, you know that they just do a great job of welcoming our community. But we chose to take the automated system off of our telephone, so it's always a person answering the phone. We always access a language, their native language, and if we don't speak that in the office, then we access the language line.

[00:17:18] And little things like that I think make a difference with our families in letting them know that they're seen here and they're valued and we want them to engage with us. You can go ahead to the next slide. So I'll segue into the attendance piece, and I kind of see it in several different pockets.

[00:17:36] The work that we do prior to the start of the school year, and then next I'll talk about the daily work, the biweekly and the monthly work. But even prior to the start of the school year, over the summer, my social worker and I, we sit down and we look at our list of students who were chronically absent the year prior. We have a target list that we have, and these are our students who we aim to connect with their families before the school year starts.

[00:17:56] So we call them in July, set up meetings in August, and have their families in to meet with us. Oftentimes, too, we learn about different resources that they need, and we're able to connect them within the community or our school. We're intentional, too, in sharing the resources we have as administrators um in through attendance works and really i guess any school employee would be able to access that or even any family we also are intentional with our family communication so i have a slide a couple of slides that i give to our teachers and ask them to include in back to school night so we're all delivering the same message about when is a great time to stay home first come to school and then i ask for our staff to be really diligent in following through

[00:18:34] and pursuing our children if they're not here we know in the research that our teachers are a big difference maker in attendance as a principal and my social worker we both have a role but what we see in the research is the teacher's role is really the biggest deciding factor so we ask that if children are absent two days in a row that they reach out simply to say I missed you we hope to see you soon and then with three unexcused absences they reach out to me so we can start to work prior to what the state requires we found it to be really helpful we We initially, you saw on an earlier slide, the downward trend with our chronic absenteeism.

[00:19:12] That first year that was presented there, mid-year I discovered, and I don't know why I wasn't looking at it before, but I discovered that we were at about 25-26% of our students were chronically absent. So we started in January a big push, and we were able to decrease just below 15%, and we've just tried to capitalize on that movement since.

[00:19:32] You can go ahead to the next slide if you would. So thinking about our daily practices, I ask our registrar, she prints for me a daily attendance log. I know who's come in, who's coming in late. Our students who are classified as McKinney-Vento, I know their patterns because there's some of them who they stopped coming to school because they've moved and they can't get here.

[00:19:52] So we are in relentless pursuit of them, making sure that they have what they need and they're able to get to school. When kids return from an absence, we try to seek them out again to say, so glad you're here today, great job making it. And again, that focus on belonging and active student engagement.

[00:20:09] We have also our junior Jaguars, so students who maybe they're lagging in their attendance or in their interaction in the classroom, we pair a fourth or fifth grader with that student just to serve as a peer-to-peer mentor. So trying to utilize the strengths in our children within our building, and that really serves a purpose on both ends as well.

[00:20:28] Next slide, please. On a biweekly meeting, as you know, we meet with our attendance team, and at the elementary level right now for us, that consists of me And when one of my APs is available, she joins us, our school social worker, and our attendance officer. We take a look at our data and click every single meeting.

[00:20:45] Usually by about late fall, I'm looking and click every day just to know who's exactly where. We connect with our students who are in need of intervention. My social worker and I decide, all right, are we going to have a meeting with the students? Or are we ready to bring in the family and have a meeting with the family? And we make that case-by-case determination.

[00:21:01] And then we also share out with our staff. So I share out on a monthly basis the percentage by grade level and the same trends that were noted earlier, kindergarten and first grade, being a little bit harder to get to school more regularly until they learn the routine and the processes. And they also tend to be met with more illnesses.

[00:21:18] So we take a look at those trends and talk about those and call families. Hey, I noticed that your child is coming to school more regularly. Thank you for making that adjustment. And we have found that to be helpful as well. And then for our students who we would classify as Tier 2 or Tier 3, I provide our teachers a script either to use on a phone call.

