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Prince William County School Board Meeting, Wednesday, October 16, 2024

Date	Wednesday, October 16, 2024
Place	Prince William County School Board, Virginia
Length	4h 6m (video)

- Official meeting video (YouTube): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qJ83GLnyg8U
- 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'd like to call the meeting of the Prince William County School Board to order. A motion is in order for the approval of the, wait, hold on, actually. Hold on, hold on, hold on, hold on.

[00:00:16] Wade, we vote on the agenda now. Is this when he would make his motion? No, first we approve the agenda. This is when you would do it, Justin, is that okay? - I thought we did it in our-- - Well, what is this that I'm looking at?

[00:00:35] This approval of agenda 102. We do the adoption of consent agenda when we come out.

[00:01:00] - Do we approve the agenda? I'm gonna ask the board, I'd like consent to move the approval of the agenda to when we come out of closed session.

[00:01:16] Does anyone have any objection to the board moving the approval of the agenda to when we come out of closed session? Okay, seeing no opposition, we'll do that. So the first vote we're gonna have now is on the closed session motion. Please give them a motion. - All right, so thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[00:01:33] - Thank you, by the way. - I move that pursuant to sections 2.2-3711 and 2.2-3712 of the Code of Virginia. The Prince William County School Board entered 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.

[00:02:03] Two, to review disciplinary matters for a specific student that would involve the disclosure of information contained in the scholastic record for the individual student and to receive legal advice regarding the same as provided by Virginia Code sections 2.2-3711A, two and eight.

[00:02:22] Three, 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 2.2-3711A, seven and eight. And four, to discuss and receive briefings by staff members related to the security of school facilities.

[00:02:43] "the safety of persons using such facilities "and actions taken to respond to such matters "where discussion in an open meeting "would jeopardize the security of such facilities "pursuant to Virginia code section 2.2-3711A19." - Do I have a second?

[00:03:00] Mr. Jesse seconds, any discussion? Please vote all in favor of the closed session motion. Aye, any opposed? Okay, no opposition. Aye, you're an aye, Lori.

[00:03:15] Everyone unanimous. Okay, so at this time, of the Prince William County School Board will move into closed session

[00:03:22] and return in approximately one hour.

[00:04:27] I'd like to call the meeting back to order. We are now out of closed session. A closed session certification is in order of motion. Ms. Zargarpur. - Thank you, Mr. Chairman. 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 October 6th, 2024, be certified by adopting the following resolution.

[00:04:50] Now therefore be it resolved "the Prince William County School Board hereby certifies "that to the best of each member's knowledge, "one, only public business matters lawfully exempted "from open meeting requirements were discussed "in the closed meeting to which this certification "resolution applies, and two, "only such public business matters as were identified "in the motion convening the closed meeting "were heard and discussed or considered by the school board."

[00:05:14] - Do I have a second? - Mr. Chairman, I have a second. - Ms. Williams, any discussion? Please vote.

[00:05:39] - Vote is eight yes, unanimous, motion passes. - Moving on to the closed session action items, approval of appointments and releases, a motion is ordered, Ms. Zargarform. - Mr. Chairman, I move that the Prince William County School Board approve the appointments and releases of specific employees as presented in closed session. - Do I have a second?

[00:05:54] - Mr. Chairman. - Ms. Williams. - Second. - Any discussion? Ms. DeWall, oh, please vote.

[00:06:14] - Vote is eight yes, unanimous, motion passes. - Moving on to the second, closed action item, a motion is ordered for 9.02, Ms. Zargarform. - I move that for the reasons set forth in the student management and alternative programs, department's SMAPD letter of September 18th, 2024.

[00:06:35] The Prince William County School Board approved SMAPD's decision to reassign student SR25-035 to the computer-based instruction program via remote access only based on charges of unlawful acts

in the community. - Do I have a second?

[00:06:51] - Mr. Chairman. - Ms. Williams. - Second. - Any discussion? Please vote.

[00:07:11] - Vote is eight yes, unanimous. Motion passes. - Okay, next 10.01, a motion is in order for the approval of the meeting agenda. Ms. Zargarpur. - I move that the Prince William County School Board approve the meeting agenda as recommended. - Do I have a second? - Mr. Chairman. - Ms. Williams seconds.

[00:07:26] Any discussion? Mr. Wilk. - Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I wanna put forward a motion. I move to amend the agenda by adding a board matters, a motion that the Prince William County School Board direct the superintendent to begin the school redistricting process to address the current student population and capacity at Covington Harper Elementary School.

[00:07:50] - Do I have a second? - Second. - Mr. Denick seconds a motion. Discussion, Mr. Wilk. - Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My goal is not to voice this on the school board. This should not come as any surprise as I've provided fastidious advocacy for this community over the last couple of months.

[00:08:11] You know, I didn't want it to come to this point and I was under the assumption, which I was wrong, that somehow the boundaries for the redistricting when we opened the new Woodbridge Elementary School would include Covington Harper Elementary as a way of addressing what I believe is an exorbitant amount of students and overcrowding that is coming to the school.

[00:08:34] I've been told and I've seen that this is not on the plan. And this is the mitigation plan is for the opening of the second Potomac Shores Elementary School, which I am grateful for the board that we moved up one year on the CIP.

[00:08:49] And to bring kind of context to this and not relitigating the past, because a lot of this predates this administration of what has happened. This school ideally should be open right now as originally planned on the CIP.

[00:09:06] Unfortunately, due to a lot of circumstances that we did not have control of, and I'm not gonna get into that, everyone is highly intelligent and can do some Googling and figuring out what was going on to delay the purchase of this land. We're at a point, I think at a threshold now, where I'm very concerned where we're at with this building.

[00:09:27] And just an example, and the goal here is to provide some context where we're headed with this building, because I do not believe that we can wait till the fall of '27 to have the mitigation for this building.

[00:09:44] We currently have eight trailers there right now. There will be trailers there next year, more trailers coming with the growth in that community. and I did speak to the manager of the Potomac Shores, and I do not believe he would provide me with duplicitous information.

[00:10:03] But just to give you context right now, so there are 2,350 current units in the Potomac Shores development, okay? On average, anywhere from 20 to 25 units open for sale, for occupancy each month, okay?

[00:10:21] Building currently has eight trailers right now at its current capacity. So by the next 12 months, they estimate that the total population in units, total population of units, this could be multi-dwelling, stacked housing, whatever, would be at 2,600-ish to 2,650.

[00:10:42] That's by next year, okay? So we're adding an additional 300 plus houses to this capacity at Covington Harbor as it stands. Now, there's the apartments being built and the construction of those apartments are about to commence in that community.

[00:11:02] And asking them again, so by the summer of 26, okay, so once again, we're one year off of the opening of the second elementary school, which again will have 300 additional seats, thank you board with the CIP changes.

[00:11:17] So we'll address it then, but in the fall of 26, 365 apartment units will be occupied. So for me, I look at this as any person speaking to the community there during the last election cycle, that if I don't address a problem, and if I say I'm going to help address a problem, but I don't, it would be feckless and just pernicious in the attempt of not helping this community.

[00:11:49] So my ultimate goal here is to ensure that we have the capacity to help this building to curtail what will be more trailers, I'm not gonna do the math and I'm not gonna ask for a calculation of formula.

[00:12:04] We can get into more details about how many students typically come per housing unit. I know it's more, it's going to be more classrooms. There's no way of denying it and it's gonna be quite a bit more. So my goal with this motion is to set the motion in place and have the lines reviewed and redone with the options presented for the board for adoption.

[00:12:30] So that's the context of this, where I'm at with this. We don't control the inexorable amount of growth that's happening back there. The school board is not in charge of that, the development. We only can do what we can do. And people have said, with the delay in purchasing the land, which was beyond our control, why didn't you guys go look for other land?

[00:12:52] I would ask anyone to get a map of that area and tell me where we were going to build another elementary school that was not already owned by the same people who had the land that we needed for the seven acres to build a multi-story elementary school.

[00:13:08] But we can address the problem now. This is what we can do. We can't go back to the past, but this is where we are now. And I'm hoping as a board, this is something we can move forward with. I appreciate your time and letting me bring this forward.

[00:13:23] Thank you, Mr. Chairman. - Ms. Williams. - Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Wilk, I will not be supporting this motion. I completely understand your fastidious advocacy for your constituents and that is our responsibility as board members.

[00:13:38] I am disagreeing with this motion because I am doing the same for my district and my constituents. It was good that you brought up the election last year. And my community in several ways is much more, much different than yours.

[00:13:53] They don't generally turn out in droves and for HOA meetings or things of that nature. But I would ask that instead of this being a continuous back and forth, that we take advantage of the CIP process and work collaboratively as a board, because in addition to the amount of growth that you're having in your district, I also have several apartment complexes, as well as two new town centers that will be built in a district that is completely Title I, and we do not have room, even with a new elementary school coming, and we have not had a new elementary school in several decades.

[00:14:28] So I think it will be to our advantage if we collectively put all of our resources together and different intelligences and work with the division to come up with some ideas that would suit both of our districts without running into each other's district so that we can ensure that our students have the best learning and academic environment that we possibly can do as a board under our authority and control.

[00:14:55] And what we cannot do, make sure that as a board, are able to communicate to the public where our line of authority ends and where the bov bocs and developers have the authority so that we're clear on this and that neither district feels that they are not being represented or that we are not advocating to the best of our ability because we are next to each other and the growth is tremendous and it's not just our district that's facing growth i know mr jesse's aquan district they have some new developments but we have trailers throughout the division and so i think that would be to our best advantage so at this time i cannot

[00:15:30] support your motion thank you mr jesse this is a very difficult issue and one thing i was going to ask about in my time at the end was that we keep talking about doing boundaries and we need to stop talking about and get it done i agree with miss williams that even if we do the boundaries i think what we're going to find out is that there is no solution because many of the schools

[00:16:09] are tired of one they're already at max capacity and even the shifting some to the new school probably is not going to relieve that but i do think and i do support the idea of least looking at it and i think we can say we looked we did all we could even if the results end up with there's not much we can do uh the community is building very quickly we cannot you can put in a

[00:16:42] new home and new set of homes easily but you can't just get a new school quickly it takes years to get it done get it approved and so forth so we're in a situation but i will support the uh motion to look at in advice, 'cause I think we should do that.

[00:17:05] The parents, but the parents need to know that the likelihood, in my opinion, that you're gonna get relief when we even do the boundaries, the likelihood, in my opinion, is slim. - Okay, I'll just sort of wrap up.

[00:17:24] Mr. Wilk, I appreciate your passion on this issue, and I think it's important for the public to know that Mr. Wilk has been working very hard for many months, years, on the issues of overcrowding in the Potomac District, as has Ms. Williams in the Woodbridge District.

[00:17:40] Prince William County has built 25 schools over the last 15 years, plus or minus there. Probably more schools have been built in our county than any other place in the country. The growth has been extraordinary and we are still in a position where we're playing catch up.

[00:17:59] The Potomac Shores Elementary School will reduce the overcrowding in those schools. any redistricting currently or Covenant Harper, there's nowhere to move the kids. All the schools have trailers around there. They're all over capacity. It doesn't make sense to move kids from one trailer to another.

[00:18:18] And this board has set a precedent over the years that the way we've handled this is to either add capacity at schools by building classrooms or building schools. We've never in mid range for the most part redistricted because of trailers or overcrowding. We have 200 plus minus trailers across the division.

[00:18:36] And you know, in a sense, we have a process which we abide by that seems to be working. And while I recognize we have overcrowding issues, we certainly aren't where we were five or six years ago,

we're much better than that.

[00:18:51] And so I appreciate, and I think everyone should know, Mr. Wilkes' passion on this, Ms. Williams' passion, the concern about overcrowding has been one of the largest issues this board has dealt with over the last 10, 15 years. At this point, I'd ask the board to vote.

[00:19:09] - Are we doing this electronic? Okay, I'll ask a show of hands, all in favor of supporting Mr. Wilkes' motion to add this to this evening's agenda, raise your hand for aye. I count three, all opposed?

[00:19:29] Five. - Mr. Chairman, I just want to clarify for the public that under our rules of the board, a motion to amend an agenda for an action item requires a unanimous vote. - Yeah, no, so for the exercise, so for this to have been added to the agenda, it does require a unanimous vote, that is correct.

[00:19:49] even in light of that, the vote is five in opposition, three in support of Mr. Wilk's motion. I'd ask Mr. Wilk to make sure that for the minutes reflect the appropriate motion that you have given them the documents.

[00:20:04] Okay, moving on to the full motion that Ms. Zargarpur read, which is the motion for tonight's agenda, please vote on that. And that can go electronic.

[00:20:25] - We'll need to do a hand vote on this as well. - Okay, all in favor of approving tonight's agenda, Raise your hand for aye and that looks like unanimous. Okay, okay.

