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Prince William County School Board Meeting, Wednesday, January 17, 2024

Date	Wednesday, January 17, 2024
Place	Prince William County School Board, Virginia
Length	51m (video)

- Official meeting video (YouTube): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dSFvRE_9njk
- 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 2026-11-02. Each paragraph starts with its time [HH:MM:SS] in the meeting video.

[00:00:01] I'd like to call this meeting and the Prince William County School Board to order approval of the agenda. Motions in order for the meeting agenda, Ms. Zargarpur. - Mr. Chairman, I move that the Prince William County School Board approve the meeting agenda as recommended. - I have a second, any discussion?

[00:00:17] Okay, please vote. Wall is seconded. All in favor? - Aye. - Any opposed? Okay, no opposition, motion passes. Moving on to motion to enter closed session, Ms. Zargarpur.

[00:00:33] - Mr. Chairman, I move that pursuant to Virginia code Sections 2.2-3711 and 2.2-3712 that the Prince William County School Board enter closed session for the following reasons. One, to discuss with staff the appointment, transfer, release, assignment, and promotion of specific officers and employees pursuant to Virginia Code Sections 2.2-3711A1.

[00:00:54] Two, to discuss with division counsel and staff actual or probable litigation and specific legal matters involving specific staff and students pursuant to Virginia code sections 2.2-3711A, 7 and 8. And three, to discuss and receive briefings by staff members related to the security of school facilities, the safety of persons using such facilities, and actions taken to respond to such matters where discussion in an open meeting would jeopardize the security of such facilities pursuant to Virginia code section 2.2-3711A, 19.

[00:01:26] - Do I have a second? - Mr. Chairman, I second. - Ms. Wall seconds, any discussion? Okay, please vote. Okay, at this time, the Prince William County School Board will enter closed session and return in price in one hour.

[00:02:36] Prince William County School Board will now return to open session.

[00:03:04] The school board, a motion is in order, 7.01, closed session certification. Ms. Zargarpur. Thank you, 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 January 17, 2024, be certified by adopting the following resolution.

[00:03:22] 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 the certification resolution applies. And two, only such public business matters were identified in the motion convening the closed meeting were heard and discussed or considered by the school board.

[00:03:44] Do I have a second? Mr. Chairman. Ms. Wall. I second. Any discussion? Please vote.

[00:04:06] Moving on to closed session action item. Motion is in order. Ms. Zargarpur. Mr. Chairman, I move that the Prince William County School Board approve the appointments and releases of specific employees as presented in closed session.

[00:04:23] Do I have a second? Mr. Chairman. Ms. Wall. I second. Any discussion? Please vote. It takes time because she has to do it like one at a time.

[00:04:50] At this time, we will now stand for the Pledge of Allegiance. We have, who do I have next? We have Fernanda from Forest Park High School to Ms. Fernanda Morante. She'll lead us in the Pledge.

[00:05:10] I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America, and to the republic for which it stands, one nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all. Thank you, Ms. Morante.

[00:05:27] Next, we are going to adoption of the consent agenda. A motion is in order. Mr. Chairman, I move that the Prince William County School Board approve the public meeting consent agenda as recommended. Do I have a second? Mr. Chairman. Ms. Williams. I have a second.

[00:05:42] Any discussion? Chair Lateef, can I move the 10, 7, and 8 down below so I can vote on those separately? Sure. Pull out 10, 7, 10, 8. Mr. Chairman, we'll move those to board matters.

[00:06:00] Move them to board matters. Yeah, that's fine. 10, 7, 10, 8. Sure. Move them to board matters. And then we will vote on 10. So this vote will be for 10, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6. Is that correct?

[00:06:35] - All in favor of approving consent agendas item 10, one, two, three, four and five and six, please vote aye. Aye, all in favor, any opposition? One, and then one abstention by Tradenik.

[00:06:58] Okay, moving on to citizen comment time. And we, to my knowledge, Ms. B. Simpson, we do not have any citizens signed up for citizen comment time at this time. Okay, all right, we're moving on now to the Office of the Associate Superintendent for Teaching and Learning for the school calendar for the 2024-25 school, or no, it's for this year actually, school year 24 calendar amendment information.

[00:07:27] Motion's in order, Mrs. Zargarpur. - Mr. Chairman, I move that the Prince William County School Board approve the school year 2024 school calendar amendment designation March 5th, 2024 as a

student holiday and a staff work day. - Do I have a second? - Mr. Chairman.