[00:21:36] If they're in that Tier 3 range, it's a phone call. If they're in Tier 2, it's an email that they send to them. So it's just less work for them, and they can just copy and paste or read right off of what we have there. And then finally, just a few other interventions to note. You heard, I think it was Darren mentioned the connection circles, the, I think, attendance and engagement circles, and we use them across all of the grade levels and find great success there.

[00:21:58] I mentioned the family meetings and our home visits. We utilize an attendance tracker for select students that's color-coded so they know when they're getting into the red. They need to make sure that they're here every day. Celebrating the improvements. Shout-outs on the morning news show. Our attendance fair makes a visit every month.

[00:22:14] The kids love that. And I do do family reminders to come back to school after a long week. We find that to be successful. Did you share your attendance rate right now? It's just below 5%. - Make sure it's 4.8, just tentatively at 4.8 from 24, no big deal.

[00:22:37] - Thank you, and Mr. Adam? - Thank you, good evening everyone. My name is Jeff Adam, I am the proud principal of Heritage High School in Leesburg, and I am excited to be here tonight to tell you a little bit about what we do at Heritage to increase belonging, increase that feeling of belonging with our students and make sure that they know that they are connected.

[00:23:01] I think it does have an impact on attendance. Attendance at the high school is a pretty complex issue. We find that students are absent or chronically absent for a variety of reasons.

[00:23:16] Some of it is school avoidance. We have also found that some of it is test avoidance, where students may be staying at home because they don't feel like they're ready for one particular test or another, they're studying for another one. So there is a whole variety of why students are gone or absent, and it's our mission to make sure that they understand why it's important for them to be at school and be in classrooms.

[00:23:43] So that has been, you'll notice in our data, we went down, went up a little bit, went down again, right? And it's our mission this year to really focus in, much like Jen said, we're really hyper-focused on attendance a little bit more so this year.

[00:24:03] We have an incredible team. We work really well with our attendance officer, our student support advisor, as well as our student activities engagement coordinator. All work very, very closely together with the rest of our administration and administrative leadership team to follow up with kids, make sure that we're doing all of the things with the letters and things like that.

[00:24:28] But we know that it requires more. So one of the things I'm doing on a monthly basis is including information for our parents and our families about why school attendance is so important what students are missing out on at heritage we are an IB school and we our mission right you can see it there is to ready all of our students for success and for what comes next for them we've defined those things and you can go to the next slide as well we've defined those things using the terminology that you see there that terminology

[00:25:08] comes from two places it comes from the profile of the graduate for Virginia as well as the international baccalaureate student learner profile and we felt like it's very important for us to focus on those things so much less on specific content knowledge and more so on whether students are prepared for what is going to happen after they leave heritage no matter what their choice is right no matter what their pathway is whether it's military whether it is college whether it is an apprenticeship or immediately into the world of work.

[00:25:42] We want to value all of those, but those attributes are ones that we know they will all need and will all help them be successful. And so you can see there, that's the graphic that we use for kind of how we're going to get there, what our map is, what our road is going to be.

[00:26:00] And it's got the vision, it's got the attributes. We are a high-challenge, high-support school. We want to challenge our students where they will be successful, but we also want to support them in getting there. And so that's one of the things, we just have that at our heart, but we know that before they can learn, they have to feel connected, right?

[00:26:22] And so you'll see there where we, the things that we do to help students belong. And then you'll see finally at the very bottom of that map is the adjust, adjust, adjust roundabout, because that is where we are, right? and unfortunately it also means that we're never really going to get to that that perfect zone but

it does mean that that we're going to put good foundations in place and then make sure that we just improve those and and and expound upon those so as we're looking at our attendance you go the next slide as well as we're looking at our attendance and as we're looking at how do we

[00:26:58] create a high school a comprehensive high school where students feel like they belong and they're connected we do some things in a very deliberate way and so here are some things that just just a few of the things that we do for example you know i'm out there greeting students in the morning the rest of my administrative staff we encourage people to be at their door teachers to be at their door not unlike what's happening at sterling elementary we have a bell schedule with clubs incorporated into it that is a an outgrowth and it's on the next slide as well but that's an

[00:27:32] outgrowth of the work from staff parents students and administration coming together to create what we felt like was a bell schedule that would meet some different needs and that we were finding right so beyond just content knowledge in in a class we also wanted to make sure that students had a chance to bond and and be together we bought planners for everybody which felt very old school

[00:28:05] but but also felt like we needed to teach kids how to like plan their lives and so we had three lunches instead of four lunches so kids have more of a chance to be together and be with friends we Spanish occasionally on the announcements we celebrate each other we celebrate our diversity that we have at Heritage.

