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Prince William County School Board Meeting, Wednesday, September 20, 2023

Date	Wednesday, September 20, 2023
Place	Prince William County School Board, Virginia
Length	2h 34m (video)

- Official meeting video (YouTube): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i8rP2byp-Qk
- Official School Board page (PWCS): https://www.pwcs.edu/about/school_board/

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Speech-to-text: whisper.cpp, model large-v3-turbo. Produced 2026-11-03. Each paragraph starts with its time [HH:MM:SS] in the meeting video.

[00:00:01] - Okay, I would like to call this meeting the Prince William County School Board to order. A motion's now in order for the approval of the meeting agenda. Ms. Wall. - Mr. Chairman, I move that the Prince William County School Board approve the meeting agenda as recommended. - Do I have a second? - Mr. Chairman. - Ms. Zargarpur. - I second.

[00:00:16] - All in favor, raise your hands. Aye. Any opposed? No opposition, motion passes. Moving on to the motion to enter closed session. A motion's in order, Ms. Wall. - Mr. Chairman, I move that pursuant to Virginia code sections 2.2-3711 and 2.2-3712, The Prince William County School Board enter closed session for the following reasons.

[00:00:36] One, to discuss with staff the appointment, transfer, release, assignment, and promotion of specific officers and employees pursuant to Virginia Code section 2.2-3711A1. Two, to discuss and consult with legal counsel regarding requests for religious exemptions pertaining to specific students under Virginia Code section 2.2-3711A2 and 8.

[00:00:54] Three, to review a disciplinary matter for a specific student that would involve the disclosure of information contained in the scholastic record for the individual student and to receive legal advice regarding same as provided by Virginia Code Sections 2.2-3711A, 2 and 8. Four, to consult with staff and division counsel regarding actual litigation involving a public nuisance, where such consultation and open

meeting would adversely affect the negotiating or litigating posture of the public body pursuant to Virginia Code Section 2.2-3711A, seven, five, to discuss with division counsel and staff actual or probable litigation and specific legal matters involving specific staff and students under Virginia Code Sections

[00:01:29] 2.2-3711A, seven and eight, and six, to discuss and receive briefings by staff members related to the security of school facilities, the safety of persons using such facilities and actions taken to respond to such matters where discussion in an open meeting would jeopardize the security of such facilities pursuant to Virginia Code Sections 2.2-3711A19.

[00:01:48] Do I have a second? Mr. Chairman. Ms. Zargarpur. I second. Please vote. Any discussion? Please vote. All in favor, aye. Any opposition? No. Seeing none, motion passes, and you can do it again here if you'd like, and that's it.

[00:02:08] At this time, the Prince William County School Board will now enter closed session, return

[00:02:11] open session in one hour.

[00:03:12] Prince William County School Board will now reconvene in open session. We are moving on to the agenda item 8.01 for closed session certification. A motion's in order. Ms. Wall. Mr. Chairman, I move that pursuant to Virginia code section 2.2-3712, the closed session of the Prince William County School Board meeting of September 20, 2023, be certified by adopting the following resolution.

[00:03:35] Now therefore be it resolved that the Prince William County School Board hereby certifies that to the best of each member's knowledge, one, only public business matters lawfully exempted from open meeting requirements were discussed in the closed meeting to which this certification resolution applies. And two, only such public business matters as were identified in the motion convening the closed meeting were heard and discussed or considered by the school board.

[00:03:58] - Do I have a second? - Mr. Chairman. - Ms. Zargarpur. - I second. - Any discussion, please vote.

[00:04:14] - The vote is seven yes, one absent. - Ms. Raulston, motion passed. - Moving on to closed session action items, a motion's in order for 9.01, approval of appointments and releases of specific employees. Ms. Vice Chair Wall. - Mr. Chairman, I move that the Prince William County School Board approve the appointments and releases of specific employees as presented in closed session.

[00:04:32] - Do I have a second? - Mr. Chairman. - Ms. Zargarford. - I second. - Any discussion? Please vote.

[00:04:49] - The vote is seven yes, one absent. Raulston, motion passed. - On to 9.02, a motion's in order, Ms. Wall. - Mr. Chairman, I move that the Prince William County school board approved the requests for religious exemptions in case numbers RE23-16 through RE23-18.

[00:05:06] - Do I have a second? - Mr. Chairman. - It's our report. - Second. - Any discussion?

[00:05:23] Please vote. - The vote is seven yes, one absent. Ralston, motion passed. - Moving on to 9.03, a motion is in order. Vice Chair Wall. - Mr. Chairman, I move that based upon a review of information provided in support of the students' appeal of the September 6th, 2023 decision of the school board disciplinary committee and the record before the School Board Disciplinary Committee.

[00:05:42] The Prince William County School Board denies the student's appeal and confirms the School Board Disciplinary Committee's long-term suspension decision of student HS23-325 and that the School

Board also approve the immediate placement in computer-based instruction CBI program via remote access only for the first semester of the 2023-24 school year and the conditions for the student's return to traditional school.

[00:06:06] - Do I have a second? - Mr. Chairman. - Ms. Williams. - I second. Any discussion, please vote.

[00:06:25] - The vote is six yes, one abstain. Jackson, one absent. Ralston, motion passed. - Moving on to 9.04, a motion's in order. Vice Chair Wall. - Mr. Chairman, I move that for the reasons set forth in the Student Management and Alternative Programs Department's SMAPD letter of August 30th, 2023, the Prince William County School Board approved SMAP's recommendation to reassign students, or student SRH 24-029 to the computer-based instruction CBI program via remote access only based on charges of unlawful acts in the community.

[00:07:01] Do I have a second? Mr. Chairman. Ms. Williams. Second. Any discussion? Please vote. The vote is seven yes, one absent.

[00:07:23] Ralston, motion passed. Moving on to 9.05. A motion is in order. Vice Chair Wall. Mr. Chairman, I move that the Prince William County School Board adopt a resolution approving participation in the proposed settlement of of vaping related claims against Altria Group Incorporated and other related entities and authorized division council to execute the documents necessary to effectuate participation in the settlement.

[00:07:48] - Do I have a second? - Mr. Chairman. - Ms. Zargarpur. - I second. - Any discussion, please vote.

[00:08:09] - The vote is seven yes, one absent. Ralston, motion passed. - Thank you, on to 9.06, we need a motion, Ms. Wall. - Mr. Chairman, I move that the Prince William County School Board retain council to represent the school board and assert any claims it may have against Meta Platforms Incorporated, formerly known as Facebook and other defendants for damage arising out of the design and operation of social media platforms and the creation of a public nuisance and authorized division council to execute the documents necessary to effectuate such retention.

[00:08:41] - Do I have a second? - Mr. Chairman. - Ms. Zargarpur. - I second. - Any discussion, please vote.

[00:09:01] - The vote is seven yes, one absent. Raulston, motion passed. - Okay, that wraps up closed session action items. At this point we'll stand for the Pledge of Allegiance. Tonight we have Fernanda Morante, senior from Forest Park High School, school board representative on the dais with us. She will lead us in the pledge. Ms. Fernanda.

[00:09:20] - Pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America and to the republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

[00:09:36] - Thank you, Ms. Morante. Moving on to Thriving Futures Focus, right? We are doing that first. All right, well, I welcome everyone to our second Thriving Futures recognition of the '23-'24 school year.

[00:09:52] Thriving Futures Focus is an opportunity to highlight the exemplary work being accomplished in our schools that fulfill our vision that every student will graduate with the knowledge, skills, and habits of mind to launch a thriving future for themselves and their community. We dedicate this time during our meetings to recognizing students, staff members, and schools that have earned an honor or award at the state or national level.

[00:10:15] We appreciate how these honorees have positively represented Prince William County Public Schools, and the school board is proud to recognize them publicly for their accomplishments. All of our honorees tonight are from the Coles District. Mrs. Lisa Zargarpur of the Coles District will introduce our award-winning musicians first.

[00:10:35] Mrs. Zargarpur. - Thank you, Dr. Lateef. Each year, the Virginia Music Educators Association, or VMEA, selects the top performing ensembles in the Commonwealth to perform at the State Music Education Conference. This year's 2023 conference will feature the Charles J. Colgan Senior High School Philharmonic Orchestra, directed by Ben Bernstein, and the Osborne Park High School Magicals, directed by Dominic Izzo.

[00:11:03] Performing at the VMEA Conference is the highest demonstration of student participation and performance opportunities and extended learning opportunities as their music will be performed for educators, administrators, and state officials. We are excited to have both ensembles share their talents and represent the high quality of music education that is offered to our students in PWCS.

[00:11:27] The Colgan High School Philharmonic Orchestra is directed by Ben Bernstein. The principal is Dr. Tim Healy. Mr. Bernstein, please introduce the students who are here with you tonight and share some more information about this talented group of musicians. - Well, thank you so much for this recognition.

[00:11:44] As you can see, I brought members of the Colgan Philharmonic Orchestra. This is, we are so excited to play at the VMEA convention in November. Of course you are all invited. It is an, I work with these students every day and it is a teacher's pretty much dream to work with musicians of this caliber.

[00:12:04] And I just can't say enough of the students and just their work ethic. I wanna thank them, first of all, just being there every day and working so hard. I would like to thank their parents, don't forget to thank your parents, for supporting them for all these years.

[00:12:22] It takes a lot of behind the scenes work. All the teachers that have ever helped them, I'm really appreciative of them. I'd like to thank Dr. Healey for creating just a great environment for the arts at Colgan High School. And I would like to introduce the students we have here this evening so i will begin with our violinists ella mead lauren mcdonald david george catherine choy matthew staton sophia curly and grace porterfield our violists are emily yay bernice

[00:12:54] gonzalez atiana reyes cordero amanda gestrick and mia navarro our cellists kat bomb ian croker and Lily McDonald, and our bassist, Char Gerritsen. I'm so proud of these students, and we are so looking forward to performing in November at the VMA Conference.

[00:13:22] - Thank you, Mr. Bernstein. The Osborne Park High School Madrigals are directed by Dominic Izzo, and the principal is Lisa Marie Cain. Mr. Izzo, would you please introduce the students who are here with you tonight to share more information about this honor? - Absolutely, thank you so much, and good evening, and thank you for honoring our students and Osborne Park this evening.

[00:13:44] I also would like to thank our wonderful principal of the year, Miss Lisa Marie Kane, and our wonderful central office administration for performing arts, including Miss Michelle Milligan and Miss Jasmine Hawkins. I am Dominic Iso, I have been the choir director at Osborne Park for the past 11 years.

[00:14:01] Since I have been at OP, it has always been considered a STEM school, but I can assure you that at Osborne Park, we are very much a STEM school, incorporating arts into educating the whole child. This

performance process that we are about to partake in is the result of two years of dedicated work by these awesome students behind me, and the ones that have come before them.

[00:14:27] The recordings that we submit were based off of just post-pandemic and last school year as well. And both of these wonderful ensembles that we're honoring this evening, This is both of our second times attending VMEA, both in 2018 and in 2019.

[00:14:45] So I would like to take a moment to honor these wonderful students who will be singing on November 17th. Santino, one of our seniors, as well as Viviana, Katie, Jillian, Ruth, Caitlin, Roberto, and Yvette, our juniors, Kamri, Kayla, or I'm sorry, Kayla, and Sarah, and our sophomores, Ansh, Alejandro, Wyatt, Charity, and Jenna.

[00:15:11] We also have a few singers that were not able to be here this evening. But thank you so much for honoring us this evening and honoring arts in our school division. Thank you. - Thank you, Mr. Aizzo.

[00:15:27] Congratulations again to the Colgan High School Philharmonic Orchestra and the Osborne Park High School Magicals on their impressive achievement. - Excellent, thank you, Ms. Zargarpur. Congratulations, I ask again that the families and the colleagues of these two outstanding schools and their students rise for recognition in the back, please.

[00:15:55] Thank you very much, very exciting. Ms. Zargarpur, please share information on our next honoree. - Well, thank you, Dr. Lateef. The school board would like to recognize C.D. Hilton High School sophomore Cadence Costello for her state and national first place finish in the Educators Rising competition for lesson planning and delivery, arts.

[00:16:14] Costello is a member of the Educators Rising, a career and technical education student organization that aligns with Teachers for Tomorrow, a program that helps students pursue a career in education. Educators Rising hosts a national conference each year to convene their network of future educators and teacher leaders.

[00:16:32] Costello was one of five students from Hilton High School who attended in the 2022-23 conference in Orlando, Florida, and the first underclassmen to represent PWCS at the national conference. She earned that privilege by placing first in the nation, in the state, and in the nation.

[00:16:50] I'm also proud to announce that PWCS was chosen to host the Educators Rising State Conference at Potomac Shores Middle School on March 2nd. Cadence is here tonight with Assistant Principal Switzer, her teacher, Katherine Jackson, and her family members. I would love to invite Cadence to speak on behalf of her accomplishment.

[00:17:09] - Hi, everyone. I would like to take a few seconds to thank everyone for coming out tonight. Prince William County, Growing Our Own, my incredible support system at home, and Miss Jackson for their continued support in helping out students like me who hope to achieve their goal of teaching one day.

[00:17:25] I cannot wait to see what the future holds in the classroom and I wanna thank all of you again because seeing you all out here supporting all of us helps me realize that truly the best place for me is the classroom. So thank you all so much, have a great night.

