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Prince William County School Board Meeting, Wednesday, September 4, 2024

Date	Wednesday, September 4, 2024
Place	Prince William County School Board, Virginia
Length	1h 50m (video)

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

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Speech-to-text: whisper.cpp, model large-v3-turbo. Produced 2026-10-31. Each paragraph starts with its time [HH:MM:SS] in the meeting video.

[00:00:01] I would like to call this meeting of the Prince William County School Board to order. A motion is in order for the approval of the meeting agenda. Ms. Wall. - Ms. Alhofer, I move that the Prince William County School Board approve the meeting agenda as recommended. - Do I have a second? That was Mr. Jessie seconded.

[00:00:18] Any discussion? No discussion, please vote.

[00:00:44] - The vote is seven yes, one absent. Lateef, motion passed. - Moving on to the motion to enter closed session. A motion is in order. - Madam Chair.

[00:01:00] - Yes, Ms. Wall. - I move that pursuant to sections 2.2-3711 and 2.2-3712 of the Code of Virginia, the Prince William County School Board enter closed session for the following reasons. One, to discuss with staff the assignment, appointment, promotion, performance, demotion, salaries, disciplining, or resignation of specific public officers, appointees, or employees of any public body pursuant to Virginia Code section 2.2-3711A1, to review disciplinary matters for a specific student that would involve the disclosure of information contained in the scholastic record for an individual student, and to receive legal advice regarding

[00:01:37] same as provided by Virginia code sections 2.2-3711 a two and eight three to consult to discuss and consult with legal counsel regarding requests for religious exemptions pertaining to specific students under Virginia code sections 2.2-3711 a four to discuss with division counsel and staff actual or probable litigation and specific legal matters involving staff students and other civil litigation involving the school division under Virginia code section 2.2-3711 a seven and eight 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

[00:02:17] to such matters where discussion in an open meeting would jeopardize the security of such facilities pursuant to virginia code section 2.2-3711 a 19. second madam chair miss williams second so in seconds any discussion please vote vote a seven yes one absent latif motion passed

[00:02:57] prince william county school board will now enter closed session return to open session in about an

[00:03:01] an hour.

[00:04:02] - Prince William County School Board is now returning to open session from closed session. A motion is in order for closed session, Ms. Wall. - Madam Chair, I move that pursuant to section 2.2-3712 of the Code of Virginia, the closed session of the Prince William County School Board meeting of September 4th, 2024 be certified by adopting the following resolution.

[00:04:22] 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 this certification resolution applies and two, only such public business matters as were identified in the motion convening this closed meeting were heard and discussed or considered by the school board.

[00:04:44] - Do I have a second? - Madam Chair. - Ms. Williams seconds. - I have a second. - Ms. Williams seconds, is there any discussion? Please vote.

[00:05:12] - The vote is seven yes, one absent Lateef, motion passed. - Moving on to the closed session action item, a motion is in order for the approval of appointments and releases. - Madam Chair. - Ms. Wall. - I move that the Prince William County School Board approve the appointments and releases of specific employees as presented in closed session.

[00:05:29] - Do I have a second? - Madam Chair. - Ms. Williams, Ms. Williams seconds. Any discussion, please vote.

[00:05:51] - The vote is seven yes, one absent. Lateef, motion passed. - A motion is in order for the approval of the appointment of the clerk of the school board. - Madam Chair. - Ms. Williams. - Thank you. I move that the Prince William County School Board appoint Ms. Laura Mills as clerk of the Prince William County School Board to replace B. Simpson.

[00:06:08] - Do I have a second? - Madam Chair, I second. - Ms. Wall. - 12 seconds, any discussion? - Madam Chair. - Ms. Williams. - I would just like to formally welcome Ms. Laura Mills to her very first school board meeting.

[00:06:23] Thank you for joining us and welcome to Prince William County Schools and I will get you started with my usual, thank you for herding cats in advance. Welcome. - Ms. Wall do you have something?

- I was just gonna say welcome, thank you. We're glad to have you on board and I think all of us are really excited to have you here.

[00:06:43] Mr. Jesse. - Yes, welcome. - And I hope you can keep that smile. - Anyone else?

[00:06:53] All right, please vote.

[00:07:26] - The vote is seven yes, one absent Lateef, motion passed. - Now it's really official, you can't leave us now. Moving on to 903, a motion is in order for the approval of religious exemptions from compulsory school attendance.

[00:07:44] - Madam Chair. - Ms. Wall. - I move that the Prince William County School Board approve the request for religious exemption from compulsory school attendance for case numbers, RE 24-1, RE 24-2, RE 24-3, RE 24-4, RE 24-5, RE 24-6, and RE 24-7.

[00:08:07] - Do I have a second? - Madam Vice Chair? - Ms. Williams. - I second. - Ms. Williams seconds, any discussion? Please vote.

[00:08:33] - The vote is seven yes, one absent Lateef, motion passed. - Moving on to 904, a motion is in order for the approval to the request for readmission of student MS24-09R. - Madam Chair. - Ms. Wall. - I move that for the reason set forth in the Student Management and Alternative Programs Department's SMAPD letter of July 30th, 2024, the Prince William County School Board approve SMAPD's decision to deny the readmission of student MS24-039R to a traditional Prince William County Public School, instead reassigning the student to an in-person, non-traditional setting with the conditions

[00:09:11] and requirements detailed in the decision letter. - Do I have a second? - Madam Chair. - Ms. Williams. - I second. - Ms. Williams, second. Any discussion, please vote.

[00:09:41] - The vote is seven yes, one absent Lateef. Motion passed. - All right, thank you. That concludes our closed session action items. Moving on to the Pledge of Allegiance. Since we have our student representative, Alaa Rashid here tonight on the dais,

[00:09:55] would you please lead us in the Pledge of Allegiance?

[00:10:22] - Thank you. Alaa Rashid is a senior who is attending Unity Reed High School, and she is joining us on the dais tonight. We also have student representative Eliana Almudina Latoura here this evening, who is -- would you please stand? She's out in the -- yeah, there you go -- who's a senior at C.D. Hilton High School.

[00:10:41] And our alternate student representative, Kaylee Tom, is a senior at Brentsville District High School. So thank you all for being here tonight. We value your voice and your presence, and we welcome you. Looking forward to working with you this year. All right, moving on to our Thriving Futures Focus.

[00:11:04] 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.

[00:11:19] We dedicate this time to recognizing students, staff members, and schools that have earned an honor or 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 and publicly for their accomplishments.

[00:11:36] Tonight, the school board will recognize our students' team and individual state championships. These awards show exceptional efforts to prioritize the school community's exceptional athletics, leadership, and culture. And we begin in the Coles District with our first champions.

[00:11:52] Congratulations to the Osborne Park High School girls softball team for winning the state championship. Your hard work, commitment, and team spirit have paid off and you have made us all incredibly proud. The victory is a testament to your incredible resilience and talent and the amazing work of head coach Patrick DeRosa, activities director Keith Lane, and principal Lisa Marie Kane.

[00:12:13] I wish to invite head coach Patrick DeRosa to introduce assistant coaches and team members here in attendance and share a few words on this team and their accomplishments. - Hello everybody, hello board. So welcoming my team here. - Hey coach, go over to the microphone so we can hear you better, thank you.

[00:12:31] - Hello everybody. So first up, Cordia Hershey, starting catcher from this year. Ella Anstott, starting first baseman. Jenna Wilson, starting first baseman, third baseman. Mia Gamble, second base, outfield, every outfield position.

[00:12:51] Guy Sagal, second base, game-winning hit in the championship game. Jocelyn Ellis, first base catcher. And Lydia Tank Hershey, starting third baseman, outfield, multiple positions. And the one assistant coach here, Brock Hershey, somewhere in the back.

