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Prince William County School Board Meeting, Wednesday, October 4, 2023

Date	Wednesday, October 4, 2023
Place	Prince William County School Board, Virginia
Length	1h 56m (video)

- Official meeting video (YouTube): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0SDOk6LDoQg
- 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] I'd like to call this meeting the Prince William County School Board to order. Pursuant to school board policy 139, school board member participation in meetings by electronic communications. School board member Lori Williams will participate in this meeting through electronic means from her home due to a medical condition that prevents her physical attendance, the clerk will so note in the minutes of the meeting.

[00:00:17] The motion is 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? Ms. Jackson. - I second. - Any discussion? - All in favor, raise your hand, signify aye.

[00:00:33] Any opposed? No opposition, unanimous passes 5-0. Motion enter closed session. - Six. - Six. Moving on, moving to enter closed session. - 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.

[00:00:56] One, to discuss with staff the appointment, transfer, release, assignment, performance, 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 sections 2.2-3711A2 and 8.

[00:01:21] 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 section 2.2-3711A2 and 8.

[00:01:37] Four, to discuss with division counsel and staff the actual or probable litigation and specific legal matters involving specific staff and students under Virginia code section 2.2-3711A7 and 8. And five, 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 an open meeting would jeopardize the security of such facilities pursuant to Virginia Code Section 2.2-3711A19.

[00:02:07] Do I have a second? Mr. Chairman. Ms. Jackson. Ms. Jackson seconds. All in favor of moving into approving whatever she just said, say aye. Ms. Williams, how do you vote?

[00:02:24] Ms. Williams votes yes. Motion passes. It looks like what, 7, 6, 7. At this time the Prince William County School Board will enter closed session and return

[00:02:39] open session one hour prince william county school board is now returning to open session from

[00:03:44] closed session moving on to agenda item 8.01 closed session certification a motion is in order miss 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 october 4 2023 be certified by adopting the following resolution 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

[00:04:23] 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 Do I have a second? Sure.

[00:04:39] Ms. Jackson? I second. Any discussion? Please vote. Ms. Williams, how do you vote? Yes.

[00:04:55] Ms. Williams votes yes. Moving on to closed session action item. A motion is in order for 9.01, approval of appointments and releases of specific employees. Vice Chair Wall.

[00:05:10] Mr. Chairman, I move that the Prince William County School Board approve the appointments and releases of specific employees as presented in closed session. Do I have a second? Mr. Chairman. Ms. Zargarpur. I second. Any discussion? Please vote.

[00:05:26] Ms. Williams, how do you vote? - Yes. - Ms. Williams votes yes. - Seven yes, one absent. Ralston, motion passed.

[00:05:42] - On to 9.02, a motion's in order. - Mr. Chairman, I move that the Prince William County School Board approve the request for religious exemption from compulsory school attendance for cases RE23-19 and RE23-20.

[00:05:58] - Do I have a second? - Yes, I second. - Ms. Jessie. - I second. - Ms. Jessie seconds, any discussion? - Okay, please vote. Ms. Williams, how do you vote? - Yes. - Ms. Williams votes yes.

[00:06:24] - The vote is seven yes, one absent. Raulston, motion passed. - Moving on to 9.03, a motion's in order, Ms. Wall. - Mr. Chairman, I move that for the reasons set forth in the Student Management and

Alternative Programs Department's SMAPD letter of September 13th, 2023, the Prince William County School Board approves SMAP's recommendation to reassign student SRH-224-041 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, I second. - Ms. Zargarpur, any discussion? Please vote. Ms. Williams, how do you vote? - Yes. - Ms. Williams votes yes.

[00:07:20] - The vote is seven yes, one absent. Ralston, motion passed. - Okay, that wraps up closed session action items. We will now stand for the Pledge of Allegiance. Tonight, we have Isabella Aversano with us on the dais. Isabella is our student rep from the Gainesville School.

[00:07:36] She will lead us in the pledge. Gainesville High School, sorry.

[00:07:59] Okay, moving on. 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 necessary to create a thriving future for themselves and their community.

[00:08:16] We dedicate this time during our meetings to recognize students, staff members, and schools that have earned an honor award at the state or national level. 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.

[00:08:35] Tonight, the school board will recognize 12 Prince William County Public Schools that have earned the Virginia Naturally Schools designation from the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources. This is the official environmental education school recognition program in the Commonwealth.

[00:08:50] Schools applying for this award must show their efforts both in the classroom and beyond increasing environmental literacy of their students. Our 12 schools receiving this award have embraced Prince William County's commitment to improving environmental awareness and stewardship by educating students and staff.

[00:09:06] They continue to work toward the school division's dedication to sustainability, the environment, and reducing the carbon footprint. We begin our recognition with Mrs. Adele Jackson of the Brentsville District, who will introduce our first award winners.

[00:09:23] Ms. Jackson. - Thank you, Dr. Lateef. The Brentsville District is proud to recognize Patriot High School and Piney Branch Elementary School. Patriot High School is represented tonight by Cassie Wethersby, sponsor of the Ecology Club and Sustainability Coordinator, and Ecology Club President Corinne Vetter and Vice President Sherrilyn Phillips.

[00:09:52] And Piney Branch Elementary is represented by Principal Stephen Thorne, first grade teacher Roxanne Edwards, second grade teacher Cherie Key, and fifth grade teacher Harmony Biska. Thank you all for being here and congratulations to both. And I know that Corinne Rutter, you were voted in for Sustainability Council last week, so congratulations in person.

[00:10:13] Thank you. - Thank you, Miss Jackson. And from the Coles District, Miss Lisa Zargarpur, please introduce our award-winning schools. - Thank you, Dr. Lateef. The Coles District would like to recognize Benton Middle School and Coles Elementary School.

[00:10:33] Benton Middle School is represented tonight by Principal Jerry Piacchese, Scott Dean, seventh grade science teacher, and Green Team Ecology Club's sponsor, and Coles Elementary School is represented by Principal Catherine Forgus. This is Coles Elementary School's 10th year to earn this designation.

[00:10:51] 10, I know, right? Congratulations to you both. - Excellent, thank you, Ms. Zargarpur. Now I invite vice chair Jen Wall, Jennifer Wall, representative of the Gainesville district.

[00:11:06] Ms. Wall. - Thank you, Dr. Lateef. On behalf of the Gainesville district, it is my pleasure to recognize Mountain View Elementary School and Mullin Elementary School.

[00:11:22] Mountain View Elementary School is represented tonight by principal Adrian Harrison, Esau teacher, Julie Grace, and kindergarten teacher, Stephanie Clement. Mullin Elementary School is represented principal Jennifer Hoffauer gifted teacher Janice Pfeiffer and custodian manager Francisco Bonilla Racinos not here congratulations to both of these terrific Gainesville district schools wonderful thank you miss wall I will go ahead and recognize our Neabsco district and they are proud to acknowledge four

[00:12:00] schools Garfield High School Bel Air Elementary School Dale City Elementary School and Neabsco Elementary School. Representing Garfield High School is Principal Matt Matheson, Biology Teacher and Green Club Sponsor Teresa Kitchen, and Biology Teacher Abby Flanders.

[00:12:20] Representing Bel Air Elementary School, we have Principal Antoinette McDonald, Third Grade Teacher Carrie Rupp, and First Grade Teacher Dawn Elms. Representing Dale City Elementary School, we welcome Principal Brian Slater, assistant principal Chantelle Baldwin, and fifth grade teacher Keaton Beaumont.

[00:12:41] And representing Neabsco Elementary School, we have principal Brooke Lavecki and school social worker Corey Coburn here tonight. Congratulations, and let's give a great round of applause for all of these schools from the wonderful Neabsco District.

[00:13:00] I invite Ms. Williams from the Woodbridge District, Ms. Williams, to speak on behalf of your schools. Ms. Williams. Thank you, Dr. Lateef. If you don't mind reading my script, I... Sure, got it. And with great honor, the Woodbridge District and Ms. Williams would like to recognize Freedom High School and Belmont Elementary.

[00:13:20] Woo! Yes. Representing Freedom High School tonight, we have Principal Chevelli Smith and representing Belmont Elementary, we welcome Principal Joy Green. Gifted resource teacher as well, Dr. Kathy Lamont and parent liaison, Brenda Panagua.

[00:13:37] Hold on. Panagua. Panagua. Ms. Panagua. to our two schools from the woodbridge district and this time i would like to ask jessica wymer supervisor of energy management and sustainability of the facilities department and to step forward and share a few words on behalf of our 12 distinguished schools miss wymer good evening dr latif vice chair wall members of the school board and dr mcdade my name is jessica wymer supervisor of energy and sustainability in the facilities department and on behalf of the 12

[00:14:15] schools being honored for their recognition as Virginia Naturally Schools. We thank you for the opportunity to be able to stand before you this evening. The Virginia Naturally Schools program is managed by the Department of Wildlife Resources and serves as the official environmental education

school recognition program in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Schools must apply and show progress each year to be considered for additional awards. Recipients exemplify environmental literacy both in the classroom and on the school grounds our 12 pwcs honorees demonstrate our commitment

[00:14:52] to sustainable schools and carry out the pwcs vision 2025 launching thriving futures strategic plan priorities of incorporating environmental literacy and using the building as a teaching tool we would like to commend each of the 12 schools and thank their administrators community partners teachers and sustainability liaisons for their effort and support in applying for this honor.

[00:15:21] All schools being recognized here this evening actively participate in our annual energy challenge and have incrementally increased their participation in energy and sustainability program here in PWCS. My team strives to be a system of support for all schools as we provide assistance, guidance and resources in all things environmental literacy and using the building as a teaching tool.