[00:20:45] With the agenda being approved, we will move on to the Pledge of Allegiance. Tonight I'd ask Almudena Latore to lead us in the pledge. She's a senior at CD Hilton High School and our student representative this evening.

[00:21:21] Thank you, Ms. Latore. We are moving on to Thriving Futures Focus. So tonight, Thriving Futures Focus is our opportunity to highlight the exemplary work being accomplished in our schools to 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.

[00:21:45] We dedicate this time during our meetings to recognizing students, staff members, and schools that have earned an honor and award at the state or national level. We appreciate how these honorees have positively represented Prince William County Public Schools and the school board is proud to recognize them publicly for their accomplishments.

[00:22:01] Tonight, the school board will first recognize an amazing achievement accomplished by one of our outstanding schools. We begin our recognition with Miss Erica Trudenik in the Brentsville District, who will introduce our first award winners. Miss Trudenik.

[00:22:18] - Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm honored to share that the US Department of Education has named T. Claywood Elementary School a 2024 National Blue Ribbon School in the program category Exemplary Achievement Gap Closing Schools.

[00:22:40] A national Blue Ribbon School serves as a model of effective and innovative practices for educators across the nation. These schools have leaders who articulate a clear vision of instructional excellence and uphold high standards. Blue Ribbon Schools display effective teaching methods and offer robust professional development for their staff.

[00:23:01] Data-driven instruction is a hallmark, and there is a concerted effort to ensure every student succeeds. Collaboration among families, communities, and educators is a key component to their success. T Claywood Elementary School is one of only 356 schools across the nation and one of only eight in Virginia to be awarded the Blue Ribbon designation.

[00:23:32] Tonight we have several representatives, my favorites, a lot of my favorites, from T Claywood Elementary and I would like to invite principal Dr. Andrew Bookite come forward and both introduce his team and share a few words all right well first of all thank you also very much for his recognition and taking the time we are very proud of um earning this award and this recognition so i'm going to introduce um some of the staff members that are with me um next to me mrs uditsky melissa uditsky our assistant principal um mrs jenny ludlow one of our first

[00:24:10] grade teachers mrs lisa alice one of our kindergarten teachers mrs andrea hanover one of of our second-grade teachers, Mrs. Katie Kortesh, one of our fourth-grade teachers, Mrs. Lynn Hardwick, our financial specialist, who I worked with for 24 years, Mrs. Carol Scarce, one of our special education teachers, Mrs. Kristi Abram, who I worked with for 21 years, one of our third-grade teachers, Mrs. Amy Cunningham, our school counselor, and Ms. Laura

[00:24:41] Van Gelder one of our fifth grade teachers. Phew! In our audience we also have Mrs. Stephanie Wiggins one of our first grade teachers and Mr. Duncan Beavers our T-Spec who also was a former student of ours. I just want to quickly say a big thank you to our amazing and dedicated caring knowledgeable and skilled teachers and staff members who put in forth all the effort to make sure all our students were learning to their fullest potential also a big

[00:25:16] appreciation to our hard-working students who never you know who continue to persevere and never give up you know even when things are a little bit challenging as we know school has been over the last few years and of course our supportive and involve parents and family who really have helped make our school the best it can be it really takes all of us to make sure our students are all learning and successful and on the note just a big thank you to all the educators out there because you know we're very proud of this award but I know what happens each day and every morning all the teachers administrators

[00:25:55] staff members get up to go to school work really hard to make sure their students are are learning are successful are safe are happy and we know the the role has gotten harder and more challenging so a big thank you if you see your teachers tomorrow, give them a big thank you.

[00:26:12] And let's give all teachers, including our great staff, a round of applause. Thank you. - Well said, Dr. Buckeye. Congratulations again to the 2024 National Blue Ribbon School, T. Claywood Elementary School.

[00:26:30] Tonight, we also recognize our individual student accomplishments, beginning with Jennifer Wall, the representative of the Gainesville District. Ms. Wall. - Thank you, Dr. Lateef. Over 16,000 high school seniors from across the nation were selected as semi-finalists for the 70th annual National Merit Scholarship Program.

[00:26:49] The National Merit Scholarship Corporation has selected six Prince William County Public School students as 2025 National Merit Scholarship Program semi-finalists. Now to become a semi- to become a finalist, the semi-finalist and a high school official must submit a detailed scholarship application in which they provide information about the semi-finalist academic record, participation in

school and community activities, demonstrated leadership abilities, employment and honors and awards received.

[00:27:19] A semifinalist must have an outstanding academic record throughout high school, be endorsed and recommended by a high school official, write an essay and earn SAT or ACT scores that confirm the student's earlier performance on the 2023 preliminary SAT national merit scholarship qualifying test.

[00:27:38] These students now have the chance to continue in the competition for thousands of national merit scholarships, which are collectively worth nearly $26 million and will be awarded in this spring of 2025. So on behalf of the Gainesville District, it is my pleasure to recognize Battlefield High School's two 2025 National Merit Semi-Finalists, Daniel Cho and Alan Peng.

[00:28:02] Unfortunately, Daniel and Alan could not make it tonight, but we extend our congratulations to our amazing scholars. - Thank you, Ms. Wall. From the Coles District, Vice Chair, Ms. Lisa Zargarpur, please introduce our next two recipients.

[00:28:19] - Thank you, Dr. Lateef. The Coles District would first like to recognize from Charles J. Colgan High School, Isabella Carter for her selection as a 2025 National Merit Semifinalist. Colgan High School is being represented tonight by Assistant Principal Chad Cavender.

[00:28:34] Isabella has asked Mr. Cavender to speak on her behalf. - Thank you all for having us here tonight and for recognizing Isabella on this amazing accomplishment. Colgan High School is very proud to have Isabella as our National Merit Semifinalist.

[00:28:50] and we wish her the best in her pursuit of attending University of Virginia and possibly studying something in the field of biology or biochemistry. So thank you all for today. - Congratulations.

[00:29:06] The Coles District would also like to recognize from Osborne Park High School, Alexandra Whalen for earning her placement as a 2025 National Merit Semifinalist. Osborne Park is being represented tonight by Principal Lisa Marie Kane. Yes, Alexandra's here.

[00:29:22] Would you please provide some thoughts on this amazing accomplishment? - Hi, my name is Ali Whalen and I attend Osborne Park High School. I'm greatly appreciative of all the recognition I have received for this accomplishment. The support of my family and teachers the past four years has been incredible, especially the support of my math teacher, Mrs. Johnson.

[00:29:41] I would also like to thank PWCS for all the opportunities I have been given here from the advanced coursework and specialty programs to the opportunity to attend the Summer Residential Governor's School for Math, Science, and Technology this past summer. Thank you. - Congratulations, Alexandra and Isabella.

[00:30:03] - Excellent, thank you, Ms. Zargarpur. Mr. Wilk, Potomac District. - Thank you, Mr. Chairman. On behalf of the Potomac District, it is my honor, Forest Park is back tonight, to recognize Benjamin Max Eikenberry from the Forest Park High School as a 2025 National Merit Scholarship semifinalist.

[00:30:21] Forest Park, again, is here, represented by Principal Richard Martinez. Max, would you like to share a few words with the school board? - Hi. - My name's Max, or Benjamin, and I go to Forest Park High School, and yeah, I mean, I've never been to one of these before.

[00:30:42] So, it's kinda cool. - Isn't it magical? - Yeah, yeah, yeah. Shout out Forest Park High School. - Woo! - Yes, Bruins.

[00:31:00] Thank you, Mr. Wilk, thank you, Max. We return to the Brentsville District with Miss Erica Trudenik for our final recognition. Miss Trudenik. - The Brentsville District would like to recognize James Yuntz for being named a 2025 National Merit Scholarship semi-finalist.

[00:31:18] I know Patriot High School is proud. Patriot High School is represented by Principal Dr. Bishop. James, would you care to speak on behalf of this outstanding award? - Thank you. I'm happy to be recognized by the school board for my achievement and proud to be representing the county as a National Merit Scholarship semi-finalist.

[00:31:37] I would like to thank my family, as well as the teachers and staff of the county who have helped me along the way. but I'd like to give a special thanks to Ms. Julie Kirk, my counselor who provided me the resources and help I needed to achieve this. Ms. Elizabeth Boussan, my former computer science teacher who wrote the letter and recommendation to the National Honor Scholarship Board, as well as Dr. Bishop, principal of Patriot High School for his leadership.

[00:31:56] This is as much an award for them as it is for me. And as I go forward into college, a career in software engineering, and hopefully a position in the United States Air Force, I'll be constantly appreciating their help. Thank you.

[00:32:13] - Excellent, thank you, Mr. Redenick. I would like to take a moment to recognize all the parents and staff here tonight to contribute to the success of the Prince William County Schools and these students. I ask you to stand in solidarity with me for our outstanding achievers.

[00:32:41] Thank you, congratulations again to our six 2025 National Merit Scholarship semifinalists winners, and I wish you the best to get to the finals. Before taking a few pictures, Superintendent Dr. McDade would like to share a few words. Dr. McDade. - Thank you so much, Mr. Chairman.

[00:32:57] T. Clay Wood, congratulations. You are absolutely amazing. I've had several opportunities to visit Tclay, and I can attest to the fact that it is an incredible learning environment for all students. And this award just shows everyone the work, the incredible work that you're doing.

[00:33:15] And the fact that you won in the category of closing achievement gaps really shows your dedication to ensure that every student can create a thriving future for themselves and their community. So thank you so much for all that you do, your passion, your commitment, and even the fact, the number of staff members that you have here just shows what an incredible community exists at T. Claywood.

[00:33:37] So congratulations to each and every one of you, to the entire school community, staff, families, and students on this honor. And to our National Merit semifinalists, you are the best of the best. We are so incredibly proud of you. You embody what it means to be the profile of a PWCS graduate.

[00:33:56] You are critical thinkers, you're digital citizens, you're innovators and visionaries, global collaborators, Most importantly, you are resilient and we look forward to the continued impact that you will make and you are making your families, your school community and all of PWCS so incredibly proud.

[00:34:13] Job well done, congratulations. - Thank you, Dr. McDade. At this time, I'd like to request our honorees to come forward for a photo with the school board and receive a small token of our appreciation. We will start with one photo that includes the T. Clay Wood Elementary School folks for their national blue ribbon and the second photo will include

[00:34:34] our 2025 National Merit Scholarship semi-finalists.

[00:39:31] Okay, welcome. So that was wonderful, thank you. It is always the highlight of the meeting to recognize these amazing folks in our school division, our incredible students, our incredible staff. So again, that was wonderful. We're gonna move on now to 13.01, which is the adoption this evening of the consent agenda.

[00:39:51] Ms. Zargarpur. - Mr. Chairman, I move that the Prince William County School Board approve the public meeting consent agenda as recommended. - Do I have a second? - Mr. Chairman? - Ms. Williams. - Second. - Any discussion? Please vote. - The vote is seven yes,

[00:40:29] one not present at vote, motion passed. - Okay, moving on to the adoption of acknowledgements and recognitions. Ms. Zargarpur. - Mr. Chairman, I move that the Prince William County School Board approve the acknowledgements and recognitions as recommended. - Do I have a second? - Mr. Chairman? - Ms. Williams.

[00:40:46] - Second. - Any discussion? Please vote. - The vote is seven yes, one abstained, Tradenek, motion passed.

[00:41:14] - Okay, moving on to citizen comment time. Those citizens who signed up in advance with the clerk may address the school board this evening when they are called to the podium. The citizen comment period for regular school board meetings is one hour and citizens may speak on the agenda items or other topics germane to the operations and policies of Prince William County Schools. Please use proper decorum and manners while at the podium or you'll be asked to step aside.

[00:41:32] 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 do so, the board will recess and I'll ask that the room be cleared to restore public order. Tonight, we have five citizens signed up to speak when I call your names, please come to the podium and state your name and address for the record.

[00:41:50] I will tell you the order so you can be ready. Dr. Shawn Spence first, Chloe Farogue second, Jacqueline Thurman, Robin Norris, Jen Donnelly. Dr. Shawn Spence, Shawn Spence, okay.

[00:42:11] Chloe Farogue, Chloe Farogue, Jacqueline Thurman.