[00:13:14] so I'll make this quick but thank you so much for having us the biggest thing that I can say about our team so we have seven girls here of the nine that are returning next year we only have 13 on the team we had a small team but all 13 of them made a big impact for us this season I can't emphasize this enough I am so proud of this group they worked so hard they came into this season with a goal and they accomplished it they deserve this they deserve all the applause that they've been given all summer all spring and I can't wait to be back with them next year and work with them

[00:13:44] them again I love you guys I'm so happy for you so thank you for having us thank you coach DeRosa congratulations to all of you I am very proud of you and I know that had to be a great moment for everybody I am looking forward to hearing about another win this year right congratulations to everyone from the Brentsville district miss Erica Trudenik please introduce your state champions thank you miss Zargarpur the Brentsville district would like to recognize two state champions one outstanding team and one phenomenal student first congratulations to the to the Brentsville district school high

[00:14:24] school girls soccer team I had the privilege of going and watching these these girls play in that game and it was not an easy game they did not go down without a fight and boy can these girls play so coach I'm we're proud of your accomplishments and the legacy of the girls soccer coaches Doug Silver and Scott Kearns activities director Seth Cameron and principal dr. Katherine mitz coach you can go ahead and say a few words uh thank you dr mcdade and the board obviously for having us here tonight and all the staff that set this up we've been in contact with some of the support staff as well so thank you for that and miss uh tradenik was at our game all the way down

[00:15:02] in charlottesville so we appreciate you being there to support us and you obviously are a parent of athletes at brentsville so um you know what it's like so um tonight with us is um our assistant coach, Doug Silver, who's been an assistant coach with me for, gosh, close to 20 years now. So he's been helping

me for a long time. One of our returning seniors, Izzy Dimilis. One of our sophomores returning, Lucy O'Brien. We have one of our returning seniors, Sammy Garber. Senior

[00:15:36] Kara Lawhead. Senior Emma Cornwell. And senior Haley Garber. And just to, you know, to kind of echo the coach from Osmer Park I mean it's so awesome to be here with all these champions from all the different schools and congratulate congratulations to everybody here that's that's one you may not know we were repeat champions this year so we did win back-to-back championships this year and this was a different year this was a difficult a more difficult year and I think it

[00:16:15] really spoke to the perseverance of the kids and just you know to move off of athletics just for a second if you're looking for exemplary examples of student athletes these kids participate in community service projects they participate in the program and mentorship projects we ask a lot of them outside of athletics and you know it it can't be understated how much character and being a wonderful person and a beautiful human being translates to going on to the field and winning championships so and I don't want to leave here before we also

[00:16:50] congratulate Kayla Smith another one of our brunchville athletes who's absolutely fantastic so congratulations to you too Kayla thank you guys so as coach said we're also going to extend a profound congratulations to Kayla Smith on her two state track titles in the 100 meter and 200 meter - I have seen this girl run I've actually known her since she's been in kindergarten and like coach said she is not only a phenomenal athlete but she is a phenomenal young lady she is kind she is caring she is energetic she also plays other sports and I cannot

[00:17:27] wait to see you be a three-peat champion young lady miss coach miss coach Tondra Beckman thank you thank you for having us all here unfortunately I was not able to come the last time you guys honored her because we had a track meet so I was thrilled to be able to come tonight this girl is just phenomenal and she's like are you gonna cry no I'm not gonna cry she doesn't just have two she has four championships she's broken five school records and the first time I saw her I was at a football game and she went running across the bleachers and I

[00:18:03] was like I've got to have this girl and we got her and you know her exploits on the field are wonderful but she doesn't do it just for herself she does it because she knows it helps our team she's willing to step up and run the 4x4 even after she's had a hamburger and fries at the last minute just because she knows we need her it has been the honor of my track career to be able to coach someone like her and there's going to be more there's there's no stop in this athlete and we're so very proud she told me right before we came in here she thought about quitting the first week and now here we are so thank you for not

[00:18:41] quitting and we love having you and congratulations to our girls softball team some of those athletes are on our track team too some of their athletes are on our team too and you guys are phenomenal and congratulations to everyone else here thank you congratulations to our students our school and to the Brunsville district community thank you ladies for being here all right thank you mr. Denick I invite Woodbridge district representative miss Laurie Williams to speak on behalf of her district thank you mr. vice chair

[00:19:16] our chairwoman for the evening on behalf of the Woodbridge district I would like recognize my amazing stellar high school Freedom High School for their long jump state champion Ariana Thomas did I say it correctly Ariana we are so impressed by the strength of character and will of spirit that has

propelled you to greatness as Ariana knows the long jump is measured by both distant is measured by distance both measurable and immeasurable we look forward to your continued journey this coming year congratulations also to Freedom High

[00:19:51] school principal Shavelli Smith and activities director Mr. A at this time I would like to invoke excuse me invite coach Kenya Hannaford to speak on behalf of this outstanding student athlete before you get to that mic I just want to say Ariana it's a pleasure to see you in this boardroom yet again I told you when we saw you I think it was in the spring or close to the summer at the end of the school year last year that I knew I would be seeing you back again and as as someone who cannot run or does not do sports and barely makes 5-1 when I jump, I am just all inspired by your commitment and dedication and for your returning visit to us.

[00:20:29] So congratulations, I'm always amazed by athletes and thank you again for representing Prince William County Schools so well. Coach. - Thank you, thank you to the board. I've been coaching Oregon Thomas since she's been about maybe like nine years old, so it's amazing to get her to this level.

[00:20:47] At the state championship, she only got two legal jumps and she was able to pull that title out. I'm just very proud of her. She was also third place in the 300 meter hurdles. She was a long jump runner up indoors. So for her to come out here and get the state championship outdoor was amazing for her only being a sophomore.

[00:21:02] So it's great. I'm also here joined with Dr. Keith Riley. He's our Maltese coach and Dr. Daryl Harris. He's actually was my high school coach. So it's amazing that I have these honors with these people and thank you to all the athletes that are here today. - That's a wonderful full circle moment.

[00:21:23] Congratulations to y'all. And coach, just for the record, Did I pronounce your name correctly, sir? Okay, thank you. - All right, thank you, Ms. Williams. Mr. Blake from the Neabsco District, please introduce your state champion. - Thank you, Ms. Zagapur. The Neabsco District is proud to recognize Garfield High School's Joshua Keea Smith, Virginia state champion for both the 110 meter high hurdles and the 300 meter hurdles.

[00:21:49] Joshua, your outstanding performance and relentless dedication have led you to this incredible victory and honor. You have shown exceptional skill, talent, determination you have made principal matt matheson activities director michael payne and the entire garfield high school and prince william county public school community proud a fantastic job i welcome coach jamal jamal or jermal latin to share a few words about our multi-talented state champion sorry about that no you got it right um i'm joined by here by mr

[00:22:28] Payne, our athletics director, Mr. Kenny Miller, our assistant athletics director, Tyler Dickerson, our head coach, another head coach is myself, and assistant coach Walter Harley. As everybody knows, Garfield High School is the legacy when it comes to Prince William County as far as Olympic and track athletes. Kai, he kind of stood out above everybody else this year. Kai ran seven times under 14 seconds, which hasn't been done in I don't know how long. He's also our state champion of 300 hurdles which that's a race he does not like but he does it for us anyways. Kai is probably your most quietest athlete that you're gonna have

[00:23:05] out there but he works the hardest in practice and now being his junior year he's taking on a leadership role running cross-country and trying to lead the way for everybody else. We are very proud of

Josh and everything he's done and what he's gonna accomplish in the future. Congratulations to the Garfield High School community. Thank you Mr. Blake. Congratulations to all of our state champions as you continue to model the standard of excellence in Brent Swinton County in school athletics I would like to invite the staff family and friends of our state winners to please stand

[00:23:42] in recognition of your support for these wonderful athletes before taking a few pictures superintendent dr. McDade would like to share a few words thank you so much madam chairwoman congratulations to each of you our outstanding student athletes on your remarkable achievements to our girls softball and soccer teams your teamwork leadership and dedication have not only

[00:24:18] earned you the state championship but has represented your school and our school division with such excellence and we're incredibly proud of each of you for our track and field state champions your focus and relentless effort have led to an extraordinary victory and you can overcome any obstacles put in your way and now you have the trophy to prove it Prince William County Public Schools continues to thrive both inside and outside the classroom you each continue to excel on and off the field and we are PWCS proud of each of you

[00:24:51] congratulations on a job well done thank you Dr. McDade at this time I'd like to request our honorees to come forward for a photo with the school board and to receive a small token of our appreciation we'll start with one photo that includes our Osborne Park high school girls softball team the second photo will include the Brentsville district high school girls soccer team

[00:25:15] and then we'd like to invite our individual state champions all right we

[00:32:22] are back now we are moving on to adoption of consent agenda a motion is in order miss wall madam chair I move that the Prince William County School Board approve the public meeting consent agenda as recommended. - Do I have a second, Madam Chair?

[00:32:37] - Ms. Williams seconds. - I'd like to second. - Any discussion? - Ms. Williams. - Yes, I just had a quick question about, yeah, for, was it the, I thought you said somewhere for a contract?

[00:32:58] - I know. - For track and field, was it on there? Regardless, nevermind then. It's not, I can ask that at another time. - Okay. - Thank you. - Okay, all right. Any other discussion? Please vote.

[00:33:32] - The vote is seven yes, one absent. Lateef, motion passed. - Thank you. Moving on to acknowledgements and recognitions. The motion is in order, Ms. Wall. - Madam Chair. - I move that the Prince William County School Board approve the acknowledgements and recognitions as recommended. - I have a second.

[00:33:47] - Madam Chair. - Ms. Williams. - I second. - Ms. Williams seconds, any discussion? - Madam Chair. - Ms. Williams. - Thank you since the beginning of the school year. I know that we do these recognitions for the next upcoming month for those who are new to our system. So I just wanted to make that acknowledgement as well as I'm just excited about the upcoming months that we will be celebrating.

[00:34:08] I'm a science person and someone who has ADHD and as well as my child and bullying is always top of our mind. So I just wanted to acknowledge those. So thank you. - Any further discussion?