[00:15:46] One of my colleagues in particular, Ms. Jeanne Jabera, who is standing here with me this evening, is a champion for all of our students, staff, and schools in the areas of environmental science, literacy, and stewardship. Ms. Jabera provides countless hours of service in support of our schools, achieving much-deserved recognition in both state and national programs, including Virginia Naturally.

[00:16:13] At this time we'd like to share some examples of how our 12 honorees have embraced our sustainability commitment outside of the classroom. Bel Air Elementary School created outdoor garden spaces in partnership with Lowe's. Belmont Elementary School conducted outdoor classroom activities in partnership with their neighbor Perrick or the Potomac Environmental Research and Education Center.

[00:16:38] Benton Middle School planted trees with the Prince William Soil and Water Conservation District. Coles Elementary School has received this award as we mentioned earlier for the 10th time and has extensive community engagement in their gardens. Dale City Elementary School has revitalized their outdoor classroom and eco trail in partnership with Keep Prince William Beautiful. Freedom High School received their green ribbon designation this past April and houses the Center for Environmental and Natural Sciences. Garfield High School has an outstanding green team and has created the most garden spaces in PWCS by our count. They are complete with

[00:17:16] educational signage, seating, and beautiful scenery. Mountain View Elementary School has recently established their first garden in partnership with the Virginia Cooperative Extension Master Gardeners. Mullin Elementary School actively participates in our pilot compost program, helping to move organic waste to the Prince William County Compost facility thus diverting our landfill from our landfill stream. Neabsco Elementary planted and cared for a hydroponic garden and students were able to taste different types of greens from the garden. Patriot High School maintains an outdoor science classroom and multiple garden spaces

[00:17:54] including one recently renovated with all native plants. And finally last but not least Piney Branch Elementary School created outdoor learning spaces and participated in and trout in the classroom. Thank you again for recognizing these 12 Virginia Naturally schools this evening.

[00:18:13] These schools' contributions and support of environmental stewardship help the division move toward meeting its goals for environmental literacy and using the building as a teaching tool. And together, we are all launching thriving futures into sustainability and beyond.

[00:18:29] Thank you. - Thank you, Mrs. Weimer. Ms. Weimer, with all those involved, will all those involved in supporting our 12 schools, including family members stand in recognition of their support.

[00:18:47] Also anybody in our crowd, please give them a round of applause as well. Well, Ms. Wymer, we've been on this journey a while here and for all of the schools who represented tonight, we can't thank you enough.

[00:19:02] This school division, the school board three years ago voted on an energy and sustainability initiative, unanimously supported by all districts, everyone in our community and all schools and leaders. And we really appreciate the work. Dr. McDade, thank you for including this work in the strategic planning document.

[00:19:19] And this work is so critical to our county moving forward and making sure our students have environmental literacy and our community does as well. You teach all of us how to be better stewards of our environment. Dr. McDade, I know you have some words. - Thank you so much, Dr. Lateef. Congratulations again to all 12 of our Virginia Naturally Schools.

[00:19:39] We're incredibly proud of the work that you're doing. This distinction really highlights our continued work in PWCS to invest and engage in sustainable practices. And I would be remiss if I didn't acknowledge our energy management and sustainability team and all of your hard work for working with our schools, the passion that you have in carrying out the vision for sustainable practice and being environmentally conscious in PWCS.

[00:20:03] So we thank you for your hard work and your efforts in supporting our schools and bringing this work to fruition. And thank you each for your commitment to uphold the strategic plan and the vision of Prince William County Public Schools. You make us proud.

[00:20:19] - Yes, very good. Am I missing something? No, am I? Okay, hold on one second, my apologies.

[00:20:39] I'm sorry, thank you, Dr. McDade. Hold on, I'm off, here we go, my apologies. I am off script. At this time, I would like to request our honorees to come forward for a photo with the school board and receive a small token of our appreciation.

[00:20:56] We will start with one photo that includes all elementary schools. The second photo will include middle and high schools. Okay. - That was funny though.

[00:21:27] - You guys wanna get your medal?

[00:25:19] - Okay, that was wonderful. And I didn't note, I know she left, but Ms. Weimer told us that we doubled the number of schools being recognized this year from six to 12. And that was a challenge that I think the board put in front of them last year.

[00:25:35] So this is fantastic, very good news. Wonderful presentation. All right, next we're moving on to the adoption the consent agenda. That will be 12.01. A motion is in order. Vice Chair Wall. - Mr. Chairman, I move that the Prince William County School Board approve the public meeting consent agenda as recommended.

[00:25:57] - Do I have a second? - Mr. Chairman. - Ms. Zargarpur. - I second. - Any discussion? - Discussion, Jen, Ms. Wall, discussion. - Yes, I have some discussion. - Mike. - Sorry. - Yes, thank you.

[00:26:13] I want to highlight item 12.10, the speech and debate resolution. The impetus for this started with students. It was student-led effort reaching out to a couple of school board members.

[00:26:32] And as we got discussing the needs of the students, the resolution came into being. Besides the importance of developing students and graduates who can think critically and weigh issues and do so in a respectful manner.

[00:26:54] There's also a great and exciting opportunity to further the speech and debate programs that Prince William County Schools offers. A long, long time ago in a school division far away, I was a speech and debate student and I look back at those experiences, those academic extracurricular experiences as some of the very best that I could have participated in and so I am very excited for this resolution and for the opportunity to continue to promote some really great things that are in our strategic plan and to put some emphasis on it and to also be responsive to the students who are advocating

[00:27:34] for us to put this forward and shine a little bit of light on it. Thank you Ms. Wall. Mr. Wilk. Thank you sir and I want to thank you Ms. Wall. I appreciate being included in your on your agenda item and commend you for your leadership on the resolution for promoting free speech and debate in our schools. Reflecting on my brief experience with my high school debate team and my time teaching eighth grade civics, I've always been captivated by the power of respectful dialogue.

[00:28:03] Even in today's challenging climate, I believe in the importance of expanding debate clubs and creating opportunities for students to enhance their communication skills. The structured debate format i implemented in my civics class fostered a respectful exchange of diverse viewpoints however considering the current state of our nation i wonder if such activities could still unfold seamlessly however it is essential to explore ways to ensure that fostering these skills remain a comfortable and constructive part of education thank you mr wilk miss jackson thank

[00:28:38] you um the student rights of freedom and speech and expression and promotion of speech debate is is a great example of collaboration and advocacy. Patriot High School was recognized last spring for speech and debate during Thriving Futures and later a student advocated for the growth of debate in the district.

[00:28:56] This resolution, again, is an example of both past and present student advocacy and board collaboration. Thank you, Ms. Wall, for your leadership on this. It also furthers the commitment to prepare students to be global citizens with thriving futures. Debate offers another avenue for success, a team building for students, And I just want to take a moment to advocate again for growing CHESS because it's along the same avenue and creating different ways for people to be successful.

[00:29:24] So I'm excited to see this grow in this division, and thank you. - Sargepoor. - I am happy to see this speech and debate resolution. I also know that there are staff members who are very interested in being able to promote this, so I hope that they will get an opportunity to work with the students a little bit more and develop things.

[00:29:44] I know there were a couple that I talked to who would like to see it as an elective type class in schools. - Miss Jessie. - I just wanted to remind everyone that the Martin Luther King Youth Oratorical gives opportunities to students to speak before an audience and that that will take place this year and it will be at Kogan High School, thank you.

[00:30:11] - And since I'll just weigh in here, Miss Jessie, that is one of the great programs this county has and my children have participated in it. Never made it to the finals, but it is an outstanding learning experience that's done in our middle school. And I think this resolution seeks to solidify the support we had for the MLK program and the spirit with which that program has always been run and moving forward, creating more opportunities and more programs as the resolution reads as part of our strategic plan, part of the great work public schools in America have to do.

[00:30:44] And I think, you know, whenever this school division puts its mind to it, you know, we can really do some great things. And so with that, I will support the resolution as well. So please vote. And Ms. Williams, how do you vote on the consent agenda? - I vote yes. - Ms. Williams votes yes.

[00:31:02] - The vote is seven yes, one absent. Ralston, motion passed. - Moving on to citizen comment time. Those citizens who signed up in advance with a 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 and citizens may speak on agenda items or other topics germane to the operations and policies of Prince William County Schools.

[00:31:23] Please use proper decorum and manners while at the podium or you'll be asked to step aside. We ask that the audience please be respectful to each speaker and refrain from any clapping, cheering or jeering to avoid disruption of the meeting. If you do not do so, the board will recess and we will ask that the room be cleared to restore public order.

[00:31:39] Tonight, we have 20 citizens signed up to speak. When I call your name, please come up to the podium and state your name and address for the record. I'll call the first five up and they can grab the seats up front here. Jared Gay, Teresa Koning, Emily Cherry, Monica Sebastian Katie, and James Utterback.

[00:31:59] Jared Gay. Hi, my name is Jared Gay, and my address is on file with the clerk. So in case you're wondering why you have so many employees who aren't coming when you call them, despite the fact that they are here tonight and did, in fact, sign up to speak, it's because they've decided collectively that tonight all they had to say to you is exactly what you have shown them you are willing to listen to.

[00:32:28] Teresa Koning, Emily Cherry, Monica Sebastian Cady, James Utterback.

[00:33:01] Okay. The next five, Katie Jefferson, Maggie Hansford, Richard Jesse, Linda Mitchell, and Brandy Peacher. Katie Jefferson, Maggie Hansford, Richard Jesse.

[00:33:24] Good evening. My name is Richard Jesse. My address is on file. I just wanted to talk to you about a conversation I had at the DMV the other day about private schools.

