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Loudoun County School Board, Specialized Program & Centers Committee Meeting, Thursday, November 5, 2026

Date	Thursday, November 5, 2026
Place	Loudoun County Public Schools / School Board meeting (see BoardDocs / LCPS-TV)
Length	59m (video)

- Official meeting video (Vimeo / LCPS-TV): https://player.vimeo.com/video/1243481794?rel=0
- BoardDocs (School Board): https://go.boarddocs.com/vsba/loudoun/Board.nsf/Public

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Speech-to-text: whisper.cpp, model large-v3-turbo. Produced 2026-11-06. Each paragraph starts with its time [HH:MM:SS] in the meeting video.

[00:00:10] good afternoon everyone today is Thursday November 5th 2026 and I am calling the specialized programs and centers committee meeting to order we will begin with public comment which I don't think we have any so we will not begin with public comment we will move on to item number three which is the approval of the draft minutes from the October 1st 2026 meeting mr. pepper are there any changes or edits that you would like to make there are none chair so i will make a motion to approve the minutes from october 1st 2026 meeting is there a second

[00:00:43] second all those in favor say aye aye none opposed uh that passes 2-0 with miss donahue absent for the vote so the minutes are approved and we will now move on to item number four which is our action item today which is review of policy 5120 alternative education programs and i will turn it over to miss mitchell for an update and summary on some of the changes that we've had thank you Thank you, Ms. Chernoff. Hello, Mr. Pepper.

[00:01:12] So I'm bringing back Policy 5120, Alternative Education Settings, as an action item to take to the full board. Feedback was received from MSAC, no feedback from SEAC or from the public. But one of the recommendations was also in alignment with the recommendation that was provided by Ms. Chernoff and Mr. Pepper, and that was to clean up the language on my copy I have lines 9 through 12 so hopefully it is an alignment and that is on the red line copy so that would read

[00:01:51] under goals a one provides sufficient resources to meet the personalized needs of students who require additional structures and or supports to enable them to progress academically and or behaviorally in a suitable environment to best meet their unique needs so further suggestions from the committee the last time was to incorporate into the regulation some of the language in terms of the criteria to enroll in the various alternative education settings and that

[00:02:30] was also some of the feedback provided by MSAC and that is currently in draft Thank you. Thank you so much miss Mitchell and thank you for the work in between to get us that language ahead of time so that we could review it I am appreciative of that and for your reference to the regulation Which I think will be really helpful in providing clarity to our families if they're looking for at the policy That'll make a natural transition to find the information for the specific program since we have so many Wonderful offerings for our unique learners. Mr. Pepper. Did you have any questions or comments?

[00:03:04] Thank you, Ms. Schroff. No, my actually only question was going to be about the regulation, but Ms. Mitchell clarified that for me. I would like to move that the Specialized Program and Senators Committee approve the proposed changes to policy 5120 and forward the policy to the full school board.

[00:03:20] I will second that. And with that, are there any, is there any discussion? I think we just had it. So all those in favor, aye? aye all right that will move on to the full board thank you so much for being responsive to our feedback that makes it super easy for us so that passes to zero with miss donahue absent for the vote uh thank you miss mitchell and now we will move on to our information items first up we have an hrtd update for considerations for special programs and i am going to actually kick it over to mr slevin before um we pass it to mr phillips who is here on behalf of hrtd thank you i just

[00:03:58] want to start by acknowledging our partner in HRTD Mr. Bob Phillips joining us tonight over the next few meetings we have asked some other divisions and departments that are integral to our support of special programs to join this committee because as much as we like to talk about the work within teaching and learning in our schools it would not be possible without partners meeting the needs the timelines all the things that happen so HR is here tonight we'll have School Counseling will join us in the future.

[00:04:28] Transportation will join us in the future as well as DDI. Talk a little bit about how all of this awesome opportunities for students have impacted their teams. So with that, I'm going to turn it over to Mr. Phillips. Thanks, Mr. Slevin, and thanks for letting me speak this afternoon.

[00:04:44] Today, I'm going to provide a very high-level overview of staffing and recruiting in HRTD for this past school year, 26-27, and then provide considerations for, as you're thinking, of additional specialized programs through our lessons learned from the implementation of the DLI, or the Dual Language Immersion Program. Next slide, please. So when Mr. Slevin contacted me, it was around the beginning of October, which is when our recruitment season ends. It goes from October 1st to September 30th.