[00:42:29] - Good evening, thank you for the opportunity to share my thoughts. I wanted to talk about the Virginia Literacy Act, specifically the implementation within Prince William County relative to special education students. I applaud all efforts to improve literacy among our children. I think we know that COVID took a hit for pretty much everyone in that area, but I do have some concerns about our most academically vulnerable children, specifically our SPED children, especially grades three plus. That does represent 14% of Prince William County's student population. With SPED, one size does not fit all. We cannot group all of these kids together. English is a second

[00:43:07] language. Disadvantage and disability are different. Different disabilities are very different and different combinations of different disabilities are also different. It then follows that the interventions that we need to do for these children are different. I'm concerned as I look at the new Prince William County division literacy plan I found on the website about a particular paragraph on page 4 where it cites intervention, which is typically where SPED children will get most of their instruction. It says that Lexia will be the primary program for intervention at Tiers 2 and 3, with 2

[00:43:47] being moderate and 3 being intensive. It also says Lexia will be our first intervention in Tiers 2 and 3. Different disabilities are different. We need to allow IEP teams to determine the best intervention for each child based on their disabilities, their temperament, what they can tolerate, and how they learn. I can tell you that if my child could learn from a screen like Lexia Core 5, he would already be fluent, but he is not. He's in grade 5. He has a normal IQ. He has four different disabilities that get cognitively in the

[00:44:23] way of him learning to read, but he is very capable. This would not be the best intervention for him and i would hate to see in the future that children my child or children like him are forced to spend two six weeks three months six months demonstrating that this is not a good intervention for them before another one can be chosen i would request that the board seriously consider a revision to the language to give iep teams the flexibility that they have always had to determine the best interventions for our sped children the second concern that i have is in the

[00:44:57] same section it says additional interventions for the school year 2024 to 25 schools can incorporate other interventions as needed for students i would i would request that we remove for the school year 2024 to 2025 and again allow iep teams the flexibility they have always had to determine the best intervention based on individual disabilities and capabilities finally i recognize that there are a lot of limitations on the state approved list i would ask that the board advocate for expanding those options particularly for graves three plus tier three intervention for

[00:45:36] orton gillingham those children are not represented robin norris evening my name is robin norris and my address is on file i'm a mom with children in this county school system i've had hold roles as a licensed marriage and family therapist and as a supervisor i also use my doctorate and counselor education to teach graduate students in all three tracks, clinical, military, and school counseling within the School of Ed at College of William and Mary.

[00:46:12] Of those of you who have met me, you know literacy and dyslexia have become my passions in the last year and a half. In that time I learned I have multiple family members who genetically share this learning difference. In my brief moments tonight, I would like to honor all of our time with a moment of silence within my three minutes.

[00:46:29] We're also busy with phones, emails, videos, and various other ways to communicate. For the concepts of care, listen and learn, and decoding dyslexia, PWC, to be upheld, we must take one minute out of our maelstrom of the many spaces in which we all run our day to not do, but to simply be.

[00:46:47] Please let our minute begin.

[00:47:46] Each one of us within that minute most likely had some sort of internal dialogue. Maybe it was about our breath, maybe it was about our laundry list, maybe it was about dyslexia. A minute can feel really long. None of us know what each other's inner voices we're thinking or feeling. I want us all to recognize that each child has a story and each child has an inner conversation.

[00:48:06] What we say to ourselves in a minute is important to heal or to hurt. We don't know what a kid says to themselves in a minute when they cannot read. The ability to read can be a reason for living or the inability to read can be a life-altering issue. We as parents and educators are tasked with keeping children safe, which comes with very uncertain paths full of dilemmas and hard choices so I ask that you please continue to check in with yourself about the path forward we want to try our best to ensure that no child gets left behind in the battle of literacy especially

[00:48:39] not those with dyslexia thank you thank you miss Jen Donnelly hi my name is Jen Donnelly and my address is on file it's gonna be a little bit of different talk tonight first of all I'd like to thank Erica for assigning me to the safe schools Advisory Council it has been a wonderful experience I also wanted to

[00:49:18] just rave about what a great system you guys have there at the security operation system I don't want to like burst anybody's bubbles or anything about what's coming up later on but the Everbridge system is probably one of the best mass notification systems that I've ever seen and I sell them on a daily basis to the military so I am super impressed that that's the system that we chose I feel like our kids are going to be much safer with that in place and I just want to thank you for really doing your due diligence making sure that the

[00:49:56] physical safety of our kids is a priority it's evident in that security Operations Center I also want to thank Dave Brown who stayed after our presentation last week to kind of give me a little bit more ins and outs of how that was working so we can still talk about the code of conduct another time but physical security is is doing really really well so I just wanted to come up and thank you all for that thank you okay thank you so that wraps up citizen comment time for this evening we're gonna move to 1601 20 the 2025

[00:50:31] legislative priorities is that where I'm at yeah dr. McDade thank you mr. chairman I would at this time like to invite mr. Matt Guilfoyle our chief information officer along with mr. Jim council our lobbyist and they'll be providing a brief overview of our legislative priorities yes good evening thank you for inviting us up to talk about the legislative priorities that will be upcoming for the 2025 legislative session in Richmond that will begin in January tonight they're on for information and they'll be presented for action at the

[00:51:09] the next meeting our legislative priorities guide our work with the state delegation in Richmond and Mr. Jim Council our lobbyist is guided by those actions that we take with the legislative priorities as he does his work in Richmond each year following tonight and following the action of the board next at the next meeting they will be presented to our state delegation by the school board chairman in collaboration with the county who will be presenting theirs as well to our state delegation on december 2nd and then as is typical we will take a delegation from the school

[00:51:47] division down to meet with our state delegates sometime in the january time frame so just to give some context around the work of the general assembly and when mr council has to hustle a little bit and that is in that january time frame so last year in this session during the 60-day general assembly session this year 1046 bills actually made it to the governor of that uh the governor signed 777 of those he amended 116 of those and he vetoed 153 of those obviously not every single

[00:52:24] one of those has to do specifically with prince william county schools or education specifically but many many do have some influence or some role when it comes to the school division and so our ability to have these legislative priorities for mr. counsel to move quickly in that situation are important so our legislative focus for the upcoming year remains consistent with our previous legislative priorities from last year and they focus really on a couple of key areas one of the first and foremost is around teacher retention and recruitment we continue to seek flexibilities and incentives from the state to allow us to hire the best

[00:53:00] teachers that we can that would include things like supporting financial incentives for teaching careers including free or reduced state tuition expanded teacher residency and apprenticeships programs as well as helping us increase the funding for our teachers salaries and benefits and increasing options for

licensure all these are detailed in the legislative priority packet that is available in board docs I'm just gonna spotlight some the highlights here as well as we continue to focus on of course funding for the school division for our students and for our staff as you are likely aware virginia operates under a two-year biennial budget that was the two-year budget was just

[00:53:40] passed this past year so we will now be in the mid-year of that the midpoint of that two-year cycle this coming uh general assembly so each year the governor prepares that proposed budget bill for introduction and passage by the general assembly that bill is initially adopted in the even numbered years and then amended which will be this coming session so with regard to that some of the areas that we continue to focus on are improving funding for school support positions this includes removing the support cap that was actually put in place in 2008 and still is in

[00:54:12] place removing that support cap our best estimate at this point should that support cap be removed completely would be an additional 18 to 19 million dollars annually to Prince William County we also continue to seek providing full funding to implement the standards of quality as well as supporting our modern schools and classroom requirements the J Lark group which is the nonpartisan group that the General Assembly uses to do their studies found that if Virginia was to fully fund schools to the actual need of our schools as under the standards of quality that would require an additional seven billion dollars that would be

[00:54:52] statewide obviously some percentage of that would come to Prince William County should they do that I don't see the the General Assembly funding that fully but what is something we would continue to pursue is that the increasing funding for our schools standards of quality as part of that we also continue to seek enhanced support for our student academic advanced academic outcomes and options as well as their needs such as their mental health as well as universal free meals and funding that would be necessary to sustain that for all of our schools and sustainability that remains a priority for our it's in our strategic

[00:55:31] plan it remains a priority for the organization we are aware of some of the challenges that are currently being faced by facilities team when it comes to the interconnection fees that Dominion energy is charging for us essentially to connect our solar activities to the grid if you will and there are substantial amount of money that's involved in that and so that may be something that requires a legislative fix so that will be something that we continue to look at and then of course as I mentioned there were thousands and thousands of bills that were introduced last year many of those become unfunded mandates and so we do continue to oppose all unfunded mandates no matter how

[00:56:09] well-intentioned because those things become a burden on the schools our our teachers and our staff. And so those are some of our priorities for the upcoming year. I do want to invite up Mr. Jim Council just to say some brief remarks. He is fresh from his honeymoon, so he's well rested and ready to go.

[00:56:26] So he's gonna just give you a quick update on what he expects in the upcoming assembly. - Mr. Chairman, school board members, Dr. McNade, good evening, it's nice to be with you again.

[00:56:42] With all the attention on the federal election coming up in just a couple weeks, must tell you there's not a lot to report from Richmond. It's been very quiet but there are a couple things I can mention. The Commonwealth seems to be doing very well economically.

[00:56:58] We just got current figures in and it looks like that it's running about 9.9 percent above the forecast for general revenues. So that means if we can stay on this pace there may be another 800 million to a billion dollars that k-12 can get in there and fight for in january also as matt mentioned the the infamous j-lock k-12 funding study there has now been a joint

[00:57:30] subcommittee appointed to study that study the study if you will and as general assemblies will do and really come up with a new formula for what we're going to do about K-12 funding. Well that that joint subcommittee just finally met last week and if there was anything to take out of that initial meeting it was that the chair lady, Senator Locke, told the committee that this would definitely be a two-year multi-session undertaking, that nothing was going to happen in a hurry.

[00:58:07] And it is major. They're looking at abandoning SOQs as the basis for funding and trying to get something to a per-student funding formula. So if they can get there, the change will be dramatic.

[00:58:24] In the interim, we've already submitted comments on behalf of Prince William to the subcommittee suggesting that if all that's going to take two years, If there's any new revenue when we get there in January, then that money should go towards getting away with the support cap.

[00:58:44] And so there could be a realistic chance, not that we'll get that totally repealed, but we can chip away on it. At this time, any questions, I'd be glad to try and answer them. Ms. Williams. Thank you. Mr. Counsel, always a pleasure to see you.

[00:59:01] I'm going to ask you my annual question that I'd love to ask. Are there any other school divisions that are advocating for things that we are not? Or are we are advocating that we could use the support of other school divisions on? I know it's really early in the year, but sometimes, specifically, I remember like the Crown Act where we had to combine forces, so to speak.

[00:59:22] Are there any issues or topics like that floating around that would be beneficial to us in the Northern Virginia area that we're not aware of at this time, should be thinking about? - Well, I will tell you that, you know, the lobbyist group of about 10 of us that we consider the the large school division representatives are in close contact and and leading up to the session and during the session have meetings every friday morning so just about everything that we talk about down there is a concerted effort one of the things that comes to mind that that does not have complete widespread

[01:00:01] support yet, but something to do about the representatives and special ed litigation. And Ricoh County School Division's really been the lead on that one. I've already talked to their representative, they intend to bring that back again this year. So I think they'll have a lot more support from other school divisions than they did the first year. Thank you, I appreciate that.

[01:00:26] And as always, any updates as we come into session gets ready to start because becomes very fast-paced for the public who may not know it's it's like lightning speed appreciate any and all updates and of course the work that you do representing us down in the general assembly very much supportive and the only other question i had is um for mr guilfoyle when we do a vote on the the legislative uh priorities if we could have like maybe a category for sustainability or something that the public can read or you can point out because i know you just did talking points tonight so we don't have to get into it this evening there is a section in the legislative priorities that does specifically call out supports for

[01:01:05] sustainability okay I missed that so thank you I appreciate that so no problem and that's all I have thank you very much mr. Jesse congratulations on your wedding well thank you we actually got

married in July and last I heard we're still together so one thing you mentioned in with the potential new funding or additional funding you mentioned something about support being a focus or something like that can you elaborate what what it was

[01:01:43] support cap oh on the support cap well and Matt alluded to this in in his talk just a moment ago but in the recession of 2008 Governor Cain in order to save money and trim the k-12 budget put a cap or a ratio cap on how much of support positions the Commonwealth would fund and at that time it saved the state about three hundred and sixty million dollars a year that was supposed to be a

[01:02:18] temporary measure during the recession as I said it was put in in 2008 2009 and here we are in 2024 and it still exists so I don't even know what the figure would look like now uh if if they repealed it but it certainly has really hampered uh school divisions funding support positions and i also heard in the subcommittee meeting last week and this is not just support positions but across the state localities are funding all by themselves

[01:02:57] 51 percent more positions than in SOQ positions than the states willing to fund. So that just gives you some idea of where the state is really coming up short and putting too much of the burden on the localities. Jim or Matt, tell us what those positions are. Like give us examples of those kinds of positions that the state considers SOQ. Sure. So when you think about a school and you about the positions now that we expect a school to be able to offer and especially among many of the wraparound services that we think about so it could be something as simple as your technical support person your t-spec

[01:03:36] but when you think about one-to-one deployed across all of our schools every student having a computer having somebody to support that or having more than one person in a large schools it becomes important that's an example of a support position other support positions are things like social workers counselors of course we talked a lot about the counselor ratio that's a support position and so when you think about all the services that are in a school that's really anything beyond the teacher is really a support position is defined under the and I'm going to oversimplify it but that's that's essentially how it operates that includes instructional coaches instructional aides yeah all that would not fall those would all be within the

[01:04:13] under support positions those are support yeah okay great and then and then just I think it's important I think dr. McDade you may know this off the top of but I think we're still not at the one to 250 at high school counselors yet.