[00:33:41] and after I had the conversation I thought about what the person was saying how great private schools are and I want to point out a couple of things number one private schools are good and part of the reason they're good is because they are selective they choose who can come to the school they choose what they want to teach and so forth so you know that that's a distinct advantage In the public schools, we have to take everybody that comes to the door.

[00:34:15] That person can be disabled, that person could be queer, that person could be a transgender. We have to take them. Some of the people with the private schools, they don't take them. They won't take them. If your kid is not doing well, they will probably kick you out of the private school and you'll come back to the public schools.

[00:34:38] We can't do that in the public schools. We have to support the people that are there. So that's a big difference in that. The other thing I want to talk about just briefly is last fall, there were kids in here that did extremely well at the state finals in indoor track.

[00:34:59] And I think I spoke at least twice recommending that we look at the possibility of having an indoor track in this county. I'm happy to say that on Tuesday at the Board of Supervisors, they will have a public hearing on a new athletic facility somewhere in this county that will include a private track.

[00:35:25] Like we had when we had Colgan High School, people say it costs too much money and so forth. I believe, and I have asked several times, I think the swimming pool is probably close to paying the operating costs with their participation.

[00:35:44] But if not, the one thing that that swimming pool has done, it has taught a lot of elementary kids how to swim and how to be safe. So there's a benefit that we can have in the track.

[00:36:00] Our indoor track people were training outside because there is no indoor track in this area. And so I'm happy to say that the board of supervisors is planning and there is a public hearing next Tuesday at 2:00.

[00:36:18] Thank you. Linda Mitchell. Good evening, esteemed school board, Dr. McDade, student representative, ladies and gentlemen.

[00:36:34] My information is on file with the clerk. I'm president of the Prince William School Librarians Association. PWSLA is the most local group of the American Association of School Librarians. First, thank you school board candidates for answering PWSLA's three little questions about school libraries for our members.

[00:36:54] As school librarians we focus on how books in our libraries meet the needs of our students including academic ability, interest, learning opportunities, easy reading for pleasure and more challenging children's and young adult literature. In the event of an objection to a particular book, we appreciate good communication and and are fortunate to be able to provide several thousand options that students can read instead.

[00:37:19] During our teaching, curating collections, and offering books, we school librarians have fielded tons of super questions and comments from our students these past seven weeks. I'd like to share a small sample of those before my time runs out, and it looks like I have a good amount of time.

[00:37:40] Before I do get to those comments, I want to just point out that it is Band Books Week. But during Band Books Week, all school librarians are working to support the great things that our students are doing.

[00:37:56] And we want to thank you for supporting the crucial work of the trained and certified school librarians do every day in our schools. So here are some comments from some various elementary students and teachers around our district and in Manassas City and Manassas Park a student says hey you are the lady of the books and the librarian said I decided that is my new title and she now goes by lady of the books a librarian in an elementary school in our district says my school is the triumphant winner of Virginia's prestigious reading makes sense this accomplishment showcases dedication of students teachers and the entire community to promoting financial

[00:38:35] literacy through the joy of reading another librarian says on the first day of school I read Lola in the library and a little boy called out hey her family looks just like mine another librarian from a middle school says at the end of a scavenger hunt a young man grabbed a picture book and started reading aloud to his classmates it was amazing I took a picture and he asked me to share it on our student announcements another student in the middle school says you know I've been here so long I could do your job did you know that and the The librarian said, yes, you are an honorary librarian.

[00:39:10] And the student replied in earnest, I could be a librarian in real life. Another student in the middle school says, hey, they've got books in Spanish, OMG, like the language. So I just wanted to bring you some positive things from our school libraries.

[00:39:26] We were really enjoying the kids this year, and we just want to thank you for your support. Next five will be Brandi Peacher, Julie Cantor, Sandy Huey, Elizabeth Flores, Tanya Eubanks, and Rebecca Marshall.

[00:39:46] Maybe I said six. Brandi Peacher, Julie Cantor, Sandy Huey, Elizabeth Flores, Tanya Eubanks, Rebecca Marshall.

[00:40:07] Okay, next group. Melissa Henry, Sarah Lowry, Amy McCarthy, Judy Adams, and Yvette Martinez-Rigg. So we'll go to Melissa Henry. Hello. Thank you, school board. My name is Melissa Henry, and I live at 7409 Howell Run Court in the Ococon District.

[00:40:35] A little short there. Thank you for your time and concern. Thank you, school board, for listening to us, to citizen comments, to putting in long hours, considering what is best for our students, and reading our emails, and it is appreciated.

[00:40:53] So, I have a concern that goes back to pre-pandemic times. Students are using school-issued laptops to watch YouTube during instructional hours. It's common practice to allow students to use their computers for entertainment.

[00:41:09] When they submit their work, even if the work they turn in is subpar, they can often still watch YouTube in class, rather than doing work that is related to the subject. The biggest YouTube usage times are during homeroom, independent study, flex time or whatever else you want to call that time that is supposed to be set aside for enrichment or catching up.

[00:41:38] It's time that's reported to the state as instructional hours. And some of our children with electronics addictions or other special needs are particularly suffering because YouTube is right at their fingertips all throughout their classes.

[00:41:54] YouTube could be blocked from student and generic logins. I know that students have their personal devices and they're going to do what they will with those. I am specifically concerned about devices that are paid for with taxpayer dollars in class with teacher and administrative knowledge and sometimes consent.

[00:42:15] I have talked to teachers, administrators, parents from several schools within the county. But you will see the truth for yourself if you survey teachers, principals, students, and have your IT run reports.

[00:42:31] I'm confident that you will find an unacceptable amount of instructional time that is forfeited to YouTube entertainment on school-issued electronic devices. Okay.

[00:42:49] Thank you. Sarah Lowry. Sarah Lowry: I am Sarah Lowry, living in the Occoquan District, and my address is on file. I am the mother of three children, two current Prince William County students, and one former student.

[00:43:08] At the last school board meeting, I watched the presentation on the various substance abuse prevention programs available in our county. It was then that I vowed to turn my words into action and decided to speak at this meeting tonight. I am not one to rock the boat, instead a team player yielding to the rules and going with the status quo.

[00:43:24] But tragically, I am no longer able to do that. You see, my oldest child Aiden never graduated from Prince William County schools because on December 3rd, 2022, I found him dead in his room from a fentanyl overdose. He will be forever 17. Aiden participated in the gifted program, participated in clubs and activities, and he excelled at learning. Unfortunately, all of his passions came to a halt when he became addicted to several substances, starting with vaping and marijuana, and including his life-ending addiction to illicit fentanyl. Aiden was a Prince William County student from kindergarten through 12th grade. This means that he would have had access to the prevention programs mentioned in the presentation last week.

[00:44:02] For him, this meant learning about the dangers of substances through his health classes. That is not true prevention, and it wasn't enough. I am happy to be part of a time when awareness of the dangers is increasing and there is momentum toward change. Luckily for my children, we are a family with financial means for treatment and an understanding of behavioral health.

[00:44:20] We talk to our children and get to know their friends. Despite all this, Aiden became addicted to substances. Yes, conversations start at home, but parents cannot do it alone. is a disease and parents can't prevent it or cure it by themselves. We need school, community, and health care support.

[00:44:36] I need to mention something else. When Aiden died, a decision was made not to send a letter to the school community regarding his death. I believe this is a result of fear originating from stigma. God forbid the community find out that our children are using drugs. But guess what? They are. Aiden's primary supplier for his substances was also a former Prince William County student.

[00:44:54] Until we take a stand together talking about this issue in the open, we will never make change. No more silence. that this issue is someone else's problem. Dr. Medade said last week that our school system is not a healthcare industry, and that is correct. But our school system is an educational establishment, and therefore it is the school system's responsibility to educate.

[00:45:14] A student will not have a thriving future if they are addicted to substances, or in my son's case, dead. Last week you asked about wish list items. I have them. Allocate money for more substance abuse prevention specialists. I need to make sure that all who are listening understand. We have one, one for all 91,000 students.

[00:45:31] Additionally, the school system needs to allocate money for these specialists to work with families and students from a prevention standpoint. We can no longer afford to wait. One life lost is too many. One of Aiden's final wishes was to convince others not to ruin their lives as he thought he had ruined his. He is no longer here to be that voice, so I carry his message on for him.

[00:45:50] Please listen to his plea and act now. Thank you.

[00:46:08] - Thank you, Ms. Lowry. - Thank you, Ms. Lowry. Amy McCarthy, Judy Adams, Yvette Martinez-Rigg.

[00:46:31] So with that, it wraps up citizen comment time. We'll be moving on to student representative time. Tonight we have student representative Isabella Aversana, a senior at Gainesville High School on the dais with us. Isabella, hold on one second.

[00:46:55] Wait for the room to clear.

[00:47:20] Go ahead Isabella, thank you. - Good evening to the school board superintendent in Prince William County community. As mentioned, my name is Isabella and I'm one of the student representatives this year. This past Monday was the first student senate meeting of the year. For those of you who aren't familiar, the Senate is composed of one junior or senior from each high school in the county. The senators serve as a nexus between the respective schools and the school board. We're able to get a lot of valuable input from across the county through them. At this past meeting we discussed where each of our schools were at in the process of implementing student voice committees. Tonight's agenda discussed Prince William County's approval of the student rights of freedom of speech and expression. Student voice committees are a positive step towards

[00:47:59] those principles. I spoke about these last time but in case you need a little refresher the goal of these committees is to provide students with the opportunity to share input on issues that they feel are important or unique to their schools and to give feedback on district level ideas and policies as well some schools such as Osborne Park Unity Reed and Hilton have already had committee meetings and they have begun to establish norms regulations and have also begun to identify some popular concerns our goal is that by the end of the year each high school has a voice committee with at least 10 to 15 members has met at least once a quarter and is working with their leadership team to create agendas so students have a seat at the table and that the committees are

[00:48:36] diverse and reflect the schools themselves some concerns have already emerged regarding the evolved systems school grading and retake policies access to specialty programs when applying for high school experience of students with service animals and access to advanced academics such as AP and IB classes our goal is to investigate these topics further throughout the year and we are hoping student voice committees will not only generate feedback but solutions students can share info about their experiences by attending student voice committee meetings, getting in touch with their senator, or even emailing me or the other representatives.