[00:05:18] And as always, every Wednesday, we take a snapshot of our licensed staff and see where our fill rates are. For this school year, we hired 592 licensed staff members. As of 10-7, our fill rate was 99.41 percent for licensed staff for considering over 8 000 total vacancies so our total position so we're very proud of that the highest the odds of 10 7 these two categories were the two highest special education which we know is a very very tough role to fill and school counseling particularly at the elementary school counselors they they seem to have a little bit of challenge

[00:05:57] in getting some school counselors there as of yesterday because it was wednesday we were still hovering at 99.42 with 44 vacancies again sped being 15 of them and then the counselors have dropped down to seven and five of those seven are elementary school counselors and that was as of yesterday next slide please up on the board there's a myriad of um events that our recruiting team does which again runs from october 1st to september 30th on at the december 3rd school board

[00:06:33] meeting we've been asked to present in the work session hrtd one of the work sessions we will be giving you a little bit more detail of some of the things that we do for recruiting and staffing but just some of the things that i would like to highlight here our teacher cadet program last year we offer 238 p1 offers for graduating seniors to return that's up nearly 100 more than the previous school year so that's very exciting and we're very excited by the partnership we've made with our cte folks to make that program as smooth and as efficient as possible the second thing i'd

[00:07:09] like to point out is we added some additional college partnerships gmu another college partner that we provide tuition assistance and reimbursement shenandoah university for their career switcher program we are now providing financial reimbursement for that and then we do have another one that's coming on board we're finishing up the last procurement little things to bring another large university on board that will be offering scholarships to lcps employees for master's degree work the last thing i want to point out from this this past year it got off the ground late but we created a sped professional development school pathway program and that's in partnership

[00:07:48] with university instructors that provides our own teacher assistance a pathway with a lot of support to become a provisionally licensed special education teacher in 90 days so it's an accelerated program but also provides support for similar to what if you went to teaching back in the day to a regular teacher prep program that clinical support that you would receive during that the university instructor excuse me unlimited instruction provides that to our um people right so right now we have

[00:08:24] three about to hire a fourth one for cedar lane elementary school so we're very excited by that obviously lcps we're very fortunate to have strong fiscal support from the school board to run these programs and when we combine them with our innovative and responsive approaches for recruitment and staffing, we result in this increased fill rate. And we're very excited. That's about two percentage points higher than we were at this time last year. This slide shows a chart of the snapshot of our self-identified teaching certification areas from all of our candidates

[00:09:01] who engaged with LCPS on the road at college fairs with traditional preparation programs. The number 402 represents a decrease of about 14% since 2021 recruiting season, which was about 457.

[00:09:18] That's a trend I think that is going to continue less students in normal college preparatory programs. You could also see a vast majority of candidates are centered around three areas on our chart, elementary, social studies or sciences, and English.

[00:09:34] So those unique one-off certificates that we need sometimes for specialized programs, those people are not approaching us at college fairs. So that's important to know. What we need to do, and as I said earlier, are alternate pathways that we've created in Loudoun with the support of the school board rather than through our college education programs.

[00:10:01] We know they're expected to continue to decline. And we also know colleges are taking a closer look at them with the latest legislation that will not provide as much money for students who are going to

be studying education in college. And that's going to be coming from our current administration.

[00:10:19] So I'm a Penn State alum, and Penn State did a survey or did an analysis on which programs to cut to save money, and a lot of their teaching programs at Penn State were on the chopping block, potentially.

[00:10:39] All right. food for thought so as you potentially consider specialized programs in the future let's take a look through the lens of the dual language immersion program which we started in 2324 which happened to be another challenging budget year for loudon county public schools throughout the budget process there were concerns that the program could potentially be cut during reconciliation and was monitored closely as a result lcps could not get the position posted

[00:11:12] until much later in the spring than anticipated which resulted in significant challenges to fill the position especially at sanders corner we found a candidate late and they started late about a month late into the school year if the board is going to consider expanding specialized programs a full commitment needs to be made not to remove the program so that hrtd and the level offices can post anticipated openings to draw interest for those positions. In year two, HRTD,

[00:11:46] in collaboration with the World Language Office, as well as a stronger budget, were able to do this and we got the positions filled more efficiently as a result of those clear budget intentions. As mentioned, we struggled to get qualified applicants to fill the candidate pools for this to DLI due to the late timing of the posting. We blasted this job out everywhere, as you can imagine, to DLI places, to language places, all over. But we struggled the first year.

[00:12:22] What has happened since then to help our recruiting efforts for these one-off niche positions? One thing we have done, we've strengthened partnerships with companies that sponsor ambassador teachers on visas, which is very cost prohibitive for LCPS to sponsor.

[00:12:39] HRTD has also developed more alternative pathways, as I mentioned, for LCPS employees to grow their own skill set and become a teacher in the classroom. We continue to expand the opportunities. I have mentioned Shenandoah, George Mason, the SPED PDS, and another university partnership should be coming along very soon, but we know we only have a certain pot of money to do that.

[00:13:00] Finally, HRTD recruitment supervisor worked diligently with the new recruitment marketing specialist in DCE to create and disseminate specific content related to hard-to-fill positions to widen our LCPS recruitment net.

[00:13:16] And since we've gotten that person, that has been a very help blasting out to all the social media platforms. Last slide. So as you know, special program implementation and growth carries a direct impact on recruiting and staffing efforts and just some more food for thought.

[00:13:34] As our specialized programs expand across grade levels, student progression requires us to map out single and multi-subject endorsement areas. We must proactively identify and target specific certifications to ensure we're not caught off guard as our cohort sizes continue to grow.

[00:13:53] Freshmen moving to sophomores, up keep going up the ladder. Building on initiatives like our alternate pathways and university partnerships, We need to continuously increase the pool of potential education for special programs to ensure our qualified educators. In addition, a multi-year budget

commitment regarding the projected growth of special programs is needed to sustain staffing models responsibly.