[01:04:28] I think we're one to 300. I think overall the county's good, but we're-- - Yeah, and we have some pockets where-- - It's not one to 300. So that's an example. Counseling is a real example of where we're still not at the goal target that's considered the ideal number of 250 to one for students to counselor ratio that's recommended by the National Counselors Association.

[01:04:55] and sort of standard across the country. So that's an example of a position that has not been refunded since 2008. - Correct, or not fully. - Or not fully funded, yeah. We're doing that on our own. - Correct. - Ms. Wall.

[01:05:10] - Thank you. Good to see you, Mr. Counsel. I had a question. We have a lot of top priorities. Are these in order of top of priority or is number one our very top priority or are they just maybe random?

[01:05:30] - So they're not necessarily sequential in terms of any kind of rank order. We did try to put the top priorities you see that are, those are the ones that we will do the heavier focus on. And what I mean by

heavier focus, Mr. Counsel typically will work with our delegates or delegates around the state to find somebody who's willing to sponsor a bill related to that and or Mr. Counsel will work with other, as he mentioned, he does collaborate the other big um eight or big ten school divisions and so we'll look for opportunities to really pursue those the other ones that are mentioned here are things that are more kind of evergreen

[01:06:05] if you will and so we do pursue those or we keep an eye on those things but they're not necessarily as high a focus in terms of mr council trying to actually get new legislation passed in those areas but all of these remain in flux and sometimes it all depends on kind of like what is of interest to the general assembly at the time and what do we feel like what that's for mr council's expertise comes in because he has a sense of what's realistic in terms of our ability to achieve something in that in that session or what's of interest in the state that we feel like is of interest anything else you want to add okay thank you that's helpful so the the top 15 are kind of

[01:06:42] the ones we keep our target on and then the statement of support opposition are just kind of positions that we take on various things correct and one of the main things that that does is that as i mentioned the general assembly and miss williams alluded to this moves very very quickly And so it's very difficult. Mr. Counsel can't call me and ask, hey, can you do a board poll on what does the board think about this or what does the board think about that?

[01:07:04] And so these essentially give him guidelines to be able to operate within that he can operate and say, OK, I'm operating consistently with the board's intent on this particular topic, as opposed to having to call and say, well, how does the board feel about sustainability? Would we oppose this? He can look at this and say, yeah, I'm good. I kind of have my ability. I have my marching orders from the board on this.

[01:07:23] okay thank you that's helpful yeah I just might add last year we probably had at least 160 bills relating to just k-12 and that does not include all the budget amendments for education so I would be calling Matt a lot of nights very very late as subcommittees wrap up and this really gives me a guideline so that just about everything that's going to be introduced knowing how y'all think and with the legislative priorities I can get it in the right

[01:07:57] pigeonhole and get some guidance from that. Mr. Jesse? On the student support gap, I know Delegate Luke Torrin is the chair of the Finance Committee down there and is a big supporter. Do you know his position on that particular issue? Well the general position is they all agree that it was supposed to go away and it shouldn't be there now the problem is the price tag that it would bring so

[01:08:32] typically what happens each session as we we have budget amendments in to completely wipe out the support cap and in consideration of that what we end up with is they'll take a couple more instructional support positions and move them into the instruction category so they give us a little bit but but they're they're not gonna give us, or they have not been willing so far to completely repeal the support cap ratio.

[01:09:05] Like I said, I don't even know what the figure would be now, but at the time it was implemented, it was about $750 million biennium savings to the Commonwealth.

[01:09:20] - Mr. Counsel, always a pleasure to have you here. I have a couple of questions. We have the new accreditation system that the Virginia Board of Education has asked school divisions to implement

has two portions, the accountability portion, which has metrics that are still being calculated on how they're gonna implement it.

[01:09:40] But the second one, which after they give schools their rating or their grading says, one of the ratings will say needs support. Do you know if the governor's office or the governor has a bill that will talk about the kind of money they're gonna use to support school divisions when the Board of Education may come to an accreditation conclusion that a school needs support.

[01:10:07] What does that mean? Do you have any idea if the governor's gonna push any more money towards schools this year? - Mr. Chairman, I'm not aware at this point of any initiative on the part of the governor. Usually the second week in December, he presents his budget to the General Assembly.

[01:10:25] - Even in the off year? - Even in the off year. And that would be the time we really get to see all the details second week of december yeah i think it was around the 17th of december last year second or third week so outside of that issue it's the governor's last year you know typically they're known for sort of legacy related issues in this time he's been committed to a program he defines is called the right help right now which is you know immediate supports for special ed for or mental health.

[01:10:58] Do you know if there's any more funding coming behind those efforts? Have you heard anything or do you know anything about that? - No, I was at a Senate health and education meeting last week. - Yeah. - But they did not discuss any new funding initiatives yet.

[01:11:15] - Okay. - I'm sure there will be some however. - Okay, so just last two points. So the, you know, we have listed, I think it's important for the public to know, one of our, you know, priorities is mental health supports. school division is spending its own money on Hazel Health, which is a program that supports student mental health across the division, telehealth service, which I think is great.

[01:11:37] I know it was in last year's budget, it got killed for the governor wanted to support this for all schools from grade six to 12. I think that money might be out there and I would urge us to try to do what we can to do that. And then second, I think as Mr. Guilfoyle points out, I think some noise ought to be made about the solar connectivity charges that the utility companies are charging to school divisions.

[01:12:07] It makes our efforts for energy and sustainability almost negligent or negligible based on the amount of cost we would have to pay to connect the solar panels that we'd lose all the savings. And I think any effort in finding out how that, we know in Northern Virginia that's a major problem, but if you can help us with getting the other districts around the state to look at that and see what we can do about getting that effort.

[01:12:32] That's critical. - Mr. Chairman, just tonight Matt has filled me in on both of those issues. On the health one, I don't think that needs to wait for the General Assembly session. I can work on that right away. - That'd be great. - On the Dominion issue, that might take a little more digging before we can make any progress on it.

[01:12:51] - So if you can help us with this. So the SCC, the State Corporation Commission, is supposed to issue new guidance on connectivity fees and other issues in their December meeting. I understand there'll be citizen comment time at that. If you can look into whether it makes sense for the school divisions to go there to that meeting or to present our case on that issue, I would appreciate any information you can gather on that for us.

[01:13:16] - We'll certainly do that and also talk to the K-12 associations that represent various entities. - Yeah, yeah, yeah, no, that's, so I appreciate it.

[01:13:31] Thank you very much. There being no further questions. Mr. Counsel, always a pleasure. Mr. Goffoy, thank you. Dr. McDade, anything further? - Nothing further, Mr. Chairman. - Okay, thank you guys, very good. - Thank you very much. - So for the board member's sake, if there's any, and for the public's sake, if they have any concerns, we will be looking at this for the next two weeks.

[01:13:49] We'll come back and vote on a final draft of our legislative agendas over the next couple weeks. Thank you. Moving on to, where are we at now? student representative time. We have Almudena LaTorre who will be, Almudena, say it for me, Almudena, Almudena LaTorre, our senior attending City Hilton High School, our student representative for this evening.

[01:14:16] Please take it away, Ms. LaTorre. - Thank you. So good evening to everyone who took the time to be here today and for the people watching. My name is Almudena LaTorre and I'm honored to be here as one of the student representatives to the board. you for the opportunity to share my thoughts and voice the opinions of fellow students in Prince William County. As of today we're halfway through the nine week of the school year and we're getting closer to the end of the first marking period. This can be a stressful time for students, in fact many students have shared concerns about school spirit decreasing in these times. This is a

[01:14:51] recurring problem that repeats itself at the end of every marking period and it needs to be addressed. Currently many students organizations are trying to find solutions for this issue and i urge every student to speak up if they have any ideas on how to solve it at the same time i thank the teachers and administrators that support these students building school spirit helps create a stronger community which is why it is essential to do so now i will move on to discuss some information about the student voice committees thankfully most have received a warm welcome across the high schools in prince william county many of them have already had their first meeting

[01:15:28] those who have not already have a date set for it. The SVCs are in the process of recruiting new members and I encourage students to join. They're also open to feedback on school lunches to share with food and nutrition services. In one of the last meetings an issue that was brought up to an SVC was the lack of after-school buses with some students having to walk long distances from the stops closest to their homes. Students have reported that this discourages them from participating in after-school activities so it is an issue that requires attention. Moving on once SVCs are fully established across high schools this year, something that we will work on expanding the program to include

[01:16:08] elementary schools. This year SVCs were introduced to the middle school level but we're still in the process of finding ways to gather feedback from students in elementary schools as well as their parents. One of our goals is ensuring the students across all grade levels are represented and we look forward to fulfilling it. On a different note, Virginia College application week is fast approaching. This means that for many seniors, stress levels are high. Believe me, as a senior, I understand too. However, I'm happy to say that I have heard from multiple students that schools have plenty of resources to support them as they search for colleges and scholarships.

[01:16:46] Similarly, schools also have information regarding other pathways such as trade school and the military. Yet, some students feel like there is not much support in the actual process of applying to college. This is why, if anyone is struggling, I encourage them to reach out to their college and career counselors

since they are there to help. The Prince William County website also has good resources for both students and parents, so if you're unsure about what your next step will be, that is a good place to start to research career pathways. Finally, I want to discuss the cell phone policy. As time goes by, more and more feedback from students is being gathered.

[01:17:23] as of now i can confidently report that an overwhelming majority of students do not believe in a belt-to-belt policy at the high school level would be effective many believe that this policy would be an excessive measure that ignores the students the issues students could face due to being inaccessible during the school day in high school students have extra responsibilities such as work and taking care of siblings a belt-to-belt cell phone policy would prevent them us from from fulfilling these responsibilities.

[01:17:55] Our modern world is one based on interconnectivity. This is why I urge people and the board to focus on helping high school students build a healthy relationship with cell phones and technology rather than banning them from using it. The current policy that is in place, for example, is a perfect example on how to do this.

[01:18:14] It restricts cell phone usage during instructional periods while allowing students to access their phones in between periods and during lunch. This policy has received mostly positive feedback so far, with students commenting on how it has encouraged students to put their funds away by having reasonable consequences for breaking the policy.

[01:18:33] I feel confident to say I speak for most of the student body when I say we like the current policy and we hope our feedback will be kept in mind as a decision is made on whether or not to implement the bell-to-bell policy in Spring-William County Schools. That will be the end of my remarks for this evening, but I would love to discuss this issues further if anyone has any questions.

[01:18:53] Thank you for your time and thank you for being here today to work on improving our community. - Thank you very much, Ms. LaToya, I appreciate that. We will now move on to superintendent's time. Dr. McDade, the floor is yours. - Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[01:19:08] PWCS is proud to have over 35 specialty programs from elementary to middle school and through high school. We even boast a grade one through eight specialty program and our specialty programs focus on career exploration, subject area concentration, and post-secondary preparation.

[01:19:25] PWCS provides excellent opportunities that give students the chance to investigate careers, ranging from the fine arts to building trades to advanced computer science. The application process can be found on our website at pwcs.edu under academic programs, going to advanced academic and specialty programs, and then linking to specialty programs.

[01:19:50] Applications for our specialty programs open Friday, November 1st. Please note that the Center for Fine and Performing Arts application is due on December 14th, while other applications become due on February 1st. For further inquiries, you may email or call our Advanced Academics and Specialty Programs Department.