[00:49:06] Thank you for your time, that concludes my remarks. - Thank you, Isabella. We are now moving on to superintendent's time. Dr. McDade. - Thank you, Dr. Lateef. Congratulations again to our 12 Virginia Naturally Schools and their continued efforts towards reaching our strategic plan goal of Green Ribbon School designation for at least five schools.

[00:49:29] I am proud to announce nine PWCS schools been recognized as 2023 America's Healthiest Schools by the Alliance for a Healthier Generation, a leading children's health organization. Only 10 schools were named in Virginia. This highly regarded annual distinction is awarded for demonstrating exceptional efforts to prioritize the essential health needs of the school community. These schools meet or exceed best practice standards in one or more topic areas related to the physical, mental, and social emotional health of students teachers and staff congratulations to the following schools on receiving this

[00:50:07] nationwide recognition ashland bennett buckland mills kilby montclair piney branch marshall victory elementary school as well as parkside middle school this honor reflects the important and outstanding work of the social emotional learning coaches and staff throughout the school division on behalf of the school board and myself i look forward to recognizing these schools at our next thriving futures focus i also wish to acknowledge seniors psych auger at osborne park high school and joseph dietrich at patriot high school for being named 2024 national merit scholarship

[00:50:45] semi-finalists the national merit scholarship corporation announced the names of over 16 000 semi-finalists in the 69th annual national merit scholarship program these students entered the 2024 national merit scholarship program by taking the 2022 preliminary sat national merit scholarship qualifying test the pool of semi-finalists represents less than one percent of the nation's high school seniors congratulations to sky and joseph in preparation for securing thriving futures for our students after graduation college and career counselors in every high school are

[00:51:24] scheduling university visits, college and career planning, Naviance work sessions, scholarship and financial aid opportunities, and career and self-discovery explorations. Additionally, PWCS will be hosting two college fairs in October. The first one at Freedom High School on October 12th from 6 to 8 p.m. and the second at Battlefield High School on October 16th from 6 to 8 p.m. These college fairs are an excellent place for students to begin the planning process for post-secondary education opportunities with tiny talks, meet-and-greets with in-state and out-of-state college and university

[00:52:02] representatives, free application for federal student aid information, and more. Please review our PWCS College Fair website for more information and registration. In September, Governor Youngkin approved the state budget which allocated additional funds for education. Not only have these additional funds supported our commitment to continued investment in employee compensation, through an additional two percent salary increase which will take effect on January 1, 2024. Additional funds will be allocated through the All in Virginia plan to support a three-pronged approach to accelerate learning loss recovery,

[00:52:39] specifically addressing absenteeism, literacy, and learning. Through this plan the state will provide school divisions with additional funding and resources to include a playbook to reduce chronic absenteeism, funding to hire and support grades 4 through 8 reading specialists and in additional investments in high dosage tutoring for students in small groups and an individual setting and that's on top of the dollars the ESSER funds that we had already set aside in our recovery plan for high dosage tutoring. School divisions are preparing plans to use this additional funding to accelerate learning loss recovery and in

[00:53:17] the coming month we will be providing more information for how PWCS will leverage this additional support. As we conclude Childhood Cancer Awareness Month, I want to acknowledge the inspiring work our students are doing to raise awareness, support, and spirits. I continue to be impressed year after year with the efforts of our students' philanthropic endeavors toward the significant causes such as childhood cancer. For the sixth consecutive year, T. Clay Wood Elementary School continues the proud tradition of collecting toys for Childhood Cancer Awareness Month to donate to Inova L.J. Murphy Children's

[00:53:55] Hospital. Similarly, the sixth annual Lego Drive is in full swing at Haymarket Elementary School where students are trying to beat the school's 2020 record of collecting 207 Lego kits also to be

donated to Inova Children's Hospital for children undergoing cancer treatment. These are just two examples of the amazing and personal efforts being made at schools around PWCS. Raising awareness is about continued dedication to a noble cause such as research to end childhood cancer. I hope you will consider supporting your local school's crusade for our brave warriors in the fight for their lives. At this time I

[00:54:34] would like to invite Associate Superintendent for Special Education Dr. Ashley Ryer to provide an update on special education. I want to thank the board for your continued push as we work to improve across the board all programs but especially special special education all of your feedback your questions as we have been working with this new office under dr. Ryer there's a lot of updates that she'll share in the work that we have been doing but I do want to thank you each for being a partner in that work along the way I'm bringing forward any concerns that you might have to be addressed and staying

[00:55:11] informed and engaged with all of your questions and feedback. Dr. Reier. Good evening, Dr. Lateef, Vice Chair Wall, members of the board and Dr. McDade. This evening's presentation provides an update from the Office of Special Education. I'm joined by the directors who lead the respective areas within our office, Dr. Darwin Barker, Director of Tiered Interventions and Supports, Dr.

[00:55:35] Amy Holub, Director of Special Education Specialized Instruction, and Dr. Wendy Martin Johnson, Director of Special Education Programs and Development. As you're aware, this office was established to open the 22-23 school year with focused attention on special education processes and the performance and outcomes for students with disabilities, which we know are areas of need.

[00:55:59] The establishment of a standalone office offered increased leadership and also provides an opportunity to assess what can be improved and enhanced. This presentation will conclude with the priorities established for this current year based on a year of evaluating our opportunities for improving in order to meet the needs of all students, including students with disabilities, which is commitment one of our strategic plan.

[00:56:28] Leadership in this office was reorganized into three departments to address critical areas. One goal was to protect the focus on instruction, in addition to continuing work with schools around compliance with special education regulations. The Department of Specialized Instruction focuses on the total programming for all disability areas, including serving students across the continuum of placements in their least restrictive environment.

[00:56:54] In other words, maximizing opportunities for students to be educated among their general education peers. Specialized instruction also leads our parent outreach and family engagement efforts, including the Parent Resource Center and other programs that provide support to parents as they navigate the special education process.

[00:57:12] Finally, this department includes our early childhood special education instructional programming and oversees the services that are provided to our youngest learners with disabilities who are children ages 2 to 5. Work accomplished this summer uncoupled early childhood instruction from the child find process so that there could be a dedicated focus on both finding children eligible for special education services and making sure that they are provided with high quality instruction in order to be kindergarten ready to the greatest extent possible.

[00:57:46] The Department of Programs and Development oversees procedural support to schools and families as well as the Child Find and Eligibility process which consists of PWCS's responsibility to evaluate and determine eligibility for any child where there is a suspicion of a disability.

[00:58:04] This department also provides leadership for related services which includes speech and language services, occupational and physical therapy, and adaptive PE programming. The Department of Programs and Development leads the division's post-secondary transition programming to ensure that our graduates are on a pathway towards a thriving future that is aligned to their skills, interests, and aptitudes.

[00:58:28] This team also works to ensure that our data and state reporting requirements are met. The Department of Tiered Intervention and Supports leads the division's work around a multi-tiered system of supports, or MTSS, which is a framework for identifying students who are struggling with academic, behavior, or social-emotional skills early and providing them with an intervention that matches their needs.

[00:58:53] This was intentionally separated from special education as the goal is to intervene early and monitor progress in such a way that may prevent the need for special education services. However, MTSS implementation does not delay any request for an evaluation for services if a parent or staff member suspects a disability.

[00:59:15] Our team would like to acknowledge the strategic investments that have been part of the superintendent's budget for the past two fiscal years. Notably, 175 teacher assistants have been added to schools to address programming for students with disabilities with the greatest needs.

[00:59:31] Our students with autism, emotional disabilities, and intellectual disabilities. assistive technology, behavior specialists, and adaptive PE teachers are serving students across our schools. The Parent Resource Center position was upgraded to expand parent outreach and family engagement in addition to the PRC.

[00:59:53] An increase of procedural support staff through grant funding allows for increased support to schools through working with teams on their campuses with a focus on developing high-quality IEPs. This is especially important for developing the skills of our new teachers and administrators.

[01:00:11] Strategic investments have also allowed for additional work-based learning site, the ability to administer audiological assessments for students within PWCS instead of having to contract with outside providers. Similarly, the addition of in-house division counsel reduced our need to outsource and allowed for the procedural support staff to be more hands-on in working with staff in schools.

[01:00:36] Finally, in response to advocacy from stakeholder groups to include the Special Education Advisory Committee, a parent that is led and composed of parents, all high schools received funding to sponsor unified sports participation, and all IEP case managers received a $1,000 stipend for the additional paperwork and timeline responsibilities associated with the IEP process.

[01:01:02] Additional strategic investment highlights include our Child Find staff, which is growing in response to an increase in referrals for our earliest learners, and each middle and high school has a dedicated department chair to oversee special education at their school.

[01:01:20] On this side, you will see highlights from the specialized instruction team during the 22-23 school year. As we work towards increasing the number of students receiving special education services

who are accessing general education settings, peers, and curriculum, all schools completed and inclusive practices self-assessment.