[00:14:16] Bringing someone on from another country for one year and then the next year saying that program's over, that's not going to be good for us. So that's just another thing to consider. Specialized curricula demands specialized instruction. Extended teacher absences or sudden separations can disproportionately impact student progress in these settings.

[00:14:37] When this occurs, it is very difficult to maintain high instructional quality and fidelity when the primary teachers are out for extended periods of time. And then finally, our ambassador teachers. They have contributed a lot to Loudoun County Public Schools. We're very happy to say that our first cohort that is going into year three, All of them upped to return for years four and five, and that is on their accord.

[00:15:01] So they all want to come back to work for Loudoun. But we know that time is ticking. So they have a five-year maximum. The gentleman at Sanders Corner, he was not part of that program. We don't sponsor visas, do visa sponsorship.

[00:15:16] We couldn't keep him on. He got upset and the community was upset. We got emails about that, but there was nothing we can do. So the time is ticking from the time they walk into the classroom, depending on which program they're with. So those are just some of the things to consider as we do fill these specialized programs with specialized talent, and I'm happy to answer any questions you may have.

[00:15:41] Thank you so much. Colleagues, do you have any questions? Yes, Mr. Pepper. Thank you, Madam Chair, and I do have quite a bit. First of all, thank you for this. I find HR, particularly teacher recruitment and retention, as someone who works in the field of education extraordinarily fascinating.

[00:15:56] Those numbers, particularly that bar chart that was in there about people with certification, should not be surprising to anybody who works in education. Teacher preparation programs are producing fewer and fewer teachers nowadays, and the ones they are producing tend to be concentrated in areas like English elementary, PE, social studies.

[00:16:14] They're the big ones. Do we, or have we given any thought to incentivizing unicorns is probably the best way to describe it, right? So when I think of some of our programs that we offer at MATA, for example, like X-ray technology or phlebotomy or some of these, or even at HAMSci, where you need someone with a very, very, very unique skill set who is likely either a career switcher or somebody who's been doing this forever, do we have ways to incentivize those people to come and be part of our programs?

[00:16:45] Well, we do implement a signing bonus, but we have not extended. Right now, the signing bonus is extended to special education teachers and teachers in schools of Title I. So we have not extended it to other areas in those specialized programs.

[00:17:06] It may not be an incentive to draw people into Loudoun County, but if you're in a, an example may be we have continued needs for dual enrollment teachers. And so to incentivize teachers that have their normal licensure to become eligible to teach DE, we do have programs which would support their continuing education to become eligible for DE.

[00:17:28] For example, Mr. Schaefer manages that program. We've identified hard-to-fill positions in the past, like reading specialists, math resource teachers, those type of positions for folks that are in service to

move towards a higher level of certification. But in terms of, like, external incentives, that's not something that exists beyond what Mr. Phillips shared.

[00:17:50] You mentioned, and this is probably not related to SBC at all, but you mentioned the difficulty in hiring elementary school counselors. Is their contract different than secondary counselors? It is. It's a few less days than middle and then more so than high school.

[00:18:07] That's what I thought. That's probably why it was probably a little bit harder because I can do a similar job because counseling is K-12. I can do a similar job and make a little bit more money if I go at the secondary level. And, you know, obviously it's a personality fit, and there's a lot of other issues there, but it is a consideration to make our counselors equivalent.

[00:18:24] One of the things I want to ask about, and then I'll turn it over to my colleagues, is, and we hear a lot about this at the full board, but as our DLI program has continued to thrive, we're getting closer and closer to that first cohort of kids entering middle school. I would envision, and you can tell me I'm wrong, it's probably going to be even more challenging to staff that program at a middle school level when you're talking about not only having the language ability to teach in a DLI program, but also the unique subject area certifications required when we get to the secondary level. Do you have any thoughts on

[00:18:59] what we might do if this is a consideration? So you are setting us up for the December special programs meeting. No, we have heard from the community with questions regarding where we're headed with middle school DLI.

[00:19:17] And the plan would be to bring in different options depending, different levels of options in terms of implementation. And one of the concerns, and I'm sure Mr. Phillips would agree, is finding those unicorns that could teach seventh grade science as well as be fluent in Spanish or to teach physical science in eighth grade or to teach algebra.

[00:19:37] So it's not that those folks don't exist. That'll be one of the risks we take depending on where we eventually go with DLI. And that's a frequent conversation between our teams related to DLI. Would you add anything? I would just add in the complexity of a middle school schedule on top of that.

[00:19:57] So when kids are going all over and not clustered like they are in elementary programs, that would also create some challenges, just one that went off the top of my head. Thank you, Mr. Pepper. Ms. Donoghue, did you have anything? No, thank you, Chair Chernow.

[00:20:14] All right, I have a couple of questions. I just want to make sure I heard you correctly. And as we're entering this budget cycle, it feels different for us. We've said that before with the enrollment numbers. And we're just beginning to hear and explore about what this hiring pause is all about and what the parameters are around that.