[01:20:08] Their contact information is available on our website at pwcs.edu. PWCS is also hosting three Family Engagement Series webinars students and families to learn more about our specialty programs in preparation for application season for information on specialty programs for elementary school students please attend our webinar which is scheduled for tomorrow october 17th at 6 30 p.m we also will host a

webinar on specialty programs for high school students which will take place on october 24th at 6 p.m and the webinar for specialty programs for middle school students will take place on october

[01:20:44] 29th at 6:30 p.m. This information and more can be found on our PWCS website if you go to academic programs find the link for advanced academics and specialty programs and then select specialty programs moving on to our presentation for this evening each year we present the state of the schools and this is an opportunity for us to take stock and reflect on the work that we've done the progress that we've made as well as acknowledging the challenges that still exist as well as our future goals for the upcoming year and so at this time I would like to bring forward and welcome our director of research assessment and

[01:21:22] data services dr. Tim Neal who will present the data for the state of the schools for the 23-24 school year he will also be joined by our associate superintendent of teaching and learning dr. Stephanie Sullivan and miss Denise Huebner for student services support and post-secondary success we also have some other representatives from our high school team our chief equity officer and human resources as well as Dr. Jocelyn Lockhart who oversees as the director of continuous improvement we'll present data from the 23/24 school year we will

[01:22:01] also share key takeaways from that data as well as next steps and some of the key priorities that we are working on in the strategic plan to address those areas of needed continuous improvement so at this time I'll ask dr. Neal if you can please begin the state of the schools presentation and share the data from 2324 thank you good evening dr. T school board members and dr. McDade it's my pleasure to be here tonight to present this state of schools to you this is an updated and revised presentation that is academically and act oriented

[01:22:36] action focused. I also want to point out that this presentation exemplifies the progress we've been making towards organizational coherence by bringing together a wide array of individuals in collaboration and development of this presentation. So this is a slide setting a little bit of a context we've seen this before it positions us nationally and you can see that across the nation we are 32nd so we are are quite large even when compared nationally and we are

[01:23:10] very diverse again compared nationally when we look at regional data this is based off of last last year's fall report you can see our demographic breakdown compared to those localities around us and again you can see we are diverse and we also have a relatively low level of per pupil spending compared to our neighbors.

[01:23:36] And so we recognize that we have little control over this, but it does put every piece of data that I'm about to share with you into greater context. The other thing that I want to share with you is the demographic data is based, is broken down based on our national categories.

[01:23:54] We recognize, though, that one category might encapsulate multiple students. So a student might be a student with a disability. They may also be a Hispanic student. So they cut across multiple categories and we recognize that even though we're presenting this with the federal breakdowns.

[01:24:14] So in thinking about our school accreditation, under the current system, so how schools are currently accredited, you can receive one of three ratings: accredited, accredited with conditions or accreditation denied. These ratings are based on different indicators. Broadly, those indicators can be grouped into performance, academic performance, achievement gaps absenteeism and then graduation

and dropouts so when we look at how our schools fared three percent of our schools are currently accredited with conditions and 97 are accredited this means

[01:24:50] that we had a change last year we are at seven percent accredited with conditions so we had an improvement in our and of four schools that are now accredited where they were not last year Now, as was alluded to earlier in this meeting, the system is changing.

[01:25:09] So, next year there will be a new performance and accreditation system in place. I don't want to go into a lot of details in part because we don't have them, but you can see that it's going to be based on mastery, which is our SOL and academic performance, our growth, which is already a component, we are just extracting it a little bit, and then readiness, which there is really absenteeism at the current moment.

[01:25:34] And then at the high school level, we'll also be including graduation. It is important to know that my team is keeping track of this. We are frequently in contact with the state. We're collecting this information. As we gather more details, we will be sharing those.

[01:25:52] The last piece of context that is really important for this presentation is a focus on our wildly important goals. These are our driving focuses. So you can see the target is that 95% on-time graduation rate and leading into that is decreasing our chronic absenteeism rate, decreasing our dropout rates, and improving our academic performance to 85% pass rate across all of our content areas in the SOL scores.

[01:26:24] The remainder of this presentation is organized by our strategic plan and we'll begin with commitment area one which is learning and achievement for all. So when we look at the data, some of the things that are going to come out.

[01:26:41] We have made gains in our SOL pass rates, and we generally outperform the state. But we recognize that we didn't get the accelerated performance that we wanted across all of our student groups and content areas. Early literacy is remaining an area for growth.

[01:26:59] Our on-time graduation rate did increase significantly over the prior year. Our English learners demonstrated significant growth in language acquisition. Our SAT and PSA participation rates increased substantially. And when I get to that, I'll provide a few more details.

[01:27:17] And we are still seeing performance gaps for our English learners and our students with disabilities. So when we look at grades three through eight, we had a 74.5% pass rate on the reading SOL.

[01:27:33] But we did see a 2% increase for certain groups. So English learners, our black students, and our economically disadvantaged students did have increases. When you look at the reading pass rates by groups, you can see there was a slight improvement across groups, but we still see that performance gap with our students with disabilities and our English learners.

[01:28:00] In mathematics, in grades three through eight, we had a 71.5% pass rate. And we did see an increase in 3% for the pass rate for students with disabilities. Then when we look at this across all of our groups, you can see that upward trend and again, we see the performance gaps with our students with disabilities and our English learners.

[01:28:28] For science, we had a 68.9% pass rate in grades three through eight. Similarly, you see an increase across our groups. You will notice that we had a 4% increase for black students in their pass rates, but as with the other content areas, we do see performance gaps for English learners and are economically disadvantaged students. When we look at literacy there are multiple ways that we can measure that. One

way is our phonological awareness and literacy screening or PALS tests. This looks at our phonological skills. At the

[01:29:07] end of grade two 78.9% of the second graders had met the benchmark and when we look at a trend over two years we see a 12% increase in the percentage of L students that have met those benchmarks. Again when we break this down by subgroup you can see we did have that upward trend across all groups so these are substantive increases another measure that we can look at for reading is

[01:29:40] reading comprehension so for this we'll use the HMH reading measure and we had sixty seven point eight percent of our second graders reading on or above grade level this is a decrease over the prior year and when we look at this across all of our groups we do see that that downward movement across all of them so this is new information we haven't shared this in prior state of the schools we do measure English learners demonstrating growth and meeting their

[01:30:14] progress targets on the access test and what we saw last year it was an increase of 5.4 percent of the number of students that met their progress targets this is a substantive and meaningful increase in L growth, and that equates to roughly 800 students beyond what was expected.

[01:30:40] There's also been a concerted effort to identify students who would benefit from gifted services, and so when we track the gifted placement, we have seen increases in the provision of gifted services to multiple student groups.

[01:30:57] significantly you can see we had a 60% increase in English learners that were identified for gifted services. At this point I'm going to turn it over to Dr. Sullivan. Thank you. As of course everybody in this room knows that the Virginia Literacy Act is in its first year of implementation this year across the Commonwealth. Calls for every student to receive core literacy instruction based in scientifically based reading research and evidence-based literacy instruction. Students are also supported through evidence-based supplemental

[01:31:36] instruction and intervention that should be targeted to their specific needs as an individual learner. I pointed out this graphic because there's been much discussion about the importance of explicit and systematic instruction in phonics and phonemic awareness, but equally important are the skills that build language comprehension as students increase their fluency in word recognition, the development of vocabulary, and the growth in reasoning skills. Scarborough's Reading Rope demonstrates the importance of that

[01:32:12] interconnectivity of reading skills and language and word recognition skills coming together. And as you can see it requires each one of those components to be tightly woven for a student to develop successful reading skills. Some of the things that we have done this year to prepare for full implementation are Our teachers participated in training this summer in curriculum implementation.

[01:32:37] And throughout the school year, every one of our teachers are working through comprehensive modules developed by the Virginia Literacy Partnership at the University of Virginia. The modules contain specific content on specialized instruction, in addition to strategies for all learners.

[01:32:57] In order to ensure that all students in all classrooms were supported, We also resourced all schools aligned with the division-wide expectation that all of our teachers are fully equipped. We expanded contracts to include all schools and provided materials to include manipulatives, magnetic letters, and other hands-on tools that support learner engagement.

[01:33:21] To help teachers manage the new expectations, the student learning team developed clear and concise curriculum guides that integrate our instructional materials. A significant portion of the VLA was the adoption of the new standards of learning.

[01:33:37] Our new curriculum guides align learning experiences with the standards and provide a roadmap for our teachers. Additionally, our reading coaches are participating in a year-long professional learning, not only in the content of reading instruction, but in research and best practices in coaching teachers and modeling lessons.

[01:33:58] That being said, monitoring and feedback is critical. We are constantly monitoring what's working and what might need improvement. Through numerous classroom visits, we've already identified process improvements and we certainly welcome feedback from our parents.

[01:34:14] We recently launched our public VLA page and encourage our families to review the information there and on our state site. Thank you.

[01:34:35] - So one of the measures I mentioned is our wildly important goal is a 95% on-time graduation rate. On-time graduation is, in a nutshell, defined as graduating within four years of your ninth grade entry year. For the prior two years we've had an on-time graduation rate of 91.7%. Last year we saw an OGR of 94.3%. This is a substantial increase and when you look at how at the increase across student groups you can see we had almost a 10

[01:35:08] point increase in our L graduation rate and a six point increase in our Hispanic graduation rate. At this point I'm going to turn it over to Mr. Hood and Mr. Wolf. Good evening. While these results are worth celebrating we know we have work remaining to meet our wildly important goal of 95% on-time graduation rate. This past school year an on-time graduation task force was developed. The goal of this task force was to dive into our student data and identify potential

[01:35:44] barriers that may get in the way of our students graduating. Albeit this could be from school, home, work, or anything else. You will notice in this first bullet that tools were created and/or enhanced to monitor student progress to ensure our students remained on target towards graduation.

[01:36:02] These tools include our early warning system and two dashboards for graduation monitoring and focus student support. These tools essentially provide us with a comprehensive information on our students relating to their current grades, attendance, and remaining academic elective and non-academic requirements.

[01:36:22] We as a team then took this information and in the spirit of collaboration with our schools, developed plans to support identified students. Regarding cross-departmental collaboration, this work takes a coordinated effort from the many departments involved with our on-time graduation task force to provide the needed resources and support for our high schools.

[01:36:42] From increasing our focus on credit support or unit recovery to providing opportunities for our students to recover full credits when they were not successful in their first go around. This time, I'd like to ask Mr. Hood to speak about the remaining points on this slide.

[01:36:58] - Thank you, Mr. Wolf. Knowing that some of our students need more encouragement and support to work towards their goal of crossing the stage, at graduation, PWCS hired three graduation coaches last school year. Their primary focus was on reengaging students who had dropped out or were at

risk for not finishing high school by providing individualized support based on each student's individual need.

[01:37:23] We saw great results with the schools that had graduation coaches, and we're looking to expand these positions and practices across the division. This year, we have also expanded participation in our on-time graduation task force that Mr. Wolf talked about to include representatives from elementary school, middle school, human resources, transportation, among other offices, really to make that a collaboration commitment that is truly kindergarten to 12 and cross-departmental.

[01:37:54] And finally, we're providing additional learning opportunities as we did last year and continuing to next year for our principals on various topics relating to on-time graduations, such as school scheduling, transition to ninth grade, credit support and credit recovery, among other topics.

[01:38:12] And really also focusing on this year is what practices worked last year, and then how do we also bridge the gap and move them across our schools for this coming school year. So with those continued efforts and new efforts, our goal is to achieve the 95% on-time graduation rate.

[01:38:42] So in looking at the academic performance of our students, how we create challenging learning environments for them and prepare them for post-secondary success, that relies on advanced course participation. And when we look at advanced course participation for the last year, we saw that 53.8% of our high school students participated in one or more advanced courses and we did see substantial increases both in the English learner participation at about five percent and an increase in our Hispanic student participation of about

[01:39:16] six and a half percent in those classes when we look at this by student group we do see that there's an upward trend in advanced course participation across all groups although we do see a participation gap with our English learners, our students with disabilities, and our Hispanic students.

[01:39:38] When we drill down a little bit deeper and look just at our advanced placement courses only, you can see that this table shows five years of data of the counts of students that took AP tests and their performance on those tests.

[01:39:57] And you can see that in 2024, we exceeded the pre-COVID rates. And of all of the AP tests taken, approximately 61% of them had a passing score of 3 or better.

[01:40:18] Continuing with post-secondary preparation, this table shows the participant patient rates in our two SAT administrations and PSAT administrations that took place during the school day last year. You can see that 66 percent of 11th and 12th grade students took the SAT during the school year and 78 percent of students in grades 9 through 11 participated in the PSAT test.

[01:40:44] I said at the outset that SAT had an increased participation rate. I want to specifically call out this here because this is quite an accomplishment.

[01:41:01] In the prior year, around 2,600 students in the graduating cohort took the SAT. Last year, we hit almost 5,000 students in the graduating cohort taking the SAT test. When you look at their performance, the college board sets benchmarks that they say are indicators of success in college.

[01:41:24] That benchmark is a score of 480 for reading and writing and a 530 for mathematics. 35% of the graduating cohort who took the SAT met both the math and the reading benchmark. 36% met the math benchmark, and 66% met just the reading benchmark.

[01:41:44] When we look at PSAT performance, we have two years of data on this slide. You can see that we had an increase in the percentage of students meeting both the reading and the math benchmark from 21% to 24%.

[01:42:00] an increase in the percent of students meeting the mathematics benchmark from 23 to 26 percent and then those meeting the reading and writing benchmarks uh stayed stable at 50 percent a hundred percent of the graduates had a post-secondary plan in place prior to graduation and when we looked at that those plans we found that 74 percent of those students planned to attend a two or a four-year college and there were 123 million dollars worth of scholarships offered to to PWCS graduates.