[00:17:46] - Thank you and congratulations to our future educator, Cadence Costello. And would the family of Ms. Cadence Costello stand in recognition of the support, please?

[00:18:06] Congratulations again to the Colgan Philharmonic Orchestra, the Osborne Park Madrigals, the state and national winner Cadence Costello. Before taking a few pictures, Superintendent Dr. McDade would like to share a few words. Dr. McDade. - Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Congratulations again to the Colgan Philharmonic Orchestra and Osborne Park Madrigals.

[00:18:27] We are so incredibly proud of you. In our strategic plan, we have a commitment to ensuring students have access to fine and performing arts. And so we're just so grateful that you represent all that we hope all students have access to within the school system. And we are just shining that you will be representing not just your school, but our entire school division and sharing your talents at both the state and national level.

[00:18:51] And then also Ms. Costello, congratulations to you. We're incredibly proud and we just cannot wait to see you return after graduation and hope that you will be walking the halls of one of our schools here in Prince William County as a certified teacher.

[00:19:08] Congratulations to you all. - Thank you, Dr. McDade. At this time, I'd like to request our honorees to come forward for a photo with the school board and receive a small token of our appreciation. We'll start with Colgan first,

[00:19:23] then Osborne Park and then Ms. Costello.

[00:25:50] Okay, very good. Again, congratulations again to all our honorees and thank you all for your patience as we went through that, it was very exciting. Now we'll move on to the adoption of the consent agenda, 12.01, Vice Chair Wall. - Mr. Chairman, I move that The Prince William County School Board approved the public meeting consent agenda as recommended.

[00:26:10] - Do I have a second? - Mr. Chairman? - Ms. Williams? - I second. - Any discussion? - Ms. Chairman? - Ms. Williams? - I just wanted to remind the audience that we do these a month in advance. So these are all for October. I forgot to mention that last time. It gets confusing sometimes.

[00:26:25] - Thank you, Ms. Jessie? - I just wanted to congratulate the custodial services. They are the lifeblood of a school. If a principal doesn't show up, maybe people will be upset, whether the custodian does show up, the most important person in the building.

[00:26:41] Thank you. - Thank you, Ms. Chesney. Ms. Jackson. - Thank you, Dr. Lateef. Just want to speak to the revision of policy 891, construction of new facilities and renovation of existing facilities.

[00:26:56] This resolution was a collaborative effort between board members and the division. I would like to thank Ms. Wall, Ms. Zagrapoor, Ms. Williams for their collaboration and insight. I also want to thank division counsel Carol Marchant, Dr. McDade, Dr. Ryer, and Mr. Brock. Collaboration is essential for board production as it is a corporate board, as Ms. Jessie often references, and requires a vote of five to make change.

[00:27:20] Lastly, I appreciate the educators who reached out to me to advocate for this change. Universal design learning is included in the school division's strategic plan and is defined as a set of principles for curriculum, development that gives all students an equal opportunity to learn.

[00:27:37] It provides a blueprint for creating a flexible instruction that can be customized to meet individual needs. What I appreciate about this resolution is that the board and the division renews its

commitment to inclusion and breaking down barriers. For me, it recognizes the importance of play or recess in the academic day for young learners, including the academic benefits.

[00:27:58] I'm excited as the adapted policy reads, "For all playgrounds, including new schools, shall employ universal design meaning that the playground shall be designed to me be usable by all students the greatest extent possible without the need for adaption or specialized design so thank you miss wall thank you mr. chairman I also wanted to speak to policy 891 I'm I'm excited about this improvement in our policy towards improving playgrounds for all children so I think it's really really great and I'm glad that I was able to work on it I also wanted to speak

[00:28:36] for just a minute about the um where did it go the legislative priorities um and i wanted to express appreciation for the focus that is in our legislative priorities for things that are um addressing teacher teacher shortage um attraction of teachers to the profession retention of teachers and supporting the critical needs of the school division to support children so i really like like that narrower focus that we have, I think the legislative priorities are great and I'm looking forward to being able to advocate for Prince William County Schools in this upcoming General Assembly session.

[00:29:14] Thank you. - Okay, thank you for everyone. And then just as a reminder to everyone, all of the actions we take on the consent agenda are up on the internet, on the website, under Board Matters, and you can read about each of the policies and I would emphasize policy 891. I wanna congratulate Ms. Jackson of the Brentsville District, Ms. Wall and Ms. Zargarpur and all the great work they've done to get this across the finish line.

[00:29:37] I think this is terrific and very excited and thank you to the superintendent for the work. Please vote on this if you haven't already. - The vote is seven yes, one absent. Ralston, motion passed.

[00:29:53] - Great, moving on to citizen comment time. Those citizens who've signed up in advance with the clerk may address the school board this evening when they're called to the podium. The citizen comment period for regular school board meetings is one hour. Citizens may speak on agenda items or other topics germane to the operations policies of PWCS.

[00:30:11] Please use proper decorum manners while at the podium or you'll be asked to step aside. We ask that the audience please be respectful of each speaker and refrain from any clapping, cheering or jeering to avoid disruption of the meeting. If you do not, the board will recess and I'll ask the room be cleared to restore public order. Tonight, we have 20 citizens signed up to speak.

[00:30:28] When I call your names, please come up to the podium, state your name and address for the record. I'll call the first five names and their chairs up front if they choose to move forward. Eileen Devereaux, Richard Jesse Afton Schwalm, Carl Greeton and Emily Cherry.

[00:30:47] Eileen Devereaux. - Good evening, Mylene Devereaux at Gainesville District. During the last school board meeting, I spoke about documenting egregious aggressions against some African-American students in the western end of the county, perpetrated by Prince William County Schools employees.

[00:31:09] Today, I'm speaking about organizational coherence of family and community engagement, and will suggest some specific yet simple actions can be taken to begin to unveil a culture of accountability. I stand with other marginalized students including racial ethnic minorities, differently-abled English learners, lower-income LGBTQIA and other children who thrive in futures have been compromised. Often it's unnecessarily complicated to advocate for children particularly African-American

because of the lack of organized and accessible information. I am requesting that Prince William send clear and detailed communication about the fundamental civil rights of all students and list specific options available

[00:31:47] to parents to pursue when those rights are deemed violated. It should be referenced such policies such as policy 738, non-discrimination and harassment, and it should have links to forms to file complaints and incidents of harassment and bullying. This should be part of the school and of the weekly message, and it should have a prominent position on a home page at pwsc.edu and at each school.

[00:32:09] should be required in their school letters newsletters to affirm the values of equity inclusivity innovation integrity resilience and well-being and clearly state if these values are deemed violated who to contact and how this includes the process within the school and at the district level this communication should also contact information associate superintendents chief executives supervisors of the different academics departments so they can be engaged with situational awareness and when the school level resolution is perceived as unacceptable principals should also reiterate this information as PTO and PAC meetings.

[00:32:43] Prominently explained the office of the spokesman. This office provides parents, students, and members of the school community confidential, impartial, and informational assistance in resolving school-related concerns, conflicts, and issues, yet it is buried in a school board web page.

[00:32:59] Why? I realize that there will be pushback with a culture, transparency, and accountability. Some in school leadership will be uncomfortable because they will not be associated with policies and procedures that they had previously were not following nor enforcing. For I believe when you shine the light, there will always be those that'll be exposed.

[00:33:16] Good and good riddance. But for everyone else, cheers and carry on with the business of choosing children. And my fellow parents, I feel strongly you should engage to us buzz men and to get timely, helpful information. And you can contact me directly at nopam@gmail.com as we need to document and mobilize.

[00:33:35] We are not tolerating racism or any other ism against our children, period. Get the memo and get to work. Thank you. - Richard Jesse.

[00:33:51] - Good evening, my name is Richard Jesse. My address is unfiled. Thank you, board members. I've received a request from the Moms of Liberty to do a survey. The major question was, would you support the model policies on ensuring privacy, dignity, and respect for all students and parents?

[00:34:11] I respect privacy, dignity, and respect of students and parents. I just don't agree our interpretation how to do these things are the same. I feel the statement in large part wants to know what is my position if the division should have an absolute obligation to inform the student's parents if they are gay or transgender, even if the student doesn't want their parents told.

[00:34:41] I request that everyone think about what if the student know that their parents have an extreme opinion on gays and other such issues. What if the student says that telling the parents could cause a possible extreme or even a possible violent reaction?

[00:35:01] If there is a possible threat of violence, would the school system be obligated to report this to social services? There is no absolute correct answer. answer. That's why I believe the system must have the

option to do what they feel is best interest of the students. Switching to books. Banning and teacher history. Banning books and teacher history.

[00:35:30] Back in the day, blacks were allowed, not allowed to read, but now some want to tell us what we can and cannot read. Yes, you have a right to determine what your kids are allowed to read, but you don't have the right to tell me what my kids can only read what you believe is appropriate, nor does any parent group that comes forward have the absolute right to say that something can or cannot be taught in their school.

[00:36:02] I believe, and I mentioned believe, that the current compromise is that if a questionable book or topic is going to be discussed in class, you must be given a 30-day's notice and are able to opt out thank you very much afton schwalm hello my name is afton schwalm and my name is on file with the clerk i'm a special education teacher in the county as division employees and union members observe the collective bargaining process unfolding it is relatively obvious that the division's strategy is to run out the clock refuse to negotiate on the majority of contract

[00:36:42] proposals force our union to pay half the cost for expensive mediation and then ultimately pass whatever contract language the school board feels like pwea has said that the moment they passed the resolution written by the union busting attorney they or yeah the union busting attorney they hired that they that that was their plan and it unfolded in exactly the way they predicted but as i've witnessed this process my mind keeps returning to a few short years ago when the schools were shut down to due to a global pandemic this is for a few reasons for one i'm reminded

[00:37:18] that much of the animosity that school board chair Latif feels clearly feels towards teachers broadly and the union specifically goes back to how aggressively we pushed back to when we fought to have the staff back, we fought against having the staff back in school before the vaccine.

[00:37:38] I even recall him saying a little while later that he withdrew his candidacy for lieutenant governor because he was unsuccessful in that attempt. The main reason that I have been thinking about this a lot is that I remember how the division praised teachers and told us how we were essential.

[00:37:54] And indeed, it is obvious that at the time, the education staff is literally essential to the functioning of society. The main jurisdiction given by those who wanted to open schools before there was a vaccine was that it was necessary to bolster the economy.

[00:38:10] And this is obvious. When schools can't open, parents have to stay home with their children. Not all jobs can be conducted through teleworking, so this made it difficult for businesses to open. That effect compounded every day schools remain shut down. I have no doubt that Lateef and the other school board members probably received plenty of calls from business owners urging them to open schools as soon as possible.

[00:38:34] Perhaps their disappointment factored into Lateef's claim that schools shutting down there until there was a vaccine hurt the viability of his campaign for lieutenant governor. Now we're being asked to provide this virtual instruction, which we proved did not work during that pandemic on our code orange days.

[00:38:55] So bringing it back to the present, all this makes it more bewildering that the division and school boards seem completely unconcerned with staffing shortages in our schools. It makes it difficult to

understand why they are so unwilling to compromise in good faith when it comes to collective bargaining and contract negotiation.

[00:39:12] If teachers and staff were essential workers, then why does the school board and the division leadership treat their employees dismissively, disrespectfully, and antagonistically? Why do all of these actions seem almost designed to chase their staff out of the division and into the open arms of Fairfax?

[00:39:31] - Carl Greton. - Good evening, I'm Carl Greton of the Gainesville District. The school board has not solved the problems presented to them last year. It is not too late for the current school board to drop out of the running for next year and drop your candidacy.

[00:39:51] You have not solved problems. Own up to it and drop out. It is time to move on. There are candidates for your position. The Prince William Teacher Union does not even support the current chair. The current school board has been in the position to make Prince William County better.

[00:40:06] What have you done to correct the downward spiral? Absenteeism, bullying, violence, and inflated scores are high. What will be your process to make Prince William County stronger? If you vote to shut down schools, These issues will only grow worse.

[00:40:23] What have you accomplished is not working. Set up a process like a project manager would propose and then seek input from specific individuals at a round table. Better yet, set up a tiger team to find the answers. The chair has spoken about data center income.

[00:40:41] Data center income is not the answer. $400 million may come into the general Prince William County budget, not the school board budget in 15 to 20 years. I am sure there may be some math teachers in this room. $20 million a year divided by 57% to schools is approximately an additional $11 million.

[00:41:04] The fiscal year 2023 budget provides the schools with $715 million. Yet Dominion Energy has said the cost of power towers will be $16.7 billion. That cost will be passed on to rate payers at a cost of $800 per year for everybody in this room.

[00:41:25] If you are concerned about money, then you should stand against the digital gateway. The $16.7 billion bill will start now. If you want to save money, eliminate DI. Prince William County can do away with inservices for teachers while you virtue shame the same teachers you are trying to hire.

[00:41:44] Eliminating DIE can probably save a million dollars due to the salaries in that department. The current chairman states that SOL scores have increased and are above average. School board candidates have stated the reality is SOL scores are down 15%.

[00:42:01] We don't always have to look just at the increase in SOL scores. The goal should be to blow those scores out of the water. Remember, we're just trying to get back to the norm prior to the lockdowns. We need to rise above that number. Do not even consider future lockdowns and contribute to additional mental illness.

[00:42:19] Did anyone vote to follow the previous lockdowns? The ones who followed the lockdowns are the current school board members. Early voting starts 22 September 23. That's on Friday. To find your voting location, go to elections.virginia.gov.