[00:07:42] - Second. - Any discussion? Okay, just as a reminder to everyone, this is to give off the day because it is the primary Super Tuesday. And so this will be a holiday for students and staff work day, please vote.

[00:08:10] Okay, moving on to student representative time. Tonight, we have student representative Fernanda Morante joining us at the dais. Fernanda is a senior at Forest Park High School. Ms. Morante. - Thank you, Dr. Lateef. It feels weird speaking this early.

[00:08:28] Yes, it does. Yes, it does. But good evening, Prince William County community. Thank you for those who attended today. Your attendance is appreciated, especially when I'm speaking. Good evening, Dr. McDade, Dr. Lateef, and school board members. I'm happy to be back in the dais after a couple months.

[00:08:45] I'll talk for longer than normal, but I won't be boring, I promise. First and foremost, I want to welcome the new year and express my gratitude for being able to serve as one of the student reps for this half of the year. I am excited to see all the new projects, events, and accomplishments across the county that we will witness this new year.

[00:09:05] I also want to welcome new board members, Mr. Blake, Ms. Tradenek, and Mr. Jesse. I had the awesome opportunity to meet you all at this ring-in ceremony, so I'm really happy to see you today and excited to work with you along with the returning board members.

[00:09:22] As Isabella said last time, let me know if you need anything. I've been here longer, so I know my way around the KLC. I got lost a couple times but I know my way around now. But on a more serious note, I want to commend all my fellow seniors on their planning process for their post-secondary plans.

[00:09:39] Those of you who have decided to go to a four-year institution, two-year institution, trade school, military, or the workforce, I know it is complicated to decide on these big steps of the future. So congratulations for that. I know some of us are already getting college offers, scholarships, job offers and whatnot.

[00:09:58] So congratulations on this new exciting stage of our lives. I am positive that Prince William County has given us a proper education and tools to become successful citizens in society post-graduation. And I'm excited to see what great things PWCS 24 graduates end up doing in the future.

[00:10:17] As I said, I haven't been here since October. I couldn't attend the November meeting as I attended the Virginia School for Association in a conference that same day, held down in Williamsburg on November 15th. I was able to attend the workshop for student school board representatives.

[00:10:34] Almost all students, all student reps from all counties around Virginia came together and we participated in different activities, professional development sessions. We even had a school board governance jeopardy.

[00:10:49] My team won, so that was fun. I think it was really priceless to have the opportunity to connect with all these students across the state and see the differences in the issues and areas we each focus on. I work closely with the representatives of Stafford, Fairfax, and Alexandria in South County.

[00:11:08] And the conversations we had were full of exchange of ideas. And I'm excited to see them again in the future if possible. Thank you to the school board for letting me attend this event. It was really

exciting. And I look forward for more professional development sessions in the future.

[00:11:25] Going off that, Isabella shared last time she was here that there was a student leadership workshop here at the KLC last week on Tuesday. It was really rewarding to come together with different student leaders from around the county and discuss different matters with them.

[00:11:42] We received leadership training from the Close Up Foundation on how to facilitate discussion in our student senate meetings, in our student voice committee meetings as well. And we also learned how to create surveys and interviews that will result in worthy feedback.

[00:11:58] We share a lot about attendance issues, division-wide policy concerns, school rebranding, school spirit, school climate. We talked about a lot of different things. It was really exciting to see all the ideas that these students have. Additionally, the student senate and the student voice committees have been working endlessly to serve the students in the county and address their concerns.

[00:12:20] All the 14 high schools across PWCS have implemented their student voice committees and they have quarterly meetings to address school-based issues and countywide policies, and the Student Senate has been having a couple meetings every month, and we talk about a really, really wide range of topics.

[00:12:38] We also host county professionals like Dr. Shaver, the College and Career Counseling Director, Ms. Brown and Ms. Good, who talked more about the specialty programs in the county, and Ms. McKnight, who talked about substance abuse prevention and addressed students' concerns about vaping in high schools and middle schools.

[00:12:56] It is really awesome how PWCS is full of capable and brilliant student leaders that have been working very, very hard and I'm very excited to see the positive change we make in our community in the near future. On the other hand, I want to remind students about the inclement weather codes and policies.

[00:13:15] Yesterday was a code red, so I hope you all enjoyed the snow. Today we had a two hour delay, so I do thank all the families, staff, and students. I know these changes are quick and we have to adapt to them. So thank you for all the efforts.