[01:01:42] The Differentiated Instructional Practices Conference held this summer continued these efforts with a nationally recognized speaker in the area of co-teaching, as well as supporting students who are duly identified, meaning that they receive special education services as well as English language learner services.

[01:02:00] Approximately 30% of students with disabilities in PWCS are also English language learners. This office hosted a conference for parents in February with presentations on various aspects of the special education process, instructional strategies, and community resources.

[01:02:19] This year, the Parent Resource Center is up and running with six events offered in the month of September and seven more planned for October, with many more to come. Finally, with leadership devoted to preschool instruction, a research-based curriculum is being implemented, and classroom teachers are focused on meaningful children interactions, which is how our youngest learners learn best.

[01:02:46] Programs and development highlights include increased training of school staff around special education procedures. During the 22-23 school year, we saw a significant increase in the number of staff trained in IEP best practices, the administrator's role in the IEP process, and Section 504 plans.

[01:03:06] This is in addition to job-embedded professional learning and on-demand support that this team provides to schools. The discipline process for students with disabilities was revised and regulations were updated to ensure that any time a student is removed from the school setting beyond 10 days, they receive special education services that continue to meet their needs.

[01:03:28] The team and procedural support is also continuing to develop resources for schools and parents to increase understanding of the regulations in practice. The Department of Programs and Development had additional accomplishments in the area of post-secondary transition.

[01:03:47] Our transition specialists work with schools to support students with a variety of next steps after high school, including students who are college-bound and need assistance with the process for applying for accommodations. Additional highlights focus on our students who are transitioning to employment.

[01:04:04] For example, all PWCS high schools are implementing the Employ Program, which offers work-based learning opportunities for students in and out of the school setting. PWCS currently has 93 business partners where students go out to job sites.

[01:04:20] Project SEARCH continues at the UVA Medical Health Center, and PWCS has opened a homegrown site at Toto Supermarket, where an additional 10 students are receiving real-time job training across a variety of areas at that business.

[01:04:36] The team hosted an annual transition fair in March of 2023, where community agencies came together to make connections with families. Two of our schools are being recognized as pilot sites for the I'm Determined project, with a PWCS graduate serving as the lead mentor.

[01:04:55] We continue to leverage community partnerships and this year have brought partners from Project Search into three of our high schools to help develop job success skills for students in our level two classrooms.

[01:05:12] The Department of Tiered Intervention and Supports launched the MTSS Reset, and that was a result of all schools completing a self-assessment on how they provide academic, social-emotional, and behavioral intervention to students. The implementation of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, or PBIS, includes training on restorative practices.

[01:05:33] School and division staff have been trained and will use strategies to build relationships and strengthen students' connectedness to their school community in an effort to prevent code of behavior violations. Behavior support continued with revisions to our restraint and seclusion regulation, which notably also includes additional prevention training with a focus on de-escalation positive behavior supports and strategies.

[01:06:00] Lastly, MTSS addresses students who are struggling in reading with the launch of a cross-departmental team to lead this work. The dyslexia team developed a two-year plan to increase professional learning and supports around dyslexia.

[01:06:18] This collaboration was key as students with characteristics of dyslexia are supported through core instruction with the support of our reading specialists, through intervention, and through specially designed instruction prescribed by a student's IEP.

[01:06:33] The work done this past year includes inventorying and providing all schools with multi-sensory research-based reading materials. This year's professional learning plan has required training for all staff on the characteristics of dyslexia and best instructional practices.

[01:06:50] Additional training is available for specialized staff who work with students with specific reading needs. Some examples are the Orton-Gillingham approach, Linda Mood-Bell, and SPIRE, which are all endorsed approaches or programs. There continues to be work in this area at the division and state level as the Virginia Literacy Act emphasizes the science of reading.

[01:07:12] All reading specialists were recently trained on dyslexia as part of the rollout of the VLA and members of the special education department will receive training from a national expert on dyslexia at an upcoming statewide conference. This is a continued area of focus in our division.

[01:07:32] As we continue to look into this year, specialized instruction priorities include continuing to increase inclusion opportunities for students with disabilities. The team will be supporting instruction in level two settings to ensure our students with the greatest needs are receiving the supports that they require and making progress.

[01:07:51] The department is working to provide job embedded professional learning to all teachers but especially those new to the profession. This includes teachers assistance as well. Some recent examples include a make and take data collection protocol workshop that was offered to all new teachers working on site with schools who want to increase inclusion of students with disabilities in general education electives or encore classes, and working with school staff on student behavior and communication.

[01:08:21] The focus on inclusion also extends to early childhood special education and working with families as our partners also continues to be top priority. Programs and development priorities for this school year include continuing to provide schools resources to help maintain compliance with Virginia's special education regulations.

[01:08:45] Staff are working with teachers to develop effective data collection systems to collect valuable information and report progress on IEP goals. The team in ChildFind is working to address the increase in the number of two to five year olds being referred for an evaluation for special education.

[01:09:02] We are continuously recruiting and working to staff high needs areas, such as speech language pathologists. The work and focus on post-secondary transition will also continue with enhanced partnerships with career and technical education to offer more inclusive opportunities for students preparing to enter either the workforce or post-secondary education.

[01:09:23] MTSS work will continue as schools are supported to implement the framework for identifying students, providing the right intervention and monitoring progress. The team will continue to evaluate the tools and resources being used for intervention.

[01:09:43] A goal for implementing behavior supports and interventions is to reduce exclusionary discipline, especially for particular student groups such as students with disabilities. Dyslexia work will continue with strategies embedded into the division's broader implementation of the science of reading as well as the development of the PWCS literacy plan.

[01:10:05] The practice of explicit phonics instruction will benefit students with characteristics of dyslexia at all three tiers through core instruction, intervention, and through special education services. Finally, as you have heard in prior presentations, PWCS has a laser-like focus on on-time graduation as one of our wildly important goals.

[01:10:27] The MTSS framework will be used to assist high schools in reducing barriers that stand in the way of graduation. This concludes our formal presentation. The directors and I are here to answer any questions that you may have. Mr. Wilk.

[01:10:47] Yeah, I'll be brief and thank you for incorporating I think everyone's feedback, some of the questions that we had and you know it's great to see this I really have no questions because you address them I do want to say certain highlights you know the fact that you know we have 93 sites for transition services I think that's great I think we can keep improving I'd like personally to see a 25% increase in three years but as evidence with totos and you know different things like that and speaking with the CEO this past weekend I think it's going to be a great opportunity love the idea again stressing the embedded Orton-Gillingham practices the science of reading to improve literacy and then I talk

[01:11:27] anecdotally you know when I go to my schools I always make it a point to go into the self-contained classrooms because well that is my world and and it's great to see a lot of the progress I see and a lot of the you know you mentioned inclusionary practices you know I wasn't even aware when I went to my son's back-to-school night that you know Potomac Shores Middle had inclusionary gym classes PE classes you know some of the other classes some of the more CTE focused classes so that was great to see and then I was at back to school night at Dumfries in a self-contained room and the teacher was presenting to the parents and I was just floored with the number of resources

[01:12:06] especially some of the digital resources we have for the parents to take a hold of so I just wanted to add that and be very brief on just some feedback thank Thank you. I'm going to jump in just on Mr. Wilkes point. I think this, the addition of the work with TOTOS and other programs like that adds on to the project search we already do at UVA Prince William Hospital, which is an amazing program and absolutely, you know, first in class for the work they do over there.

[01:12:35] And so I'm glad the division and your office is working to expand this program, very excited about this. You know, this is one of the strategic priorities we have and really appreciate that work. I think, yeah, no, I get it.

[01:12:56] I didn't, she didn't have her hand up, did she? Oh, Ms. Williams. - Thank you, excuse me. Thank you, Chairman. I just wanna start by saying thank you very much. I appreciate this presentation. I know that this is a high level presentation and not all inclusive of everything we do special education, but I definitely feel like the public really needed to know all of the updates that we've had and the school year and the reorganization that special education has undergone.

[01:13:28] It's undergone so many changes since I've been on the board and I appreciate the new level of organization and structure. I also want to congratulate Todos and others who are working with us as a division and partnering to ensure that our students, when they graduate, have the skills that they need to go out and be professionals in the workplace and are acclimated into the workforce right out of the gate.

[01:13:52] I know that was a big lift and something that has been in demand for several years. And I really appreciate the new level of programming and partnership that we have with organizations in our community. I was wondering if you could speak to, I know that the highlight of tonight was dyslexia and it's okay if we don't have an answer to this right now.

[01:14:11] Are we also working with other sort of comorbidities similar to dyslexia, like dysgraphia and things of that nature? Is that in the plan coming down the pike Or does that fall in line with what we're doing with dyslexia? I'm not quite up-to-date on the reading of science and how that works.

[01:14:28] Sure. Absolutely. Sorry, Ms. Williams, did you want me to address? So to address those other areas, we absolutely are partnering with my colleague, Dr. Sullivan, who oversees the Office of Teaching and Learning, so that any of our professional learning and work with staff in those other areas, such as writing or math, we really integrate the the lens of how do we best support students with disabilities so that the way we strengthen core instruction is thinking about them first and foremost and not after the fact.

[01:15:02] Thank you. I appreciate that because I know that dyslexia was highlighted and I just want to mention too for those who may not know that these are all medical diagnoses and not something that the school itself or the division plays a hand in diagnosing, but once your student has been diagnosed, we do have resources available to assist with that diagnosis to improve or enhance their educational experience.

[01:15:29] I also just want to say how much I really appreciate the development of the procedural. What did you say? I think it was one of the slides with a procedural resource for parents and and the schools with Section 504 manuals.