[00:28:27] And then the student and staff leadership groups are constantly kind of interrogating our culture and making sure that we're asking the right questions, that we're involving our students in making and in leadership decisions so we can be intentional about making sure that students feel like they belong.

[00:28:50] You can go to the next slide. So that's just a sample of, that's our bell schedule, right? And so in the middle of our day, We have win time, and win stands for what I need. So it's what I need time. On Mondays, we have pride time, which is our advisory.

[00:29:07] On Tuesdays and Fridays, we have clubs. So it's, you know, 30 minutes where students can go and they can go and hang out with people who are sharing an interest, but they're not necessarily, it's not all focused on academics.

[00:29:22] And then Wednesdays and Thursdays, we have an academic support time where they rotate back to a teacher that they've had. They can also use that time to go and see a teacher who they may need to just touch base with. So we felt like it was important to not only add that time in the middle of the day after they've been through two classes, they may need a little bit of a brain break, but also they need a chance to be with their peers and feel like they are connected.

[00:29:50] So that's led to some really good data for us, and that's on the next slide. So this is from our family survey, which was, the question was, my child has a sense of belonging at this school.

[00:30:06] And we had very nearly 90% of our respondents said yes. And that is up 11.7 points in the past two years. So that also correlates to when we started this new bell schedule. And so that's been something that we've been really proud of.

[00:30:23] We definitely see the difference for our students. Yesterday, some of our students were being interviewed for the LCPS podcast, and they talked about win time. They talked about the schedule as being something that helped make students feel like they belonged.

[00:30:43] And then you can see the rest of it. I shared all of this data also with our students this year at class meetings to really emphasize that for them as well, so that they heard me say, this is really important. We want you to belong. It's not just a feeling, but also we shared that data, partly also to share with them that 87% said that they could be themselves, and 87% said other students at this school care about me, and my point to them was, that's not good enough.

[00:31:13] It needs to be closer to 100%, and so asking students to help me with that. So does that have a direct relationship to attendance? I think it probably has some relationship, right? We saw the correlation based on the data.

[00:31:30] But it's something that without that, our attendance becomes that much more difficult to to manage. And so we know that students are coming in some part for I know that that I would love to believe that they're all coming because of the amazing things that happened in English.

[00:31:48] I was a former English teacher. But but I also know that many of our high school students are coming because of seeing friends, because of the social aspects of it. It's one of the things that I love about having in-person school, right, and something that we missed several years ago.

[00:32:06] And so getting students back into that groove of you're needed here and you're wanted here and we notice when you're not here is our mission for this year so we can get that attendance down, that chronic absenteeism rate down even more.

[00:32:27] And Ms. Riccardi, with that, we will turn it back over to the committee for questions and discussion. always great i mean i love hearing from our schools and what's going what's going well and it's just such a great thank you both and thank all of you guys for the presentation too i appreciate it i'm going to open it up to you all to you want to start sure i know i know you got it thank you um i agree with mr carty i think this is really exciting and i am so grateful what i hear and what you're saying is that this is work i feel like what both of you have said could be a full-time job

[00:33:04] And that's one teeny tiny itty bitty piece of what you both do each and every day. I'm especially struck by words like relentless pursuit and we missed you when you weren't here. And the positive reinforcement, not just getting a nasty gram call that, hey, your kid's not here, but hey, we noticed your kid was here.