[00:42:36] Thank you. - Emily Cherry, and then after Emily, the next five will be Katie Jefferson, Yari Dahlenkor, Jennifer Roberts, Yvette Martinez-Rigg, and Jared Gay.

[00:42:52] Ms. Jefferson, or Emily Cherry, my apologies. - Hi, my name is Emily Cherry, and my address is on file. And tonight, as one of the co-chairs of PWEA's social justice committee, I wanna speak about what our school division values.

[00:43:08] Many teachers in Prince William County started this school year by boxing up shelves of books from our classroom libraries. Even though we know that being exposed to as many books as possible is the best thing to help our students become lifelong readers.

[00:43:23] Even though we know diverse books serve as mirrors for students, because the ability to see characters like themselves in a book makes them feel less alone. It lets them know that there's a place for them in this big, wide, sometimes lonely world. Even though we know that diverse books serve as windows for our students, allowing them to see outside of their own lives and to empathize with people outside of their own cultures.

[00:43:47] I've heard from teachers across the county that because of the division's unclear directives about the new policy on sexually explicit materials, many teachers are opting to remove their classroom libraries entirely Rather than accidentally violate a policy that is unclear and hasn't been explained.

[00:44:08] It's hard for me to understand why such a policy even exists in Prince William County Schools. Because I've been paying attention. I've heard this school board, each one of you, talk about how much you value social justice.

[00:44:23] I've heard you say that equity is a core value of the school district and the school board. But we can't say we value diversity and then limit diverse books in our classrooms. maybe eliminating books from classrooms wasn't the intention of this policy but it has certainly been the result and when the results of policies don't align with our values then those policies have to change like i said i've been paying attention to what the school board says and it says that they also have heard you say that you value teachers and some of you have even said

[00:45:02] that you support our right to collectively bargain and yet so many teachers are here tonight and we're telling you we don't feel valued. We don't see evidence of the desire for good faith negotiations from the county. When you said you supported giving us a seat at the table, our expectation was that our voices would be heard, but that isn't what's happening. Instead, the only thing we're hearing in response to our request for thriving wages and better working conditions is no. So let's be real. Whether you say you value equity or you say you value teachers,

[00:45:39] If the results of your actions don't match those words, then I don't believe those are your values at all. Katie Jefferson. All right. Good evening, Dr. McDaden School Board. My name is Katie Jefferson and my address is on file with the clerk. On October 4, 2022, Justin Wilkes stated that he's

[00:46:13] been a vanguard for collective bargaining for the 14 months prior. Later in that same meeting, he cited that inaction has a cost. We've heard that by the testimonials tonight that our educators are facing.

[00:46:28] That was 14 months ago. I agree with Justin. An action does have a cost. It's apparent the vanguard of collective bargaining has jumped ship. The silence and lack of support has been deafening. Meanwhile, almost 12 months later, educators and support staff are still facing the same problems with the same people sitting in front of us.

[00:46:52] But it doesn't have to be that way. I firmly believe that. That the people in front of me can take action. They can help our veteran employees. They can help our employees that need the most help, the ones that are on the lowest on the pay scale.

[00:47:08] It was brought to my attention that the school board chair did not believe that a bus driver who was so brave to put her salary out to the public, he did not believe it was substantially lower than what was advertised. This week we figured it out.

[00:47:24] On the classified pay scale chart, there are grades in which encompasses almost 180 job positions in steps or pay increases, which you get when they decide you get them. And the steps, the way that it looks is it's a yearly salary based on the grade and the steps.

[00:47:44] And that yearly salary is based on, I believe, 37.5 hours over 250 days. But there's only one job in grade number one, and that's a cafeteria hostess. There was no cafeteria host, by the way. Only hostess.

[00:47:59] We'll get to that later. who is only permitted to work 180 days. So this cafeteria hostess doesn't make the advertised salary. There's no way.

[00:48:15] That entire grade is 0% accurate. She works 180 days. So I ask our vanguard, Justin Wilk, do you understand this, that you have an entire grade on a pay scale that's incorrect?

[00:48:39] Did you know this when you allowed our bus driver to be humiliated by the school board chair when she was called a liar? It seems to be we're back at the same place that we were way back in October when you asked these questions and I'll ask them again. What is the estimated cost of losing our teachers and our support staff?

[00:48:57] How much are we spending to recruit non-certified teachers? And what part of the budget has been allocated for some of these stuff? Thank you, Ms. Jefferson. Yari Dalancour.

[00:49:16] my name is Yari Dallencore and my address is on file. I am an educator, artist, wife and mom and I'm just going to share a little bit about my personal experience coming here as a new family to Prince Williams County. I grew up in Northern Virginia in Ruston, went to South Lakes High School, went to Langston Hughes and Forest Edge and I had a wonderful experience growing up here.

[00:49:38] I left and went to New York City, spent many years pursuing my career in the arts and education and then went to California to Silicon Valley for my husband's job in tech. When we came back to Northern Virginia, we were excited. We moved back to Reston, and we moved out here about a year ago.

[00:49:55] We have five kids from the ages of five to 16, so two at the high school and three in an elementary school. And much of what I've been hearing is very disheartening and concerning. We've experienced many of the things that have been mentioned here as a family of African descent, where our children have been unfortunately discriminated against when it comes to athletics or placed in courses that are advanced level courses.

[00:50:22] We had two of our daughters in a private school in Vienna and we came here and I, literally my husband and I had to fight to make sure that they got placed in advanced classes and we were given every excuse why that wouldn't be the case. We applied our daughters and our son to gifted programming, had to appeal.

[00:50:39] They were accepted because they had the test, They had the aptitude and were deserving of being placed in those programs. I can't understand why we're fighting so much and I'm sure this is one

anecdotal story and just my experience but while we're spending time on all of this, we're not being innovative.

[00:50:58] We're not supporting our children and thriving collectively. We're not being interdisciplinary with our students and focusing on some of these other things. So again, I mentioned I'm an educator and an artist and it's a bit frustrating to see the resources and the opportunities that we have here that we're really missing with some of these other issues that we're facing.

[00:51:18] So I do wonder and ask, even in our school, which is Alvey Elementary School, we don't have any African American teachers. I remember growing up here again at Forest Edge and seeing a diversity of teachers also in my community, in our churches, in our Reston Community Center, in Lake Anne at different events and so on and so forth.

[00:51:37] So I kind of expected to see that just 30 minutes away in this same area. So I just think about the relationship between community, between our schools. I'm also very active as a Girl Scout leader. I try to get as involved as I can. So I just wanna understand more about the recruitment processes, the things that are being done to hold teachers accountable when they don't allow certain students or discourage them to be in advanced classes.

[00:52:03] And with some of the other issues around discrimination when it comes to athletics and things that we've heard over the last, this is my second board meeting that we've attended. So I just wanna see and understand better what you all are doing about those things. We're a new family here and more new families are coming. So make this place great and keep it great.

[00:52:19] Thank you. - Jennifer Roberts. - Good evening, Dr. McDade, Dr. Lateef, Vice Chair Wall, school board members, and district leaders. My name is Jennifer Roberts.

[00:52:34] I reside in the Gainesville District and my address is on file. Prince William County Schools fourth commitment is organizational coherence, which includes working toward convergence, operating as a unified school system with shared accountability for school and division goals.

[00:52:51] Objective 4.4 reminds us that school divisions are complex systems and that the multiple components of the school division depend on one another and must be aligned to support students. As the mother of two PWCS students, I observe and experience that Dr. McDade and her team have done an excellent job of developing an actionable strategic plan that all district employees are supposed to follow.

[00:53:19] I also observed that Dr. Brown has done an excellent job establishing the division's diversity, equity, inclusion, and compliance office, as well as creating an outstanding DEI plan that values and benefits every stakeholder in our learning community.

[00:53:36] Unfortunately, what I also observed are too many PWCS staff members who are hell-bent on undermining and unraveling the efforts of these two dedicated leaders, as well as holding on to discriminatory and racist practices that endanger black students.

[00:53:55] Instead of working with parents of black students to cultivate environments that help our children thrive, far too many educators are sacrificing the wellbeing of our students and catering to the majority. The Gainesville district is comprised of 12 schools.

[00:54:12] Out of those 12 schools, at least one third of them employ staff members who are participating in discrimination and racism toward black students or enabling staff members to practice discrimination

and racism.

[00:54:27] This may be news to some who have been duped into thinking that all is well in Gainesville and Haymarket. Don't let the abundance of fake smiles, School of Excellence recognitions, and high test scores fool you. The Gainesville District is sick with the cancer of racism.

[00:54:44] Too many black students are suffering in plain sight at the hands of imposters impersonating true educators. PWCS policy 738 is clear on the district's position on discrimination and harassment, but far too many employees are closing their doors and willfully disobeying the policy.

[00:55:06] Some of these same educators are enabled by other imposters who actively or passively participate in the racism or keep their dirty secrets. Black children and parents have rights too. We will not tolerate this abuse.

[00:55:21] We are asking you to help. Our children are under attack. Thank you. - Yvette Martinez-Rigg. - My name is Yvette Martinez-Rigg and my address is on file.

[00:55:37] Good evening, members of the school board, administrators, dedicated PWCS employees and fellow community members. I stand here before you today with a firm belief in the power of collective bargaining as a cornerstone of a thriving educational community.

[00:55:53] It is a vital bridge between the various stakeholders committed to our students' growth and development, cultivating a culture of mutual respect and collaboration, that the unique perspectives and talents of PWCS staff are acknowledged and harnessed, enriching, and launching our students' thriving futures.

[00:56:12] But this can only be accomplished when both sides are willing to negotiate in good faith for a fair contract. PWCS employees were clear when they voted for collective bargaining. We wanted transparent communication channels between the administration and the staff to ensure that decisions are made collectively, taking into account the perspectives and experiences of those on the front lines day in and day out.

[00:56:40] But I'm sure you've heard all these things before. My priority in addressing this body is to speak to the dedicated Prince William County employees. To my colleagues, we have not had a voice or a seat at the table for far too long.

[00:56:55] We came together, uniting our voices to ask for collective bargaining. United, we asked for change. Once again, we must unite and let our voices be heard, demanding a fair contract. If we fail to come together again, we consent to virtual code oranges to become the norm, Accept that other duties as assigned is the norm, that working beyond our contract hours without pay is the norm, that 2% pay increases are the norm, that built-in snow days never used are the norm, or that three-year contracts become the norm.

[00:57:34] The only way to see the change we ask for is to let our united voices be heard. Join PWEA, write letters to the school board, or better yet, attend the school board meetings. we must let our united voices be heard.

[00:57:51] My dedicated co-workers, I leave you with this one last thought. United we bargain, divided we beg. - Jared Gay. And then after Mr. Gay will be Maggie Hansford, Steven Spiker, Arvinder Johri, Kimberly Melman-Orozco, and Amanda Locklear.

[00:58:16] - My name is Jared Gay, and my address is on file with the clerk. In searching for reasons why division leadership and their bargaining team have been so antagonistic towards employees' attempts to organize the purposes of negotiating a fair competitive contract, I came across a piece of information that might reveal some context. Chiefs for Change is an organization that was started by Jeb Bush, which split from Bush's Foundation for Excellence in Education in 2015. To quote the Washington Post, "Since its creation, Chiefs for Change has represented a small group of state education officials who have loudly promoted an agenda shared by Bush, using test scores to evaluate

[00:58:52] teachers, A to F report cards for schools, expanding charter schools and online learning, among other things many of those ideas are embraced by conservatives and opposed by teachers unions the foundation also connected state education officials with its corporate donors facilitating private meetings between state decision makers and company executives at the foundation's annual meetings this has led to some criticism that the arrangement serves as a backdoor for major corporations to urge state officials to adopt policies that would enrich the companies end quote so what does this have to do with our school division and collective bargaining? Well, Superintendent McDade is a member of Jeb Bush's

[00:59:28] Chiefs for Change and is even quoted in some of their promotional materials. Our superintendent is a member of a conservative organization that promotes all of the same discredited ideas championed in George W. Bush's No Child Left Behind legislation and conservative reform agenda that puts the interests of private companies over those of teachers, staff, and students. So it is at any wonder that the line item for professional development went up by 90 percent in her first year as superintendent.

[00:59:54] Is it any wonder that she stood in the way of good faith contract negotiations between the union and the school division? Is it any wonder that the school board just told us that the meager and inequitable counter proposal on pay we were given yesterday is McDade's "first and final offer."