[00:34:22] Please vote.

[00:34:49] - The vote is six yes, one abstention. Tradenek, one absent Latif, motion passed. - All right, moving on to citizen comment time. Those citizens who have signed up in advance with the clerk may

address the school board this evening when they're called to the podium.

[00:35:06] 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 PWCS. Please use proper decorum and manners while at the podium or you will be asked to step aside.

[00:35:21] We ask that the audience please be respectful of each speaker and refrain from any clapping, cheering or jeering to avoid disruption of the meeting. If you do not, the board will recess and I will ask that the room be cleared restore public order tonight we have four citizens signed up to speak when i call your name please come up to the podium and state your name and add state your name for the record we have tonight we

[00:35:45] have four speakers carl gretton chris funderberg shalen klinger and ovetta scott good evening i'm carl gretton of the gainesville district hopefully everyone is ready to begin the new school year as citizens we thank the school board for moving in the correct direction to limit the use of cell phones in schools. It is unfortunate that we must wait until other school

[00:36:21] districts make their decision before PWC will make ours. It appears that the school board members are delaying due to decisions that may affect election decisions. The governor has put a date of January 1st for a decision and we hope Prince William County can decide prior to that. Have you incorporated questions from artificial intelligence? I will attach a file on my email to you with a possible answer. Part of the answer is about parental controls on cell phones.

[00:36:50] Have you heard about the situation in California in which illegal aliens are congregating at bus stops? How is Prince William County bus driver going to determine if adults at bus stops are illegal aliens or not? The school system is responsible for students from portal to portal. Please make a forward-thinking decision on how the school system will handle this situation. We are excited for another productive year following superintendent mcdade's report on a 2023-2024 year we do not necessarily need to be see improvement after one year out of the covet lockdowns we would like to

[00:37:28] see a comparison to pre-covid years of 2018 to 2019 we hope the prince william county school board is also working for the following goals remove perversion out of school books and off the shelves harsher punishment for bullying eliminate the fentanyl problem set the bar higher for better grades forget D minus strive for A's no boys and girls sports no boys and girls bathrooms or showers remove DEI and divert money to school security reverse the renaming of schools decrease attendance problems and most important include merit excellence and intelligence

[00:38:07] for all students. Please do not support the radical weird waltz. He wanted to put tampons in boys bathrooms. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Funderburg. Good evening. My name is Chris Funderburg and my address is on file. I'm back. Welcome to the 2024-25 school year and I look forward to spending a lot of time here with all of y'all. Tonight you'll be voting on whether to keep a book in the school library that contains sexually explicit content as defined by the State

[00:38:43] Virginia, State Department of Education, and your own policy. While this book is popular and doesn't generally have a bad story, it delves into adult sexual content in a way that doesn't add to the overall story. It's simply gratuitous and although tame for adults, should not be available to 13 year old children. In case you haven't read this book, here's a small sample of what is contained. I'm sure your voters will be curious. If there are any kids nearby, put your earmuffs on. Quote, "My night back gown had

become hitched around my waist, but I didn't care. I hooked my bare legs around his, running my feet down the hard muscles of his calves. The fingertips of his other hand slipped beneath the waist of my undergarment

[00:39:23] and I sucked in a breath. He hesitated at the sound, pulling back slightly, but I bit his lip in a silent command that had him growling into my mouth. With one long claw, he shredded through silk and lace and my undergarment fell away in pieces. The claw retracted and his kisses deepened as his fingers slid between my legs, coaxing and teasing. I ground against his hand yielding completely to the writhing wildness that had roared alive inside of me and breathed his name into his skin he paused again his fingers retracting but i grabbed him pulling him further on top of me i wanted him now i wanted the barriers of our clothing to vanish i wanted to taste his sweat i wanted to become full of him my own breathing became steady as i

[00:40:02] raised my napgown over my head and tossed it to the floor utterly naked before him i watched his gaze traveled to my bare breasts, peeked against the chill night, to my abdomen, to between my thighs. A ravenous, unyielding sort of hunger passed over his face. I bent a leg and slid to the side, a silent invitation. He let a low growl and slowly, with predatory intent, raised his gaze to mine. Give me everything, I breathed. He lunged, a beast free of his tether. We were a tangle of limbs and teeth. I tore his clothes until they were on the floor, then tore his skin until I marked him down his back in his arms his claws are out but devastatingly gentle on my

[00:40:39] hips as he slipped down between my thighs and feasted on me stopping only after I shuddered and fractured I was moaning his name when he sheathed himself inside him it powerfully slow thrust that hadn't been splintering around him I'd appreciate it if you didn't make me have to do this again the future thank

[00:40:56] you Shailen Klinger is Shailen Klinger here okay moving on to Ovetta Scott good Good evening ladies and gentlemen of the board, Ms. Chairwoman and Dr. Mayday.

[00:41:27] My name is Oveta Scott and my address is on file with the clerk. Hooray! Another school year. I want to say thanks for the improvements that have happened within the last year, like the new leaves benefits, flex timing, and front loading sick leave.

[00:41:42] I enjoyed that summer school schedule began earlier in the season. Now even with all those wonderful gloves, there's always room for growth. Tonight, I would like to spotlight some areas of concerns. First, there are several schools that are piloting instructing students with the iPad.

[00:42:00] Unfortunately, the logistics structure that was designed for distributing this new technology and the training for staff and students, use of this new device was done ineffectively. It feels like my students, colleagues, and myself was given a new toy, and we must figure it out, along with keeping with the pace of the new curriculum.

[00:42:22] Last year this time I spoke about the super women and men of our building, which are our custodial staff. Tonight I wanna share with you, tonight I wanna make you aware of another unsung hero, our school registrar. Currently I learned that this person worked the entire year without a break.

[00:42:41] The mighty school registrar is responsible for the heartbeat of our foundation, which is the school records. This individual is accountable for incoming outgoing of student files, scanning them into

our system, translation assisting, covering the front office, communication with other schools, and problem solving to validate student addresses.

[00:43:04] Maybe we can fix the turnover rate that the school registrar, fix the turnover rate of the school registrar if they were recognized as an essential staff member that received time off during the school year. Lastly, I would like to highlight a rise in school sport within our county and that is robotics.

[00:43:25] I know some great robotic coaches that have made names for themselves at the local and state level. The only downside about the sport from a coach's perspective is that it's not valued as the other top athletics like football, basketball, soccer.

[00:43:43] Are you aware that at the middle level, if you are a coach, if you coach a nine-week sport like football, you earn $3,000? robotics coach who operates their program for the entire school year earns 1200. The robotics team has competitions that are on the weekend not during the week. They must fundraise to obtain monies to support their program. Since this is one of the fast and rising academic sports we consider we should consider making it a part of the intramural sport community. This will ensure that all coaches are valued for the work that they put into their high

[00:44:21] achieving athletics thank you thank you all right moving on to 1501 I'll turn this one over to dr. McDade thank you madam chairwoman I would like to bring forward Shaquille you staff our chief financial officer and he'll share more information on the VPS a bond sale good evening Miss Agapur members of the school board and dr. McDade we have before you a resolution for information

[00:44:57] today on the sale of VPSA bonds in the amount of $144,500,000, which will be used to fund our CIP projects, and we have a list of those projects also available.

[00:45:15] This resolution will then be presented to you for approval at the September 18th meeting. As you may recall, at the February 7th, 2024 school board meeting, we presented an initial CIP funding amount of $169,555,000.

[00:45:36] With thanks to additional funds received from the BOCS, Board of County Supervisors, we have been able to reduce the amount of bond sales, bond funds needed for our CIP projects. And the other piece of it you will see is that the county typically asks for additional monies to refund outstanding bonds.

[00:45:59] In this case, it's $215 million. This is like a placeholder that they put. The financial benefit of refunding or refinancing depends on what the interest rates are and what cost savings we can realize. So, in conclusion, I respectfully request that your approval of this resolution.

[00:46:21] I'm happy to answer any questions. - If there's no questions now, I'm sure we can also submit them to you over the next couple of weeks. - Thank you. - All right, thank you. - All right, moving on to student representative time.

[00:46:38] Joining us on the dais tonight, we welcome our student representative Allah Rashad, a senior at Unity Reed High School. Allah, the floor is yours, welcome. - Thank you so much. Good evening to Dr. McDade, the school board, and the Prince William County community. I hope everyone is doing well.

[00:46:55] My name is Allah Rashad, and I'm a senior at Unity Reed High School who was honored to be one of the student representatives for the 2024 to 2025 school year. Excuse me, sorry. to exceed all expectations in this position and be a welcoming face to the students of Prince William County Schools. A goal of mine as a student representative for the school year is to maintain inclusivity. We all make up this

community and we should all feel welcome amongst one another no matter what. The school division displays this idea of inclusivity by implementing student voice committees or SVCs all in all high schools and growing its future throughout middle schools

[00:47:33] this year. In these committees students are able to advocate not only for themselves but also for their peers. Through this, I have expanded my own personal knowledge of the school division and the opinions of others as it gives me a rare chance to speak to people I would not normally see.