[00:33:26] The first, I am so biased towards heritage because my daughter goes there now. I think everyone knows this now, and I'm always singing Mr. Adam's praises and roar pride, all the things. But one of the first things she said to me on the first day of school is she said, did you know Mr. Adam? I said, how was your day? Are you okay? Did you get there? You know, so worried.

[00:33:44] And she said, you know what one of the things Mr. Adam does every day? And I said, what? I think it was the second day of school because he had done it twice. She said, he tells us he loves us on the morning announcements every single day. that girl has so much new in her life so many things going on and that was the thing she wanted to tell me so it matters I think it matters more than we realize and it's little things like that but those are also big things because that's who you are and so I think that it's commendable on so many levels I have a couple of questions if that's all right yeah okay my first is what are

[00:34:19] the students saying in these circles what are they saying their barriers are or the things that draw them to school are they related to sense of belonging are they more practical logistical things just

curious in those different circles student circles what they might say about attendance so i'll go first um some of it is some of your your more traditional barriers that you would think you know in terms of things students are experiencing sometimes not necessarily them like in terms of experiencing issues with their cells of mental health but like family members that may

[00:34:58] have mental health issues or children's that that are dealing with maybe a parent as dealing with an addiction in the house but a lot of times it's just disengagement the students that just don't feel connected for some of the reasons that Ms. Short and Mr. Adams talked about in terms of avoidance avoiding you know in terms of like avoiding a certain class or feeling like they you know like they're they don't feel connected because they don't I've it's just like circles like being in circles and facilitating I'm just quoting some students they

[00:35:33] don't feel smart right um so it's it's a wide variety variety of different issues um so those are some of the just just you know some of the things that happens um Ms. Short anything you want to add to that I would say at the elementary level the connection circles are more how the kids are connecting with each other and less about the depth of the concerns they may have at home where some of those things do come out is with the check-in check-out and it often is related to an older sibling who maybe is you know in and out of juvenile detention or a move a new baby

[00:36:13] things like that is what comes up often yeah I appreciate that I think that that's so insightful they're going to be the ones that are going to be the ones that tell us what they're really feeling my next question is a little more pointed on the school board side so and you can be as honest as you want with this? So what I'm wondering is, do you believe, are there any barriers that we in LCPS or with our policies or structures that are creating barriers to attendance? I will tell you there's two that I'm ruminating on. One in particular is the idea of early release. I really

[00:36:52] struggle with how that may or may not be connected to chronic absenteeism when we offer that. um and the other one that i'm struggling with which we will tackle next week i believe at the school board meeting is our calendar how do those structures different days off long weekends you alluded to how do those things come into play and are they barriers um i know we can get past barriers that's not necessarily insurmountable but i'm wondering if either of those things or other things that are structural in nature might present challenges to you that you see could

[00:37:28] change it's a big question i know on the spot but let's start with the calendar because we did that deep dive with chronic absenteeism and looked at the trends and what we saw was that there were families that were taking their kids out prior to our student holidays and extending them so if we had a monday off so let's make this a four or five day weekend um so they were bookends and absences there so and not seeing um the impact that it was having on their students with the academics and the social emotional but also on the school's chronic absenteeism so we saw parents

[00:38:05] kind of there was a disconnect and then kind of taking advantage of the opportunity because travel is less expensive during certain times of the year and they were taking those vacations yeah we had gap days a while back that were with teacher work days and different things I think we've really worked hard to kind of work away from that to only create long weekends so I know that that was an effort on the attendance side too I'll share that something that I feel has helped is when we became

[00:38:39] more consistent across all schools and all levels with the same message and this is what is excused versus unexcused and no matter what the state is looking at just number of absences so when we

started to hear that consistent message that really helped us feel like I was often the bad guy saying sorry you're not gonna be excused for the family trip but the and I don't know that this is in policy and I know it's state code that determines when a child is withdrawn but one area where we see more is let's say family goes on a trip and their child is out for 14 days and it's at 15 they're

[00:39:18] automatically withdrawn in those 14 days if they even had like last year where we had such a smaller number of school days so even if they had two or three other absences then they were chronically so that is something that's a little bit more difficult but sometimes it's necessary sometimes there's just a family emergency you know in their country yeah i i had alluded to it but i think um and you heard uh mr madison talk about this like we find that it's so dependent on the student situation right and so we get so many variables that what we do have some students

[00:39:57] who are chronically absent because they went on vacation right we have ones who got sick we have ones who are avoiding school right they are truly disconnected if you look at our graduation rate if you look at those things are all pretty good right and and so we don't what we don't have is We don't have students who are chronically absent, and that's an automatic, that automatically means that they're not going to pass classes and things like that, right?