[01:00:10] That's not good faith negotiating. That is constructing a fake table for the purpose of gaslighting employees and residents of our community into believing that staff has actual rights in our school division. collective bargaining theater she's basically the Vince McMahon of education is it any wonder the policies have gotten more onerous and punitive towards staff since she became superintendent is it any wonder that the huge staffing shortage in our division doesn't seem to be a concern to her after all if public schools fail the right-wing education reform agenda is perfectly comfortable falling back on their calls to privatize schools I'm not saying that that's McDade's goal but I am saying that the logical conclusion of many of

[01:00:47] the policies that she is promoting through chiefs for change is school privatization and many of the people that are also affiliated with chiefs for change have no problem making that case explicitly so the question is does this reflect the agenda of the democrats on our school board who hired superintendent mcdade if so they should own it if not they should denounce it she may not have to worry about getting re-elected but you do thank you for your time maggie hansford hello my name is

[01:01:22] Maggie Hansford my address is on file I am a parent of three I would love a hot spot for my students to be able to have code orange there's a lot of parents and educators that are being denied hotspots so I think we should have that discussion sooner rather than later I came here today to talk to you about the proposal that was provided to PWA but first I want to talk to you about when you all started you all started you were elected in 2019 when we are compared regionally to all the

[01:01:59] school divisions regionally in 2019 when we you were elected we were second from the bottom for average teacher salary today we're second from the bottom in average teacher pay when you were elected in 2019 we had the highest classroom sizes in our high schools today we have the highest classroom sizes in our high schools compared to all other region all other divisions in our region you all were elected four

[01:02:35] years ago and that's where you started and you are there today let's talk about the proposal that was provided to PWA but first let's talk about the two percent raise for educators that was shared to all of our staff that was provided by the state passing our budget and what staff needed to understand was it's two-thirds of two percent

[01:03:08] so if you're making 60 000 in prince william county schools you're not getting 1200 you're getting 800 you're getting started getting the two percent from january to august you're getting two thirds of 2%.

[01:03:27] Okay, so let's talk about the counter proposal. It was partial, I'm still waiting on it, but you were able to do a slideshow, you were able to give me a three page summary, but I'm still waiting for the actual counter.

[01:03:45] But let's talk about where it gets us. Does it get us anywhere from second to the bottom for average teacher salary? Absolutely not. you all decided that 80 percent of our certified teachers will receive five percent and 20 percent of our certified teachers will get nine percent we wouldn't do that to our students why are you

[01:04:11] doing that to your staff do better Stephen Spiker hi thank you Stephen Spiker my address is on file uh like everyone else here I was caught by surprise on Thursday to learn that code orange days uh will now require live virtual learning um according to the pwcs website we have 18 days worth of hours built and above the minimum required and this means that there's nothing stopping us from declaring a code red and just closing the schools during bad weather instead

[01:04:48] of a code orange so why do we even have them dr mcdade in your 2021 uh letter when you created these code orange days you said that you wanted to maximize time available to provide instruction to our students citing investments in technology laptops and wi-fi that in theory provide an equitable experience you said quote these investments have provided the means to deliver instruction even when in-person learning isn't an option and while i admire the work that you've done since you were hired and the professionalism that you brought to our schools on this issue you are wrong code orange days were a mistake from the start and doubling down doubling down on them now

[01:05:24] demonstrates a failure to recognize that mistake. For starters, to the original rationale, whether it's asynchronous or live or resume, virtual learning does not maximize time for instruction because it doesn't work. Period. Even in a scenario where every single teacher is able to fully prepare and provide virtual instruction and every single student logs on to receive it, we know that virtual learning was and is a disaster. In fact, the reason why we face learning loss from the pandemic is precisely because it doesn't work and opposing more virtual learning to help make up for the loss caused by virtual learning is insane but we also

[01:06:01] know that the scenario I just described is impossible it doesn't happen teachers do not have the time to prepare for a sudden shift from in classroom to virtual let alone those who have their own kids to

support and students do not have an equitable experience which extends far beyond county provided equipment to include technical experience to include adult supervision to support it in a quiet dedicated space for kids to actually engage with the material maybe the most affluent in the county will be in an ideal position to participate but most students are not and most parents are not in a position to scramble to provide it when the code orange is called the night before a

[01:06:39] school day so as a result it's inevitable that code orange days will be the day that many students and teachers call out sick or they may not even bother with a pretense of an excuse and just be marked as absent. And this is happening while we're boasting about our improved attendance numbers. In short, Code Orange days put unreasonable demands on teachers who are already unreasonably burdened. It increases inequity in learning among students. It creates chaos for parents and it undermines our school success story about keeping our kids engaged and in classrooms. And for what? There's no reason for any of this.

[01:07:16] just call it a school day and close the schools. Teachers, parents, and students will figure out how to manage the rest as they've done for decades. And it really is that simple. Thank you. Arvinder Jory. Good evening. My name is Arvinder Jory and my address is on file.

[01:07:45] As the co-chair of PWEA's Social Justice Committee, I would like to take a moment to discuss some issues related to social justice in our school division, as well as emphasize how actually including employees in the decision making process via good faith collective bargaining negotiations would augment social justice's core tenets of inclusivity, equity and diversity.

[01:08:14] It was heartening to see that Prince William County Schools and the Prince William County School Board declined to implement the governor's guidelines aimed at stripping protections and representation from some of our most vulnerable students. I wish that a school division had led in this aspect instead of waiting for other divisions in the region to take similar actions first. This left many staff members, students and parents flustered and alarmed but I sincerely thank you for the decision.

[01:08:51] That being said I have to also express my disappointment and concern over the school board's decision to voluntarily implement other guidelines regarding books that are antithetical to a school division stated commitment to inclusivity diversity and equity the policy operates under the guise of parental rights to ensure that the children are not being assigned sexually explicit materials yet the weight definitions provided for sexually explicit can be so broadly interpreted as to include many titles that contain

[01:09:30] innocuous technicality that no reasonable parents would find sexually charged or objectionable. What the policy actually does is provide a line of attack in the right-wing culture war being waged against LBGTQ+ youth and representation while the policy does not single out lbgtq plus representation it places a requirement on teachers and staff to provide prior notification of a broad swath of titles that would satisfy the

[01:10:05] aims of parents pushing these types of policies and in turn censor books that contain queer representation. Additionally, this policy places such a mammoth and unreasonable burden upon teachers, librarians, and other staff members. How can that predictable outcome possibly make this policy in the best interest of staff or students? It's imperative to incorporate texts that authentically represent underrepresented voices and create spaces of courageous dialogue.

[01:10:41] Kimberly Melman Orozco. Good evening. My name is Dr. Kimberly Melman Orozco. My address is on file. I wanted to spend my time, my three minutes, juxtapositioning some of the things that you all have said compared to some of the things that the audience has said. And I'm trying to reconcile the gap between the two. So Dr. Lateef, in your promotional advertisements for your election,

[01:11:16] You said that there have been over 30% teacher and staff raises, that you oversaw this. Yet we're hearing from many teachers saying that that's not what's happening and that you're fighting against their collective bargaining for a 17% increase.

[01:11:34] We're hearing from them that they're still second from the bottom with average teacher salary. I actually took the time, and it's not a 200-page document, to look through your proposed budget for fiscal year 2024, and I didn't see a lot of teacher raises.

[01:11:51] I did, however, see many raises for your administrative staff, specifically, for example, one line item that I thought was particularly interesting was in fiscal year 2020, your budget for general counsel, Wade Anderson, I'm looking over at you, was under half a million dollars.

[01:12:09] Now it's over a million for 2024. Why do you need that? Maybe it's because of the multiple violations to federal and state law with regards to special education rights. That could have been part of it, but how could that money be reallocated if you actually complied with the law?

[01:12:28] That half a million dollars certainly can go and help the bus driver that is trying to look for a raise and being paid $35,000 a year, I'm sure. Let's look at some of the other things. You said Forbes magazine, number one school division to work at in the Commonwealth.

[01:12:45] When? In 2023, it said that we had dropped 50 positions. We are 50 places underneath, and many, many other schools are ranked above us. So I don't see that being a reality. Now with the little bit of time that I have left, I just wanted to also make mention that Dr. McDade, I'm curious how you feel being used as a talking point by the board members.

[01:13:13] We've heard many parents talk about the discrimination within the division, but if you ask Ms. Adele Jackson or Dr. Barbara Lateef, we don't have a discrimination issue because they oversaw your appointment as the first black superintendent. I wouldn't like to be used as a talking point personally. And on that, I'd like to end with a narcissist prayer.

[01:13:31] That didn't happen. And if it did, it wasn't that bad. if it was that's not a big deal and if it is it's not my fault and if it was I didn't mean it and if I did you deserve it. Every single time I hear and I juxtaposition what teachers and parents and staff members are saying to what you're saying that's what I think about. Amanda Locklear. Good evening my name is Amanda Locklear and my address is on file. In June I stood on this very same spot

[01:14:06] And I said there are a few things in life that we can't get back the word after it said an opportunity after it's missed and time After it's gone time cannot be replaced yet Not all of us pay attention to it a few of us rush it many of us waste it Some of us don't have it and none of us are promised it little did I know exactly three months later The words I had spoken would be a constant repeat in my head. I'm gonna cry born members I have been watching the debates, town halls, whatever you want to call them. I appreciate you

[01:14:42] sharing aspects of your lives and backgrounds. I can certainly empathize with a child that's being bullied or a parent and being made to feel like they are less. My heart hurts for them. I can also agree that engaging with our schools, our administrations, our teachers, our counselors should result in success for the students. However, it doesn't always happen. Sir, you said Rather than, you know, complaining and, you know, screaming and grandstanding about the issue, what we did was we worked closely with the school division and the teachers and the administration and counselors.

[01:15:18] I'm glad it worked out for you. I'm glad it worked out for your child. Collaborating as a collective sometimes proves to be quite challenging for various reasons, especially when it comes to special education. This month marks a year since I've been asking for help, guidance, and assistance. Mind you, I've gone from the bottom up.

[01:15:35] The issue continues here, and here's an example, now a core memory, unfortunately. June 22nd, I request an IEP meeting via someone at the KLC to discuss the IEEs that have been completed. This should have started a 30-day time period.

[01:15:51] August 17th, 56 days later, the first meeting is conducted with a time limit, so we have to reconvene. August 19th, my mom goes into the hospital. August 21st, school starts. August 29th, 68 days after the initial request and the second meeting is conducted.

[01:16:09] My mom is now in the ICU, intubated, and I am in that meeting to finish this out for my son. We have to reconvene again. I'm told 15 minutes before we stop that there's a hard stop.

[01:16:26] September 1st, my mom dies. September 6th, I bury her. September 12th, 82 days later, we meet again to finish out the IEE discussion and conduct a meeting for a different Prince William County eval that had a 65-day time period. At what point does someone help us and them?

[01:16:47] Thank you. Yesenia Lassiter, and then after her will be Bella Lassiter, Chantel Rock, Hina Ansari, and Chrissy Falls. Yesenia Lassiter, Bella Lassiter, Bella Lassiter, Chantel Rock, Chantel Rock, Hina Ansari.

[01:17:24] Hey, everybody. It's so good to see so many familiar faces. I recognize so many of you. Thank you, Dr. Lateef. Thank you, Super Nintendo McDade, for having me here.

[01:17:40] I am a substitute teacher, actually, here in Prince William County Schools, and I can echo a lot of the things that I'm hearing from the teachers. And I'm here because I'm part of a Facebook group, and they were talking about the LGBTQ rights, and they asked me to come in and speak. Well, they didn't ask me, I volunteered.

[01:17:56] Because what am I gonna do on a Wednesday night besides sit at home, or come here and talk to all of you? So I wanted to tell you a story that I heard with a parent, while it is Ashburn, feel like it's still a relevant story so bear with me for like well you've got a timer so we'll see and i also like your timer it's very snazzy so um she was telling me that her daughter is a muslim we're muslims and she wears a headscarf so she went into the daughter went into the bathroom this is the the parent telling me this story she said her daughter went to the bathroom and she was adjusting her headscarf and a trans girl came in and then she said she didn't know what to do and she panicked so this is the parent telling me this so i said what was the end of the story but that the mom didn't have an end of the story.

[01:18:35] So I went to find the daughter and I asked her, because I'm a substitute teacher, I'm not afraid to talk to kids, even though they are a little intimidating. And she looked and I retold the entire story as her mother had told it to me, and the daughter looked at me dumbfounded and said, "I don't know what you're talking about."

[01:18:51] So I thought it was fascinating that this parent had contrived this story of this boogeyman, of this trans kid coming into the bathroom and scaring her kid when none of it ever actually happened. So I think that that's something that I think about I talk about trans rights and as a substitute teacher and I know one of the teachers said this too the schools are wildly overpopulated I've reserved myself to only doing high school because I can't handle kids that I can't reason with and you can reason with a little bit with high school students um I think I encounter maybe one or two LGBTQ kids per day and that's like 120 kids per day so percentage wise you're really uh you know you're you're it's like an elephant and a mouse

[01:19:28] but anyway I didn't have any more to say but thank you Christy Falls good evening Dr.

[01:19:43] McDade, Dr. Lateef, school board. I'm back. Jen Wall, thank you for appointing me to the Safe Schools Advisory Council. Of the years I serve I'm mostly proud of what we accomplished last year and we now have weapon detectors going into every middle and high school. I hope you're I hope you're having the schools ramp up that dial and getting those vapes and all of those other fun devices. We know vaping continues to be an issue. How does this tie into your discipline process? Are students being educated? Are parents being educated, this would be a great initiative for your substance abuse prevention specialist, except you only have one.

[01:20:20] Your prevention specialist does a great job and is fully involved in other prevention efforts in the community, bringing in resources into the school system, but again, she's only one person. And with a student body of what, 91,000? If you don't already know, neighboring counties have a SAPS, at least in every high school.

[01:20:40] SAPS stands for Substance Abuse Prevention Specialists, where they are assigned to provide substance abuse prevention, education, and brief intervention services, not only with the child, but also the parents and school staff. Prevention in this county has always been on the back burner.