[00:13:33] Code red means that schools and offices are closed. No workers are expected to report to work except for inclement weather workers, which are also really appreciated. Thank you for cleaning out the roads and everything. Code orange means that there will be virtual synchronous instruction.

[00:13:50] I've heard a lot and I know a lot of us are not fans of virtual instruction because of different reasons, but I do encourage all students to still try their best at it. I do invite the board to evaluate the efficiency or virtual instruction and see if it is worth it to have students connect synchronously next year as well.

[00:14:08] A lot of families and students have a hard time switching from in-person to virtual instruction with only a few hours of notice and teachers turning their lessons from in-person to virtual, but I still encourage students and staff to take Court Oranges calmly and abide by the PWCS guidelines.

[00:14:25] If you have technical difficulties or no access to at-home Wi-Fi, You can visit the PWCS website and see how the county can assist you with virtual instruction. There's also possibilities that after school and weekend activities get canceled if appropriate.

[00:14:43] So as we enter the Calder months, please be on the lookout for possible announcements about codes on the PWCS website, Instagram, and Twitter. I guess it's X now. I also want to congratulate my fellow Bruin senior, Samuel Noor from Forest Park.

[00:15:00] He was the winner of the attendance slogan, knowledge is power, attend every hour. Every time I see him now, I feel like I know a celebrity 'cause he's been just all over the news. I saw him like on TV, it was crazy. But I think that slogan is very powerful and I do hope it decreases absenteeism next year.

[00:15:20] I know the goal for 2025 is to decrease chronic absenteeism by 5% and I hope this slogan motivates students to attend school on time daily. Attending school every day on time has been proven to be crucial for on-time graduation, so I encourage students to always do their best.

[00:15:38] I know it's getting colder, it's harder to wake up in the morning, I know, I promise. But all efforts will be worth it once you have that diploma in your hands and you walk across that stage. Stay warm, try to not sleep on ice. I've done that before, it's not fun. And with that, I conclude my remarks, thank you.

[00:15:57] - Thank you, Fernando, appreciate it. - Very good, very well done. Just a note, we didn't really skip Launching Thriving Futures. We have moved some of the folks who were gonna come today just 'cause of issues of scheduling to the February meeting, so you will see some of our Launching Thriving Futures.

[00:16:15] Spectacular students and faculty then. Next, we will have superintendent's time. Dr. McDane. - Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As we return to school from the cold red closure on Tuesday, I want to start by thanking our outstanding staff who came together to ensure our students, families, and teachers got to school safely and on time.

[00:16:36] Our facility staff cleared roads, parking lots, and sidewalks. Our bus drivers brought our students safely to school and warm buses. Our custodians cleared entrances and kept hallways clear from melting snow. Our cafeteria staff served warm breakfasts and hot lunches to students.

[00:16:52] And our educators, staff, and leaders greeted our students with warmth and an eagerness to learn. Hearing the stories of our dedicated staff from faculty, friends, and families is what PWCS is all about. Thank you for contributing to our vision to see every student graduate on time with the knowledge, skills, and habits of mind necessary to create a thriving future for themselves and their community.

[00:17:16] The decision to close the school division is a challenging and consequential one that is not based on personal preference nor done in isolation. It is done with extreme thought and collaboration with multiple expert advisors from facilities, the Virginia Department of Transportation, and local meteorologists that collect, monitor, and analyze a wealth of data over multiple days leading up to a single weather event to provide the best available information and recommendations.

[00:17:51] We try to also communicate these decisions early enough for families to make necessary arrangements. As a superintendent, I deeply understand my responsibility for all students in Prince William County Schools, which is why I keep top of mind that many of our families rely on our school system for services that extend beyond core curriculum to include social services.

[00:18:15] Approximately 42% of the Prince William County student population are identified as economically disadvantaged based on federal criteria. When our schools are closed, many students' basic

needs go unmet. For example, over the course of the pandemic school year closures, PWCS served 22 million free meals to students in need.

[00:18:40] This demonstrates the incredible impact that school closures have on our communities, which is why it is important to consider all the ways that we serve our families in making these decisions. When inclement weather rises to the level of school closure being warranted, be reassured that we will utilize the cold red weather call for full school closure as was executed Tuesday.