[00:40:29] In some ways, we've made it pretty easy for students to not be at school because we have Schoology, we have some things like that, some things that we adopted during COVID, right, that have carried forward as far as making sure that we're keeping assignments up to date on Schoology and things like that, that helps our students who may be sick or may be out. And so it's not something I want to do away with. But at the same time, it can also feel like passing a

[00:41:08] class is a bit of a checklist, right? And so that's why it's important for me this year, especially to really emphasize why it's important for students to be at school right and and the we're we always emphasize for instruct from an instructional standpoint we emphasize students talking to one another we emphasize students being involved and engaged in classes in that way that's not something you can replicate by doing in a packet at home or doing something that you

[00:41:40] print it off um students don't always appreciate that um and um and so it's it's my job to educate you know families about like hey this is what your kid's missing right if you look at those attributes none of those attributes said stay on top of the packets right like it's it's all based on um on interaction and on social learning right because learning is a social enterprise and so um

[00:42:12] So that's, that's what we see is that it's really that like figuring out what are the things that we can intervene with or what may need intervention, what may need some connection to community resources, who is just gone and the chronic absenteeism came at a very particular time of year because they went on vacation and, or they got sick, right?

[00:42:39] and what's something that's more um that you know a kid just didn't get up he has a hard time getting up or she has a hard time getting up in the morning because they drive to school um so i think it it really what we find is there's not sort of a there's not a policy there's not something that that is systemic that is happening that's keeping kids away it's more just the variety of dealing with people right um and having resources that say okay you know what i can still stay connected

[00:43:13] right and i'm not gonna being absent is no longer an automatic failure for my class right i have ways to make things up i have ways to to get to stay caught up um which is different than it was maybe

when i went to school where it was like you're here you're not right so thanks oh go ahead I was just going to add something that I thought of while sitting here and you asked for transparency.

[00:43:43] I do think we've come a long way with the alternative programming. We've got RISE now, we've got the Transition Center, lots of different programming, but I do still see a need, and our schools have gotten really good at being creative with modifying schedules where we can to really give the kids exactly what they need while they're getting support for their mental health or substance use.

[00:44:05] But I do feel like there's still a need, and maybe it's a future vision, but a transition for mental health. We have a lot of students who go to hospitals, and they're just not ready for safety reasons to come back into their brick-and-mortar school.

[00:44:22] There's middle school students who have substance use concerns that we don't have a program for. So I think maybe just additional programming to meet our unique needs of our students who might need a step before they go back. Rise is that for many of our students who are in recovery, but we do have a lot of kids that go to the hospital for crisis stabilization, suicide attempts, and then the return to learn.

[00:44:47] Yes, we can stagger their re-entry back into the school to align with their needs, but some need a little bit more nurturing and another location might be an option for mental health or substance use needs. Thank you so much for your honesty, for tackling the question.

[00:45:06] It's always good to use committee work, I think, to kind of drive our work, and we want to stay connected to what the needs are, so I'm appreciative, and thanks for the conversation. Ms. Chandler? Thank you, and thank you, everyone, for being here. This is a fascinating presentation.

[00:45:22] It's been just really riveting to dive in and have the ability to consider. And one of the things I would say to start, right, I'm very aware of the differences between the communities that you both serve.

[00:45:38] And when you said, Ms. Short, about how high your free and reduced lunch was and I went to check the dashboard, I didn't realize it was 64%, just about 64%.