[01:20:56] The school system has access to community services, New Horizons school-based therapists and prevention staff, but prevention needs to be a priority in elementary and middle schools where it can have the most impact. Years ago, Prince William County has a substance abuse prevention specialist in each high school with feeder programs in each middle school and was a model for the rest of the state.

[01:21:18] Maybe it's time to play catch up and provide our students with the science-based information and skills they need to make healthier choices and prevent discipline issues and addiction. Thank you. - Thank you. At this time, that wraps up citizen comment time.

[01:21:35] We will move on to 14.01, proposed sale of VPSA bonds, fall 2023. This item is on for action this evening. A motion is in order. Vice Chair Wall. - Thank you, Chairman Lateef.

[01:21:51] I move that the Prince William County School Board, A, authorize the completion and submission of the application to the Virginia Public School Authority, VPSA for a fall 2023 standalone bond sale in the amount of 141,380,000 to finance certain capital improvements projects for school purposes.

[01:22:12] B, authorize the superintendent or such other officer as she may designate to submit such documentation as required by VPSA. C, request for the Board of County Supervisors to authorize the completion for a Fall 2023 VPSA standalone bond sale and to take such other action as may be necessary to complete the bond sale.

[01:22:31] And D, direct that this resolution shall become effective immediately. Do I have a second? Mr. Chairman. Ms. Williams. I second. Any discussion? Does anyone have any questions regarding this item?

[01:22:46] We discussed this last time. Any questions? Okay. At this time, please vote.

[01:23:08] The vote is seven yes, one absent. Ralston, motion passed. - Okay, Mr. Wallingford, go forth. Get us a good rate. Thank you very much. Moving on, student representative time. Tonight, we have our student rep, Fernanda Morante, senior at Forest Park High School.

[01:23:26] On the dais with us, Ms. Morante, please. - Thank you, Dr. Lateef. Good evening, Dr. McDade. Again, Dr. Lateef and school board members in Prince William County community. My name is Fernanda Morante, and I am beyond excited to represent the student body here at Prince William County this year, as well as representing my high school forest park this evening in the dais.

[01:23:50] I'm excited for this amazing opportunity and I promise the PWCS student body to do my absolute best to fulfill all my duties and make your voices heard to the school board. With that said, I would like to congratulate once again, Osborne Park High School Madrigals and Colgan High School Philharmonic Orchestra for their next performance at the upcoming Virginia Music Education Association Professional Development State Conference in November, 2023, as well as City Hilton High School sophomore student, Cadence Costello for achieving first place on the junior varsity level

[01:24:29] in the category of Lesson Planning and Delivery at the 2023 Educators Rising National Conference. I think these are examples of what Prince William County Schools staff and students can achieve if working together. Prince William County thriving futures focus implemented at all schools encourages students to graduate on time and with the skills necessary to have a thriving future post high school.

[01:24:53] Prince William County is strongly committed to every student enrolled in each of the 95 schools to ensure that they are receiving the tools necessary for learning and achievement for all, positive climate and culture, family and community engagement and organizational coherence.

[01:25:08] The county does the best they can to provide the tools necessary to ensure this happens. But it is our job as students to also work towards this common goal. Students in schools will only be successful through engagement with family and community as partners, and one way of ensuring this comes through is through student attendance.

[01:25:26] It's been proven by the Virginia Board of Education that better attendance is associated with higher grades, which is why I would like to encourage all my fellow Prince William County students to take advantage of all the amazing opportunities we are giving daily, such as specialty programs, sports teams, academic clubs, student-led organizations, college fairs, and school-based and county-wide activities.

[01:25:48] I strongly encourage all students to make the most out of school and work together for a better attendance rate county-wide, which will lead to better academic performance for all. On another note, it's

been a month since school started, so I would like to extend a warm welcome back to school to all families in Prince William County.

[01:26:07] I have seen the adjustments that students have made regarding the implementation of the Evolve Weapon Detection System in all middle schools and high schools. I can't speak for Forest Park as we won't be starting until October 11th, but I do know some schools have started using them already.

[01:26:23] So I do acknowledge and appreciate all the effort that students and staff are putting towards making schools a safe learning environment. I know it is a different and even unfamiliar process to walk through the Evolve system, to your laptop out and whatnot.

[01:26:39] But if there is something that we can all agree in is that we want a safe space to learn. So I do thank all students and staff for working together to adapt this new implementation. I would also like to acknowledge and Prince William County community a happy Hispanic Heritage Month.

[01:26:56] From September 15th through October 15th, we honor National Hispanic Heritage Month in the US. This is a time of the year that I personally enjoy a lot as I'm part of the Hispanic community in the county, in Prince William County, so I am beyond excited to see what different student groups and different schools decide to do to celebrate this special time of the year.

[01:27:16] I invite all student council associations and multicultural student groups to take advantage of this month and organize activities within their schools to celebrate the immense diversity that the county hosts. Prince William County is the second most diverse county in Virginia and 10th in the US, So I advocate for all student leaders to reflect this during this time and get excited to celebrate all the different cultures and backgrounds present in our county.

[01:27:43] I think it's a perfect time not only to celebrate Hispanic culture, but diversity as a whole. I am really happy about all the activities and celebrations. I saw a video from Freedom High School and I thought all the activities they had were really nice. So I'm excited to see what the rest of the county does.

[01:28:00] Finally, I would like to show my excitement about the integral ceremony of Innovation Elementary School will be taking place tomorrow, September 21st. I am so grateful to have been invited as a student representative, along with Isabelle and Jackie, my fellow reps. I can't wait to see what the Falcons have to offer to the Prince William County community.

[01:28:20] I was looking through their website and Innovation Elementary School's mission is to provide opportunities for all students to demonstrate creativity, challenge their own capabilities, work collaboratively and appreciate and support individual differences.

[01:28:35] And I am very thrilled to see what students from the newest school in the county have to offer to the community throughout its first year. And with that, I conclude my remarks for tonight. Thank you for listening. - Excellent, thank you, Ms. Marante.

[01:28:50] We really appreciate it and we welcome you to the board and we're excited to work with you the rest of this year. Moving on to superintendent's time, Dr. McDade, please. - Thank you, Mr. Chairman. First, I would like to formally welcome and introduce our new PWCS Executive Cabinet members.

[01:29:05] We have first Shaquille Youssef, who is assuming the role of Chief Financial Officer. Mr. Youssef most recently served as Director of Finance for PWCS, prior to that Director of Finance for Fairfax County, and he will be taking over the role of CFO from John Wallingford, who retires October 31st.

[01:29:26] So congratulations to both Mr. Youssef as well as Mr. Wallingford. As many of you know, Rita Goss, our former Associate Superintendent of Teaching and Learning, also retired in June 30th of this past school year, and we are excited to welcome Dr. Stephanie Sullivan as our newest Associate Superintendent for Teaching and Learning.

[01:29:55] Dr. Sullivan joins PWCS from Brevard Public Schools in Florida, where she most recently served as the Assistant Superintendent for Secondary Leading and Learning. Welcome, Dr. Sullivan.

[01:30:11] Bill Bixby was our associate superintendent for high schools. He retired June 30th. And we have now two new associate superintendents for high schools, Mr. Greg Hood and Mr. Keith Wolfe.

[01:30:26] Mr. Hood previously served as PWCS management support director of high schools and Mr. Wolfe most recently served as executive director of secondary education and leadership for Spotsylvania County Public Schools. Welcome to the team.

[01:30:44] Following the retirement of Dr. Jocelyn Hart, Kimberly Godinus has assumed the role as the Associate Superintendent for Western Elementary Schools. Ms. Godinus previously served as PWCS Management Support Director of Elementary Schools, and she has a long history with PWCS, having served as a teacher, elementary school principal, and supervisor for professional learning.

[01:31:06] Congratulations to each of you on your new roles, and we look forward to witnessing your positive impact on students, schools, and communities. Each year between September 15th and October 15th, our nation celebrates Hispanic Heritage Month, a time to recognize and celebrate the many contributions, diverse cultures, and extensive histories of the American Latino community.

[01:31:32] This month inclusively celebrates the Independence Days of several Latin American countries, including Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua on September 15th, Mexico on September 16th, in Chile on September 18th.

[01:31:49] On Monday, we notified all PWCS employees of the school board and division's approval of an additional 2% salary increase for fiscal year 2024. During the SY24 budget season, all employees received an average 5% increase and we committed at that time to investing any additional state revenue received this year towards competitive wages and benefits.

[01:32:13] At the end of last week, Governor Youngkin approved the state budget, which allocated additional funds for education. Although we already met the criteria for the state, the state criteria for a 2% increase in our initial budget process, we are keeping our commitment to continued investment in employee compensation.

[01:32:31] Allocating the additional 2% was on top of the average 5% for employees that took effect in July. That increases the average salary for the fiscal year 24 by 7%. This 2% additional salary increase will take effect January 1, 2024, and will be applied to the salary scales for certified instructional managers and classified employees.

[01:32:57] This week began the first phase of implementation for our security screening systems. We began with four high schools, which include Gainesville, Osborne Park, Freedom, and Independence Non-Traditional School. It has been an overall successful start to implementation.

[01:33:14] Of course, as we expected, students are getting acclimated to this new routine. However, each school has begun implementation without incident, and by the end of the first week, we expect any minor

delays in starting times to be remedied. We will continue to learn and refine practices throughout this first week of implementation to ensure a smooth process as we are onboarding additional secondary schools in the weeks to come.

[01:33:40] At this time in the superintendent's report, I would like to invite Ms. Denise Huebner, Associate Superintendent for Student Services and Postsecondary Success and the Student Health and Wellness Team to give a presentation on substance abuse prevention.

[01:33:57] - Good evening, Chairman Lateef, Vice Chair Wall, members of the School Board, Dr. McDade. Thank you for allowing our team to be here. The team from Student Health and Wellness is in charge and oversees substance abuse under the direction of Ms. Pam Bell. Unfortunately, Ms. Bell is not able to be with us here this evening, but she was a significant contributor to this presentation, so I just wanted to mention to her.

[01:34:18] So I'm grateful to have Dr. Tameka Martin, who's our supervisor of student prevention programs and family assistance, as well as Mallory McKnight, our substance abuse prevention specialist. If I can get this clicker, there we go. So the work of our team in student health and wellness is grounded in our strategic plan, and our goal is that every student will graduate on time with the knowledge, skills, and habits of mind necessary to create a thriving future for themselves and their community.

[01:34:46] Our strategic plan was built on core values that we wholeheartedly embrace, equity, inclusivity, innovation, integrity, resiliency, and wellbeing. We take responsibility for wellbeing of students' physical and mental health.

[01:35:02] And we take measures to help families and students and employees feel supported and protected in order to thrive. Under commitment to positive climate culture, our goal is to promote wellness for all. This includes emotional and physical wellness. And for students, that means having skills that will lead to success in the future.

[01:35:21] I believe it's important to recognize that the division's role in substance abuse is to provide education to students and to support parents by providing resources and referrals to community agencies. As an organization, we understand that our core business is education.

[01:35:37] We understand that it's our responsibility to remove barriers to learning for students. And as a division, we work to create conditions that do remove those barriers, but we do not provide therapy for students who are impacted by substance abuse or addiction. Prince William County Schools partners with families by supporting students in developing healthy habits through education and awareness.

[01:35:58] We also have a significant role in helping families connect with community resources when needed. One of the most important roles we play in substance abuse prevention at educators is to help our students learn these success skills that will lead them to a thriving future. On this slide, you will see examples of some of those success skills.

[01:36:14] These are embedded into our counseling curriculum and into our day-to-day actions with our students. By teaching these skills, we will help students make responsible decisions. about their well-being, students are going to experience challenges, peer pressure, but as I mentioned resiliency is part of our core values and the foundations of our thriving future strategic plan. We believe it's important to help our students feel a sense of belonging that creates conditions to help and demonstrate resiliency. We want

our students to believe in themselves, feel self-worth when faced with challenges, and to make good decisions and apply healthy habits.

[01:36:49] As you can see on this slide, nationally, there are trends of substance use prior to age 13, increasing from 14% in 2021 to 15% in 2022. This data shows that students nationally had their first drink of alcohol prior to the age of 13.

[01:37:07] There's also an increase nationally in the use of marijuana, and perhaps the most concerning statistic is the use of illicit drugs that show on the CDC survey that is at 13%. On this slide, you'll see some national data from the Journal of American Medical Association for the National Center for Drug Abuse.

[01:37:26] The statistics show are regarding fatal drug use and overdoses among teens. You can see the increase by 94% from 2021, it's an increase of 20%. And in 2021, fentanyl was identified as 70% of the cause of overdose deaths for adolescents.

[01:37:48] Between 2016 and 2020, there was a 61% increase in drug use among 8th graders. This data includes some information that we see locally in Virginia. The data reflects trends that we do see such as vaping, marijuana use and alcohol consumption on the increase.

[01:38:09] This data set shows the same, alcohol, vaping, illicit drug use by grade levels. You can note the high percentage of students who are engaging in vaping. You'll notice how the use of substances increases as our students age. Our goal is to ensure that our students have education at all levels to help prevent the use of substances.

[01:38:28] Our strategies are information dissemination, prevention education, which is most effective when it started at the elementary and with lessons that are developmentally appropriate and with parental consent and involvement. Support for problem identification and referrals to community resources are also strategies.

[01:38:43] So as parents, we encourage you to know your teen's activities and pay attention to your teen's patterns, whereabouts, and social activities. Provide boundaries, establish expectations and rules. Be involved in your child's social world. Know who your teen's friends are.