[00:47:50] SVCs also give me and my fellow representatives the feedback needed to speak on behalf of the student body. Lastly, we are now working on this first ever student bill of rights displaying the growing leadership the division promotes in its schools. Overall, SVCs have allowed students to to grow not only as student leaders, but also as advocates for themselves.

[00:48:16] Showcasing the step forward the school division is taking for the future of its students. Now, speaking of the future, this new school year welcomes change as we all must adapt to the new cell phone initiative implemented by Governor Youngkin's executive order. It is one of the most significant changes this school year as many students are still adjusting to this new policy these first few weeks.

[00:48:37] The policy was put in place to better us as it allows students to be more engaged in class, increasing both productivity and communication. After reaching out to the Student Center for Feedback, which is composed of one to three students from every high school in the county, I've seen the new policy slowly become a new norm in schools with them saying how it has mostly been followed and students have begun to understand the reason why it was put into place.

[00:49:02] However, concerns are still present as the use of technology in schools grows every year. A big concern for students is that many websites such as Canva and Pinterest can be blocked on school computers at times and students need access to these websites for school assignments.

[00:49:18] Classes such as SCLC or Art have used these websites can now not do so, leading to as phones or bands during instructional time, this then leads to tension within students as they cannot always complete assignments on time, leading to an overall decrease in productivity.

[00:49:35] A solution that may be fit for this would be to have students be able to advocate for what resources they need on their computers through their SVCs, so they do not need to interfere with the state mandate as it gives them a chance to interact with their student voice committees, while also giving them the chance to speak on their path.

[00:49:53] This would give students some input on this mandate as it was sprung onto us during the summer. Surprisingly, another concern is the need for cell phones in emergencies. Whether a personal or school-wide issue, some students have felt that they cannot always reach out to a trusted adult as it is a new school year and we're still adapting to some changes.

[00:50:12] An example would be going to the office for a personal matter rather than just sending your mom or dad a quick text. Since the student's earn is vast in how it can be handled, a solution that may be fit would be to approach it on a school and classroom level. An example of this would be having cubbies for phones and options for communication if it doesn't interfere with the state mandate.

[00:50:32] Thus, I hope these concerns bring more of the student perspective to this new endeavor made by both the school division and state of Virginia, as it has the potential to benefit the student body heavily.

Now, reflecting on the first two weeks of the school year, I would like to welcome back all the amazing families present in the Prince William County community, I cannot wait to be an advocate for you all.

[00:50:54] Opportunities for students are growing yearly as the division steps up to provide them, from the SVCs to college resources put into place. But in order to truly take advantage of these possibilities, we all must be present at school. Attendance is such an important issue that is necessary for success in the future.

[00:51:12] In order to make change, we must acquire the knowledge necessary for it. So I urge all my peers to strive to be present throughout the school year and set new goals to challenge themselves. Lastly, to conclude my remarks, I would like to speak on upcoming events in the county with Hispanic Heritage Month beginning in a little over a week on September 15th.

[00:51:33] It is always remarkable to see all the fun events and activities each school has that promote culture and inclusivity. An example of this would be at my high school, Unity Reed, as we are hosting assemblies and our first ever Hispanic Heritage Night for the school year.

[00:51:49] This night will be celebrated with nearby elementary schools displaying a sense of community and inclusivity throughout the school division. I hope to see this idea pushed throughout the division as I grow my presence as a student representative. That concludes my remarks for this evening. Thank you again for this opportunity.

[00:52:05] - Thank you. - Thank you, Alaa. We now move to the superintendent's time. Dr. McDade, the floor is yours. - Thank you so much, Madam Chairwoman. First, I want to welcome and congratulate our new student representatives to the board, Almadena, Alaa, and Kaylee.

[00:52:24] Welcome, congratulations. I look forward to working with you this school year, learning about your priorities and goals and collaboratively making sure that student voice is represented in value throughout the school system. So welcome aboard. I'm excited to kick off another school year in Prince William County Schools.

[00:52:41] We welcomed more than 90,000 students through our doors on August 19th. Thank you to our amazing educators and support personnel for their commitment to excellence for our students and their families. We're entering the fourth year of the PWCS Strategic Plan Vision 2025.

[00:52:58] And like any strong strategic plan, we must assess our current state to determine if we're making adequate progress towards meeting our goals to identify and refine our priorities and significant actions. The true measure of success of any school system is in the graduation rate and the ability for our students to experience post-secondary success.

[00:53:19] Because our job goes beyond the classroom and beyond handing off the diploma on the stage, it is to ensure that when our students depart from Prince William County, that they can realize the vision to create a thriving future for themselves and their community. I will provide more specifics on our student academic performance in our State of the Schools presentation, which we will share in October along with accreditation.

[00:53:42] But I want to share the 2023-24 school year data for our wildly important goals in PWCS. We currently have an all-time high graduation rate of 94.3%. We've reduced chronic absenteeism by 5.4%.

[00:53:57] our English learners on-time graduation rate has risen by 9.6%. We've also reduced English learner dropout rates by 9.6%, and we've had rises in SOL pass rates in each subject, reading at 76%, which is 3% higher than the state average, writing 79%, which is an 8% increase from last year and 3% higher than the state average.

[00:54:21] History and science coming at 71%, that is a 1% increase from last year, and 6% higher than the state average. Math at 73%, which is a 2% increase from the prior year, 2% higher than the state average. And in science, we're currently at 68%, 2% increase from last year and on level with the state average.

[00:54:41] Our students achieve when they are present in school and connected to our teachers, so let us continue to support student success and achieve our strategic plan goals for 2025. September is Attendance Awareness Month, and we're spotlighting multi-faceted improvements that are coming with higher attendance.

[00:55:02] More inconsistent attendance rates lead to more success for graduation, better academic achievement, and overall student well-being. So we're asking to please recommit this year. Although we saw improvements in chronic absenteeism, the work is still not finished. We wanna get that rate down right now.

[00:55:19] We're currently at about 16%. We concluded the year at 16%, so we wanna continue to decrease that number. So we want to recommit this year to ensure students are on time in class every day because we know that students who are on time in class every day will be on time for graduation.

[00:55:35] We continue to create pathways for success for students and their future. Our instructional development extends beyond our organization and into the partnerships that we have with other educational institutions. Currently, Prince William County Schools and Northern Virginia Community College have teamed up to pilot the Collegiate High School.

[00:55:56] When Dr. Sullivan came on board, this was one of her big priorities. And we're so excited that within the first year, she was able to get this off the ground. We already had a robust partnership with NOVA, and so they were excited to partner with us on this endeavor.

[00:56:13] And right now, qualifying students from Freedom High School are now attending classes and activities on the Woodbridge NOVA campus. so they walk right across the street each day to earn college credit towards a degree at no cost to their parents.

[00:56:28] Also starting with the class of 2025, PWCS has partnered with George Mason University to help simplify admissions for students at eight PWCS high schools. This partnership is a part of a strategic commitment to increase access and opportunity for students pursuing higher education, and our hope is to see this pilot program expand to more PWCS high schools.

[00:56:51] More information can be found on our website at pwcs.edu, or our families can reach out to your local school to see if your student qualifies for this opportunity. As we begin this new school year, let us commit to starting strong and maintaining that momentum throughout the year.

[00:57:08] By setting clear goals, building strong relationships, and fostering a positive climate and culture, we can create thriving environments for teaching and learning. Consistency in routines is key, and focus on continuous improvement will keep us grounded and growing. We are doing our part to

improve transportation for our students and families, and we're pleased to report significant improvements in our student transportation services, particularly in achieving on-time status.

[00:57:35] I know that these enhancements, any change in any school system are always challenging, but it was necessary to make significant changes with transportation so that we can better serve our students and families and ensure that we're getting students to school safely and on time. And this was part of several strategic initiatives that we've implemented over the past year.

[00:57:55] First, we undertook a comprehensive review of our bus stop consolidations, including a full-scale safety assessment to ensure the well-being of our students, which have optimized our routes, contributing to more timely arrivals and departures. Secondly, we introduced a sign-on bonus incentive for new drivers to address staffing challenges, which resulted in a well-staffed transportation department directly contributing to more reliable and punctual bus services.

[00:58:22] This is the lowest bus driver vacancy rate that we've seen coming out of the pandemic. Third, we've leveraged the Here Comes the Bus app to improve communication with parents. This app provides real time updates on bus travel times, allowing parents to track their child's bus location and estimated arrival times.

[00:58:41] This transparency has improved parent satisfaction and helped us maintain our schedules more effectively. And I do have some data around student transportation. We've been tracking it and making comparisons to the prior year to be able to assess whether or not the changes that we've made are making a significant difference with on-time rates, and I'll share those with you today.