[00:45:53] That's significant. And I think it speaks to the fact that this isn't necessarily attendance as an issue isn't necessarily something that only happens to a certain type of students because obviously there are challenges across the board.

[00:46:11] And I really appreciated your perspective about it being a variable that's dependent on a student's individual experience. And that's always been something that we've tried to grapple with here. So thank you for sharing your school's experiences and what you've done to make such positive change in this area.

[00:46:28] I am so fascinated also to hear about some of the new collaborative approaches, Mr. Madison, that your team is working on. I would love to hear about just a little bit more detail about what the percentage of students are in truancy and what the conversations with the Commonwealth's attorney and your best practices team have been like, although I know that's new.

[00:46:58] I don't have the actual percentage. I know we did a presentation, actually last year, we did a presentation that showed the gradual increase, the number of students that we have involved in truancy. I want to say towards the end of the year, we had approximately 80 families or so.

[00:47:20] And some of that was actually Judge Kohler's during our meeting was the question because you can see if you go three years back, and I don't have the data in front of me, but at one point, I want to say

maybe approximately three years ago, we had six petitions, six petitions.

[00:47:39] And some of that is it was things that were happening more on the court side where they were blocking our ability to provide that service because it is a service. a child in need of supervision is a service where parents could go or a tense option go and file that petition to be able to to have the families get services to be able to be the catalyst to start where a family can go before the family assessment planning team the FAP team so they can actually have funding from the court to get services so these were some of the things that

[00:48:13] we had to work through with the juvenile court with the judges but I would say this this meeting And we had approximately two weeks ago was the first time that the judges were really aware that we had some of these, Ms. Evans, I can say, some of these blocks that were occurring between our systems.

[00:48:34] So I would say that, and I'm sorry, what was your second part of the question? No, no, I just, I'd like to hear a little bit more about some of those blocks and some of this. Yeah, it was our attendance officers not having the ability to file petitions, which was, in that meeting, the judge essentially told the court that should not happen anymore.

[00:48:56] That should never happen anymore. And so, you know, just having, being that transparency, having those discussions, it's important because it's, you know, I know sometimes it is, sometimes it's not necessarily all about the punitive part of it. It's about trying for those families that are most vulnerable in need is safety.

[00:49:16] It's about getting them services. And so, yeah, that was something that we talked about. and also the ability now that our attendance officers will have up and coming, because particularly in the past, if a attendance officer was filing against a parent, let's say if a parent was having some type of educational neglect, the only recourse that a attendance officer would have would actually go to the magistrate's office.

[00:49:40] So to go and file a petition to the magistrate's office, and it's very inconsistent, but they're not used to dealing with the juvenile petitions. So there was some inconsistencies in the systems, and then sometimes those petitions for the master's will get lost. So now we are working on a platform where we'll be able, the attendance officers, we'll be able to go directly to the juvenile court service unit through a parental participation petition and file right through the court for those families in need so we can expedite that, whether it's a child need of supervision or a child need of service.

[00:50:15] A lot of times we start off with a child need of supervision, It turns into a child and even services, and it goes into, you know, more of that route. We're just trying to provide services for these families. Yeah, that's incredible. It really does speak to the fact that when we're working together and facing the problems across the jurisdictional agencies that we can truly solve problems.

[00:50:38] That's phenomenal. would just ask we're talking transparency I would just add also we we advise the judges that um our only recourse for for gang in prevention was through a service that we had through it's called intervention prevention educational services which was a uh a contractual uh service that was through northern virginia family services that provided gang prevention um in um to our our students

[00:51:09] when in need um that was cut that funding was cut by our um our board or of uh supervisors so now we we have no right now in our county through our in terms of trying if we if our unified mental

health team members or we needed to refer services for game prevention there's really no recourse for that there's no actual prevention services and all of our gang prevention services our gang response intervention team has been paused so the judges

[00:51:44] were not even aware of that so that so now that that that that caused a like a ripple effect of like the chief judge going to have a conversation with one of the board members so um these are these are hard conversations but these are conversations that we need to have in in terms of you know it's not about throwing people under the bus but it's just it's a fact that we we need these services in place for our for our famous and students and thank you for sharing that wow um i i loved um that's that's very helpful context um i did uh just want to know i love the idea of schools the