[00:19:07] I too appreciate the joy that comes from a snow day that allows students to experience the magic of building a snowman, making snow angels, sledding, or even the classic snowball fight. They create some of the fondest memories from our childhood.

[00:19:25] However, we must also be responsible in our decision-making, which means only closing schools when justified based on expert advice and all available weather-related data. This process ensures that we prioritize both safety and education while providing critical services to all families.

[00:19:48] While our decisions may not always be the most popular, they will always be the right decisions to meet the critical needs of all students and families, prioritize safety, and uphold our deep commitment to education as our core business.

[00:20:05] I wanna thank everyone for your patience, compassion, and understanding when these difficult decisions must be made. I also want to remind families that the registration deadline for applying to our 37 specialty programs will close February 1st, except the Center for Fine and Performing Arts, which closed December 14th.

[00:20:25] Our specialty programs offered in elementary, middle, and high school focus on career exploration, subject area concentration, and college and university preparation. Information and application assistance sessions are being held beginning through February 1st.

[00:20:43] I invite everyone to attend one of our online sessions found on our PWCS website. Last Wednesday, January 10th, the school board held a work session to review and discuss the capital improvement plan, which we also refer to as the CIP or CIP.

[00:20:59] As I wrote in my Friday letter, it is important to share that the current enrollment projections indicate a population decline in Northern Virginia for the first time since 1970. According to the University of Virginia Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service, trends show that Northern Virginians are moving to Richmond and other exurbs due to rising housing costs and remote work, allowing employees to live further from their employers.

[00:21:25] The Virginia Department of Health has also noted the decline in birth rate in Prince William County, another factor that impacts the future enrollment in PWCS. Due to current trends, PWCS anticipates a notable deceleration in enrollment growth over the next five years, which will delay or change current and future facility plans.

[00:21:46] This means that we will need to refine, update, and proactively respond to ensure past, present, and future student success. Projects slated for delay include construction of the 14th high school and renovations at Brentsville District High School. Emerging projects include in addition to the Noakesville School and Potomac Shores Area Elementary expansion both planned for 2027-28. More

information on how PWCS is responding to current and future data can be found on our website pwcs.edu. On February 7th I will present the CIP along with the

[00:22:24] fiscal year 2025 proposed budget to the school board on February 12th a public meeting on the fiscal year 2025 proposed budget and CIP will be held and an official public hearing on the fiscal year 25 budget will be held on February 21st a final markup on the FY 25 budget and CIP in a school board work session will occur on March 13th upon approval the school board will submit the FY 25 budget and CIP to the Prince William County Board of County Supervisors. This

[00:23:00] week is Virginia School Principals Appreciation Week. In celebration, we extend our deepest gratitude to our dedicated principals and assistant principals. Your tireless efforts in shaping educational environments and supporting students, families, and staff are invaluable. Your leadership, energy, and compassion create a foundation for success and inspires us all. Thank you for your unwavering commitment and for instilling the right kind of culture here in pwcs for every single student to thrive your impact extends far beyond the walls of the school and into the lives

[00:23:36] of every student within your reach happy principals appreciation week as noted tonight on march 5th pwcs will amend the 2023-24 calendar to designate march 5th a student holiday and staff workday due due to the presidential primary elections.

[00:23:54] Mr. Chairman, this concludes Superintendent's report. - Thank you, Dr. McDade. Moving on to committee updates. Ms. Jen Wall will update us on the Safe Schools Advisory Council. - Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The Safe Schools Advisory Council met on the 8th of January, and I'm gonna get my notes here.

[00:24:23] The committee heard a presentation on school-based security teams and highlighted in particular the roles and responsibilities and the distinctions between the school security officer, the school resource officer, and the community safety officer. We have a number of layers of employees that are responsible for security, and then of course our school resource officer has a very unique and distinctive role at our middle and high schools.

[00:24:49] We also briefly covered the PWCS, PWC, PD, MOU, and if individuals are interested in more information about that the pwcs risk management and security website has a lot of good information on it including the sro mou And our next meeting will be on february 5th 2024 at 6:30 p.m. In its usual location the information should be on the website But it was good meeting and the committee's been doing a lot of hard work And advising on the issues of school safety and security and I think we're starting to see the results of of that so it was good meeting and

[00:25:28] appreciate all the folks who are volunteer volunteered to be on that committee thank you miss wall okay um moving on to do we have board matters am i approval okay so i'm looking at 1601 okay so this is on for information correct what um budget response this is a first reading

[00:26:00] okay um council do we what is this remind me this this is just budget language for the okay so this This is just to clean up the, okay, technical change.