[00:59:03] So for example, in 2023, for the first day of school for all buses serving high school students, we had an on-time rate on day one in '23 of 77.8%. So 77.8% of the buses serving high school students for the first day of school in 2023 were on time.

[00:59:24] This year, opening the school year in 2024, we had an on-time rate of 85.1% on the first day of school which is significant because the first day of school is a time where drivers are getting accustomed to their routes, students are learning stops.

[00:59:41] And so we expect on the first day of school that we'll have some hiccups there but at 85.1% On-time rate is the highest that we've seen in three years and it is significant We are on time by the end of that was the first day for the new school year by the end of the second week For high school students bus riders. We had an on-time arrival to school at 91 points 91 percent for the first day for middle school students bus riders last year Our middle school buses had an on-time rate on the first day of school of 72.4%.

[01:00:20] For the start of 2024, the first day of school, that number for middle school was 79.2% on the first day of school that were on time. When we concluded the end of the second week of school last week, our on-time arrivals improved to 93% for middle school buses. For the first day of elementary school in 2023 our on-time rates i'm embarrassed to say were 31.4 percent so on the first day of school for elementary bus riders we had an on-time rate of 31.4 percent this year 2024

[01:00:58] the on-time rate for elementary school on the first day of school was 57.6 percent but i'm excited to announce that at the end of the second week of school once buses stabilized our on-time time arrivals for elementary school is now 92%.

[01:01:16] So we are making some significant improvements. We've received, certainly we've received concerns about changes to the stop, which we knew that change would be challenging, but consolidating those routes has definitely contributed to more efficiency in getting our school students on time.

[01:01:35] And these initiatives have collectively led to a marked improvement in our performance, ensuring that students arrive at school and are returning home safely and punctually. We remain committed to continuously enhancing our transportation services. We certainly appreciate the board support, the patience of our families as we start at the new school year.

[01:01:56] We know that in the start of any school year, it requires some time for our bus drivers, our students and our families to get acclimated to the new transportation routines and the routes. This has been a big adjustment, but one that certainly was needed. I do want to thank our transportation team under the direction of Robin Marshall, and I wanna thank Mr. Vernon Bach, our Chief Operating Officer.

[01:02:20] This is a huge effort. We don't, we have a large school system. I think over 75,000 bus riders of the 90,000 students, over 90,000 students that we serve, but the transportation team is very small. And so I just wanna thank them for all of the hard work and effort that went into this.

[01:02:38] We did hear all of the feedback that we got over the last two years from our parents and a change was absolutely needed. And we've been working hard to respond to any additional concerns that families have. I would encourage everyone to continue to use Zendesk. That is the best way for us to track tickets, track response, track customer service and make sure that we are serving our families well and that we're responsive to the needs of our families.

[01:03:03] But we are committed to improving upon our stabilization for our students, families, staff and community. That concludes the superintendent's report, Madam Chairwoman. - All right, thank you, Dr. McDade. We will move on to board matters. Our next item up is 1801, Appeal of Challenge to Instructional Materials.

[01:03:21] Before we take action, I will turn this back over to Dr. McDade. - Thank you. I would like to invite our Associate Superintendent for Teaching and Learning, Dr. Stephanie Sullivan, who will provide an update to the process for challenging instructional materials.

[01:03:40] - Thank you. Vice Chair Zargarpur, members of the board, Dr. McDade, thank you for a few minutes of your time today. And I believe this is going to magically work. So first want to point out that in the linked presentation, and presentations are strong words, just a couple slides for our constituents.

[01:04:02] We wanted our families to be able to link directly to the library website that is a public website, it's not an internal one, that has an abundance information for our families that have questions or concerns. In terms of tonight's reconsideration request, wanted to give the board a just brief overview of the process.

[01:04:22] I do wanna highlight that this book request was started in the old process, so we wanted to honor that entire sequence for the petitioner. As the board may remember, we modified that regulation this past spring to simplify some of the challenges that both our schools and our petitioners faced in the previous process.

[01:04:45] And so for this request, a school-based committee was formed. Those committees are inclusive of parents, teachers, student, and librarian, and somebody serves as the committee chairperson. In this

case, it was an assistant principal at the school. After reading the book, engaging in discussion, the committee determined that it should remain in circulation.

[01:05:06] We did receive an appeal for that decision, and we then convened the district-level committee. And the district level of committee further reviews the findings of the school-based committee, also reads the book, of course, reviews professional journals and articles, prevailing guidance by the American Association of School Librarians, and of course, regulations and circulation statistics.

[01:05:31] After their review, that committee voted for the material to stay in the school libraries and accessible to students. I do wanna highlight the fact that in both the school level and the division level, it was emphasized that it should be maintained in high schools only.

[01:05:49] So I do want to clarify that. So the division level committee affirmed it, and then it went to the superintendent. The superintendent reviewed all those same materials, the books and the findings, and affirmed the both school and division levels decision for the book to remain in circulation.

[01:06:11] And so the next step, of course, is the school board. And so now today, you will consider your perspective in the decisions that were made before you. In the new process, the petitioner is able to go directly to the division-based committee.

[01:06:28] I wanna remind everybody that in the past, the petitioners had to go to several different schools, and that created a lot of burdensome actions for both the petitioners and the schools. So the new regulation will allow the petitioner to come directly to the division level.

[01:06:46] So just wanted to point out some of those changes in what was the original process and what is our new process. And then finally, something we're really excited about, we really want our parents to be engaged in selecting what their children read and making it a smoother support for schools into supporting those decisions.

[01:07:05] And our vendor has made adjustments to our library circulation system. So parents can create their own accounts attached to their child and they can put in whatever restrictions match their values and their belief system for their child. We very much support that and encourage all of our parents to go into the system and do that.

[01:07:26] It has been communicated through our traditional mechanisms but also provided a link here for our parents to have additional guidance on how to set up their account. And we really encourage families to use those resources help them feel more comfortable about the choices their child is making all right thank you any questions for doctors no well no but they're she just presented no motions been made just

[01:07:59] in referring to dr sullivan we're asking questions yes hi dr sullivan thank you for that sure so as a parent i have not received a notification to use this program yet okay i have two kids in the system i have not received a notification i spoke to multiple parents today they have also not received a notification we will most certainly amplify that I did just try to use the system just now while I was sitting here to see it appears to me and again this is in the two minutes that I was sitting here yeah that if I

[01:08:33] want to block my child from reading a book I would have to type that title in and then select block there's no pre-done list there's no check all there's there's no correct one book at a time. - Correct, so yeah, as a parent or author, so a lot of parents have found success in putting an author title.

[01:08:53] I believe there's some ability to look at genres as well. - Okay. - And so the parent is basically creating an account alongside the student account, and they will input those selections. The school cannot override that, and the system will not allow a book to be checked out in that circumstance.

[01:09:12] So we've tested it a number of times and it has successfully worked. It truly will red flag the student's ability to check it out. And again, only the parent can remove the restrictions. And so we will certainly do another round of communication and make sure we want parents using this, we want visibility into it.

[01:09:33] And so we will certainly amplify our efforts in that. - Yeah, as a parent, you know, there is a list of sexually explicit books on the Prince William County website. There's over 161 titles on that list. There are some really great parents out there that have a lot of time and a lot of commitment.

[01:09:54] I do not have enough time to read every single one of those books, nor do I have time to type in each one. So as a parent, that method, for me, it's not the easiest method. For other people, maybe it's great.

[01:10:09] May I kindly suggest, out loud, which I, again, I just got here, so this is my first chance at even speaking about this publicly, but I know our neighboring jurisdictions, like Fauquier County, they give the title of the book to the parents when they check out, it goes into their thing, so you can see which book your child has checked out, whether it's a book that you deem appropriate or not, you can see the title.

[01:10:37] So as a parent, I would then be able to look at my child's book to see if i deem it appropriate and then while my child is in my house i can say hey i don't really want you reading that book let's return it to the library that gives us as parents the option to be the person who decides what's appropriate for our kids or not now going through the entire library i can't even i don't even know how many books are in our school libraries a lot going through each one and looking for explicit materials would take forever we can tell parents

[01:11:12] what their children had for lunch that day i know when my kids get extras i know when they grab an extra milk because i'm charged for it i also know when i owe you money for a book that's checked out then you can tell me the name of it so i know that we could have a way to make this system work where you tell us what our kids have checked out and then we can look it up yes ma'am that which was sorry which was suggested to me also by librarians who have talked to me about how much work this whole process has caused them um and and where we can meet that works for everybody

[01:11:48] because i know that this is a point of contention and it bothers some people that that we're even having this discussion about this book so my offer and suggestion and ask would be that we are able to see what our kids check out. - Yeah, thank you.

[01:12:04] We do have that capability with our platform right now. We don't currently have that module. I am more than happy to collaborate with Dr. McDade and share with her the information from our platform that does have the availability in that module.