[00:52:20] sanctuary or the sanctuary and i think um as a former public school student as the parent of two public school students that it's so deep and meaningful and to see how our work in that area has changed over the course of my life I'm just incredibly pleased with that I really appreciated Ms. Chernoff your questions and I love the idea of exploring the alternative pathways I think that's that is a really important point because we have given students so many different

[00:53:00] paths to find success and to be able to accomplish graduation and the more we can find ways to expand that it's an opportunity we should seize um so with that i don't have any further questions but thank you for the presentation thank you so i you know i just had a couple questions i'm fascinating conversation i got to really wrap my head around what you shared about yeah yeah that's that was interesting um number one i want to say i am so thankful that we're seeing

[00:53:35] major trends in reducing absenteeism in our schools from the post-COVID or COVID-ish pandemic era to where we are now. I think in a few years, we've really, really turned the tables on that, which I think is fantastic. I hear what you're saying about, I mean, I'm teaching a class at George Mason, and tomorrow we're doing a writing workshop, partially sparked by the fact that, you know, we're having issues with writing just in general, I think with kids coming out of schools, but it doesn't get any better at the college level I might add so we're doing a writing workshop tomorrow but the whole idea of just paper and pencil like just I told them you have to print

[00:54:14] it off and bring a pen and if you don't bring a pen I'll bring a box so everybody's got one right but sometimes it's just you've got to get down to the basics and really teach some real basic concepts again so I really appreciate that too I have a real heart for our Sterling elementary kids because literally right down the street from my house and so I'm so impressed with what you've done at sterling elementary over the years and really getting to this and i think that um it's a really it is a really you know we like to say every community all 100 schools have unique communities and i would say that's probably true but i feel in sterling park we have a whole you know seven

[00:54:51] schools that are very unique to even the rest of the county and sterling elementary certainly at the heart of that so it's really it's really great to see what's going on there um thank you all for this presentation and yeah i it's just it's given me a whole lot of food for thought and And I'm also mindful of our time.

[00:55:07] So I just want to, I'm definitely going to be following up on some questions after I wrap my head around a little bit more of some of the data. You know, the one question I did have in the tables really quickly is I noticed we didn't have the LCPS, this last year's LCPS score for absenteeism.

[00:55:23] Do we have that number now? We do not have that yet. Those calculations were based on the preliminary SPSF reports, which has school level data, but does not have an overall division level calculation. So when we have that, we will certainly follow up.

[00:55:38] Okay, yeah, that's just the data piece I had on my first slide three. That'd be great. Whenever we get that, it would be fantastic. And then any other questions on this topic? All right, so we're going to go to new business. I just want to, before we go kind of under new business, talk a little bit about the enrollment numbers because I've been hit with lots of interesting questions around the enrollment numbers this year.

[00:55:59] And I think the first thing I want to share is I learned an awful lot over the last seven days about all kinds of aspects of enrollment and what's going on right now I was asked specific questions around our English learner enrollment and I just want for the public to understand I would love for you guys to clarify this you know if I don't get this right we'll see we'll test my knowledge on this topic for a minute that enrollment numbers are reported to VDOE on September 30th and that's when the numbers kind of become official for I guess what the start of the year. And so if we're looking at numbers around enrollment for English learners

[00:56:38] or any of our subgroup categories right now, I know English learners in particular are going through testing. So the number that we see in the dashboard right now is going to probably be low compared to what will be in another five weeks when we get the testing complete. Is that a fair statement? I wouldn't even go that far. I would just stop at the September 30 count because the numbers fluctuate so much between the first day of school and that September 30 date because of

[00:57:11] multiple factors so one for example pre-k doesn't even start until several days after the first day of school so those numbers while they're included in projections obviously don't arrive on the first day so they're not in the first day count so that changes also we expect to see quite a bit of an increase in enrollment after the labor day weekend so there are so many factors involved we just we really can't even begin to get it would purely be guessing until we have that september 30 count yeah and i know we'd had a conversation about putting some context around certain elements of