[00:26:30] If anyone has any questions or concerns, please send those to division council. We will be voting on this next board meeting. Okay, moving on next to the approval of January 3rd, 2024 school board minutes. A motion is in order, Ms. Zargarpur. - Mr. Chairman, I move that the Prince William County School Board approve the January 3rd, 2025 school board meeting minutes. - 2024 minutes.

[00:26:51] - 2024, sorry, it's 25 on here. It's a typo. - Any second? - Mr. Chairman. - Ms. Williams. - I'll second. - Any discussion? - Please vote.

[00:27:22] All right, so I guess we're doing 1603. Motion is in order, 1603, Ms. Zargarpur. - Okay, so I move that we approve the January 10, 2024 CIP budget work session minutes.

[00:27:42] - Do you have a second? - Mr. Chairman. - Ms. Williams. - Second. - Any discussion? Please vote. Please vote. - Point of order, do we know why we pulled these to board matters and pulled them off consent?

[00:28:01] - Request by school board member. And moving on to, that's it, 1604, right? Okay, last week we started with Ms. Williams, this week we'll start on the other end, Ms. Trudenik.

[00:28:24] - I hope everybody enjoyed their snow day. I loved hearing Dr. McDade talk about that. I know a lot goes into those decisions. My favorite part was seeing everybody from kindergarteners all the way up to seniors outside. The fact that the seniors still wanted to go outside and sled was wonderful.

[00:28:43] The fact that they came back to my home and still wanted to eat though was not as wonderful. But yes, they still like to eat a lot of food too after those snow days. So I hope everybody had fun and stayed safe. I loved hearing all the giggling and fun outside as I pretended to shovel my driveway a little bit after the kids had already done their job.

[00:29:04] So I look forward to visiting my schools this week in the district. I'm excited to talk to principals, teachers, and staff at these schools and students. I can't wait to see you guys and I look forward to it. I hope you have a great week, and I'm excited for more snow, that's it.

[00:29:25] - Mr. Blake. - Thank you, Mr. Chairman. - I thought you were sitting on my left. I'm sorry to mess with you. Mr. Jesse. - Well, what can I say, James?

[00:29:43] No, good evening, everybody. It is just amazing to me to see, first of all, I don't remember in 12 years having come and there was no citizen comments. You guys miss me, I know, there for making some comments. But you know it's been a lot of thing and I really respect what Dr. McDade was saying about the complications and all the

[00:30:19] nuances of making a decision and I think he made the right decision. I know I I think Montgomery County is in the news tonight because they had cold two hour delay and at 7:45 this morning or the other morning they went to the schools closed and parents it's just it's just a mess when something like that happened but there is one thing that I'm concerned about that I don't think there's a fix to it but I am concerned when the weather gets somewhere in 15

[00:30:55] degrees and below. There are a lot of kids who do not have coats and do not have the ability to think. I was going by somewhere the other day and I saw three students coming from Woodbridge High School and they had blankets wrapped around them. And I'm assuming that's because they didn't have a coat. So when the temperature, I know as a Marine, when the temperature got up to 90 degrees we did some things we couldn't do exercise

[00:31:30] and so forth but the same thing when it goes down to 10 degrees with a much chill factor of minus 5 it's something I think we should take a consideration about but there is no easy fix that's the problem. MLK was this weekend or Monday and I want to thank the school system, it was hosted for the first time at Kogan Elementary School and most of

[00:32:02] the time it's been held at Hilton, or the church venue over there at, I want to say Hilton but I can't remember for sure, huh? Yeah, the chapel. But they were under renovation and the school did a wonderful job, they really supported it and I think it was really a good program and uh the only thing i told to the people on stage and afterwards you got to remain neutral

[00:32:34] on the stage so uh the speakers were really good and so forth uh you know i'm gonna do as we were just saying i'm gonna go meet with the principals and some of the pta staff and so forth to get a better feel for uh what's going on in the district and i'm just uh happy to be here and i want to thank you for all your support and uh i'm looking forward to some citizen time thank you miss wall thank you mr chairman uh the top of du jour is that code red um i did take a long

[00:33:14] walk in the snow and shoveled the four inches that we got i even measured the four inches that that we got as proof and I hope all the snow lovers got out in the fluffy white stuff and for the rest of you, I hope you were able to get caught up on some projects or homework or rest up or go shopping or whatever it is you do on a snow day.