[00:20:34] Would you say that special programs and unicorns, as my colleague has coined them, would that fall outside of a hiring pause because they are such unique positions? Or is it all in-house, we're not looking to really refill positions because we need to put a pause?

[00:20:54] How does this specialization fit into that? Let me see if I can, where do they fit if there were an opening in said DLI school? Is that correct? Yeah, I mean, my understanding of the pause is that if there becomes a position available, we might not necessarily backfill it.

[00:21:14] We might try to find some other solutions because we may not be able to fill it again next year based off of declining enrollment. So would that same principle apply to our special programs, or are we sort of looking outside of that hiring pause because we need to find specialized people that can teach this?

[00:21:29] So my preference, for it to be falling outside of that? Mine too. That's where I'm headed. But if we have people internally who are interested in making that move to the special program from their current role and might be leaving or losing numbers at their high school, they would have first preference.

[00:21:50] So really, it all depends on the numbers, and we'll get more into that at the December 3rd meeting when we go over what recruiting and staffing look like in a normal year and what it's going to look like this year or years in declining enrollment.

[00:22:06] So we'll have that compare and contrast. I appreciate that. I think that would be a good thing for staff to know, especially as we head into this new season of hiring or as a pause is what I'm being told it's called. So I think people knowing that that could be an opportunity as going into a specialized program, if that's an incentive to, you know, if you're not going to be able to stay where you are, that you're going to get first dibs on that.

[00:22:31] I think we need to do a good job making sure our teachers know that. So I think that that's important. And then I think I heard you say that if, as we move into the budget conversations, I think there are going to be a lot of cards on the table in terms of what we protect and what we don't.

[00:22:48] And so I think I heard you say that it's not only necessary for us to front load with what might be on the table in terms of considering as a cut, but also even as important is making sure that we're solidifying our support for something we're keeping so that you know that you can continue to pursue that recruitment.

[00:23:08] Is that correct? So typically after the school board adopts their budget, and we are typically the last three years now, we don't know what's going to happen with the board of supervisors.

[00:23:23] If our numbers are in alignment with the adopted budget and what they said that they are going to give us, we can pretty much start posting our anticipated openings for the next school year. And if that's in February, that's great.

[00:23:40] Okay. For DLI that year, it was more towards April. And for example, Participate Learning, who was one of our partners, they have DLI teachers, but they were all gone. They were all taken by that particular time because they need an early commitment because they're coming and you need to get a visa and all the other things that they have to do. So the earlier that we can know that, the better off that the program will be as well as our recruiting efforts.

[00:24:07] I'm glad you said that. I probably wouldn't have thought of that because I think a lot of the discussion is going to be what where we can find efficiencies and not so much about what we're holding the line and supporting so that's good for me to know as the chair of this committee that as we talk through the data and the different I'm sure it's going to come up so I will be mindful of that as you think about hiring I also am having some wonderings about if there needs to be advocacy in terms of the incentives at the state level we're seeing a lot of pushed for bills for career technical education centers and specialized programs and pathways for

[00:24:43] kids as the world is changing so that's great and i'm grateful for that advocacy at the state level even some of our local delegation is willing to take that to the table and pursue that but along with that i think we we need to be mindful that we're tucking in that hrtd piece that there also needs to be incentive to get the people to actually teach in those programs so um i just was having that thought as you were talking about it because I do know that we are asking you know we're asking for a shift here but the shift also has to happen for our educators so anything else all right thank

[00:25:18] you so much for being here we appreciate you and we will move on now to item 5.02 which is our special programs admissions data and I will pass the mic off to miss Katie Clark our director of academic programs floor is yours good afternoon thank you for allowing us some time to give an update on special programs admission data for the 26-27 school year. This presentation will follow the here's what, so what, now what framework. We will first review what the admissions data tells us about student interest and enrollment, then discuss what the findings mean, including notable

[00:25:56] strengths and opportunities, and finally outline next steps for outreach and program adjustments. Our goal is to use data to inform decisions that support equitable access and align program offerings with student and family interests. The full report is located in your folder and is also in board docs. I want to take a quick moment to thank our partners from the research office for putting together our data packet. We couldn't do this without their help and support.

[00:26:27] This includes detailed admissions, enrollment, and demographic data for all special programs. Today's presentation focuses on the major trends related to student interests compared to enrollment across our secondary programs and the elementary dual language immersion program.

[00:26:43] It is important to note that this year, the accepted tables reflect the number of students enrolled on September 30th. This is a change from past years in which we included students enrolled prior to the start of the school year.

[00:26:59] We wanted to present transparent data that better indicates the students actually participating in these programs this year. This September 30th date also aligns with the VDOE reporting date. Here is our special programs life cycle.

[00:27:17] From August through January, our focus is on promoting on recruiting for all of our special programs, ensuring students and families are aware of the opportunities available to them. In November today at this meeting, we share our admissions data from the previous year.

[00:27:35] This review allows us to reflect on participation trends, identify areas of success, and consider adjustments that may strengthen future recruitment and enrollment efforts. In March, we will shift our focus to enrolling and preparing newly admitted students for successful program placement.