[01:15:46] and I'm sorry, it was something else, a special education procedural resource. I think that's really important. Special education can be very confusing. So I am excited that we'll have something that will work collaboratively with parents coming in and collaboratively with the schools to better understand what it means to be in special education.

[01:16:08] And I also like to appreciate the attention given to duly identified special education students. I'm wondering if in later in the year that we would be able to, as a board, have an additional special education update on the progress and how it's going with the new organizational structure and what has become of these manuals and updates that are forthcoming.

[01:16:34] - Thank you, Ms. Williams. - Thank you. - Thank you, Ms. Williams. I think I had, I'll go to Ms. Jackson, or let's go to Ms. Jessie, then Ms. Jackson, then whoever else. - I wanna thank you, thank you very much. It was very comprehensive presentation.

[01:16:49] You know, we asked a lot of questions doing a two by two and I appreciate your patience with us on that because you know special ed is my background and I've looked at scores I'm results oriented and I would like to see us have a smart goal for improving our performance at the SOL level I'm not sure we shouldn't break it down because some of those the LD kids have 90 IQ and then you've got speech and all this so I'd like to look at those breakdowns.

[01:17:24] I'm very pleased with the tier-to-intervention program that you have in place, and the outreach into the community. I just want to thank you and the superintendent for bringing forth a plan for special ed that includes learning and includes active participation by students and awareness.

[01:17:48] I'm a little bit concerned about dyslexia. I'm not sure if it's not the new term that we've come into, you know, I've been here for so long and I've seen so many terms that lead to, you know, and every year there's a new term, but I just wanna make sure that we are providing the right training for teachers.

[01:18:10] And one of the things that someone brought up tonight was the use of computers. And I don't know, I've heard this so many times, especially with special ed kids and various kids, I'd like for someone to look into the fact that there seems to be a lot of computer use in some of these schools.

[01:18:29] I'm not sure if it's accurate or not. Could somebody just look into that? I'd appreciate it. I wanna thank you for a very good presentation. I know you thought that Lori and I were gonna ask you a lot of questions. We asked the questions during the two by two. Thank you for your patience. - Ms. Jackson.

[01:18:45] - All right, thank you, Chair Lateef. Thank you for the presentation and the information you shared tonight. It was really informative and it had a lot of information that we've done over the last few years. I have one follow-up question, but I just want to just say thank you to all special educators, including those who are in the room right now, instructional assistants, paraprofessionals, related service providers, families, and members of the diagnostic team for evaluations.

[01:19:15] Special educators must know the curriculum law while documenting, while providing research-based instruction, while advocating for all students and writing solid IEP goals with multiple stakeholders, and while loving our students and our families. So as one special educator to another, I thank you, and I thank you for this presentation.

[01:19:34] I also want to thank you, Dr. McDade, and I really mean this, like from the bottom of my heart, for prioritizing and reorganizing special education. It was needed, and I appreciate it. So my one question that either please answer tonight or please answer in the future, whether or not you have the information, has to do with the strategic plan and the dyslexia goal by 2023, 2024, teachers and assistant principals do you want me to read it or do you know it is it the one that refers to training and professional learning uh-huh it's kind of long so I was just wondering if I could get an update on where we are on

[01:20:13] that that goal either now or in the near future we can we can go back and take a look at you know over the past year because we've started there's been training ongoing it's not just starting up now so we can go back and look at at where we are and come back with some hard numbers.

[01:20:34] - That would be great, I appreciate it. Thank you, and again, thanks for the presentation. I know I'm looking forward to more conversations. Thank you. - Ms. Jarrett. - Just very quickly, thank you for this presentation. I, as an educator myself, but not a special educator, we are often told, all teachers are all special educators, but I am grateful for when I have experts to go to.

[01:21:05] I am appreciative when I am able to get information that I need for my students, and everything that we're doing to support our kids is obviously necessary. I'm also grateful to the parents who will communicate with the teams of educators to let us know.

[01:21:21] Sometimes it's little things that'll make a bigger difference, so I want to make sure that the parents know to keep advocating and keep, you know, things change with your kid, and we want to make sure that we're always moving forward together. So thank you for this presentation and everything in it.

[01:21:37] - Ms. Wall. - Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for the presentation, Dr. McDade and all of your staff who worked so hard on this. It was very comprehensive and it's a good summary of what we have been doing in this area, particularly starting with the creation of a standalone special education office with three focused departments with clear mission for each department.

[01:22:09] Bringing focus to the needs of special education students and their families. So I can see through, just through your first slide, the structure and how the structure is driving the important work that we're doing and how we are prioritizing special education.

[01:22:30] And I know that a number of these many listed items here are the direct result of either board member advocacy or family advocacy or teacher and special education instructor advocacy.

[01:22:49] And I commend that collaboration, the governance team collaboration, the school and leadership team collaboration, and the family and school collaboration. I think that when we look, when we think of kind of the larger picture of what we're seeing here, we're seeing that this is working.

[01:23:09] And hopefully if we stay the course and we continue to strive to meet our strategic objectives, then we will begin to see good results, really good results for our children. We're seeing good results, that we will see even more good results. Because at the end of the day, it matters for those individual children and those individual families.

[01:23:29] That's the goal, right? Is to help each individual child get the supports that they need to be successful in their own goals and dreams. So I appreciate hearing this comprehensive report. I know it was probably a heavy lift, but I really appreciate it. And I also wanted to thank those who are on the SEAC committee, who spend a lot of time, that's a volunteer committee, and they spend a lot of time, and they're very dedicated.

[01:23:54] And they also brought forward ideas that either ended up in the strategic plan or have contributed in some way to the work that we are doing. So I wanted to say thank you as well. - Okay, so Dr. Ryer, thank you and your team for this great presentation.

[01:24:09] Dr. McDade, thank you for the presentation. Really appreciate your commitment to the work we're doing, both in special ed, the work that you focused on with the strategic plan, and the priority you've made this since day one, since you've arrived. So we really, truly appreciate it.

[01:24:24] Okay, moving on to, do you have any other comments? Are we done with superintendent's time? - I just wanna thank the board. I know you all mentioned the reorganization of the office and putting

the resources towards special education as a priority, but that was only possible because you supported that recommendation to do that.

[01:24:45] So I do want to thank each of you also for the support of the work that we've been doing to prioritize special education and all of the things that Ashley and her team, they brought forward a lot of new ideas and they've been doing a lot to evaluate and improve.

[01:25:01] And so I want to thank my team for all of their hard work. Many of them are new to Prince William County, but they have come with so much passion and commitment to this work. And so I'm really proud of the work that they're doing, but I also want to just give my gratitude to the board as well.

[01:25:18] - Thank you, Dr. McDade. So moving on to committee updates. Ms. Wall has an update with internal audit. She is the chair of the internal audit committee. Chair Wall. - Thank you, Chairman Lateef. Ms. Jackson and I are serving on the audit committee, and I thought what we could do we could split we would talk we've had we've met twice since we've been able to report on the workings of the committee so Ms. Jackson do you want to lead off with the May meeting and then I'll cover with the September meeting okay thank you Ms. Wall we did meet in May of May 16th but Gary Maness was out and at the

[01:25:58] time of the meeting so the meeting was brief we discussed that we do have a still have a fraud hotline and I'm just gonna give the number which 703-791 1-8993, which is accessed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

[01:26:14] And callers can remain anonymous if they're calling from an outside line. And we also have an email, but anonymity is not possible via email, and that's fraud@pwcs.edu. We also discussed the risk assessment of the laptop inventory and celebrated success and discuss next steps which included a regulation which either is happening or happened that will be made relating to the laptop inventory process so always reviewing processes and analyzing risks we also in May learned about the ERM

[01:26:53] which is not an audit but can be used as a tool to manage risk by the board and management it stands for enterprise risk management and it started as a pilot in the spring, and we discussed ways for the internal audit to self-assess, which I think Ms. Wall might maybe discuss the self-assessment.

[01:27:13] And before turning the mic over to Ms. Wall, I just want to just again send my condolences to Gary Maness' family and just tell them again that we are so thankful for his service to the division.

[01:27:28] Thank you, Ms. Jackson. I also echo that to the Maness family. Mr. Bannister Prince William County Schools as his chief auditor for a long time and he did a fabulous job. We miss him. On September 20th, the internal audit committee met and we heard a couple of updates, a status update of audit activities.

[01:27:53] The audit always conducts some school-based audits and so we received updates on some of the schools that had been completed. We also got an update on an athletics audit, a fundraising audit, and a little bit more information about the enterprise risk management efforts that the school division is, or that the audit committee is working towards.

[01:28:20] And a risk assessment for the internal audit plan is an ongoing process right now. board members and executive cabinet leaders are being asked to ascertain their perception of risk for the school division and to compile as the auditor is leading that effort.

[01:28:43] And we also, and I'll speak a little bit about this later, but there was an Office of Internal Audit self-assessment, which is a great thing always to do, and that process This has led to a couple of changes that we are proposing for the policy that governs internal audit.

[01:29:02] Lastly, one of the bread and butter workings of the auditor is to conduct school audits and we also discussed prioritizing how we select schools for those audits a little bit differently than how we have done in the past.

[01:29:19] So the audit committee will meet on November 14th, that's the next day of our meeting, And if there are any questions, I guess at this point, this is just a committee update. So we'll just end with that. Okay, thank you. - Thank you both. We really appreciate it.

[01:29:35] And thank you for all the hard work you guys do in audit 'cause Ms. Jessie and I know how fun that committee is. Isn't that right, Ms. Jessie? She loved every minute of it. Okay, moving on to, well, we'll move on to board matters here.