[01:42:36] This table shows that breakdown by school. It is important to note when interpreting these results that this is self-reported data for cohort 24 and these reports have to be verified. So there has to be documentation provided as well demonstrating that these awards were offered.

[01:42:56] And at this point, I would like to invite Dr. Sullivan and Dr. Atkins to talk. - Good evening. So with our Equal Opportunity Schools Initiative, we've seen some significant gains in access to advanced coursework, specific call-outs for our economically disadvantaged students with a 4% increase, a 3.1% increase with our English learners, and a 2.6% increase with our students with disabilities taking their first ACE, AP, IB,

[01:43:33] or dual enrollment course last school year. And with this program, we have students taking a survey with targeted questions to uncover barriers to access and how we can assist them through those. We assign them trusted adults to help them with academic success and progress throughout the year.

[01:43:53] And we have concerted efforts with our AP government and AP US history courses with EOS through a new grant that has come out. And then we are monitoring the targeted supports that students are receiving throughout the year when they are taking the courses for the first time.

[01:44:11] And then I'll turn it over to Dr. Sullivan. - Thank you, Dr. Atkins. Before I go on, I just have to restate that we not only had increased participation in advanced placement courses, we had increased success in advanced placement.

[01:44:26] And to realize both of those things so significantly in the same year is extremely rare and a tremendous credit to our incredible fleet of teachers. And it is all about targeting both access to courses and success in those courses.

[01:44:45] Our advanced academic programs include AP, IB, Cambridge, and dual enrollment. Each are valuable ways for students to engage with college level coursework and possibly earn college credit even before starting college. The opportunity we provide our students in taking the PSAT is an important first step.

[01:45:06] Based on that day, we receive AP potential information that targets specific strengths and weaknesses in students and identifies the courses that they are statistically likely to have success in. That data is not only useful in helping encourage students into AP, it also provides information in supporting student enrollment in IB, Cambridge, or dual enrollment.

[01:45:33] You heard a little bit earlier tonight about the success that several of our students had in taking the PSAT in 11th grade towards the National Merit Semi-Finalists. Our PSAT and SAT data also provides skills insights.

[01:45:49] It is a comprehensive overview of the strengths and weaknesses of our students for the benefit of teachers, counselors, and administrators. Teachers can analyze patterns of performance and gain insight into areas that they may want to enhance in their instruction.

[01:46:07] I spoke to a principal just today about his data and he was sharing how they were using it in their CLTs to identify supplemental instruction based on the patterns they saw in Skills Insight. I'm also pleased to share that we are launching our partnership with Khan Academy for all 10th through 12th graders.

[01:46:28] You may remember that last year it was only available to 11th graders in the spring. Khan Academy is the official SAT Partner II College Board. The coolest part is students can link their PSAT and SAT scores for customized practice.

[01:46:46] Students will receive guided support in question based on their own individual strengths and weaknesses. Teachers can also use the tools to help students prepare for the assessment, ultimately strengthening a student's readiness for college.

[01:47:02] Students will have the opportunity to sign up for after-school tutoring and preparation if they prefer to have one of our teachers help them utilize Khan Academy and additional resources. So in-person support is also available.

[01:47:17] Interestingly enough, information about Khan Academy will be in tomorrow's scoop, so look for it. Another incredibly valuable tool is AP Classroom. It is a resource for teachers and students to focus in on the significant standards and expectations for the course.

[01:47:36] College board guarantees that if it is not covered in AP classroom, it will not be on the assessment. Considering that a single assessment can give a student three or more college credits, we want our students in Prince William County to have every possible tool available to them.

[01:47:56] I'm also excited to share that NOVA is as motivated as I am to expand opportunities for our students in dual enrollment. In addition to Collegiate High School at Freedom, we recently aligned a significant number of courses available to students at NOVA to serve as dual enrollment credit.

[01:48:15] This means many of those courses available through early online college and independent dual enrollment will now also reflect on their high school transcript as dual enrollment. Our high school teachers, counselors, and administrators have been active participants in professional learning around all the available opportunities for students and are fiercely committed to the success of our students in advanced academics.

[01:48:43] Thank you. - Moving on to commitment two, positive climate and culture.

[01:49:00] In this section, you will see that our overall dropout rates have decreased with significant decreases at our English learner population, our Hispanic students, and our students with disabilities. We had an over 5% reduction in our chronic absenteeism rate, and our employee and teacher retention rates are above 90%.

[01:49:23] So when we look at chronic absenteeism, chronic absenteeism is defined as missing 10% or more of the school days. So if you are enrolled for the entire school year and we do not miss any days due to closings, that would be 180, which would mean 18 days.

[01:49:40] So, you can see the prior year our chronic absenteeism rate was 21.7%. We've reduced that by 5.5% to 16.2% last year. It is important to note that 55 out of 95 of our schools had decreases of 5 percentage points or more, and 7 schools had decreases of 10% or more.

[01:50:07] When we break this down by student group, again, you can see that we had that reduction across all of our groups. Overall, Prince William County had a 2.9% decrease in their dropout rate from 6.9% to 4%. We saw a 9.8% change in our English learner dropout rate from 28.7% to 18.9% and a 6.2% decrease in our Hispanic dropout rate from 14.6% to 8.4%. And so when we plot this,

[01:50:45] Again, you can see we had that downward trend across groups. When we look at employee retention, so the two groups here are all Prince William County employees and then just teachers.

[01:51:01] You can see we had an employee retention rate of 90.4% and a teacher retention rate of 90.5%, which remains consistent with what we have seen in prior years. And at this point, I would invite Ms. Huebner to address this slide.

[01:51:21] Thank you. under our thriving future strategic plan you can see in the data that we have increased organizational coherence and so this is represented by our school leaders our level associates our central office teams all working together to implement those strategies that are effective in creating a sense of belonging for our students and positive strategies towards attendance we've had creative very creative incentive programs support plans and mentoring by our school social workers and other caring adults the sense of belonging is so important for our children wanting them to come to school paired with really rigorous creative lessons that make kids excited about learning we've

[01:52:00] seen the increase in attendance and as noted by the decrease in chronic absenteeism five percent it's not good enough we're going to do better in the future but we're going to continue to use all of those strategies that have worked well for us this year most importantly we're helping our kids feel a sense of hope in their learning in particular our secondary students as we use their vision profiles as we plan for their post-secondary options so we're using those in hopes of them not only seeing the chance for diploma but actually achieving that diploma when we partner that with our on-time graduation task force great things are happening we're creating different opportunities

[01:52:37] for our students that have never existed alternative pathways for achieving that diploma through increased efforts in credit recovery support options and continuing to ensure that the schools are actually utilizing these options With our evening school, it's being refined to be more tailored to individual student needs, and our high school team continues great work with our on-time graduation task force, and we're looking at revising on how we provide that support.

[01:53:00] Monthly meetings with attendance officers and our registrars have been reformatted, not just to talk about the work, but to talk about the why behind the work. Our kids are important to us. The data that you see, they're just not numbers, they represent children, and so we remind our staff members that our actions are important because they make a difference for kids.

[01:53:19] So there continues to be a focus on engaging students and creating that positive school environment and the continuous improvement plans from each of our schools and our offices include specific strategies and implementation of those plans. We've enhanced our current tracking systems and notification to school leaders for re-engagement and with the implementation of a new notification for those students who drop after 15 days of seconded absence, it's allowing us greater, more timely follow-up

and the tracking system in case management will help us stay on top of re-engaging our students we've expanded our community partnerships so you'll see that our additional resources for our students are helping their health and wellness we've had great

[01:53:56] success in partnering for immunizations allowing more children to actually come to school and remain in school so we've had great partnerships with Sentara our principal and health district our map clinic and our students are alive and well here with us in the buildings wellness strategies have been embedded into our instructional practices including internal and external supports such as support corps who will be focusing on our students who are returning from hospitalization or require additional supports to remove barriers and our hazel health services are available to families to provide mental health support through telehealth therapy this is an interim provider until families are able to secure their own services through their own provider or through

[01:54:33] community resources and we continue to work with our tier three students at our students who are most significantly impacted with dropouts freedom garfield unity reed woodbridge other other schools in need of support through our success coaches which is a caring mentoring adult and we will continue to use our notification letters our attend to remind parents of the importance of attending school and at this time I'd like to invite Dr. Colbert to come up and talk about our staff thank you Ms. Huebner you belong here is a comprehensive diversity equity and inclusion

[01:55:12] organizational initiative developed in partnership with human resources professional learning and the Office of the Chief Equity Officer. This initiative consists of division-wide professional development, other systems of support, and a redesign of our selection processes. Through implementation of You Belong Here, PWCS ensures that our leaders are creating inclusive cultures within their school buildings that will positively impact climate and employee morale. It is also Also, our aim to equip employees with the skills to work and communicate more effectively

[01:55:51] across differences, align behaviors with beliefs, and address unconscious bias to build more equitable, diverse, and inclusive cultures. On the slide is a brief summary of the You Belong Here initiative's critical actions and some next steps.

[01:56:09] Through engaging with staff and focus groups, we created the You Belong Here statement of understanding and establish the pwcs five pillars of belonging those pillars include valued included engaged welcomed and supported upbeat teacher engagement survey this initiative administered a fall survey about research-based factors that have been shown to improve teacher retention and engagement a coach that works worked alongside our school administrators on

[01:56:45] a plan to improve teacher engagement and climate and culture and then will be was followed by a spring survey administration last year we had 27 schools participate in our pilot and most of them saw an increase in teacher retention this school year we are expanding the initiative to include a total of 53 schools the hr team has implemented for the past few years are administrative selection protocols at this point in the process we continue

[01:57:18] to monitor for compliance division-wide selection protocols and a selection guide have been developed and shared with our school and site-based leaders across the division currently professional learning is being facilitated to launch the protocols for the upcoming hiring season Additionally, candidate care professional development is being presented and professional development on the pillars of belonging is being provided for all staff.

[01:57:49] HR, in partnership with the communications team, has created a robust You Belong Here media campaign to include media outreach, You Belong Here official branding, and strategic brand engagement targets.

[01:58:06] And recently, we launched our PWCS Proud Employee Recognition Program. Our first nomination window is open right now. And we are taking the nominations from staff, students, families, and the community. At this time, I will turn it back over to Dr. Neal.

[01:58:35] So the last two commitments, commitment three, family and community engagement, and commitment four, organizational coherence, I'll be addressing both these commitments in the next two slides. So the key idea is family engagement remains consistent with prior years as measured by our survey, and our continuous improvement process remains a critical lever for realizing organizational changes.

[01:59:02] So when we look at our climate and culture survey, we see consistent levels of family engagement and trust as measured by that domain over the last three years. So you can see it was hovering around 88% each of those years.

[01:59:19] help foster community engagement we did offer 44 family engagement series sessions over the 23-24 school year they were distributed across the school year 39 of the families who registered for a session did attend a session and over 2 000 downloads have been or 2 000 views i'm sorry of these recorded sessions have been accessed for the second year in a row a hundred percent of schools and central office departments have continuous improvement plans that

[01:59:55] are aligned with our strategic plan. These plans are validated, all leaders have been trained in the process, and there is a systematic and robust progress monitoring plan in place. And at this point I would invite Dr. Atkins and Dr.

[02:00:12] Lockhart to address the slide. PWC has maintained strong cycles of improvement through systematic progress monitoring. All schools and departments receive direct support and coaching for all aspects of the continuous improvement process. We are dedicated to providing ongoing support to our leaders in developing progress monitoring tools and systems that will track progress throughout the year. Additionally, collaborative efforts with various departments are underway to ensure that our support aligns with the strategies

[02:00:47] employed by schools to achieve their objectives. In our pursuit of continuous improvement, we are actively seeking additional opportunities for training and research to bolster the capabilities of our school and central office leaders i will now pass the discussion to dr atkins so to continue with our collaborative efforts the level office and the office of the chief equity officer work together with implementing standards of excellence for school advisory councils which will be increasing our engagement with families specifically

[02:01:23] leveraging the support of our school parent liaisons to not only serve as members of the the Advisory Council, but also to recruit families to be members, active members of the council to voice their needs and to advocate for their students.

[02:01:40] We are also working collaboratively with various departments to have targeted family engagement series sessions for our specific populations that need supports to remove barriers, and we are working collaboratively with community and business partnerships to align resources for critical needs

for our schools based upon the supports that they need for successful on-time graduation throughout the year.

[02:02:07] So those are just some of the things that we are doing to increase family engagement across the board.

[02:02:23] - So we recognize that over the last 45 minutes or so, we have shared a lot of information with you. We also realize that there is a lot of information out there that we haven't shared due to time constraints. So we want to offer two resources that you can utilize to explore additional data points.