[00:27:54] In May, we move into the review and evaluation phase. Program owners will come to SPC meeting and present an overview of their program, including retention data, key accomplishments, highlights, and opportunities for improvement. During the summer months is when we use that feedback and data from the year to refine our programs and prepare for the next admission cycle, which begins again with the start of that new school year.

[00:28:24] Several of our newer programs are still in the implementation phase and are adding grade levels each year. ACCESS is in its second year. AGLS is in its first year. HAMSci is continuing its phased expansion and dual language immersion is still growing into the upper elementary grades. Because these

programs are relatively new, we expect participation patterns to continue evolving as awareness grows and programs become fully established. At this time, several established programs, including AET, AOS, MATA, IB at Heritage in Long Valley, and NJRTC, now provide multiple

[00:29:03] years of trend data that help us better understand long-term student interests. It is important to recognize that our programs utilize different admissions models. AET, Advanced AET, and AOS use a competitive merit-based process. Armada and NJROTC use prerequisite-based qualification with lottery selection, while ACCESS, AGLS, HAMPSI, IB, and Dual Language Immersion use lottery-based admissions. These differing admission structures influence enrollment rates and should be considered

[00:29:38] when comparing program data. This slide illustrates the gap between student interest and actual enrollment across our secondary special programs. While application numbers are strong across nearly all programs, available seats naturally limit enrollment. Programs such as MATA, AET, and AOS continue to attract substantial interest, while newer options such as ACCESS, ADLS, and HAMSci are also demonstrating strong demand. The chart highlights both the popularity of these opportunities and the ongoing importance of aligning capacity with student interests when

[00:30:17] possible. It is important to note that everyone interested in both AGLS and IB were offered a seat and no waitlist remained this year. Next, the dual language immersion program continues to generate strong family interests through demand, though demand varies by location. This year, Potomac transitioned from a regional enrollment model to a school priority model. Sanders Corner remains the regional program with 50% of seats reserved for students within the attendance zone and 50% of students from outside the zone. It is also important to note that we offered all available seats in our

[00:30:56] DLI program at Leesburg at this time. Moving on to our so what. After reviewing the admissions data, the next step is understanding what the data tells us about student interest, access, and participation. We focused on three questions. What trends stand out in the data? Where are we seeing success? And where are the opportunities to strengthen awareness or participation among specific communities? Across the secondary special program, students submitted 9,170 applications

[00:31:33] while 1,587 students ultimately enrolled, resulting in an overall enrollment rate of 17.3%. MATA generated the highest number of applications with 2,845 applicants, followed by AET with 1,756 applicants.

[00:31:53] ACCESS and AET were among the most competitive programs with enrollment rates of approximately 6.4% and 8.2% respectively. These numbers demonstrate substantial student interest in specialized academic and career-focused experiences throughout the division.

[00:32:10] One clear strength is the breadth of special program opportunities available to students. A huge thank you to this committee and the entire school board for making these opportunities possible for our students here in LCPS.

[00:32:27] MATA applications increased by 46% compared to 2022, reflecting sustained interest in career and technical education pathways. And I just want to acknowledge that we have Dr. Grubbs here, and he is a huge part of our success with our career and technical education.

[00:32:46] Our HAMSci applications increased by 26% in just one year. Access applications more than doubled from 211 to 440 applications, while NJROTC applications also increased dramatically, even after

accounting for the change this year that requires in-zone Loudoun County High School students to also apply for the program.

[00:33:09] Although AET and AOS applications have declined slightly over several years, they continue to attract more than 1,500 applicants each and remain highly sought after programs. These trends indicate strong interest across a diverse profile of program offerings. The data also reveals opportunities to broaden participation across the division. Interest in many programs is concentrated within specific geographic areas. For example, four middle schools account for nearly half of

[00:33:43] all AET and AOS applications. Similar patterns appear across several lottery programs, where a relatively small number of school communities generate a large percentage of applications. These trends suggest opportunities to continue expanding awareness and outreach in communities that may be less familiar with available special program options. Now on to the now what. Based on these findings, our next steps focus on two primary areas. First, we strengthen outreach and awareness efforts to ensure families understand the opportunities available to them. Second, we will

[00:34:20] continue refining program structures and admission process to better align with demonstrated student interest while maintaining accessibility and transparency. Creating awareness remains one of our most important strategies in our outreach efforts. We want every student and family to have access to clear, timely information about program opportunities so they can make informed decisions based on their interests and goals. Our outreach efforts are designed to reach students through multiple channels and at multiple points throughout the admissions cycle. Our outreach strategies

[00:34:58] include special program fairs. We hold two of them. We had one at Heritage High School and one at Parkview High School this year. We also have a panel at that event where we have students from all programs represented so that our families and students can actually talk to students that are in currently in the programs. Each program does hold its own information night throughout the fall.

[00:35:21] We do middle school school visits. We do an assembly at every school. We have our websites for each program. We have videos. We have admission timelines that we have gotten on track together so that offers and everything go out at the same time.

[00:35:38] We also have our annual special programs magazine that is located in your folder as well. Together, these resources provide families with multiple opportunities to learn about programs, ask questions, and understand application requirements. We will continue evaluating these efforts to ensure information is accessible and reaches students across all of our school communities.