[00:33:35] I wanna thank all of the awesome principals in the Gainesville District and across PWCS. You are extremely valuable. You make a difference in the lives of students every day and I can't say enough how much we trust you rely on you to carry forward the promises in the strategic plan so thank you i sincerely appreciate each and every principal in the gainesville district some highlights of activities that i've been up to and out and about at the youth orders on mlk day were fantastic i especially liked ben

[00:34:09] samuel ronald reagan it's not easy to give a speech like that memorized without any notes in front of a large audience and he displayed grit perseverance and grace under pressure and i just thought that was absolutely tremendous so well well done ben in particular and well done to everybody um reagan middle school's drama program is awesome i went to their the one act play that goes wrong and i really enjoyed the hilarious falling apart of the entire play it was great it was it was just the right note of funny dramatic and hilarious all in one perfect for a

[00:34:44] middle school program and it was awesome all candy band was top-notch just i was just blown away one of my concerns over covid was that we were going to kill our music programs i mean it was a sincere and serious concern that i had but seeing how well the performers performed the students performed at all county band i was just so excited because it seems like our music programs are doing great. And it was just a really fun way to highlight what is going on in our music classrooms across the county. And I stopped by Art Factory. There were some amazing art students

[00:35:23] who competed in a competition. It's a good example of community involvement in supporting the growth of our students. So thank you to the Art Factory. And if you get a chance to go see their artwork, please do. Fun times were at Tyler Elementary School. They hosted a STEM night. And the Battlefield high school students came over and displayed their robots and put on some really fun hands-on activities for the kids.

[00:35:49] And there was just so many smiles and happiness going on and lots of love of STEM. So that was really cool. And I hear they're going to do the same thing at Alvey. Battlefield high school students from the robotics teams and math and science honor societies will be there. I am out of time.

[00:36:06] I had some other thoughts about the CIP, student health. I wanted to just quickly share that on Tuesday night, the 23rd, at Potomac Valley Church in Dumfries, at 7 p.m., there will be a meeting on how

to recognize the signs of fentanyl overdose, how to administer naloxone, and how to talk to your family members about fentanyl, among other topics.

[00:36:31] I would encourage folks to look into that and to attend. And my final thoughts relate to Martin Luther King Jr., something that he stated that I read a couple of days ago.

[00:36:49] And he said that vanity asks the question, is it popular? And conscience asks the question, is it right? And I think that is a really wonderful question for us to always ask ourselves as a governance team, is it right? And as we move forward into this new year, I think that is something I will be asking myself quite a lot.

[00:37:09] Thank you, everybody, and have a wonderful night. - Ms. Williams. - Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As we are in the month of January, I just also would like to echo some of my fellow board members' statements and congratulate all those who participated, tried out, gave it a shot for the first time in a row, all the coaches, students, family members, everyone who participated in some way, shape, or form in the Delta Sigma Theta Incorporated, alumni chapter MLK Day Oratorical Competition.

[00:37:44] Special shout out to Rehiba Braza from Ripon. Her speech was amazing. As well as all of the students who braved the pressure and stood up there and gave their speeches. There was a particular young man who got a little bit stuck during the middle, but recovered.

[00:38:04] And I think that that's probably one of the best examples I've seen of recovery and continuing to go under pressure and he should definitely be commended for that. It's really tough to recover when you are stuck up on stage and forget your train of thought, but he did an exceptional job and brought the expression, "The show must go on to life."

[00:38:24] So appreciate him for that. Also echoing Dr. McDade as a reminder for the specialty program applications, there are still a few specialty nights being hosted. If you have not yet applied or checked out the specialty programs, please do so on our website.

[00:38:41] One of my favorite times of year is the VSBA Capital Conference, which will be held next Monday and Tuesday in Richmond. This is the time to kindly harass your state legislators, specific when it comes to schools.

[00:38:59] Of course, we'd like to be fully funded, but also keep an eye out on the legislation, the bills that have been submitted, as the session goes on, what may or may not come to pass as we get closer. Oftentimes there are many things related to schools, especially unfunded mandates.