[01:29:52] This is revisions to the 2023 school board meeting calendar, 1701, a motion is in order. Ms. Wall. - All right, Mr. Chairman, I move that the Prince William County School Board revise its previously adopted meeting calendar and approve moving the December 6th, 2023 school board meeting to Tuesday, December 5th, 2023, at the request of the superintendent due to a scheduling conflict and remove the joint meeting with the board of county supervisors that had been tentatively scheduled

[01:30:29] for Tuesday, December 12th, 2023. - Do I have a second? - Sure. - Ms. Jackson. - I second. - Okay, any discussion? Okay, please vote.

[01:30:56] Oh, Ms. Williams, how do you vote? My apologies. - I vote yes. - Ms. Williams votes yes. - The vote is seven yes, one absent. Ralston, motion passed. - Thank you. Moving on to 1702 revisions to policy 361, Office of Internal Audit.

[01:31:11] This is on for information. Ms. Wall, do we have, what are we doing? Okay, so I wanted to just say a couple of things about this. This is on for information, so we could say nothing at all or we could ask questions or we can collect questions.

[01:31:28] Give us a little background. Okay, I'll give you some background. These amendments came forward through the work of the Internal Audit Committee, starting with our previous Chief Internal Auditor and with our current acting Chief Internal Auditor, Chris Migliaccio.

[01:31:43] It represents discussions and work of the Chief Internal Audit Committee. Overall, these changes were made towards strengthening the independence of the Office of Internal Audit. In particular, the proposed changes will strengthen the ability of the Office of Internal Audit to deliver value to the organization, to meet industry standards for the independence of offices of internal audit and to improve board ownership and processes over the school divisions audit functions so if there are i guess any questions from the board i have asked our chief

[01:32:23] acting internal auditor chris migliaccio to come here tonight he's been sitting here patiently waiting if there are any questions specifically about any of these changes that the board would like to ask at this time okay and so what i would what i would ask so this is on for first reading tonight, and we will have Chris here at the next meeting as well when we vote on it.

[01:32:46] In the meantime, if you have any questions or concerns, please reach out to either Jen Wall or Adele Jackson or Chris regarding any questions you might have. Anything further, Ms. Wall, on this? The only additional, I don't know, did you want to say something?

[01:33:03] Yeah, Chris, do you want to come up? Yeah, you want to give us? I should say, is there something that you would like to say to the board about anything of these changes? Good evening, Chairman Lateef, School Board members, and Dr. McDade.

[01:33:18] I just appreciate the support I have from the internal audit committee members, making a lot of good progress, and as Ms. Mald mentioned, it's important for internal audit to add value, and that's what we're trying to do here, so I'm hoping that these changes help propel us with those value-added services internal audit can provide.

[01:33:44] Awesome. I have one. I had one other comment. Thank you. One other comment that we could consider, we don't need to consider it necessarily this evening, but it would be whether we want to add a couple of citizen appointees to the audit committee, not as voting members but as maybe subject matter experts or as somebody with background in accounting or audit with a financial investigatory background or something like that.

[01:34:10] I mean, if that's something the board members are interested in exploring, we could reach out between now and when we would vote on this, that's an amendment that could be, that's a change that could be made to the changes that we've already made, but it's not currently in there. Just something to consider. Great.

[01:34:27] And I think just as a summary, there's four main aspects to this. There's a move from the 300 series to the 100 series to reflect board ownership of internal audit committee and the auditor position. Removing operational management as a voting member of the internal audit committee to to comply with the level of independence expected by industry standards, adding an additional board member to the internal audit committee and creating an annual evaluation requirement for the auditor similar to that of division council and the ombudsman.

[01:34:52] There are a number of offices that the school board holds direct supervision of and one is the office of internal office, one is the office of the ombudsman and obviously division council we work closely with and with the superintendent's office. And the work that the school board's done over the last three or four years has been consistent with the desire to improve oversight, governance, and compliance.

[01:35:18] And all of these tools, whether it's our Title IX office, Division Council office, whether it's the Office of the Internal Audit, whether it's the Office of the Ombudsman, all have been, I believe, created and/or strengthened in a way to improve governance, oversight, and compliance.

[01:35:35] And so I fully support these efforts, and please I'd ask the board to take a look at these measures, and if you have any questions concerns, please reach out to Chair Wall or Ms. Jackson or Chris, we really appreciate it, or division council. Any other comments on that? Okay, moving on, we will move to board matters and tonight we'll start with Mr. Wilk.

[01:35:54] Mr. Justin Wilk of the Potomac District. - Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just, I'll be pretty brief. This is still back to school season. It is winding down on Thursday night, I think for all of us. And so, you know, it's usually two a night, start at one and at the other and I've enjoyed my time since the last board meeting.

[01:36:15] I've been to Potomac Middle, Patti Elementary, Montclair Elementary, Covington Harper, Swan's Creek, Triangle, Henderson, Dumfries, Mary Williams and Ashland. Two more to go tomorrow night and that will encapsulate the entire back to school season in the Potomac District.

[01:36:35] A couple other fun events that I did, Falcon Brew and Fun Run, annual event was on Saturday great turnouts my own son and I ran the mile not the 5k we've reduced I've reduced and he said dad let's go run the 5k and I said no we're good we're good so we did the Falcon Bruin fun run and then let's see there was also I'm sure Miss Williams is gonna highlight this there was a great event Potomac Middle School had a robotics day it was like a kickoff day to middle school robotics they had brought back high school students who

[01:37:11] had been part of middle school robotics teams had courses classes a lot of hands-on experience for the kids that was great it's great to see our our robotics program thriving especially in the middle schools then Covington Harper had a rock your school event last week which I was able to appear and show up that and I think overall I'm actually surprisingly done early again so thank you good night. Ms. Zargarpur. Thank you Dr. Lateef say yes it's been a busy back-to-school back-to-school night season one of the challenges for all of

[01:37:49] us is we if we have more than one school on one night it's sometimes hard to get to all of them so I this past couple weeks I've been able to go to Rosa Parks Yorkshire, Loch Lomond, Westgate, Benton, and I believe tomorrow night is the last of mine as well and I have a concert to go to so concerts these are starting this wall you may have to get our concert schedule going I plan on holding office hours next Wednesday October 11th at the Panera on Liberia Avenue starting at 6:30 I'll put a thing up on my social media and you can email for a time I have met with some parents in the past couple weeks and discussed

[01:38:29] whatever issues they were coming up for them and some teachers as well just to hear what's going on and what what we need to be considering as a school division and sounds like for the most part if you don't tell us about a problem we don't know it exists so I appreciate those of you who do let us know when things are not going quite right so we can make sure we get eyes on them and get them fixed I'm hoping that VDOT will help with the learned last night up in Manassas there's some some road work that is impacting traffic to getting people in and out of school timely fashion so I'm hoping VDOT will

[01:39:05] finish that work quickly I hope everyone has a great week we are heading toward the end of the first quarter I cannot believe it is going this fast so make sure you get those those homework assignments done those papers turned in whatever it is you got to do make sure you get it done have a great week everyone we're gonna get we're gonna go to Miss Jackson and then Miss Williams I I did not forget about you, you will be after Miss Jessie.

[01:39:30] Miss Jackson. - All right, thank you. Last week I attended 12 back to school nights and I'm thankful for the time that educators put in their presentations, connections with staff, and the late nights for everyone. I'm also thankful to T. Claywood and Haymarket for their initiatives to support and bring awareness to childhood cancer, the toy drive and the Lego drive.

[01:39:53] This month is ADHD Awareness Month, Dyslexia Awareness Month, and Virginia Disability History Month and the timing of tonight's presentation is perfect. I think this month is a great reminder of the importance of inclusion in history and curriculum and to have goals to create space and lessons that are universally designed to meet all learners.

[01:40:13] Next week, I believe it's next week, is custodial service employee appreciation week. So thank you to all custodial service employees and to help maintain a clean, safe environment and for the vital role you play and making connections with staff and students.

[01:40:29] Thank you so much. I know that every board member up here brings a unique perspective and background. I've said that this platform is a position of privilege, a position with the potential to see, address, collaborate to break down barriers.

[01:40:48] I've attempted to use mine to take down barriers like advocating for universal design playgrounds or special education department shows. So I'm just gonna take a moment and reflect. I recently had an IEP meeting for my own kid. And reflecting afterwards, I'm so thankful for the educators that sit around the table, the knowledge and compassion that they bring.

[01:41:09] I know that bias still exists against those with disabilities. I've experienced it as a student and recently as a school board member. And I have, in full transparency, which is probably not the best in politics, a lot of mama guilt knowing that my son will experience it too.

[01:41:25] So with that, I'm proud to be a former special education student. And I'm proud of my son and thankful for his educators, including related service providers. I just wanna say love and respect to all y'all and have a good night. - Thank you, Ms. Jackson.

[01:41:41] - Good evening. I want to deviate a little bit and I'll talk about back to school nights at my next meeting. I wrote an article in the school board minutes and I talked about what's happening with this performance.

[01:42:05] I have heard so much about how we're not performing and how we need to wait, it's gonna take us years. But someone forgot to tell people in Alcaquan District, and I wanna share some things that have happened in Alcaquan District.

[01:42:20] First of all, looking at the adjusted data, nine of our schools out of the 12 school had a 90% pass rate in reading and seven in math.

[01:42:35] And I wanted to also talk a little bit about one school, but I'll wait a little bit later. I wanted to talk a little bit about Prince William County School. The source of my data is quality profiles, which is VDOE and School Digger. If you haven't gone to School Digger, please go to School Digger because it ranks school divisions and schools by standard scores.