[01:39:00] If you have prescription medications, please make an effort to keep track of them. Find ways to support and engage in conversation. Sometimes that's not easy with teenagers. It's not easy being a teenager these days. But as a parent, the best thing you can do is provide supports to love unconditionally, help your child understand that they are not alone, and keep in conversation with them.

[01:39:20] And also set a good example. On this slide, you'll see a summary of our coded behavior violations that are related to prohibited substances. We opted to share a comparison of pre-COVID data and post-COVID data to help highlight our current challenge.

[01:39:36] You can see the significant increase. On this slide, you'll see the specific violations pre- and post-pandemic, and you'll note the increase in vaping, or as we call them, electronic cigarettes, as well as violations related to marijuana. At this time, I would like to turn the presentation over to Dr. Tameka Martin, who will provide an overview of some of the efforts and supports provided to families.

[01:40:04] Thank you. As with many of the supports that we have for our students, our Substance Abuse Prevention education uses a tiered approach. Tier 1 includes prevention education for all students grades K through 10. Tier 2 support is for students who have their first code of behavior infraction involving

substance use and they refer to our stop and think program. The program is held monthly and provides education on vaping, marijuana, and opioid use. It is a small group session that allows students to also assess their substance use and learn to make good decisions. Students with subsequent infractions or who are referred

[01:40:44] due to more serious substance use issues may be referred to our New Horizons program. There's a counselor at each of our high schools and they are provided by Prince William County Community Services. For our Tier 1 lessons provided to students in grades K through 5, school counselors usually create a developmentally appropriate plan that is used throughout the division for each grade level. Then in grades 6 through 10, our health and PE teachers create lesson plans that provide information about things such as types of

[01:41:22] substances, trends, and signs of addiction. Students also learn the risk associated with using substances and understand things like social influence. In addition to our student education, we provide education to our staff through professional development. Our substance abuse specialist provides annual updates to teachers and partners with outside outside agencies to discuss different topics. We also partner with the Community Services Board of Prince William County to hold monthly revive training for all

[01:41:55] staff. Our substance abuse specialist also provides education for parents in the community as requested by school staff. This can include information on transit resources, tips to talk on talking to youth about substances and setting up the hidden in plain sight bedroom display which highlights signs of substance use and paraphernalia that can look like everyday products. As our goal is to provide education to students and families regarding substance use and misuse, we have compiled

[01:42:31] resources on our Substance Abuse Prevention website. This is where parents and guardians can go to get more information about what we offer as well as links to community resources. This slide shows some of the educational activities that occurred during the 2022-2023 school year and as i said our substance abuse specialist collaborates with community services to provide education for our schools and communities throughout the year for both staff

[01:43:01] and for students and families each year pwcs also celebrates red ribbon week this this year the dates are october 21st through 31st with the theme of be kind to your mind live drug free schools are encouraged to sponsor programs and activities and miss mcknight provides a planning guide for their use. We also celebrate Red Ribbon Day on October 26, where everyone is encouraged to

[01:43:33] wear red in support of the cause. In addition to our partnership with community services, PWCS also partners with the DEA, our Drug Enforcement Agency, the Prince William County Bar Association, and the Prevention Alliance of Greater Prince William County.

[01:43:54] Our division also has an opioid task force that meets throughout the year to discuss current trends and develop recommendations for improving substance use education. The task force brings together stakeholders from many departments throughout the division and some members from the community. And so as Ms. Huebner said, the goal of this presentation is just to equip you with the facts and resources so you can feel empowered to have these conversations with your children. In that spirit, we wanted to share some community resources that can be useful

[01:44:27] in those discussions. I now turn it back over to Mrs. Huebner to close us out. In closing, I'd like to, again, thank you for the opportunity to bring this important topic to light and that concludes our

presentation.

[01:44:48] Thank you, Ms. Hefner. So at this time, I will open it up for board members who have questions or comments. Who would like to go first? Ms. Williams. I just have a comment. I just want to say that I appreciate all of the hard work that's done by your office and the presentations.

[01:45:06] I have been able to attend a middle school presentation geared at middle school families. The hidden in plain sight bedroom is impressive. I thought I was pretty hip to the game with all the kids that I know and I still learned quite a few things. I appreciate all the time and effort that goes into that.

[01:45:24] Of course, we continue to build our staffing and I would very much love to see the day when we have the ability to make presentations countywide at multiple events and multiple times. I know that we'll get there one day but in the meantime, I really appreciate all the work.

[01:45:42] I think it would be good to see some of these, some of the information at other types of events too, just so that we can hit the most, the maximum amount of parents as possible. I know that we inundate our families with information, so I'm always trying to figure out new ways to catch attention.

[01:46:01] But I do think that it is critical and important. There are a lot of families that deal with drug or substance abuse issues. And I know that's top of a lot of family minds, So I appreciate all your efforts and I just wanted to say thank you. Thank you.

[01:46:18] Who would like to go next? Ms. Jackson. I really appreciate the presentation tonight. And I have also been to some of the trainings and they were exceptional. So I just appreciate the conversation and the time that you've taken to present tonight.

[01:46:34] And this update was asked for, it was a direct result of a conversation from office hours with Ms. Wall and parent engagement. And this partnership that is being demonstrated, it's just like I appreciate it. know I said like three times but I do appreciate it. So there's one thing I have a question about is that what steps would you suggest to parents in terms of involving schools? So like they might want to involve the schools in the conversation, maybe they're on the fence about calling the school. Would you take, would you suggest the parents to take if they suspect those students

[01:47:09] involved in drugs? I definitely encourage the parents to reach out to their counselors. They are, we have school mental health professionals. They partner with our social workers and have have the ability to connect parents with community resources. It's always good to partner with parents to know what's going on so we can form a plan of support.

[01:47:26] Like we said, our goal is to remove barriers for students. And so while we don't provide treatment, we do provide supports so that students can access their education in the building. And then if they don't feel comfortable contacting the school directly, is there another resource like here at the Kelley Center that maybe they could contact too?

[01:47:44] Certainly always welcome to reach out to me directly or to our Office of Student Health and Wellness. I would also encourage parents who are looking for that confidentiality piece or for the resources. Our webpage does have a lot of information on it and a lot of good connections. Really community services board would have good resources for parents.

[01:48:01] So I encourage them to work with either their medical provider or community services board to see what's the best option for their family. All right. Thank you. Ms. Zargarpur. Thank you. When I was

at a VSBA event and got to meet board members from all across the state, we would talk about mental health, drug addiction, all kinds of things.

[01:48:23] And each community has its own way, its own approach of doing things. I'm also in a cohort with UVA where I know educational professionals across the state. One of them works in Rockingham County and they have therapy in their schools, I believe is what she has told me in the past.

[01:48:42] So, and I know that there were a couple other school divisions where the school board members talked about that. How do we get, I don't know how to ask this, is it possible to get therapists into the schools for some of these kids who might not have access otherwise or telehealth or if, because some places do do it, I don't understand whether that, there's barriers here because of our government structure or our school structure or it, I'll let you answer.

[01:49:16] - So we're certainly always open, looking at ways to help our families. It is, you know, a very, like you say, a sensitive topic and the parents are the ones who have the rights and know the best treatment for their students. It is a matter of resources, and so I would encourage you to reach out to maybe our Board of County Supervisors to explore what community options could be brought in to our buildings.

[01:49:34] As we've noted, we do have New Horizons counselors that are located in our high schools, and so we do have access to students who go through that community service and are referred to the New Horizons, but at this point in time, that's our limitation.

[01:49:50] - Thank you. The other thing I wanted to just say the general public is the the revive training is really short and it will get you a narcan so it i recommend people taking it it's a it's a pretty fast easy training there's a little video they play that just it makes my heart hurt it's so sad you know the little yeah yeah the little birdie so but i recommend everybody um who just just take a look and see what it is but um it's a really fast training.

[01:50:24] All right. Thank you. Ms. Williams. Sorry, Ms. Jessie first. Hi. I want to thank you for this presentation. Slide 13, would you please look at that slide? I just want to talk about the parent education portion of it.

[01:50:46] It says that schools request presentation designed for parents. Is it the schools, do they have the option or you wait for them to call you for a presentation or are these presentations in all schools and are they elementary middle?

[01:51:03] You may have covered that. - So, and I can let our specialists speak to that. So we are very new into the school year, but our intention is to work with our family and community engagement office. So we have done division-wide information sessions for parents and we do have schools that reach out to us.

[01:51:20] So it's not something that's mandatory, but when schools contact our office, we do work with them to provide the information to parents. So it is a request by schools. It's a little bit morbid, but I have a friend who works at the funeral home. And years ago, she said to me, Lily, the number of kids that are dying from drug overdoses is overwhelming.

[01:51:42] And now we have stats to prove that she was right. So I'm just wondering, is there some way we can get this information to parents? Because one of our friends who worked with us lost her son and did not know he had drugs. So the parent education piece is very important.

[01:52:00] I'm just wondering is there some way we can perhaps move that to a higher level, a higher priority for schools at the middle and high school level? - I look forward to opportunities to promote information and as much awareness as possible.

[01:52:17] So it's certainly something that we look into. - Thank you, you're so political. You really have the right answers. Okay, thank you, Denise, I think. Okay, bye-bye. - All right, Ms. Williams.

[01:52:33] - Thank you, I just wanted to clarify something I might be misunderstanding. Do we no longer, we used to, I know as a school division work with counselors or therapists, often therapists that came from outside the school division to host internal like groups for students to participate in, of course with parental permission, if they had substance abuse problems or had themselves or family members.

[01:52:56] Do you know if we still do that or we don't do that? I'm not sure if you would know that off the top of your head. - I believe what you're referring to is the New Horizons program, that we do have those counselors in each of our schools. So we certainly have, I can't speak to the resources that the county has.

[01:53:12] I do know that we are in contact and we do work closely with them. And I do know our county is also overloaded with parental requests and a lot of families that are in need of service. So we have our New Horizons counselors and that's what I'm aware of. - Okay, maybe we could get an update on exactly what they do.

[01:53:28] 'Cause I'm just curious to know if that's still an ongoing program because it would be something that I know we used to as a school division years ago, partner with them. So it wasn't just a matter of showing up in their office and having it like a 10 minute discussion or whatever.

[01:53:43] However, I'm just guessing 'cause I have no idea. - Sure, and just to reiterate. - Right, I know that it's not us. - Yeah. - Right, so I'm not saying that we provide it. I was just saying in partnership, that was something that outsized counselors came in and that was offered during the day. So I don't know, you know, clearly I know you don't know the ins and outs of every specific program down to the minute detail.

[01:54:03] just wondering if we could get an update on that because I think it's important if we're informed then we can also inform others and that would be helpful 'cause then there's a lot of outside resources and I'm also aware that the county is doing a lot of work with mental health services for youth and adults as well. So I appreciate the continued collaboration that we have and I'm just interested in that one particular piece.

[01:54:23] - They are and we're looking forward, we're having our first opioid task force meeting of the year soon and we have community representation on that from the county and certainly something that we can pursue. - Did you have your hand up?

[01:54:38] Ms. Morante. - I have a question if, from a student perspective, I've seen substance abuse in a couple different schools. What would you say is a good action item that us as students can take so we can help reduce this problem?

[01:55:00] - Sure, I think students are a strong voice and really your peers are most influenced by those who are around them. So I would say helping promote good and healthy choices, you know, working with a caring adult in your building. If you have a student, you know, voice committee or a student representation, thinking about how you can and would internally promote, you know, healthy habits and good substance abuse protocols.

[01:55:24] And so we'd be happy to give you resources about that. Thank you, Ms. Morante. Ms. Vice Chair Wall. Thank you. Thank you for this presentation. Thank you, Dr. McDade and your staff. This is something that I've been asking about for a while.

[01:55:41] And Ms. Jackson referred to a constituent meeting that we held, a joint office hours meeting, where we talked with a parent who was having a particular challenge. And I know that she was just representative of many parents.

[01:55:56] And so I know this is a very big problem for our students. It's a societal problem. It's a tragic problem. And so I do appreciate that we have some of these resources. I do have a couple of questions. I know some of the data that we had on slide four, for example, some of our data was citing national trends and some Virginia trends.

[01:56:20] And I know we do have, for instance, opioid abuse in our schools. But I don't have a sense of how that is for Prince William County. Do we have more specific data that we could get at a later time or that the board could take a look at? I don't know the extent of the severity of the problem here, but I suspect that it's growing and that a lot of kids are having a really hard time.

[01:56:46] Do we, could we get more data that's more specific to Prince William County? - I'm certainly happy to work with our county partners to provide that. - Yeah, that would be great, thank you. And my other question is, I'm aware that neighboring jurisdictions have moved ahead on the prevention piece and they offer some prevention tools and other things that we don't yet offer in Prince William County.

[01:57:11] So my question to you is, if those who are working on this challenging problem could recommend to us a wish list, what would be on the top of your wish list as far as resources or programs or anything? What would you like to see us provide so that we could be more effective, especially at the prevention piece for our children and our families?

[01:57:37] I'd certainly be happy to work with my team and bring that back as part of our strategic budget process. And I think, you know, obviously, it's always, you know, more is better in awareness. So events, increasing events to help parents understand more. Yeah, thank you.

[01:57:53] I know when I was a parent of middle school kids, I went to several events that were hosted by the schools that my children attended. And they were put on by community partners. And they were excellent. But they were also very poorly attended.