[01:12:21] We have the same system as the other districts. So yes, it's an entirely possible and I will follow up with Dr. McDade. - Thank you, Dr. Sullivan. - Yeah, no worries. Ms. Williams? - Yeah, just a question. I don't want to turn to a library discussion, but it was my understanding, it was pretty transparent.

[01:12:38] For libraries, as a parent or a guardian, you can always see what your child checks out. Even if it's not electronically, we have the capability to provide that information. - Well, yeah, we can certainly provide the information. We are pleased to say that our vendor partners have done a really nice job of updating the software to stay current with the requests of parents and the availability of it.

[01:13:01] We certainly embrace that just like we now can see where a child is on the bus, same idea. We certainly appreciate the new transparencies that technologies offer us today. And again, we have not purchased that module, but we will certainly have that further discussion.

[01:13:19] - Thank you, I appreciate it. 'Cause I just wanted to make sure that had not changed, 'cause I know my parents were able to request that information when I was a student and I, as a parent, have always known what my child has access to for library days, elementary. it's trickier in high school. - Yeah, there are things that are manual and there are things that are automatic and we certainly embrace our available tools.

[01:13:39] - Okay, so there's been no removal with the new systems and things of that nature then of information. - No, no ma'am. - Okay, I just wanted to check. - Yeah, no ma'am. - Thank you. - Can you point what I have to ask to the motion? - Ms. Walker. - Yeah, I was just gonna add that, you know, typically when we have contracts, we may purchase a particular package, but if it offers other, you know, resources that we can use or other tools that we can use, we can always add on.

[01:14:06] So we definitely will look into seeing if there's a function that we can have where you can see the whole list of whatever your child's checking out. I think that that's something we definitely look into and make the additional ask of the vendor. - I just wanna be extra crystal clear.

[01:14:24] I can't see what my child checks out. I also don't know when my child goes to the library and if you have multiple children, I don't know how you could possibly know when they're going to the library because they go at will when they'd like. So I don't have access to what my children read and never have been able to see what books they check out unless I go into their backpack and look myself.

[01:14:44] - Yeah. - I just wanna be clear as to what my ask was. - I understand completely. - Was that we were notified what our kids are checking out 'cause I think that makes the process a lot smoother. That's what I was asking. - No, I'm very familiar with what you're asking for. - Thank you. - I'm very familiar with what the vendor has available and we will follow up.

[01:15:02] And of course, to mention that all of it has a cost. So we'll collaborate with Dr. McDade on all those items. - And it probably, what I understood you to say is even showing the history of what they've checked out.

[01:15:17] - The new systems will alert a parent when their child takes out a book. So you are correct in what you're describing, and I know that our vendor has that capability. - Ms. Wall. - Yes, thank you. - So I did have a question, but I'll start out just making my comments first.

[01:15:35] I think that's great that we have the capability and that we're gonna look into allowing parents to have more transparency, life is busy, and if parents don't mind or they like that capability, that would be awesome. And if they wanna be able to monitor that on a regular basis.

[01:15:52] So I think that's great. And going back to the communication through traditional channels, could you elaborate a little bit more on that? how we put it out the first time, I mean, I-- - So Scoop always,

Scoop comes first. We also have given pre-made communications for schools to send out to their families.

[01:16:12] So we wanted to attack it from both lens. Some schools directly, the parents are more in tune. So we've done both, both Scoop and school-based communication. But soon as I hear that not everyone's getting it, we will double down and work with communications on our ability to send more direct information parents that is not a problem at all and I know they'll work with us that's great because I'd also heard the same thing that parents were like hey that thing you were talking about like did that happen yeah well we definitely we all of those resources we want our parents to be aware of and be able to utilize so we will definitely amplify the communications and do those come

[01:16:49] through like directly from the school as like an email or is it coming through so hey check our newsletter out and then somewhere in the newsletter it's probably somewhere in something and so what is loud and clear is that we will pull it out of being embedded somewhere and add a little spotlight on it because we do think it's important yeah we'll take care of that and then my other question is when a parent creates an account alongside their students account if they have multiple students does it link that with all students or do they need to create a parallel account for each student that sounds kind of

[01:17:27] complicated but I don't know because I don't have a student currently. I don't want to speak to that off the top of my head but I can certainly follow up on that and we'll make sure that is crystal clear in the guidance. I think it is clear on that website that I've linked to that explains how to do multiple kids but I don't want to speak to without having in front of me. Okay thank you.

[01:17:48] But we'll make sure all of that is in our is our refresh communication. I appreciate that thank you very much. Yep you're welcome. All right a motion is in - In order. - Madam Vice Chair? - Ms. Williams. - Madam Chair one for the evening, excuse me. - Ms. Williams.

[01:18:03] - I move that the Prince William County School Board approve the superintendent's decision of affirming the division level committee's recommendation that the book A Court of Thorn and Roses remain in circulation for high school students only. - Is that a second?

[01:18:18] - Madam Chair. - Mr. Blake. - I second. - Mr. Blake seconds. Any discussion? Mr. Dennick. - Thank you. So this is a point of contention among the board. Matter of fact, I was approached before this meeting and yelled at and pointed to in regards to who I've appointed, Mr. Funderburg, who spoke today.

[01:18:41] No other board member has taken as much flack as I have for who they appointed. Much of you are in the room today. Again, thank you for being here. You are some of the only people that come every single month to these boring meetings and I appreciate you and thank you for your advocacy for our children.

[01:19:01] I am here because you elected me to be here. I am here and I promised that I would do this job. I would promise that I would fight for our kids. I promised that I would be an advocate for things that matter to parents. Today, I was told that it was ridiculous that you were coming to speak and read that book.

[01:19:21] If that book is appropriate for our children, it is appropriate for you to stand there and read it. That is my point. My other point that I made very calmly and very smoothly to Dr. Sullivan, sorry, Ms. Sullivan, Dr. Sullivan, is that we as parents should get to decide what our children read.

[01:19:42] If you don't want to decide that, that's fine for you. But I should get that decision as a parent. I just gave a solution that after talking to librarians worked for them and should work for us. Once again, Mr. Funderburg, thank you for coming.

[01:19:59] General public may not know this, Mr. Funderburg ran against me. And then I turned around and appointed him to a committee because I know that he cares about our kids. I know that he's willing to fight. Thank you for using your three minutes and your freedom of speech the way that you wanted to. I appreciate you for doing that.

[01:20:15] And I'm sorry that this has to be a point of contention. I'm sorry that other board members feel the need to be rude to me in regards to this situation and that we differ across this. It's okay for us to differ. It's okay for us to have differing opinions when it comes to fighting for something that we believe in, that's okay.

[01:20:36] What's not okay is to be rude and condescending to each other in regards to it. Thank you. - Ms. Williams. - Thank you, Vice Chair Zargarpur. I respect the petitioner's right to challenge any book that we have in our school division.

[01:20:55] As much as I respect all of the librarians and professional organizations and everyone who made the decision to put the book in the library, We all are different and we have different values and that's what makes us great as a public. But I do feel with all of the controls in place and parent or guardian involvement in your student's life and asking questions and finding out what it is that they're learning and reading about, as well as keeping abreast of all the information that we send out.

[01:21:24] I feel that we fully provide enough information for a family to make that decision in their own home. And as a school division, we have put in proper protocols so that those decisions can follow the student into our building. I will always support books in our libraries because I believe diverse books makes for critical thinkers and that's what makes our nation great.

[01:21:48] And as one constituent told me in support of this, as long as religious books are in the library, we should always strive to continue to have as much diversity as possible for our students, their growth and for their learning because the library is not the place that most students spend the majority of their time in as our student representative said earlier most of our culture is on digital platforms so i appreciate any student that takes the time to go into the library interact and learn and discover what could be in print and held in their hands and i appreciate that our division takes the time out to note that everyone is different and put those protocols in place so

[01:22:25] because the professionals who go to school and um dedicate their lives to determining these uh this information have voted for it i will be in support thank you mr jesse yeah i just want to say that uh i'm not sure if you implied it this way but when we when you're talking about advocacy for your kids and so forth uh i respect that and you should but also i don't want it to be implied that because you advocate that we don't we just

[01:23:05] have difference of opinions we have a different reason but we are advocating for our kids and what we believe thank you thank you so speaking directly to the book i've read some of this text i've done my research on it i got a ways into it i didn't have time to read it not my genre but i have done my due diligence, reading reviews, parent reviews, purchaser reviews, looking around

[01:23:41] at what people like about the book, et cetera, and reviewing content for its appropriateness for content for children and teens. I know that this is the first in a six series book, the sixth book is not yet written, coming out next year, and from what I've learned of the book and the series, the content of the subsequent book in the series, I do not feel that it is appropriate for children.

[01:24:07] There are many books that are not in our school libraries for various reasons, including appropriateness for children. And I think this book, I cannot support this book in our libraries, and I think it should be taken out of circulation.

[01:24:22] The other books in the series appear on our sexually explicit content list, and I think it's important to note that most parents I talk to are surprised that we have a list like this at all. But we have this list and most of them are kind of unaware of it, unfortunately.