[01:42:58] We are in the 20th percent of 2211 schools and we are 40th and we are above Fairfax. We're above Montgomery County. And I want people to know that Prince William County School is doing a great job.

[01:43:15] I wanna talk about one school in particular in the Occoquan district, that's Old Bridge Elementary. And I think I have a slide for that particular school. Did you put that up for me?

[01:43:32] Well, the cup is still here. So today I gave a cup to Old Bridge. Old Bridge Elementary has had 19 years of schools of excellence and is still excellent without the title because Old Bridge Elementary has a 98% pass rate in reading, a 98% pass rate in math, and a 95% pass rate in science.

[01:43:54] Old Bridge Elementary ranks above 90, better than 92.2% of elementary schools in Virginia. It also ranks seventh among 64 ranked elementary schools in Prince William County schools. There are

schools out there, and Occoquan has done some wonderful things, and I'll be meeting with Occoquan later.

[01:44:13] West Ridge is a 90-90-90 school, 92 percent pass rate in reading math and science and so I want to say that all of you with all the doom and gloom this lady has come in this county and she has made a difference because we moved up and and school did what I love about school did it doesn't have all these parent comments it just has pure data we're doing a great job in Prince William County and so I have to have an old expression in the south when you talk about schools not doing well for at Prince William County School, that dog is not gonna hunt.

[01:44:49] - Miss Williams. - Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I also attended a lot of back to school nights, including Rippon, Fred Lynn, Kilby, Featherstone, Potomac, View, Marumsco, and River Oaks.

[01:45:05] I just want to take this moment and give all of those schools a special shout out. The information presented at back to school night and the collaborative partnership to keep parents educated on how they can help their students learn and grow. It's just outstanding and I'm always impressed, always impressed when I go to my Title I schools.

[01:45:25] Also had the opportunity to attend a BSBA Legislative Advocacy Conference, Title IX Best Practices, and a webinar with Dr. Koons since our last meeting. As Mr. Wilk stated earlier, this past Saturday I was at the VEX I and VEX IQ Fun Day.

[01:45:45] I always appreciate seeing middle schoolers, well, robotics at any level, but I always appreciate seeing the middle schoolers. Their challenges are a little different than elementary and high school. It was wonderful to see some of the Yellow Jackets and other high school robotics students providing classes and education to our robotics, our middle school robotics teams.

[01:46:06] Shout out to Porter who had six teams there at the event. One of the things that I always like to highlight about robotics is that it teaches kids to learn from failure, how to pivot, and how to work collaboratively together and use their critical thinking skills. So I really appreciate all the effort and time that goes into putting those events together. Thank you always to Ms. Carol. I also want to bring attention to special education and say that I appreciate the efforts that our division has made in the reorganization.

[01:46:40] i think that it has been a heavy and a tremendous lift lift i am a special education parent myself but for years i was an advocate for my godson who was in special education to see the dramatic difference between 12 years ago to now is like night and day it will always be a work in progress because we are humans and nothing is perfect and the law changes so frequently but i again wanted to give thanks and praise to Dr. McDade and her team for all the efforts that you're putting forth not only in schools but also with special education families so that everyone can understand

[01:47:17] what they need to know about their student and work for the betterment. The last thing I want to say as a school board member when you see things like the organization change structure in school divisions it takes a long time sometimes to see the results of the fruits of your labor And I know that, for example, putting a new elementary school in the Whitford District has been seven, eight years coming. Ms. Jessie, I'm sure you can identify how laborious it can be from serving in the Joint Audit Committee all those years ago to finding land. And I just ask for

[01:47:52] a little patience sometime and understanding and to tune in to see the regular updates and to ask us where we are in the process of things. As Ms. Zagrafor said earlier, we don't know unless you tell us

sometimes what your concerns are and please use the proper protocols and channels to do that because our goal as a school board and a school division is to meet the needs of our school families and that's what we're here to do and that's what we're doing the best that we can do so thank you and i hope everyone has a good night miss wall all right thank you dr latif um i will

[01:48:31] start out with some events that i've attended this last couple of weeks first of all the ribbon cutting for innovation elementary school on thursday september 21st was awesome so very excited for this newest school i was able to attend unity braxton middle school's back to school night they had a six through eight night so everybody was there and there were lots of parents and lots of students there together so that was really awesome i went to the house assembly kickoff at sinclair elementary on friday september 22nd it was a beautiful day the event was outside which was good because the kids were absolutely bonkers it was so so there was there was so much enthusiasm

[01:49:09] it was great um so exciting um i went to a pto bingo night at alvey that is also a very fun event lots of lots of people were there lots of families were there and children were having a great time hit a back to school night at alvey went to a double header of back it is back to school night season. Doubleheader at Sudley Elementary and Tyler on this 27th. And then I also caught the big the first half of a bull run boys soccer game which was very very fun and they played against Mets. I visited Mountain View Elementary School on Thursday September 28th and Gravely on also

[01:49:47] that night Gravely Elementary School. My regret with back to school nights is that sometimes schools will have two or three nights and they'll break up all the grades so I can't get to say hi to a lot of parents from the entire school but you know i'll take a two-thirds or one third if i can um tomorrow is my last back to school night at sinclair last but not least and i'm already looking forward to that um i'm also looking forward to the rescheduled vex and vex iq robotics event which will be at gainesville middle school this coming friday evening and to touch base at battlefield high school on october 9th which i lovingly refer to as speed dating for

[01:50:26] parents and teachers. I wanted to speak just for a second about the speech and debate resolution just a little bit more. He was here earlier. One of the students that we talked with and helped us understand some of the student needs was Palmer Denny based on some experiences he had while he was a high school student.

[01:50:47] And I wanted to thank him for his advocacy efforts for himself and also just students in general. one of the students that really we listened to and talked with and he represented a viewpoint that was really important. Let's see I'm going to end by saying I attended a meeting with the state superintendent it was an online meeting and we discussed the all-in Virginia plan that Dr. McDade talked about briefly in her comments to help students across Virginia for focusing on tutoring focusing on attendance and focusing on literacy and learning so I'm really excited about that initiative and how that's going to help Prince William

[01:51:27] County schools and I want to close with a thought from Henry David Thoreau and I'm gonna borrow a little bit of Mr. Wilkes time and it's not a long quote I promise it's from Walden and this is the perfect time of year to quote Walden it's a quote from Walden but he said this I learned this at least by my experiment that if one advances confidently in the direction of his dreams and endeavors to live the life which he has imagined he will meet with a success unexpected in common hours so it's my prayer that we can do just that

[01:52:04] that we can meet with success unexpected in common hours here in Prince Willem County Schools and thank you everybody and have a great night thank you Vice Vice Chair Wall and board members. You know, I think tonight, you know, if you take a look at that consent agenda, please take a look at the resolution for students' rights of freedom of speech and expression and promotion of speech and debate for today, October 23rd, 2023.

[01:52:34] You know, building on what Ms. Jessie, you know, Ms. Jessie is taught in the school division, she's worked in the school division, and she knows the talents that our students have. She speaks lovingly about it regularly, about the commitment that our students give to the schools and what potential that they have that's both realized and unrealized.

[01:52:55] And one of the great programs is the MLK, Martin Luther King Oratorical Program, which I'm just a big fan of, really a great program. Our middle schools participate in it. And one of the things that when I came to the board was, can we get more of our schools participating, more of these great activities, whether it's robotics, whether it's MLK, whether it's speech and debate, and I like Mr. Wilk, I like Ms. Walsh, was on the debate team in my high school.

[01:53:21] And as we look at counties that we're competitive with, whether it's Fairfax, Loudoun, Montgomery, in Maryland or DC, we're looking at programs that they have as well. And speech and debate is a program recognized by the Virginia High School Sports League, and it is something that we want to expand.

[01:53:38] And when Prince William County puts us in mind to it, like we did with robotics, we still have ways to go to expand that to all of our schools. And we're working on that when this board has invested money, time, energy in that, and we will continue to do that. But this today marks a moment where this board has said, you know, we are committed to speech and debate programs.

[01:53:56] We're committed to making sure we realize the potential of all of our students. And I think it's really important to read part of the resolution. I'm gonna read it out loud. It was the beginning of the resolution. And I really do wanna thank this board. I mean, you know, a lot of the work we do, while it is seven to one on party lines here, you know, we do try to work bipartisan.

[01:54:16] And then I do appreciate, you know, all the work that Jen Wall has done on this very important issue. But I think it's important to read the first part of the resolution out loud. Whereas the Supreme Court of the United States recently expressed in the Mahoney Area School District versus BL by the, through Levy, by and through Levy, 210L, whatever, all these numbers.

[01:54:37] This is a statement written by Justice Stephen Breyer in the summer of 2021. America's public schools are the nurseries of democracy. Our representative democracy only works if we protect the marketplace of ideas.

[01:54:52] This free exchange facilitates an informed public opinion, which when transmitted to lawmakers, helps produce laws that reflect the people's will. That protection must include the protection of unpopular ideas, for popular ideas have less need for protection.

[01:55:10] Thus, schools have a strong interest in ensuring that future generations understand the workings in practice of the well-known aphorism. I disprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it.

[01:55:25] And so goes our resolution. And so I wanna thank this board for doing this and voting on this tonight. I think it is really important. And I think it's a moment where we can celebrate what we've done and set the bar high on where we'd like to go.

[01:55:42] And so for that, I wanna thank the board again, Dr. McDade. And with that, I want to wish all of our students a good end of the first quarter, keep it up, and for our high school seniors, get those applications in. Thank you very much. Have a great night.

[01:55:58] School meeting adjourned.