[02:02:42] One of them is the PWCS interactive dashboard, which is accessible through the PWCS website. It's also linked here. You can drill and look down at specific schools on a whole variety of information from enrollment to performance. The other tool that is extremely useful is the VDOE School Quality Profile pages.

[02:03:02] These get updated annually with performance data, and again, there are a lot of different metrics in here, some of which we've covered tonight, others which we have not. When you look at the state of our schools in totality, accelerating academic growth and closing the achievement gap is a priority for the school year 24-25.

[02:03:28] You can see that reflected in the strategic initiatives from central office and our continuous improvement plans. VLA implementation across all grades is a driving focus for the year. The on-time graduation task force will maintain a concerted effort to improve graduation rates and reduce dropout rates for all students.

[02:03:51] Engaging families in positive and proactive ways to support their growth continues to be a priority and our continuous improvement plans and our enhanced progress monitoring remains a linchpin in linking the actions we take to our data and our outcomes. That concludes the overview of our state of schools be welcome to address any questions that may be asked miss our report thank you dr latif so earlier tonight we had a parent who came and talked about um the virginia

[02:04:30] literacy act and yes i mean you see you getting up um because it was in part of your presentation you were talking about the the supports and things like that and she mentioned the tiered levels of supports could you speak a little bit to that because i think that's probably got a lot of information inside of it and I know VLA had some very specific things that we have to do so you know I'm headed with this I I am thank you I'm actually delighted to have an opportunity to speak to it so yeah that parent in a pretty incredible job of outlining the key information where a lot of really

[02:05:08] like targeted specific support is going to be given in intervention spaces we typically will use the terminology of Tier 2 and Tier 3 where Tier 1 are universal strategies for all students. Tier 2 or when we start providing unique strategies for students and those that need intents we would typically call that area Tier 3. It is part of MTSS progression of providing supports for students. Fortunately I was sitting right next to my SPED counterparts when the parent was speaking and we had an opportunity to double-check our internal

[02:05:45] documents because we were whispering we wrote that part about IEPs into the plan and so we agree with the parent wholeheartedly that students in a tier two and tier three situation our standard response we identified Lexia but we also recognize that through IEP teams and through other customized supports there are potentially other supports that may benefit a student more to include some of the ones

that our parent mentioned our internal documents include all of that same information we need to make an adjustment to our formal public facing document to include that same information that the parent

[02:06:25] referenced so all the points that she identified we wholeheartedly agree with we want our teachers utilizing and implementing IEPs first and foremost and particularly in the space of tier two and tier three intervention.

[02:06:41] So it highlighted something that was missing on our plan, which I love, which is why ironically, I also included my part, we need to hear this feedback from parents. We are just a couple of months into implementation. Real easy shift because we completely agree that we wanna see that custom level of support in those intervention blocks.

[02:07:01] - Dr. Sullivan, just a quick follow up to Ms. Argerport's question on that. I think it's important to that same point, an IEP supersedes anything else. - It wins all day long. - Let's make that crystal clear. - 100%. - The school division has always or should, and if we're not, we will be, but always honoring the IEP is the first and foremost thing.

[02:07:21] Now, another question though, sometimes it's difficult to get the IEP, the negotiation that goes back and forth with the parent and the teacher, and so I think it's important to also say that if a parent comes and says, know kid doesn't do well with computer learning Lexia that we don't maybe you know try it out I know this is the difficult aspects of working on IEPs but I think that's I important that we we tonight leave here knowing that the IEP is dr. McDade I think said yes supersedes all all other I would say that that is not a difficult tension point a parents knowledge of their child

[02:07:59] be the fact that our students have diverse needs and we have a panoply of We have options available for that. And we certainly want our schools utilizing that. It is commensurate with the information we have provided internally to teachers and staff.

[02:08:14] We just realized the disconnect on our internal guidance with our public facing. We're going to fix that. And again, we're just a couple minutes into implementation. Love that feedback. We want to hear it. And this is, in the spirit of all things, continuous improvement at its finest.

[02:08:31] Thank you. - Can I ask a follow up? - I just wanna make sure it's crystal clear that when you say that, you know, we're going back and making adjustments, you're talking about the language in the document, correct? - Right. - The expectation has always been that the schools follow the IEP, okay.

[02:08:50] - I do wanna preface that too. We will, we have an opportunity at intervals to submit for revisions to the state. And this is a revision to our external document, to our official document where we recommend those changes.

[02:09:05] Our internal guidance to teachers and staff, we double checked everything and it all has the same language and what we expect. And working with families with IEPs, not just IEPs, 504s, and students with just diverse learning needs in general.

[02:09:21] So we quickly identified the parents feedback was spot on and we will certainly make that adjustment and submit to the state. - Ms. Trudeneck. follow-up on that too. Can that go to the schools as well again? Like I know you just said that they've gotten it but maybe just a reminder and always beneficial also in there so that yes when the parents go to meet they don't have to self-advocate for that too. They know that it's already been re-communicated possibly. Absolutely Mr. Denik that is always a necessary

extra step especially when a division of this size is trying to roll out some consistency and implementation and it's

[02:10:00] something we can very specifically address. We can do that sooner because our internal documents point to that now, we'll wait on the state approval for the official change. - Okay, thank you. Mr. Wilk? - Yeah, just following that and what the parents said, you know, I think it's important to know what that, at the VDOE, as the parent mentioned about being VLA approved, literacy science reading curriculum, it's very restrictive.

[02:10:25] And in an environment where, I mean, I know this 'cause I'm in the ed tech world, where there's thousands of companies that potentially has resources. I think the VDOE is doing a disservice where they only have a window open for a very slight amount of time to have programs evaluated where then they put their posted list of what a school system can and cannot use.

[02:10:45] What I hope we could do as a division is maybe leverage and say, this should be on a continual basis. If a teacher has a program that maybe they wanna leverage, but it's not on the list, maybe the principal can submit it to the VDOE for a review or a principal has something vice versa.

[02:11:01] It shouldn't be based off of closed windows and periods of time when certain things can be evaluated. And then two years later, for example, the current curriculum was evaluated by the VDOE in 2023, only recently refreshed with the intervention and supplemental ELA supports.

[02:11:19] I know that's not our fault, but it would be great if we could implore the state to have a rolling basis of evaluation of resources and materials. - Yeah, we can certainly share that feedback. I will say that they must've heard you because they have open supplemental approval windows.

[02:11:37] I think they're on their fourth cycle now. So I think that feedback was probably heard already. So we are seeing that change in the video. But the providers themselves do submit, not schools, teachers, or divisions.

[02:11:53] So that would be the one thing I would caution. Thank you. - Jen Wall. - I really appreciate this presentation. love the state of the schools I love the data I just love talking about this topic I think it is awesome and I'm I really commend the parts where we are doing really well and I'm encouraging everybody to keep on going I wanted to ask a question about some we've had parents come in and talk about dyslexia in particular and I wanted to know if how dyslexia and other disabilities that

[02:12:32] directly impact reading are incorporated into the efforts that we are moving forward with if there's anything in particular with that's on the forefront that we're going to be doing differently or in a greater manner to address some of those concerns with our students who have the diverse learning needs Dr.

[02:12:52] Sullivan I do want because I know specifically Dr. Ryer is working on some of the some of the things that we're trying to tackle with dyslexia so I So if we could address that first, Dr. Ryer, from your department. - Yep, absolutely.

[02:13:11] So first and foremost, I just wanna make the connection. We're really excited. We feel like the Virginia Literacy Act and some of the information that Dr. Sullivan presented, specifically if you think back to that image of the reading rope, that's really changing the way that all kids are instructed to read in

a way that's going to naturally address students that might have characteristics of dyslexia through the way that core instruction is focusing on that systematic approach to teaching phonics.

[02:13:38] But then beyond that, that's when those tier two and tier three interventions, as well as any decisions that are made by a student's IEP team would come into play where there are a plethora of resources that specifically target whatever a student's profiled is determined to be as they've been assessed for those characteristics.

[02:13:57] So a couple that come to mind are some the programmatic approaches that we sometimes utilize multi-sensory reading instruction and trying to get students to work tactile and using manipulatives as they learn sounds those are a couple of things that are critical and are embedded into those interventions and IEP team decisions about specially designed reading instruction that specifically target dyslexia I can offer a couple that are commonly used in the school division one of them is spire that might be a reading program that's familiar to many of our families that's

[02:14:32] great thank you and kind of an ancillary question is I know because of the way we taught reading when my kids were in school and now they're recent graduates we have some older students in our high schools maybe in our later middle schools who maybe are I think the VLA is kind of targeting K through 8 right so we I know we have high schoolers who are in need of not remediation but they're still struggling to read and if you if there's anything we have planned for I know this is to help those students I know it's a little bit beyond you know

[02:15:12] kind of our over comprehensive efforts but if there's any hope or any plan or anything you can say to give some encouragement or insight into families who may be in those categories with you know bright students who are in high school now who are still struggling sure so if those reading difficulties are documented through a child being eligible for special education services one of the things that we would encourage IEP teams that include parents and family members to really think about is might there be an elective course that is offered in addition to the English coursework

[02:15:48] that the student's going to get so that they're accessing the same curriculum that they are assessed on but then could potentially get direct instruction on reading skills that's not as prevalent in the ELA curriculum at the secondary level through instruction that can be targeted and tailored in a course that's oftentimes taught either co-taught or taught by a special educator who has training and background in teaching reading skills to older students. The only parts that I would add and to my colleague, those K-8 VLA modules that I mentioned earlier through the Virginia

[02:16:24] Literacy Partnership and the University of Virginia, there is substantial content in their own dyslexia and specific strategies in working with students with varying disabilities as related to reading instruction.

[02:16:41] And all of our teachers K-8 are completing those modules and it is very high quality comprehensive information that I think all of our teachers having that baseline of knowledge is gonna be critically important. For our high school students, we are this year, For the first time, having universal literacy screening as well, just to, not formal screening from the state, but internally, all of our students will begin the year with a STAR assessment that is more high school focus on assessing those comprehension skills, right?

[02:17:16] Our high school students might have fluency, word recognition, not necessarily a need in phonics, but struggle with comprehension. This will allow us to have data and support those meetings, support the MTSS process to make sure students are getting intervention at a tier two and tier three level as appropriate even in high school.

[02:17:36] - Thank you. So if the parents have particular concerns, they should really continue to reach out because there are more options than we've had in the past is kind of what I'm hearing. - Yeah, absolutely. And just to follow with one final comment that might be helpful to any parents who are listening or watching, this is a topic that we've gotten a lot of questions about.

[02:17:55] And so there's actually an upcoming presentation that will be put on by our Special Education Parent Resource Center that specifically talks about dyslexia, its relationship with the Virginia Literacy Act, and I think that would be a really informative way for parents to get a deeper dive into the conversation we're having this evening.

[02:18:13] All of those presentations are posted, and so more information can be found on the public-facing Parent Resource Center website. - Thank you. - Let me just go to Ms. Williams. - No, I'm done. - Okay, Ms. Williams. - Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[02:18:29] same track and path but my question relates to English learners English language learners what sort of resources or plans are in place for students who test out of English language learner classes and they're now in more traditional English classes how are we servicing or catching the gap for those students because often they're just put in an English class I'm not as familiar either so that's okay don't often talk we actually monitor students after they exit and so students are still case managed supported and monitored after

[02:19:06] they exit L services and programming for at least six years afterwards of obviously depending on when they exit out and so they still have a case manager at the school and we monitor their success and their programming so students uh are progress monitored after their success on the assessment so there's i guess i that's great information i don't think i formatted my question specifically it's in relation to the literacy and learning plan okay so is that like something that case manager does i'm asking for parents who would like actually i wouldn't i didn't know or think about it but because this

[02:19:43] literacy plan is so important yes i'm thinking specifically of like our transition years like maybe you have a student that tests out now eighth grade they're going to ninth grade where where the same plan is not in effect, but they could fall through a gap or a crack because they are transitioning. And I'm just using them as an example.

[02:19:58] How are we, what is our plan, or do we have a plan to kind of catch or service those students? - Same answer, I think, that we continue to monitor those students, that exit. Our students in K through eight through the VLA are obviously receiving universal services, but we've also aligned our English language development classes and programs to the VLA, a lot of good work being done on how those same systematic and explicit strategies will benefit our L students.

[02:20:29] And so for the first time, we actually have completely aligned curriculum. And so those teachers are working together with core teachers on the same curriculum, and our L students are getting pre-supports prior to covering content in their English classrooms.

[02:20:45] who have exited out of L instruction continue to be monitored to make sure they're succeeding as we would hope they succeed after exiting the program. - Thank you. We don't spend a lot of time talking about that. - Mm-hmm, these are really good questions. - And if there are parents watching, where would they go to get more information or who should they direct their questions?