[01:24:40] I believe it is important for healthy child development to read books that are age appropriate. Inappropriate material at a too young of an age can be very harmful and disturbing to children. Most children do not have the cognitive and emotional ability to comprehend and process difficult adult mature content.

[01:24:56] And I am uncomfortable with inadvertently exposing children to content at earlier ages than is appropriate for their understanding. And the truth is most parents are relatively unaware of what their children are reading. So I do really approve of the changes we've made or at least the tools that we've given parents to be more aware of what their children are checking out because I think generally parents trust us to have materials in the library that they would be considering unobjectionable.

[01:25:30] I am thankful for the fact that every parent now has that capability and the opportunity to monitor their children's school library book access, I'm encouraged that we're going to continue to promote that because I do feel like that is under known, whatever word I'm trying to think of.

[01:25:46] I don't think parents have grasped that we've done that yet because some of the content in our school libraries may be controversial and objectionable to some parents and appropriate for some students. So yeah, going forward, I already stated what I think about this, but my ultimate goal is that we do need to protect children and as they develop and that we consider carefully what we offer and that we help parents be more aware of what their children are accessing so that they can have those conversations with their children and reinforce it in their

[01:26:22] homes and be there for their kids when they do stumble across something that is inappropriate for them. All right. Mr. Denning. Ms. Wall had just said too, when I was looking at this book prior to this as well, nine other books from this author are on that sexually explicit. I know Jen just mentioned that some were on there. There are nine other books from this author that are on that sexually explicit list. This one is just left off. So that's why I will be voting no against this, because I do

[01:26:58] also agree that the content is above a 13-year-old level. I wouldn't want my 16-year-old reading this either, if I'm being honest, again, that's my choice. But I am supportive of removing this from the list as well.

[01:27:15] So I'm sorry, we're adding it to the list. Thank you. - All right, let's please vote.

[01:27:48] - Five yes, two no, Wall, Tradenek, one absent, Lateef, motion passed. - All right, thank you. On to our next agenda item, 1802 is a policy. On for a first reading, so I will turn this one over to Dr. McDade as

well. - All right, I will have Dr. Atkins come to just give a brief update on the changes that were made to the policy and answer any questions that you might have.

[01:28:15] - Good evening, Madam Vice Chair, Dr. McDade and members of the board. Before you, we have updates to policy 507 specific to discrimination and harassment in employment supporting our employees. We have an update to align with updates to federal guidelines so that we are in compliance as a school division with some of the mandates that have changed in regards to support for employees, whether or not they're discriminated against by other employees and/or students.

[01:28:47] And so the updates that we have before you are proposed to support the updates to regulations. - Are there any questions right now? All right, so remember, we can read through these. We can email our questions, all right?

[01:29:02] All right, moving on to 1803, a motion is in order. - Madam Chairwoman. - That's me. - Oh, sorry, I got it.

[01:29:18] - Miss Wall, sorry. - I move that the Prince William County School Board require a corporate surety bond in the amount of $10,000 for the clerk to the school board, conditioned upon the faithful performance and discharge of their duties with the premium for such bonds to be paid for by the school board.

[01:29:35] - I have a second. - Madam Chair. - Miss Williams. - I second. - Miss Williams seconds. Any discussion? - All right, please vote.

[01:30:01] - The vote is seven yes, one absent. Lateef, motion passed. - All right, moving on to board matters. Let's start on way over yonder with Mr. Wilk. - Thank you, Ms. Agapur. Just highlighting some events since we've started the school year, there was a resource night at Forest Park, well-managed, very organized, very impressed with it this year.

[01:30:26] There was a back to school night at Forest Park, the first one I had. There was a rescheduled football game on Saturday at Potomac High School. Congratulations, Gainesville, on your victory, but still fun to be there. Yesterday, I visited six schools on, quote unquote, My day off of work, starting at Graham Park, watching really, it was the evolution of the Evolve, as I say, watching the seamless transition of students come into the building in the morning and just as streamlined as that is, it was great to see it.

[01:30:56] Went to Triangle next, went into some classroom observations. Dumfries, I met my new principal, Ms. Williams, Covington Harper, I ran into an old friend, Ron Whitten is there right now, good guy who opened that building up. Swans Creek, great building renovations that's undergoing with the CIP.

[01:31:14] And then Mary Williams visited a classroom in each grade level. So the summer, some highlights, it was nice to kind of disappear and be away from the political fray and just kind of spend some time with my family.

[01:31:30] But there's some great things that occurred this summer and then also tragically kind of in a sense how it ended on Labor Day in a sense with events that happen. I mean, we started the summer watching the triumph and the patriotism and the strength of being a country, watching the United States take 126 medals at the Olympics in Paris, 40 gold, 44 silver, 42 bronze, overall the number one.

[01:31:53] We're currently in the Paralympic Games. USA currently has 63 medals. There were historic moments, whatever side you're on in the presidential campaign, this will be definitely one for the history

books, looking back at what occurred this summer. Then we had, you know, very interesting sultry temperatures, not only in Virginia, but I saw that there were a number of cities that have the highest recorded temperature, Phoenix, Las Vegas, San Jose, making them the hottest summers ever.

[01:32:22] From an entertainment side, was able to see Deadpool Wolverine. It decimated the box off records 44, 441.1 million globally, 211 domestically. I don't know, it was a good movie.

[01:32:37] I liked it, whatever. Garfield's own Shibuzzi has spent eight weeks on the number one of the Hot 100, so that's exciting. And then lastly, it overshadowed Labor Day weekend for me, but it has no relation to school, but Johnny Goudreau and his brother, Matt Goudreau, two hockey players and Johnny Goudreau is a famous hockey player.

[01:33:03] They were home in New Jersey to be in their sister's wedding over the weekend and they were killed senselessly by a drunk driver leaving behind his two children, his brother's unborn baby. So it lingered all weekend and in the end, my quote, I know I'm over that I'm thinking it has made me more reflective and we'll come back is, you know, in the end, we only regret the chances we didn't take the relationships we were afraid to have and the decisions we waited too long to make and that's by Lewis Carroll so thank you thank you Mr. Jenick Justin

[01:33:42] always does a good job thank you for that news in the in the moments of our summer you did leave off Tommy Richmond who is also a Prince William County grad who sings million-dollar baby or raps million-dollar baby but that I would say is the song of the summer if I had to get to choose but no offense it was very good um thank you again for all of you that came and sat through the meeting um again you got to see on display us voting and having a differing opinion um and that was that was nice to get that out and speak about it and it is an important topic that matters to you all so i'm glad we

[01:34:20] were able to do that unlike justin i did not keep a log of all the schools that i went to but i did get to visit a lot of them for back to school and see how the first day ran um i've heard great things about transportation and buses all arriving at the same time and leaving at the same time i did get to hang out with some staff from glen kirk elementary school on the first day of school and we do not tout our front office staff and our teachers enough for all of the different hats that they play they are not just front office staff they are not just teachers they then become

[01:34:58] aftercare workers if a bus is late and um problem solvers and all of these things that they do to keep our kids safe and um entertained when uh there's issues at all with the buses and things like that i have gone to a couple of football games and i've been to one back to school night i am very excited to come watch your kids play volleyball to see some of the competitions go on Please don't hesitate to invite me to certain events.

[01:35:29] I've gotten invited to a lot of different events that aren't always the most popular ones, and I really like to attend those. So please continue to invite me to those things. I would appreciate that. And I hope everybody continues to have a great first few months of school.

[01:35:45] Thank you. - All right, Mr. Jesse. - Well, the summer is over, but you know, really, just for the teachers and principals administrative people we don't have a long summer and there's always something to do the nice thing about being on the school board you choose what you want or what you don't want to do so i was busy but i just like to first of all highlight the fact that i'd like to thank mr bach and his team for the wonderful work they did at woodbridge high school

[01:36:26] I actually put an article in the Old Bridge Observer of all the things that they did for Woodbridge High School. I did mention to him that I want you to be careful because I don't want this to knock out a renovation at some point, okay?

[01:36:47] So, but they did a lot, went over, took a tour, and I know during the back to school night, which I think they're having late this year. They're going to have the parents be able to see, and it's a major difference.

[01:37:04] So that's exciting. One of the most exciting and unexpected event that I went to, and originally I was not going to go to, because the African-American Festival over at MedCellar Middle School is a big event, And I've been going there for years.

[01:37:29] And I was saying, "I'm not going to this community event." And it turned out that that community event was helped us, organized by Mrs. Gattis, who my wife worked with at her very beginning when she started with a food truck.

[01:37:49] But there was over 6,000 people there. I drove up and I said, "Oh my God!" You know, I was happy that I had the reserved parking spot somewhere. But it was wonderful, and it was just wonderful to see all the work that went into it and all the people that were there.

[01:38:08] So that was the highlight of my summer. One of my goals this year is particularly at the high school level, maybe somewhat at the middle, I want to attend every sporting events and some of the other activities that I normally -- I went to my first field hockey game.