[00:39:15] Hopefully we won't have any. And of course, Prince William County Schools has our own legislative agenda. If you have not had a chance to read up on that, that information is also available. Every January, I'd like to give a shout out to the Divine Nine organizations or the historically black sorority, Greek fraternities and sororities who do tremendous amount of work with our school division and helping our students and volunteering with different programs.

[00:39:43] And January, there are quite a few organizations that celebrate their Founders' Day. So as always, Happy Founders' Day to Kappa Alpha Psi, which is on the 5th of January. My Distinguished Fat Brothers, which was Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity Incorporated on January 9th.

[00:40:01] Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Incorporated was on the 13th of January. Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Incorporated was on the 15th of January. And of course my wonderful, amazing, finer sorors, the

ladies of Zeta Phi Beta Sorority Incorporated was yesterday on the 16th, so happy Founders Day.

[00:40:21] I still have one opening for the equity position on the Superintendent's Equity Council, Advisory Council, and I just want to also thank the principals who are the heart and lifeblood of the building. Thank you. - Mr. Blake.

[00:40:37] - Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good evening, everyone. I'm excited to tell you all about my amazing week visiting our district's 11 schools. At first, I wanna thank all the amazing principals and school leaders in the Neabsco District.

[00:40:53] On Monday, I had the opportunity to visit Hampton Middle School, where I met many dedicated teachers and saw our students really getting into their learning. It was a great reminder of why we're all working so hard to make our schools better. Then on Tuesday, I went to Fitzgerald Elementary.

[00:41:12] Who knows, this could be our first fine and performing arts elementary school, which is very exciting. I also visited Enterprise and King. I was impressed by the great leadership and learning happening there. Wednesday, I was at Dell City Elementary, Garfield High School, and Belleville Middle School.

[00:41:32] The caring community at Dell City really stood out to me. Garfield's new facilities are awesome, and it was special to see kids I've known since kindergarten walk in the halls of Beville Middle School. On Thursday, I visited Sunny Penn, Bel Air and Neabsco Elementary Schools.

[00:41:50] Meeting all the wonderful people there reminded me why I love working in education and how we're all aiming for a bright future for our kids. It's clear that Neabsco District, that the Neabsco District is in good hands with dynamic leaders steering our schools towards excellence.

[00:42:07] Friday, I went to Minnieville Elementary where I saw a strong sense of teamwork and community. And then on Sunday, Sunday was a special day. I got to visit First Mount Zion Baptist Church, and I would just want to congratulate the Reverend Dr. Luke E. Torian on his pastoral retirement.

[00:42:33] And he's done a lot of work in our community and inspired our community and supported our community and our school system. And then this week, as you heard from the other board members, we had the opportunity to attend the Barnett Luther King Jr. Oratorial Competition hosted by Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Incorporated.

[00:43:00] The young speakers talked about love and brotherhood in a way that really showed the spirit of Dr. King's teaching. These visits have made me more committed to our schools. As a school board member and a parent, I'm excited to keep supporting every child in our district let's all work together to make sure every student has a chance to thrive and finally i just want to again thank all the custodians and facilities that kept that cleared the roads cleared all the walkways and made everybody safe and are able to come to school

[00:43:38] today um thank you everybody stay warm and have a good evening miss jargon good evening prince william county a lot of great things happening in the coals district so i'm going to kind of work backwards I too went to the MLK oratorical competition and these were the finalists from the Coles District not all of them spoke on Saturday but these were the ones who were recognized so from Benton Middle School we had Jiveer Singh Sani he's an eighth grader from Colgan High School we had ninth grader Alyssa Godfrey from Osborne Park we had Gabriel Hamilton who's a freshman

[00:44:15] Parkside Middle had Briani Floyd an eighth grader and Saunders Middle School had Arisha Nawad. Saturday I got to go to the off-the-wall art exhibit at the Art Factory. Well Miss Wall and I actually went so I went with the wall to the wall. Anyway we had a ton of kids from Colgan and I think one from OP so I'm going to quickly yes off the wall with Jen Wall. I'm gonna quickly mention their names it's Elizabeth Brittingham a senior at Colgan, Sofia Smirnova from Colgan, 11th grader, Corinne Matthews, a Colgan senior, Andrew Miarrer, a Colgan 11th grader,

[00:44:53] Denise Guiyadem from Colgan, a 12th grader, Rhea Rand from Colgan, also a 12th grader, or senior, sorry guys, that's more appropriate senior, I got you, Catherine Quintanillo from Colgan, she is a senior, Gabriella Molina Otiza from Colgan, a senior, Emily Oliveira Irvin from Osborne Park who is a senior Madison Gibbs from Colgan High School who's a senior Paula Cuellar-Diaz Colgan 11th grader we also went to the all-county band concert that was held at unity read we got to hear the ninth

[00:45:31] grade select band that was amazing I remember thinking sitting there thinking first of all didn't realize they were the ninth graders second of all The future's bright, just that's all I gotta say. And then our own, our freshmen, sophomore, junior, seniors who got into the honor band, performed for the rest of the concert and they were absolutely amazing.