[00:36:00] The next one you've heard a lot about. We've had many conversations about this, but we are really excited that we are expanding awareness of all our special programs through our Future Ready Exploration lesson. This is scheduled for next Thursday, November 12th.

[00:36:16] It's a district-wide exploration lesson at all middle schools. By embedding this common exploration activity, we can ensure all students across LCPS are exposed to available opportunities regardless of whether they actively seek out program information on their own.

[00:36:36] A review of application data shows that many students apply to multiple programs, which can inflate overall interest figures and make it difficult to accurately gauge program demand. Allowing students to apply to unlimited programs also introduces logistical challenges with managing and working through waitlists as students accept some opportunities and decline others.

[00:36:59] As we've stated before, beginning this year, students may indicate interest in up to two lottery programs while still maintaining the ability to apply to AET, AOS, and TJ. This adjustment is intended to provide more meaningful measures, student interest, while still preserving opportunities for students to explore multiple pathways.

[00:37:19] As such, future versions of this data may show decreased interest. However, this decline would be superficial only and would result from requiring students and families to be more focused in their program application decisions. We've also updated the admissions process by moving parent or guardian approval to the beginning of the application.

[00:37:43] An application is only considered complete when both the student submits and parent approves. and those need to be received by the deadline in order to be included in the lotteries. This change helps ensure that applicants have family support before entering the admissions process and provides a more accurate picture of actual interest and intent to enroll in that program.

[00:38:07] This concludes the admissions data review. We welcome feedback and discussion regarding the trends presented tonight, as well as suggestions related to outreach, recruitment, and future program development. Our goal is to continue ensuring that special programs reflect student interests and provide meaningful opportunities for learners across Loudoun County Public Health.

[00:38:32] Thank you so much. Very appreciative of the full data packet as well as the high-level summary and trends. I know personally I am really curious to see where we are in a year after narrowing the scope of how many programs kids can apply to.

[00:38:51] I think that that's going to drastically change some of our numbers, but I think we can clearly communicate why. And I think it is an exciting thing for kids to be able to apply to all the things. But I do think that the purpose there of really defining what you're interested in is more important.

[00:39:08] So I fully support that shift, and I'm looking forward to seeing how that plays out. I'm going to go ahead and ask the first question. I'm going to take a privilege here. I find it very curious that some of these smaller communities that are within proximity of each other are taking up so much of the applicant pool to certain programs.

[00:39:30] And I'm grateful for the continued outreach, and I think you guys have a good plan. And I'm also hoping that the lesson is going to really broaden the scope for kids as it's really going to drive home the availability of the programs. And I hope to see that more spread out across the county as that rolls out.

[00:39:49] So I'll definitely be looking for those data points next year. As I did a deep dive into this data across, one of my ongoing concerns, and I know other board members probably share this concern, is as we accelerate into these academic programs, specialized programs, I'm often worried that groups will get left behind.

[00:40:15] And I know that sort of the purpose of the lottery was to get us to a more equitable space but what's worrying me about what i'm seeing in the data is that our economically disadvantaged and our el student participation is continuing to decline significantly and in some areas there is zero percent um in those areas so i have like what do we do about that i think one of the things that i'm concerned about is do is it a self-efficacy thing do those children not feel like they have access or that they can achieve at those levels, I really hope the answer is no to

[00:40:54] that. My other wondering about it, though, is how are we helping get the word out to those families? Because we know that in these communities, communication can be a barrier, understanding what is available and what is out there. How can we ensure that we're going the extra mile with these communities to make sure that we are participating? Because if the lottery truly was meant to help provide that equity we're not really seeing that in our some of our most advanced programs so is the team thinking about that how can we continue to pursue that because we want to give access to all students and we

[00:41:32] want all students to believe that they can achieve at those levels I can start and then mr. Sullivan can jump in I mean yes our team is always considering that and trying to figure out new ways to reach all communities within LCPS some examples we participate in that Yale empowered conference every year so we are going to be there on November 14th with all our special programs we were at SEAC last night at their program fair we also often bring out students from some

[00:42:08] of these programs that can speak another language and we've done that I believe at Sterling Elementary School and even some of our other schools where we bring students and we do a session in Spanish to make sure that the language is not a barrier for these students and for them to also see some peers like them that also speak that language and that they're being successful in those programs so those are just a couple examples of what we're doing but obviously our work is not done and we'll need to continue to figure out how we can support these schools and these communities within there Mr. Slovin

[00:42:42] anything else? I think you did a nice job with that. I think continued focus on the family engagement piece. As you know, as a board member, there is so much information we're trying to convey to our parents. It's difficult at times to prioritize, but trying different strategies, like making sure we're connecting the work to these community events is really important.

[00:43:09] I know that when you think about some of our, what I would call talent development programs, I think about propellant level up. I think about beam in terms of making sure students feel ready. We do think about how we can connect the outcomes of those programs to do you see yourself in one of these programs.