[01:58:11] There were maybe 15, 20 people in the room. And the information was so good and so shocking for most of us, but it was powerful. So I would like to see, I think I'm echoing comments of fellow board members, a way that we could get, push in to family's lives a little bit more.

[01:58:34] I don't know, you know, obviously if we hold an event and we invite the whole school and there are 1300 kids in the school and 15 parents show up, then we got a problem. But I think maybe, you know, that was a while ago. So maybe there's more interest. And I think having more and more frequently, having those events and having those events maybe in person so that people could afterwards stay and be connected with people or at least be connected with the resources.

[01:58:58] Even maybe an event where we run through the website and show the things that are available. I'm not sure if that would help or not. But in any event, I know there's a great need and prevention is a

really important piece that I feel like we might be able to do more on. I'm not really sure, but those are my comments.

[01:59:15] and I really do appreciate the opportunity to discuss this because I think it's very important. - Mr. Wilk. - Yeah, hi, might as well say something, right? So as you know, I was on the safe schools for a number of years and my understanding is it's the committee itself has kind of changed and it's overall kind of functioning role and purpose from, you know, when I was on the committee and doing like an annual event or some type of focus and stuff like that.

[01:59:46] Is there still discussion or within the Safe Schools Committee of really trying to, you know, kind of be the ones who are more or less putting on this program, collaborating with the administration, bringing forward community concerns to target topics for this upcoming year, or has it turned more into like an advisory role and just kind of policy, hearing about the policy from the superintendent and just kind of soliciting feedback.

[02:00:20] - So the Safe Schools Advisory Council is just starting and I know at the end of last year, at the end of the Safe Schools, we did collect interest topics from the council. And so I can turn that over to Mr. Bach, who is now the new facilitator of the Safe Schools Advisory Council. - Thank you.

[02:00:35] - Thank you, Ms. Evener. Good evening board members, Dr. Lateef and Dr. McDade. Yes, to answer your question, Mr. Wilk, it will run very similarly as an advisory. or are we going to be asking our committee to be bringing issues that they're hearing from the community and stakeholders to the table and helping us problem solve collectively with them to address some of those issues?

[02:01:00] - Okay, so really it's not changing overall in that kind of function from the past? - Correct. - Okay. - Okay, I got a quick question. Ms. Huebner, and I'm not sure who can answer this for me, and you may have already answered it while I had stepped out, But on slide eight, code of behavior violations, pre-COVID, post-COVID, do you all expect this to be our new normal or do you think we're peaking?

[02:01:30] Do you think we're going down? What are your predictions on this? I mean, we have loosening of these marijuana laws and this nonsense and I worry that this is the new normal. So I wish I could predict the future and I wish I could predict that we're going to get better. I'd predict a lot of really good things.

[02:01:46] I will say that what we see in the community, whether it be reportable offenses and offenses that happen outside the community where we then, you know, help provide students with education or things that are occurring in our school, it does seem to be consistent and it does seem to be something that we all need to really focus on.

[02:02:03] You know, again, I'm going to just reiterate that really the best prevention is really helping our kids develop those skills, those, you know, decision makings, feel confident, feeling a sense of belonging when they're in a school building and outside so that they they don't succumb to peer pressure.

[02:02:18] And so the engagement and not just outside activities, but in their education as well. So I really truly believe that as a school division, we're on a great path. A lot of wonderful things happening in school buildings, you know, rigorous curriculum, you know, instruction, and you know, a sense of belonging is being created.

[02:02:34] But I do recognize that it is still a challenge in the community, both in our schools as well. - Dr. McTague, yeah. - Yeah, just really quickly, I do wanna emphasize too that this is more than a school system problem. And so there are limitations to what we can do in our schools to address this.

[02:02:53] It really does require more support, social services and support from the healthcare industry, as well as continued opportunities for education on the effects of all of this. I also do think that the new security systems that we have in place will play a role and helping to minimize some of what is getting into school buildings right now.

[02:03:17] So that's a positive. So we are hopeful that these numbers will begin to go down as we continue to recover coming out of the pandemic. But I cannot say enough that the school system is not a healthcare industry.

[02:03:32] And so there are a lot of supports that are needed that requires healthcare professionals. And it requires, you know, community organizations to step in and support us. So what we're presenting today really is our best effort with, you know, the limited training that we have and ability that we have to really address a problem that we're seeing throughout our communities that is coming into our schools.

[02:04:02] And I think the team, I wanna commend the team because I think that they've done a lot with a little, but I would push that as a school system, as a board, that we collectively continue to demand more support externally from our community partners and from partners within the county, because there's a lot that can be done that we're just ill-equipped to do in the school system.

[02:04:27] So what you saw tonight really is our best effort. And we do have some partners that have been diligent in supporting us, but definitely more is needed, especially for a school system this size. - I'm sorry. - Oh, here we go.

[02:04:44] So thank you for mentioning that, Dr. McDade. Our hospitals cannot handle adolescent mental health issues. We don't have the personnel, we don't have the beds, we don't have the space. And the ugly truth is that mental health and addiction don't make these corporations enough money to invest in our people.

[02:05:06] I'm tired of hearing about how kids can't get therapists. There are hardly any psychiatrists around for children, and then we have to deal with it in our school systems, and our families are ill-equipped because they can't find the support and the help, which I hope that people are looking at that list.

[02:05:26] There's some really good access points for families, NAMI and the parent-partner thing. Those are all great places, but in this area, we lack the ability to take care of our families and our children, so... in that regard. We need to make sure that our hospital, thank you for putting that back up, I appreciate that. We don't have beds for adolescents. We're going to be getting that community crisis center and thank goodness they did put in a place for adolescents, but now we need the people who can work there. Those are specially trained people. So sort

[02:06:02] of a plea to the community at large. We can't do this in the schools alone. Parents can't do it by themselves. We need everybody to come together. So my soapbox. Ms. Wall. Sorry, I have one other question.

[02:06:19] On slide 17, could you explain a little bit more about the PWCS Opioid Task Force for the benefit of the Board and the community? Sure. Dr. Martin, wouldn't you like to speak that?

[02:06:35] So we have a group of people who come together. We have community members, Heather Martinson. We actually have team members from risk management. And as a goal we do look at what can we possibly do within our division to help educate staff. There's been some really good outcomes that I'm proud to say, I know one of our team members from risk management has trained some staff from facilities, our bus drivers, you know, on how to handle substance that you're unsure and what it would be, you know, so you don't have fentanyl exposure and things like that.

[02:07:02] So we're really looking at different aspects, truancy, you know, because truancy leads to kids being in the community and having the opportunity to engage in things that are dangerous. And so the OPIED task force really is a collaborative effort between the county and really looking at what we can do and how we can support kids and our education.

[02:07:24] Thank you. Thank you for that. Ms. Huebner, thank you as well. I mean, I think Dr. McDade really put the exclamation point at the end of this. I mean, the pervasive nature of drugs and, you know, we've been fighting this war since the '80s and we've been losing, you know, it doesn't discriminate on race, religion or you know socioeconomic status drugs are so pervasive and we see it everywhere and as Ms.

[02:07:50] Zargarpur and you know I should you know she not really well stated we don't have the resources in the community that a size of this community really ought to have when it comes to beds for these kids for therapy for psychiatry psychology social work we we've done some of that here in the school division and increase some of those numbers of psychologists and psychiatrists, or psychologists, social workers and counseling, but nowhere near the ratios that even, you know, can address this in a real way.

[02:08:22] It's very challenging. And so I applaud your work on the task force. Anything you can do to work with our community leaders to encourage, you know, some innovative solutions and ways to get funding to both the schools and into the community to address these problems that are so difficult to deal with.

[02:08:39] I mean, there's no easy answer on this one and there hasn't been. And it's something that we haven't made easier with some of the laws we continue to pass. So I appreciate this and I thank you very much. And thank you for putting this together. - My pleasure. - Thank you, Dr. McDade.

[02:08:55] We'll revert back to your superintendent's time. - That concludes my superintendent's time. - Okay, okay. I didn't wanna step on any toes there. Next, we'll go to Ms. Williams for a committee update on the Governor's School of Innovation Park. - Thank you, Mr. Chairman. - I did give a small update at the last board matters.

[02:09:14] Just want to remind everyone that the last, excuse me, the next governor's school board meeting will be on November 9th. It'll be a virtual Zoom meeting. There's always opportunity for public comment at those board meetings. And I just want to congratulate Manassas Park for their new chair.

[02:09:36] Also at Prince William County Schools, I am the vice chair for the Governor's School for this year. The next committee update I just want to focus on is the Racial and Social Justice Commission. There will be a meeting tomorrow night at the McCourt building.

[02:09:51] I will unfortunately not be able to attend as the representative due to back to school nights, but the meeting is public. There's opportunity for public comment and it is live streamed as well. So we'll resume at the next meeting with any other committee updates, thank you.

[02:10:09] - Okay, on the board matters. This evening, we started last week with Mr. Wilk. We'll start with Ms. Jessie. And we're gonna give Ms. Jessie a little bit extra time tonight. Mr. Wilk has ceded some of his time.

[02:10:28] So she's got four minutes on the timer. - Okay, thank you. I don't know if I need the four minutes. I wanted to talk about our relationship with parents and kids and especially LPGT kids. Last week, we had a lot of parents in the boardroom and also Ms. Walts talking about the two model policies.

[02:10:51] I've read both model policies and they act as guidelines. In one, there were 70,000 people who were involved in surveys. An extensive amount of research was done. In another one, there was research, but it also included the kids.

[02:11:07] And I'm not here to present a favor for either model, but I think that we need to look at them as guidelines. I'm here to talk about the kids. And I'm going to start by talking about Maya Angelou. Maya Angelou, along with several famous women, including Madeleine Albright, wrote a book of memoirs.

[02:11:29] And Maya Angelou's memoir was called You've Been Raised. At the age of 16, she headed out to New York and found that she, her mother, pulled her to the side and said, don't forget that you have been raised.

[02:11:45] And all of us grew up in this situation where we've been raised by our parents. But these are not the same kids that we have that Madeleine Albright had. I'm sorry, that Maya Angelou had during her time. There used to be, at one point, I used to read about the research of who's influenced and who.

[02:12:05] And there were three influences in our children's lives. Number one was parents when Maya Angelou grew up, and two were peers. But now there's a third, I want to remind parents that there's a third influence, and that is a, I call them a stranger.

[02:12:23] There are social media. These kids are picking up social media, and so we need to look at that. Dr. Phil wrote about having a soft place to land. When I look at what we're doing in Prince William County, we're offering kids an opportunity to have a soft waste place to land because we have provided counselors for them.

[02:12:45] When you work as a principal, you hear a lot, and I'm not an expert. I must tell you, though, that when I was a principal, every year when we did this uh social service came in and talked about students who had problems with the you know the touch and uh looking at different bad touch good touch every single year i had three or four kids who showed up in that office i was always shocked at the number of kids and i want parents to know that this school system has supported students and we have provided counselors

[02:13:22] And we were the first school system, really, to have parent advisory councils. Dr. McDade has upped it a great deal. She has more advisory councils, and parents are involved. And I asked the counselors, and I'm asking you to please stay with me, because this is the most important part of this.

[02:13:42] I learned that when I asked one of the counselors, what is the number one reason children do not go to their parents? And he automatically said, shame and fear. It's not fear of the parents, it's fear of

losing the love and respect in his family and the shame that he will bring to his family.

[02:14:03] I know that we want to believe that children who are LBGT look at other media sources and decide that they want to become gay. I don't know anyone who would look up and decide they want to be gay because of the shame that comes with it.

[02:14:23] So I want the parents to know that this school system is willing and able to support students in any way possible by providing counselors and parent involvement. When you look at our parent involvement segment and Dr. McDade's strategic plan, and that's what I want to say.

[02:14:49] I think we provide, Dr. Phil said we have to provide kids with a soft place to land. and some of you have kids and you know that you have to have somebody for them to go to and we're the person that they go to. Thank you. - Thank you, Ms. Jessie and Ms.

[02:15:05] - Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just want to start off by saying happy Hispanic Heritage Month. I'm always excited every month that we have the opportunity to celebrate a unique group or this month is also for us back to school night bonanza, I guess you could say.

[02:15:26] Most of us have back to school nights, sometimes two or three in the evening. I know I have been to my one high school. It was at Fredland last night. I've been to an elementary school title one night. I look forward to attending as many as I can possibly fit into my schedule.

[02:15:42] Unfortunately, some elementaries are at the same time. So if I don't see you at one grade level night, I'm sure I will see you at another. This is just, I say this to say as a reminder to parents, please join your PTOs, your PTSAs, your principal advisory councils.

[02:15:58] I think now in 2023, the opportunity to participate in these groups have become easier. Many of them are done via Zoom and they are very accommodating to parent schedules. And it's important to be able to provide your voice and say in not only your child's education, but just events in the school and what you'd like to see happen.

[02:16:18] If you don't have your ParentVUE app, download it on your phone, please do so. It's pretty critical when you get back to school night and you have to go from class to class and your child doesn't bring the paper or you don't bring your child, it's very helpful. And ParentVUE is a wonderful app.

[02:16:34] You can find information on your student's schedule as well as classes and grades, everything right at the palm of your hand. And if you haven't had the chance to thoroughly review, I also am a nut when it comes to this. I love reading the code of behavior and have for years. And I think it is the most easily digestible code of behavior that we've ever had with definitions and everything.