[01:38:30] I've never seen one of those before, so that's one thing I checked off. But I wanna see all the different sports and support all that stuff, and particularly the women's activities. So that's it, thank you.

[01:38:49] - Not your turn yet. - Yeah, no, it's Ms. Williams. You're doing it that way. - Yeah, it's you, Ms. Williams. - Why, thank you. - Well, I'd like to welcome everyone new to our school division and welcome back all of our returning families and students and staff.

[01:39:09] I just want to take a moment as we kick off this school year to just give pause and take a moment to reflect and appreciate everyone who has gotten us to this point in time.

[01:39:24] I have been on the board what seems like an eternity in in the best way possible and what I haven't noticed that we've really done is take a moment out to just really give thanks and appreciate everyone that makes the school division possible since the pandemic no single employee no single student no single parent guardian whatever your relation has had a moment to really catch a breath and have a steady anything except for get up and do it and I think that it it really hit home for me when all the newspaper

[01:40:01] articles started talking about the SOLs and the amount of growth and my first thought was I mean it's amazing absolutely impeccable and then my second thought is oh my god now I feel like I have to go hug all of the staff all over again because we have a new literacy curriculum we have a new math curriculum we have a new accreditation standard or curriculum which doesn't care about growth and that's what we care about and I think it's important to know all of all of the hard work from everyone whether you're a parent a bus driver a janitor anyone who comes into this division and makes a difference in the lives of our students I mean just take a moment and pat yourself on a job

[01:40:39] well done to get us where we are now knowing there are so much more ahead and so much more opportunities and growth and learning and change but if you don't take a moment to appreciate where you've been it's very hard to navigate in the future so I just wanted to open the school year by thanking all of you who continue to join us and for all of you who are new your your presence matters and I really do believe that that is a theme for this year partnership working together and engagement and it doesn't mean that we all have to agree but it does mean that sometimes we have to agree to disagree that we have to listen to hear and understand and not listen to respond and take a moment out to

[01:41:18] appreciate each other and to give grace when we don't quite make the mark because none of us are perfect and just with that I want to encourage everyone if you haven't already to sign up for the parent engagement series attend your back to school nights get familiar with all the new changes because there are a lot of them and also I just really really think it's important if you haven't already you should but confirm your email address with the school division just double check it because there's so much information that goes out there and I think is the one the adult responsible for receiving the information it sets the

[01:41:55] best example possible if you take time out to learn what your what our division is expectations is of you and what is going on so that you can model that for your student and the last thing I will say is I've asked this for several years but I'm going to ask it formally here I will be putting a request to extend our board matters time because three minutes is not enough and what we do is vote but we also have the least amount of voice time and we want our citizens to come to speak to us and our citizens should be able to hear us not just read what we have to say and listen to our votes so i'm going to be asking that we change the policy so i'll write that up but thank you

[01:42:33] mr blake thank you madam chairwoman welcome to the new school year everybody good evening prince william county families teachers and students and community members as we begin a new school year I just want to extend a warm welcome to each of you our district continues to thrive because of the dedication of our staff the curiosity of our students and the steadfast support of our family and community and I'm like Miss Williams and some of the other members said I'm just really excited

[01:43:09] about the growth and the just the yeah the growth of our school district the SOL scores, the PAL scores, especially in my district, you know, the schools have just been working really hard and seeing enormous growth. I want to thank the facilities team, Mr. Bach and his team, because of all of the updates, the ADA updates at Neyap School Elementary. We got the new windows in Garfield and, you know, we got a new sign out there at Enterprise. They love it, so the community said that new digital sign,

[01:43:46] so we appreciate all those things. Also, I was able to visit all of my schools the first two weeks, and I was able to visit, we have three new principals, one at Bel Air, Mr. Pinsler, and then we have a new principal at King Elementary, Ms. Poe, and a new principal at Beville Middle School, Dr. Thomas.

[01:44:10] So I'm really excited for them to take the lead and continue to take those schools to new heights. And as we move forward, let's continue to foster a nurturing and inclusive environment where every student feels valued and empowered.

[01:44:25] Together, we can create a dynamic learning community that inspires growth and success. Thank you for your support and for being an essential part of our district's journey. Here's to a fantastic school year filled with new opportunities and memorable moments.

[01:44:42] Thank you. - Ms. Wall. Good evening, everybody. Welcome back to all our family, staff, and students. It's great to be back. The first day of school was awesome. I loved seeing the really bright eyes of especially the kindergartners because they had no idea what was coming. And the parents were, you know, kind of a mixture of happiness and tears. And that was just, it was just so, it's so fun. And it's also so endearing.

[01:45:07] So I really, I really loved being able to be out on the first couple of days of school. I was welcoming students. It was really fun, really rewarding. And I, and I really enjoyed seeing the tender care of our staff as they welcome those little kids into the classroom it's just it was just awesome so good job everybody on the first day of school um i so far i've had one back to school night i don't know i guess we have more to come um and that was battlefield there were a lot of people there they changed the format this year so just the attendance was awesome and it was really fun to catch up we've got some new faces in the gainesville district um i want to extend a warm

[01:45:42] welcome to Dr. Aaron Sykes Thornton, or Thurston, sorry, Eric, Aaron Sykes Thurston taking the helmet Unity Braxton Middle School and Dr. Keisha Tramiel taking the helmet Samuel Gravely Elementary. Some highlights around Gainesville, we have a bull run has a new security vestibule, this is really awesome. It's one of the very last to be built but I'm happy to see it completed and that extra layer of security is very much appreciated by the community. Battlefield High School has a a new digital sign, and the community is very excited about this, as is the school, because it will increase awareness of events and items of interest. Sinclair has a new parking lot

[01:46:18] for the staff to park in. This is also very, very much appreciated. It's great. And I'm really looking forward to the building of the Global Welcome Center on site at Sinclair. This is just going to be awesome for our new families who are new to Prince William and new to the country. So that's what that Global Welcome Center will do, and I think that's really wonderful I'm cautioned cautiously optimistic so far with the cell phone pilot I've heard some hilarious stories from kids at each of our middle and high schools I encourage teachers to be to strictly enforce the rules of the pilot and I encourage students to cooperate it's really important that we but we have teachers enforcing and students cooperating if

[01:46:56] we're gonna see this work I know it's hard to give up your phone and you know some things always you know lots of things feel like emergencies but anyway I really encourage a strict adherence to this because it's a pilot and we need to get a good idea of what we need to do. Mr. Bach I'm thrilled about transportation thank you for the bus improvements and that transportation data wow awesome it's amazing it's really amazing how those small changes make such a big difference for our students arriving to school on time and that stress of arriving to school late that really can carry into a child's day but if they're on time and ready to learn when the day starts it's just such a better start so thank you I want to

[01:47:32] everyone who has helped our students improve and work toward all those improvements that Dr. McDade shared I know it takes every single person working towards our common goals so I really appreciate that and then just finally the kids are worth it they're always worth it and I appreciate all your efforts and thank you and have a good night thank you all right since topic of books was up we read as a board we read the anxious generation and I do want to read a quote from here because I think it's apt we've talked about libraries this talks about when we talk about cell phones and this is from the author himself he says he's

[01:48:10] got let's see nonetheless there are four quote nonetheless there are four reforms that are so important and in which i have such a high degree of confidence that i'm going to call them foundational they would provide a foundation for a healthier childhood in the digital age they are one no smartphones before high school parents should delay children's entry into the round-the-clock internet access by giving only basic phones that is phones with limited apps and no internet browser before ninth grade roughly age 14. Two, no social media before 16. Let kids get through the most vulnerable

[01:48:46] period of brain development before connecting them to a firehose of social comparison and algorithmically chosen influencers. Three, phone-free schools. In all schools from elementary through high school students should store their phones smart watches and any other personal devices they can send or that can send to receive texts in the phone lockers or locked pouches during the school day that is the only way to free up their attention for each other and for their teachers and then for more far more unsupervised play and childhood independence that's the way children naturally develop social skills

[01:49:21] overcome anxiety and become self-governing young adults so if you would like to borrow my copy I'm happy to lend it to you this was a great read and ironically I do follow him on social media I wanted to thank everyone for for all of your attendance here tonight all of the discussions they're very important it helps us get to what we really need to do and that is making sure our kids get the very best education that we have our parents involved and that we have those conversations between parents and children about what's going on in their education before we leave tonight because I'm going to make sure I just don't use all my time

[01:49:59] I want to congratulate Ms. Laura Mills for her first night as our school board clerk and our student representative Olive for sitting up here and uh and up and our we've got our representatives out here still are we still here just one left okay thank you thank you so much um appreciate everybody's time attention um this the beginning of the school year is my favorite time of year until we get to the end and then that's my favorite time but this is my favorite favorite time i love the the newness of everything i wish you all uh the best school year ever and i call this meeting adjourned