[00:43:29] Like as part of the conversation, we could probably do more with that. I also think about the work of, we don't talk a lot about this, but we have an admissions team, for example, at the academies of Loudoun with a coordinator and two content specialists who do the work of recruiting students to apply to the academies.

[00:43:47] over the years we are thinking about those roles a little bit differently to have more broader reach than just at the academies now that we have all these programs that'll be something you hear a little bit more about as we go through the budget process cost-neutral just changing the way we're thinking about those roles a little bit so it remains a challenge but one you know we will continue to try to address I appreciate that I I want I love these programs I mean they're really they're thriving and we're seeing that and we're giving so many unique opportunities but I do not want to fall into the trap of this only being for a certain

[00:44:24] type of kid and I think we know that deep down so I think when we see these numbers it's important for us to pay attention and I'm wondering too I mean with counseling coming next time if there's can be some collaboration between the EL department and counseling to maybe provide opportunities at school I mean the application is not hard you click the button you know so maybe starting to offer opportunities in school for kids to be able to apply and then maybe then the information goes out

to families i don't know what that looks like but i'm hopeful that we can continue to keep that as a focus because i don't think it's a budget thing i do think it's a cost neutral it's

[00:45:04] just sort of shifting the way we think about reaching our our people i was going to add to miss clark always doesn't give herself enough credit the future ready ready lesson is a great example route reach but part of why we have that opportunity is we have moved the admissions testing for the academies from a Saturday testing to the middle school during the school day that's true and so one of the barriers was if you wanted to apply to the academies you would have to get there on a Saturday Saturday and so we have eliminated that barrier it's at school if you have an interest we're hoping that would also expand the number of students that have

[00:45:43] have an interest there so that was an opportunity that we are deploying this year yeah I certainly appreciate that effort and I think it will have an impact so all right I will pass it now to my colleagues yes miss Donnie thank you manager thank you for the presentation this is very interesting information I wanted to follow up on some comments that mission off made because I was having similar questions and concerns in my mind related to the application numbers for students identified as being students with

[00:46:17] disabilities and I noticed that similar to the EL population the application rates for the very for most of the secondary programs broken out by students with disabilities seems to have been falling the last couple of years with the exception of ID it looked from what I saw in here that the application rates for students with disabilities applying to the IB programs has actually been growing which is great but I and so I guess two questions if we have more students with disabilities applying for IB do you think that

[00:46:53] explains the lower number of students with disabilities applying for the other specialized programs at the secondary level and if it doesn't to what do you attribute this increase of students with disabilities applying for the IB programs can we replicate that to the other program that's a great question I I don't know if I have an answer for that I will say that they're you know obviously we've expanded our options so our students have all these opportunities in front

[00:47:31] of them to apply for so I don't necessarily have a good response to that at this moment we could definitely do a deeper dive data analysis wise we do in terms of regional expansion to specialized programs we are at the point now where we feel we are built out for IB with Parkview but this doesn't have Parkview data and it doesn't they're applying this here this has Parkview data so we do have Parkview heritage and Loudoun Valley as well so

[00:48:07] maybe the ease of access has had but I'm strictly theorizing but we could we could take a look at that thank you mr. pepper thank you madam chair so I had a fun time going through the data last night um one of the comments and I would appreciate this I appreciate you guys so much putting this together I wish rather than percentages it was raw numbers I really would love to see the like raw numbers of students who applied and as opposed to just like a percentage you know for example 11.8 percent of the applicants were from Briarwoods raw numbers would just be very helpful for me just the way my brain works

[00:48:45] it's not a comment I don't know if we can do that without identifying individual students one of the questions I had was really and I know we we talked about the percentage who apply versus percentage who enroll. There's also on, in the big packet of data, a percentage of offered. Can you walk me through a little bit of how someone goes from being offered to being enrolled and why there's such a precipitous

drop-off between the two? Yeah, so offered, we have a lot of students that are offered, but again, we allow them to apply to multiple programs. Sometimes they are

[00:49:22] offered and then they decline because they're accepting another program. So you are going to see a lot of students are offered they either decide they're going with another program they decide to stay at their home high school and the program is not for them but that is why you're going to see a huge gap between offered and then actually enrolled have we ever been in a situation where it could and this kind of translates to the world of college admissions too where you offer x number of slots knowing that you need to fill y and then there are times when the number acceptances is greater than you anticipate are we ever in a situation

[00:49:58] where that happens or is it really just it's first come to approve your acceptance offer and then once that program is full it's over is that so we do do rounds of acceptance so we have like three main rounds and then we continue with rolling emissions all the way up until the first day before school starts so we will do a round of offers and then if those students don't either respond which we do send out multiple reminders to students and parents then we would move on to the wait list there are times when students are offered multiple programs because if they were selected and they have to make a

[00:50:35] decision they can just select one so that's why you're seeing a lot of so yes as I are at RIB schools I this kind of goes back to miss Donahue's question too I think now that I've had some time to process that RIB schools obviously there's unlimited at Valley and Heritage if you're zone there you can apply and we allow you so I think that's why you're seeing a higher percentage of probably special education in our IB that have enrolled or applied because those numbers if you're a valley student or a heritage student you can have