[02:16:55] So please make sure you read it so you are up to date on some of the new things that we have going on this school year. I'd like to put an early plug in for Title I Family Camp. It'll be October 14th. I'm gonna plug it away as much as I can. I've gone in the past and I find it extremely helpful and full of wonderful programming.

[02:17:14] This Tuesday or this past Tuesday or yesterday, I was able to be at Freedom High School live for when the Evolve system was turned on. I just wanna thank all of the staff at the Kelly building, all of the staff in the buildings, 'cause Freedom wasn't the only school for a successful first run.

[02:17:31] I know that it will get better as the days goes on and students get acclimated, and as well as our staff working the Evolve system. I am very proud that we were able to utilize this system here in our

county. And next up, I have virtual office hours coming up this weekend, 9:22 at 10:00 a.m.

[02:17:49] If you are interested in participating, please email me. And lastly, I want to thank Casa Brumar. I was able to be a speaker on education policy at their LGBTQIA symposium. I want to echo a lot of Ms. Jessie's sentiments. And the most common thing that I heard was, staff would like to see a little bit better training, available, not mandatory on how to deal with issues with LGBTQI, I'm sorry.

[02:18:16] Trying to go too fast, LGBTQIA issues within schools. So thank you. Thank you, again thank you to all those who came and spoke tonight and just one more shout out for National Security Officer Appreciation Week, it's just this week, so happy Appreciation Week and again thank you. There are a number of recognitions and Mrs. Jessie touched on one with listed in the consent agenda that I'll touch on when they come next month. Last month we met for the Joint Environmental Task Force which I'll update everyone during the committee time in

[02:18:53] October. Jet meets every third Thursday. I'm going I will miss tomorrow's meeting because as was mentioned it's Innovation Elementary ribbon-cutting ceremony and as I just toured Innovation Elementary I'm excited for more community members and stakeholders to see this innovative new school. I want to thank my nominee for Sustainability Council, Corinne Vetter, a junior at Patriot High School.

[02:19:18] Last year she joined the Patriots Eco Club and is the president this year. When When I asked about her involvement and interest in sustainability, she said, "I became interested in environmental issues through Scouts, BSA, formerly Boy Scouts of America, and my family vacations.

[02:19:33] In Scouting, one of the most important aspects that they teach is respect for the outdoors, the environment, especially the leave no trace. As a family, they vacation in national parks where they've seen the diversity of beauty within the United States.

[02:19:49] And she wants to preserve and protect the beauty of nature. Her long-term goals is to become an environmental engineer and help create solutions that will lessen our impact on the planet. As a member of the Sustainability Council, she wants to help Prince William County Schools become more sustainable, and I am very thankful for her service.

[02:20:09] So thank you, Corinne. This month continues to be busy with back-to-school nights and events and soon homecoming games. So if you see me, please make sure you say hi, love and respect to all of you all.

[02:20:27] Ms. Sargo. Thank you. So it has been a busy month or a couple of weeks actually going to back to school nights. I also got a chance to stop by Signal Hill. They had a bingo night with their PTO and that was a lot of fun, meeting parents and some of the kids who go to the school and listening to how they were feeling about the beginning of the school year.

[02:20:50] I have met with some Prince William County employees to go over some of their concerns and parents I will go back to some more publicly announced office hours these were people who asked to me but when when the back-to-school night slowed down a little bit I want to reiterate that I think taking the revive training is really important for anybody really I also want to give out some thank thank yous I'm grateful to the problem solvers in this world in my own job today I had a behavior specialist I got to sit down and ask some questions and And he asked me one simple question that kind of realigned my whole thinking on some things I wanted to work on.

[02:21:29] So the people who do that, the coaches of our teachers, the leaders in our buildings who help us problem solve, thank you for doing those things. I met some principals here in Prince William County who also work really hard to try to take something off of teachers' plates.

[02:21:45] They try to give teachers a little extra recognition for the fact that they need some planning time some some time to get things done for their classrooms so every time we have those things that happen just take a second to be grateful because those are people who are watching out for each other making sure that our our employees are taken care of so that we can do our best work for our students as I want to be grateful to the people who are fixing my technology tonight as I've been experiencing some wacky things with my school board stuff so thank you for helping me fix that I look forward to open up some office hours soon as soon is back to school night, settle down.

[02:22:23] I hope everyone has a great couple of weeks and see you next meeting. - Mr. Wilk. - Okay, I'll do two minutes without a clock. Just a couple of things to state that I've done and then reiterate a couple of things about something, a position I have.

[02:22:45] So on 9/7, I did attend the Independence non-traditional school back to school night. That was a great event. I enjoyed seeing families from all across the county. All of us have students who attend independent school, but I'm proud that it is within the boundaries of the Potomac District.

[02:23:02] The Potomac Shores last week, two days back to back. Thank you, Ms. Williams for coming. Supervisor Franklin came. It was great to have so many people there. The first night I was there as a board member. The second night I kind of wore two hats. I was there also for my son.

[02:23:19] It was great to see so many inclusionary practices. I wasn't even aware of to go in and find out. My son's in like the shop class and also the gym class. It was great. And then last night, Grant Park had their back to school night.

[02:23:35] You know, another thing about Grant Park is, you know, we just recently have been working on the fenestration and coming to a conclusion on that. And just the sheer natural lighting in the cafeterias from these expanded windows, replacing old metallic doors for glass doors and putting more windows in the classroom has completely overhauled the appearance and just the overall kind of feel in that building.

[02:23:59] So I thank the division for that. Couple of things to clarify about the position about Code Orange. I wholeheartedly believe that snow days have a pivotal role in benefiting both students and staff, affording them precious respites amidst the unforgiving winter season.

[02:24:17] I do wanna clarify that our division and its commitment has affirmed the continuation of code red days as a response to adverse weather conditions. So these are not going away. Furthermore, the reduction of double runs in our bus system instills a greater confidence in the successful execution of two hour delays when necessary.

[02:24:37] So in the past, we didn't have those. Now we can possibly bring those back. Now, however, I do have concerns stemming from my role as a special needs father with a child who faces considerable challenges and during prolonged virtual sessions. Equally, I am the husband of a spouse who is a dedicated teacher, grappling mounting workload associated with live virtual instruction does weigh heavily on my mind.

[02:25:01] So consequently, my opposition to code orange still remains resolute. Thank you. - Okay, thank you very much. So it is a fall beginning of school year. Oh, I keep forgetting Ms. Wall. I don't know why I do that every time.

[02:25:17] Ms. Wall. - I don't think you do it every time. Good, you're good, you're good. Good evening, everyone. It's been a busy two weeks. I'm excited to officially welcome several individuals who have agreed to serve as representatives on advisory councils representing the Gainesville District.

[02:25:34] First, Mayor McCadwell as the Gainesville District representative on the Safe Schools Advisory Council, and Yubo Zhang, who has agreed to serve on the Superintendent's Advisory Council on Equity. I also wish to thank Karen Carney for her continued service and valuable contributions to the Advisory Council on Sustainability, and Lisa Fox for her continued service on Superintendent's Gifted Education Advisory Committee.

[02:25:56] I wanna talk about a few school visits. A few weeks ago, I was able to meet and welcome the new principal at Sudley Elementary, principal Rebecca Bowles. And last week, I met with the new principal at Unity Braxton, Dr. Mary Jane Boynton. To both, I'm so happy to have you here in the Gainesville District, and it was a pleasure visiting with you.

[02:26:13] I want to extend a special welcome to the new principal at Battlefield High School, Dolores Lucas, who comes to us from Patriot High School, and we'll begin there on Tuesday, September 26th. I'm looking forward to a great year over at Battlefield, and thank you to David Huckstein for stepping in as interim principal to open Battlefield this year and for the many long hours you put in to get the year off to a great start.

[02:26:35] So I wish you the best with your future plans. Other things I've been up to, I stopped by Sinclair Elementary School to deliver some school supplies that had been collected by a local church and had a good visit there with Principal Heather Good. I attended senior night at Battlefield High School where school counselors shared important information with parents about how to help their children navigate their senior year including the FAFSA and college applications and letters of recommendation.

[02:27:04] So that was a really great meeting and very useful. I think all the first time senior parents were so thankful. I went to sixth and seventh grade back to school nights at Bull Run Middle, enjoyed meeting staff and parents there. I attended the Nova Region Public School Leaders Network meeting last Friday with Ms. Jackson and we discussed how to address the teacher recruitment and retention challenges in Virginia and how to promote these efforts in the upcoming legislative session.

[02:27:30] So I look forward to that. I attended the Ronald Reagan Middle School back to school night for seventh and eighth grade last evening and that was a really well attended event and a great turnout, great to talk to so many parents. We had a meeting of the internal audit committee earlier this afternoon and we were doing some great things on that committee and I will share an update on that at a later time during the committee update portion I'd like to end with a message on parents and how important parents are to children and this is from Barbara Bush to the graduates of Wellesley College in June 1990 she said whatever the era whatever the times one thing will never change fathers and mothers if you have

[02:28:06] children they must come first you must read to your children and you must hug your children and you must love your children your success as a family our Our success as a society depends not on what happens in the White House, but on what happens inside your house.

[02:28:22] I just want to reiterate, parents, schools are here to support you. You are the most important people in your children's lives, and I hope you always remember that. And now, thank you, everybody, and have a good night. Mr. Willick. Thank you, Vice Chair Wall, always with a solid quote.

[02:28:41] So, anyways, we are at the beginning of the school year. I had some great opportunities to attend football games across the county. Hilton, Freedom, Gainesville and Colgan games, all well attended. A lot of excitement out there with our folks. You know, it is the beginning of the school year, so what do I worry about?

[02:28:58] I worry about our seniors as they're getting ready to apply to colleges, join the military, get jobs, making sure they're taking advantage of the opportunities that our school division has. Please, please, please, parents, read your emails. I will tell you the most important thing that you can do is read the emails that come home and follow up on them if you have any questions or concerns.

[02:29:19] There's a lot of information packed in them. I know there's a lot that come home. I know it can be tiring. You'll get them from the teachers, you're gonna get them from the counselors, you'll get them from the principals, you'll get newsletters, but there is a lot of great information in them and they are sent home with the intention to engage our parents and engaging our parents means we can help our students succeed and thrive in the way we'd like to see them.

[02:29:47] And college transcripts, if you can start getting ready your high school transcripts, start meeting with your counselors, start talking about your reference letters, start thinking about what teachers you're gonna ask for those, give your teachers time to write the letters. Don't wait till the last minute and tell them on October 1st that it's due October 3rd.

[02:30:04] Today's a good day to ask for reference letters, you know? It's very good to ask your teachers. They wanna do it and they wanna help you, but they can't do it if they get 20 requests with like one day left. FAFSA's parents, very stressful, take a look at that. And 69% of our school division is of some ethnic minority and with this year's changes in college admissions, I cannot emphasize enough that if you have questions about them, please see your counselor.

[02:30:36] More importantly, call the university you're applying. Ask them, what have they done? what have they changed to address the new admissions policies? Every university is restructuring their admissions policies, changing their essay questions, ask them what they're looking for, what are the attributes of a student that they would like to admit, they would like to see, and then as you craft your common application essays and your essays to apply to those universities, think about what they're saying about what they wanna see And if you know, it's sort of the, we say the why, the why university, the why UVA question,

[02:31:14] the why William & Mary question, the why Mason question, why do you wanna be here? That's what they wanna know. And so I think it's important to do your homework. It's really gonna be even more important this year, 'cause we're seeing changes that we've never seen on a scale this large. Lastly, this is a large school division.

[02:31:35] 1.7, 1.8 billion dollar budget. If it was a perfect school division, I wouldn't do this job or even wanna be here or try to be here. I think we can make improvements in this division. It's a large school division, like any school division across the country.

[02:31:52] And we face the challenges and magnitude of problems that everyone does. And you saw the challenges we're up against with drugs. And that's a big deal. But these challenges are difficult and they require collaboration, cooperation, working across party lines, bipartisanship.

[02:32:12] It requires us to work well with our Board of County Supervisors, with the General Assembly folks, with our police and our Sheriff. And all of this work, you know, over time, if we do it correctly, we can address some of these problems, but none of the big problems we have will get fixed overnight or with any one budget item or any other line item.

[02:32:32] I mean, it requires a lot of work. The school division brought Dr. McDade in, highly sought after. She was, she was a star out of all the candidates we applied and we did a nationwide search and it is because of her success and commitment to some of the most difficult problems school divisions face in the country.

[02:32:57] And it is really hard to do this work. You know, the challenges, whether they be in special education, whether it be equity oriented, whether they be in, am I getting yelled at? I know I'm over time, but anyways, whether they be in each of these areas, they are tremendous challenges.

[02:33:19] And if it was easy, they'd have been solved and they're not easy. And so I recognize frustrations that exist and that is why all of us up here come to work and come to this work to try to make it better.

[02:33:37] And I think we are making it better, but it takes time, it takes effort and it takes a collaboration with the entire community. And so as we move forward in this school year, I am optimistic and I continue to tell everyone Prince William County Schools is one of the best school divisions in the nation.

[02:33:53] And we are leading in many ways. And we're gonna continue to do that hard work and continue to make improvements where we can. So I wanna thank you. And with that, I'd like to adjourn tonight's meeting. Thank you all.