[00:57:48] the dashboard and so i'm now seeing the value of doing so um relatively soon but i think for the public i think it's just really good to understand that right now even though the dashboard is available um those numbers are not official until september 30 and that's got you know basically five weeks um 29 more days before that that happens and a lot happens between now and then so i've been looking at the data but you've also got to make sure that you're picking two things number one if you pick a date that you're looking at our dashboard you have to pick the same date you know for however many years back you want to go and compare apples to apples

[00:58:25] versus picking the end of the school year this year and then today's date and those numbers are going to look very different because they're not comparing apples to apples so i wanted to put that out there too um do we are we what is the mapping plan to add additional years worth of the current data that we've already got on there into the database so we don't have that on the roadmap currently now what you see on that demographics page is a live feed so it is as of what it is the day before there are some resources as far as what the longitudinal looks like from

[00:59:01] the September 30th date the fall membership build a table tool which is managed by the video you can probably go back about 10 years to see what the enrollment trends and patterns look like but we can have further conversation about what we want to do as far as longitudinal data on the demographics

page okay so is the the LCPS dashboard directly mapped to the video e no it is connected to our data warehouse so it feeds overnight from whatever whatever is in our sys the day before shows up on that dashboard the next day so it's going to be especially this time of year it'll be changing every day somewhat substantially until we get a little bit closer

[00:59:40] to that september 30th time in which case it'll probably stabilize a little bit more perfect that's that's exactly what i wanted to make sure um we covered and it was made public because i'm again we're getting a lot i'm getting hit with lots of questions about enrollment and all the the other things thank you chair I just wanted to ask and I don't want you to put I don't want to put you on the spot and I certainly wouldn't expect an answer right now but as part of this I would love to have an analysis of the data and in terms of seeing if there's any difference in traffic at the welcome centers and whether or not there are different numbers of newcomers coming I

[01:00:20] mean I there's so much diversity in Loudoun County I wouldn't anticipate that you would see change in only one pocket but i think it would be good to take a holistic approach since that is a space where we do welcome newcomers to see if there's a change in this year last year you know so the first several years before yeah and actually i was i was going to say that i would love um since september 30th will be the end or be the reporting period i would love and I know it's a couple days later but I would love for us to have some really good

[01:00:56] conversations around the attendance numbers in that October the beginning of the October meeting mostly because we're going to be in the middle of budget conversations too and I think we need to have a really good understanding of what our headcount really is and I also want and I'm sure we're internally some people are having conversations about it looks right now that our attendance is lowered and that's it is what it is but that really impacts the budget and as we're going into a budget season we absolutely need to have a really good understanding of where we think realistically we're going to wind up being in the out years because and i'm not saying

[01:01:36] this is the final case because i get september 30th is the day right but the narrative is right now the numbers are 2700 lower than what we had at the end of last year again those numbers will change however that's the projection for 2030 for our attendance so that's something that the public is seeing and i get that the numbers are not going to be those numbers once we get later into september but we need once we get past the september 30 mark very quickly we need to start having those conversations about the realistic numbers moving forward and i'd like to understand

[01:02:12] some why behind where we think we're at and what those numbers look like so not to totally shuffle the deck on the October meeting but I think that would be a really good conversation for us to have at that point even if it's just hypothesis at the time um and we move in because when is do you know not to put you on the spot but do you know do you know when the next budget the next budget workshop is which is September right focus on the budget at the retreat but when it comes down to it the next one after that is okay that's okay but you know pretty shortly

[01:02:49] within you know a month or so I guess after or maybe in the month of October we'll have that conversation so anyway I just want to put that pin in it as far as the next meeting goes but you all thank you again for your time thank you for the presentations thanks for coming and sharing your stories because I think it's really important and the successes frankly of of what you all are doing at your schools and with that we are adjourned thank you so much



Coraggio Consulting · aguyonx.com