[00:45:56] Ms. Wall mentioned something about how we had had a conversation that we were worried that the impact of the pandemic would hurt the arts, but it obviously has not. We've had a fantastic concert to go to. I got to go to Osborne Park last weekend to see the robotics team.

[00:46:13] Got to introduce a rising freshman to the world of robotics and I hope she takes off with that. Also got to meet with the Muslim Association of Virginia Girl Scouts and talk with them about how government works. There were 60 girls from kindergarten through seniors in high school involved in Girl Scouts.

[00:46:33] So congratulations to them for working on their badge but also asking some really great questions. Last thing I wanna bring up, it's on the Prince William County website. On January 17th, the Virginia Association of Secondary School Principals, VASSP, named Charles J. Colgan Senior High School Assistant Principal Karen Riddle, the 2024 Outstanding Secondary School Assistant Principal of Virginia.

[00:46:58] She is an outstanding person. She is in the halls every time I've ever visited the school. She is there with the kids. There is one quote in this that says a Colgan student said, quote, I thought coming to Colgan with 2,800 kids, I would never see my administrator, but Mrs. Riddle knows me by name, knows I'm a member of the band and comes to every performance we have.

[00:47:18] That is amazing. Congratulations, Ms. Riddle. - Thank you, Mr. Agarapur. All right, just a couple of reminders to our parents whose kids are applying to college and seniors. FAFSA did open at the beginning of the month. Please make sure you get on that.

[00:47:34] second quarter ends on January 26th, January 26th. So if we do have another snow day, get caught up, get your grades up, your grades do matter. And it's really important for our seniors, colleges still look at your first semester grades, they can impact your admission decisions.

[00:47:55] And so it is important to finish this semester very strong. So yes, you've heard a lot about snow days, I hope you had a great time, that's great, get out in the snow, but take some time to also catch up on your homework, study for your ACT or SATs, and get a good book.

[00:48:13] At my house, fun goes to die, so that's what happens on a snow day there. Moving on, population issues, enrollment concerns, there are articles continuing to come on the press on this issue of population decrease in Virginia.

[00:48:34] It is important, it's concerning, it's a public policy matter that has broader impacts than just our schools and it's something that I hope our legislators are taking into full consideration as they look at budgets this year while they are in session. Last, I went to the Human Rights Council, they had their award ceremony this weekend and they recognized a number of community groups and it was fantastic.

[00:48:58] But what they pointed out to me, which I should have known but I didn't know, is that this is the 70th year anniversary of the Brown versus Board of Education decision. And they pointed it out and they decided that they're gonna maybe do some programming around that this year and I think that's critical.

[00:49:19] And so I think I'll end our meeting with just an important quote because it was Martin Luther King's birthday and Martin Luther King Day this past Monday. We have black history coming up next month. So I think it's important to, you know, hear this great quote, you know, when the decision happened, what did Martin Luther King say about the decision?

[00:49:40] So while he was speaking at an annual luncheon of the National Committee for Rural Schools on December 15th, 1956, and so the decision was 54, 1954, Martin Luther King Jr. reflected on the importance of Brown versus Board of Education.

[00:49:57] And he said, "To all men of goodwill, This decision came as a joyous daybreak to end the long night of human captivity. It came as a great beacon light of hope to millions of colored people throughout the world who had had a dim vision of the promised land of freedom and justice.

[00:50:22] This decision came as a legal and sociological death blow to an evil that has occupied the throne of American life for several decades. that was a quote from martin luther king on his reflection of the brown versus board of education decision and you know as we look back we've made incredible progress we've come a long way we've had tremendous success but we still have a ways to go and i'm excited as you know as i start my next term for this board that you know the work that he had committed to the work that our country has

[00:50:59] committed to is work that this board has committed to as well and so let us all move forward i wish Wish you all a great night and the meeting is adjourned.