[00:51:14] access to that program but for our IB sometimes we do enroll more because our trends over the years have shown and we have more space at those schools where we haven't filled to their capacity but other programs such as hamside where we have a dedicated amount of seats we only offer through those rounds the amount of seats that we have available helps clarify a few things do we have any idea whether there is something different going on at Brambleton Gumspring Stone

[00:51:50] Hill maybe even Willard a little bit in the way they present these programs to their students because the numbers for CHAMP and Rockridge and Indy are really off the charts in comparison to a lot of our other schools is there anything different is a demographic trend something to attribute it to I think if you look there's some demographic trend there some awareness a real push for these opportunities however I'm not aware of anything specific the school they rely on us most of the time to come out and do our middle school presentations but I could definitely reach out to counselors and see if there

[00:52:28] is something that maybe they're doing differently at those schools, but I'm not aware of anything. A couple other things I noticed just picking at the bigger trend in data. Demographically, the one that jumps out at me is the students who are enrolled in our DLI programs tend to skew Hispanic, whereas the students enrolling in our science-based programs tend to skew Asian, just based on the data.

[00:53:00] Is there a way we're addressing that? Is there something that we're looking into for that? How do we present these programs? I guess it's kind of similar to their question. How do we present these programs for all students? We definitely try our best to present these for all students. Just to address the DLI side, we do enroll and we look at native Hispanic and Spanish speakers versus English speakers.

[00:53:24] So we are looking to enroll. 50% of our program are native Spanish speakers. That is how you make up the 50%. So that's why you're seeing it skewed to our Hispanic population for the DLI program. And I would just add, in some respects, the schools that have been identified have been identified because of their population.

[00:53:46] And, for example, in Arlington County public schools, the dual language immersion programs are viewed very closely to our English learner services. And so while the purpose of our special program for DLI is primarily language acquisition, there are many opportunities to view this as a service model for our English learners.

[00:54:08] So that may also impact what you're seeing in the data. And then just two more really quick things. One of the things I noticed that was pretty unusual, if you look at the IB, Enrollment and Heritage, it is 72% female, which I thought was really just kind of an unusual, unusually high percentage.

[00:54:26] And I don't know what we're doing to attract it, but very interesting. And the last thing has to do with the JROTC program. And we've heard quite a bit at the full board about the change in the application process for that. Has that affected our numbers? What has that really done?

[00:54:42] And have we looked at kind of a hybrid of what they're looking for? Any thoughts on that? So I'll start, and Ms. Clark can continue. So we have one year of data related to that in terms of the JROTC program.

[00:54:57] And we continue to be in conversations with Latin County High School and the staff of the JRDC program. Going back to that life cycle of special programs, the initial feedback from the lottery process started last spring.

[00:55:16] The changes to only having to select two processes, having parents two programs to select, having the parents choose ahead of time in terms of endorsing the application, really primarily came from feedback we received from that particular special program in terms of listening to them and trying to address some of their concerns.

[00:55:37] And so, we are in the process, we're evaluating it and may have some recommendations when we come in next year. I realize this has been an issue of public comment and you've been hearing from folks, but we are directly engaging with that team on a regular basis.

[00:55:52] Would you add anything? I mean, we are encouraged to see the number of applicants. I think it speaks to why we're putting in an Army JRTC as well. So that has been a good trend. Yeah, I was just going to add that we jumped from 67 applicants in 2025 to 234 applicants in this past cycle.

[00:56:15] So that trend in applications is huge. So now it's just making sure we fill those seats. We are upping the out-of-zone seats for Loudoun County High School for the NJROTC to 40 seats for this coming cycle.

[00:56:34] That's another thing we've done to address some of that concern. Thank you. Thank you, colleagues. And I also echo the JROTC comments. I know I've been out. I know you all have been out.

[00:56:49] And everybody's in communication and working through some of the challenges, not only with recruitment but also retention. And it's hard to analyze that with the lottery shift so early. But I want the public to know we're listening and hoping to, you know, see if we need to make any adjustments.

[00:57:07] So I am appreciative of the data. I think there's been some really good, important conversations here that could drive some future conversations as we move towards, you know, making sure that we have access for all kids. And I'm grateful to the comments of my colleagues and staff.

[00:57:23] So good, productive download here on all that data. And thank you to the team for putting it together for us. And I don't know what the answer is on raw numbers, but I think these magicians over here can probably make it happen. He did let me know that it's at the bottom.

[00:57:41] The total number of students is at the bottom. Okay. I know it doesn't address all the different percentages, but at the bottom there is a total. I mean, I can definitely do the math. I just didn't want to. Just like the kids. Wow.

[00:57:57] Says the teacher. Love it. All right. On that note, do we have any new business? I was going to bring up DLI, but I feel like we've kind of covered it. So we'll queue that up for December.

[00:58:13] So for the public, we are going to analyze that and definitely curious about what those implications will be and if we can be strategic with some of the things we already have in place to leverage some of that to meet the needs of our students in DLI. But anything else before we move on?

[00:58:30] All right. With that, we will adjourn this November, what date is it? 5th, Specialized Programs and Centers Committee Meeting. Have a good night, everyone.