[02:21:04] - Well, it's always best to have the question closest to the solution provider, so certainly at the school level, but if they are not comfortable with that or for whatever reason, we can certainly help up here in our multi-lingual services office. - Thank you, I appreciate it.

[02:21:19] I think that's another example of how we're implementing things with fidelity across our division. And I know that takes a lot of work, so thank you. - No, thank you. - Mr. Jesse.

[02:21:35] - On the very last slide, there was a acceleration academic growth, which is what I wanna talk about. I'm very impressed with everything that we're doing. I think we are doing many things that needs to be done, but I still think we're in the minor leagues.

[02:22:00] And the reason I say that is not because we're not working to get out of the minor leagues, but we are, in some respect, I think, our focus is not totally on acceleration of academic growth.

[02:22:18] most of the slides today we talked about things and some of this is brought down by the commonwealth education department high school graduation absentee rates and so forth those are important but the most important thing to me is our education i rather look at harvard and yale for their education i don't look at them for their academic performance i'm not interested so much how well we have, how many sports teams, and so forth.

[02:22:56] To me, our number one job is performing and having kids learn high levels of learning. And the only real measure, the main measure of that is the SOLs. And when we have SOLs, where the standard of learning, SOLs measure our minimum standards.

[02:23:21] And we need our kids to meet the minimum, but we want them to achieve. And so the focus for me is on the minimum standard and SOLs. And in a way, I don't think we look at that enough.

[02:23:38] When I was campaigning, I told my schools, I told my people listening to me that I'm interested in the Occoquan schools being the number one academic schools in the county. I don't care about the sport, I do care about the sports and stuff, but the academic is what's important to me.

[02:24:01] I had this discussion somewhat with Dr. McDade, and what I'm saying is simple to me. On slide number seven, it says a wildly important goal, and it was 95% on-time graduation rate.

[02:24:20] and then it talked about the things that enhance that, one of which was the 85% SOL scores. To me, that's backwards. The 85% academic SOL scores should be, in my opinion, the most important thing that we are looking at from our schools.

[02:24:44] When we hire principals, when we look at teachers, when we give awards, what I wanna know is how successful were you with your kids on the SOLs? Are they achieving?

[02:24:59] Are they just barely passing the SOLs or are they doing it at an advanced rate? And when we look at 95% graduation rate, as I asked Dr. McDade, I think, how many of those kids are doing it just barely able to read?

[02:25:22] That is important to us. And I think that we need to look at that. You know, when I look at the SOL score, the four charts you had reading at 74.5% or 1.7 increase.

[02:25:42] Science was at a 69.9% and a 1.3 increase. The PAL scores was 78.9 at a 4.1 increase, and HMH 67.8, minus 3.5 decrease.

[02:26:01] Those are the scores that I think are very important, and we need to put more emphasis on that. Then the question is why we are saying we are a good school system, and I believe that. But why in the heck are most of our scores in the 70s?

[02:26:22] We would not accept a student coming in to us and saying, I'm doing great, I got a 70 on my exam. Would you accept that? Or would you look for kids doing it 80 or 85 percent, 90? We are accepting, I'm saying we need to accept more than we are accepting now.

[02:26:43] We need to expect more than we are expecting now. You know, but there is good news. And we are not pointing out the good news. What is the good news? We have schools that are in the 80s, high 80s in SOL scores.

[02:27:06] If you take the four scores and you add them together and then average them, we have schools that are 80 and above. We have 21 schools, elementary schools. Those are the most important to me, the elementary schools. And 21 of our schools are there.

[02:27:24] 13 of them are already at the 85% goals. but we do not emphasize that we are not recognizing those schools we are not inviting those schools into thriving futures and we are saying now the counter argument of that is the counter argument to that is that we don't want to embarrass the schools that are doing poorly we have 21 schools elementary

[02:27:55] schools that have less than 70 percent average 21 that's why our our scores for all students are low because we have to focus and we're everything you guys are doing is doing that but the focus I think if people say we don't want to embarrass them well if they're not performing well they need to be embarrassed and we need to look at principals who have been there for a long time and have not been

[02:28:32] able to improve after a while why because they're dragging down the rest of them but again i say we need to recognize the 21 schools the 13 schools we need to do something special for them because we can have the best attendance rate we can have the best absentee decrease and so forth but the most important thing is how are we doing academic and i think we can do better i know we

[02:29:06] can do and i know we are going to be doing that but we need to do it faster and we in my opinion we need to concentrate why do we have 21 schools that are not performing and i know we have things and parents need to know a lot of people say well we don't want the parents to know some of they should know because we should be transparent but we also can tell them this is what we're doing to make that school improve so and we have

[02:29:36] eight schools that has no SOL score above 70 that's the problem thank you let me just make a clarification real quick when you're putting the SOL scores up here and it says 70% 70% of the students have achieved the scores not their score on the exam so yeah okay I just want to be sure you understand I said 70% the past but within the SOL you have the barely passing then you have

[02:30:15] the middle and then you have the advance and right now you know when you're really focused at high levels you then stop focusing you've got 80 90 95% of student passing then you start looking at how

many are passing at advanced rates - Okay, just wanna be clear on that.

[02:30:36] Mr. Wilk. - Yeah, thank you, Dr. Lateef. A couple of recognitions, things that I pointed out and I found something that stood out to me. First on slide 16, the science pass rates. I know in the past, because those are cumulative with kids taking those fourth grade being, the previous years are all, my son is in fourth grade, so they're starting to do the review already every day, incorporating that into warmup and stuff like that.

[02:31:05] And I know that's a new strategy. I watched, I walked around one day with Dr. Walker at Grand Park and she was walking the rooms and making sure that they had that type of thing going on. So it was great to see that process. And so in fourth and eighth grade, when they take those scores, it was nice to see the improvement at least going in that direction.

[02:31:23] 'Cause I know a couple of years back when the state shifted things, it did impact a couple of schools with that, with those ratings there. A couple other things I wanted to mention. With the AP scores, which I think are great and those pass rates are improving, just for my own kind of exploration, I'd be interested to see those kind of disaggregated those by those subject areas.

[02:31:45] So like, you know, AP psych, AP US history, you know, that would be just kind of nice to see like which ones we're seeing more success in than others. I know some are probably harder or at least, you know, have the reputation nationally as being some of the tougher exams and stuff as opposed to others.

[02:32:01] but that would be good to know. And lastly, Erica, I was thinking of our meeting on slide 42, the Hazel Telehealth thing. She and I both sit on the Health and Wellness Committee and there was a presentation, bless you, given to us about a month or so ago.

[02:32:16] And I think that is a phenomenal program because all too often we're hearing from families, I'm even hearing from friends and family, adults that therapists are filled. You can't get meetings or you have to drive an hour for an in-person one in Fairfax or Arlington and stuff like that.

[02:32:33] I think this is a phenomenal resource, you know, provided the parents opt in, of course, and have their kids take this and take advantage of this type of health service that we've subscribed to for all of our students. So I think that's a great program and those are my comments. Thank you.

[02:32:48] - And Mr. Wilk, we do have, the College Board does give us like all of the, you know, the different courses in the past. So we have that information that we can get very easily. - Mr. Blake. - Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just want to say thank you for this presentation and taking the time to put this together, all these numbers and data.

[02:33:09] And I also just really want to just highlight the graduation coaches and the graduation task force. And I know personally because of Garfield, at Garfield High School, we had a graduation coach and she really, Ms. Frazier, and she really been helping push people through, get people through the door.

[02:33:29] So I think that's just a great idea and just giving more support to the kids and helping them out. So yeah, that's it, thanks. - Williams. - Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[02:33:45] First, I wanna step back and say thank you everyone for all the work that you have put in on this presentation. Last time I jumped in piggybacking on the literacy planning questions. I also wanna take a moment to really just thank and appreciate all of our staff at all the levels.

[02:34:01] What we have here tonight is representation of staff that speaks really to, as a testament to everyone's work on boots on the ground. And I know for a fact, and speaking from my district and Freedom High School comes to mind, pretty much encompasses just about every aspect of what we're talking about here tonight.

[02:34:22] I think they had the largest growth in, was it literacy or reading on SOLs? Forgive me, I don't remember, it was like 11% growth. It was the largest of any high school in our division. Ms. Huebner, did you know, or you can't see me 'cause I'm so short, I can barely see you.

[02:34:40] And I also know that the graduation coaches, the graduation coach there was effective and instrumental in raising the graduation rate there. Freedom's numbers, I don't think I've ever seen in my decade of service on this board. I'm not even sure if they've ever been like that since the school has opened.

[02:34:58] So I can see specifically all of the new systems and protocols that we have put into place to improve students graduating and for services for our families. I mean, the school is a walking testament to that. Last year, my district was Featherstone with on-time reducing chronic absenteeism.

[02:35:19] So I know that these things work and I also do wanna speak to the SOL scores, but in the sense that one of the things that I'm most proudest of, even if one of my schools had a 70, is the amount of growth that our students demonstrated because I particularly, not a good test taker, and being able to know that my student, maybe he didn't get the highest score or the 500 score, but his comprehension of the material is there all the time.

[02:35:52] Maybe not on a standardized test, but in the classroom when he's teaching me what he learns at home. So that's something that we just don't talk about and numbers don't fully encapsulate all of the work an effort put in by families and students and staff in our buildings and parent liaisons and some of our community partners that come in to assist with our students.

[02:36:13] And I just wanted to give an overall congratulations to everyone involved because this State of the Schools presentation really shows the amount of growth that's been put in and school divisions have not had a chance to rest since the pandemic.

[02:36:28] We don't talk about it anymore as if it has not happened, but the amount of changes that the VDOE has implemented is specifically after the pandemic. Even now, the new Virginia Literacy Plan, there's been no break. And for the people who were here and the people who are still standing that contribute to our students' academic progress, it's not always gonna be perfect, but absolute kudos and round of applause.

[02:36:53] Nobody is saying we don't have work to do, but we can't continue to do the work if we don't recognize what has been done and applaud those who are still continuing to do it because I look around in schools oftentimes, and especially as we head into November and we're getting ready to the end of quarter and start rounding the corner for the SOL preparations and all those things, people are legitimately full of excitement and desire to learn, but people are tired.

[02:37:18] And it brings to mind my former co-board, school board member, Ms. Jessie, who would say, oh, you have to talk about the bad too. And I don't wanna be remiss or say that there's any shortage of that going on, but I think it's also time to celebrate the good and the absolute hard work that has been done because many of our teachers, especially at my schools, stay above and beyond contract hours.

[02:37:41] The counselors, the social workers, even the custodians, and then we have the family engagement series nights where we have maybe KLC building administrators that come in and talk about specific events and parents, and all of those things are important and they don't necessarily get all the attention due in a state of the schools report, but they contribute to this report and the data that's in there.

[02:38:03] So I just wanted to make sure I took time out to say that. And again, kudos to my district 'cause they're all title one and they rock and they do amazing things, a little bias. But my question is for gifted, I noticed that our student populations went up. Do you know, or could you answer to me, gifted students who enroll in GovSchool and those other specialized programs, what I should say is GovSchool and other specialized programs, are those students considered gifted students or is the material gifted?

[02:38:31] and you may have a non-gifted programmatic student in that class. Is there a difference? - I think I'm gonna get this right. But students are generally individually classified as gifted based on our traditional screening process.

[02:38:49] Those students can receive enrichment in a variety of different ways, like classes at GovSchool, or classes in different levels of acceleration. An exception to that is our Fine and Performing Arts Program at Colgan.

[02:39:06] At Colgan, the audition process serves as the qualifier for gifted services if a student is not already identified and those students would be considered gifted in the arts. So that is the one exception to a program specifically having that synonymous relationship with the students it serves because the criteria for enrollment serves as the screening process since it's an arts process. Thank you I just wanted to be clear because yeah I don't know if that was clear but hopefully I got there because sometimes I get it confused yeah I don't think parents would know and we have

[02:39:46] increased our gifted population I just wanted to check that there wasn't an overlap there yeah because there's a lot of hard work and effort into the number increase and I appreciate that and something was said earlier about dual enrolled transcripts could you speak to that again if for some reason I couldn't capture what you were saying it does it have to do just yes so our students will often take a class at Nova that I would consider unaffiliated with this school meaning the student is doing the online program for juniors and seniors where our students can take a course for free or the sometimes our parents will

[02:40:23] actually pay for a student through independent dual enrollment we did not have a process in place in the past for those courses to that count as dual enrollment on the students high school transcript the student had a college course and they had high school courses that was not really the intent of dual enrollment it should have counted on their transcript and so we've been through a process over the last six months working with NOVA to match courses and create a course list where if a child does potentially one of those

[02:40:59] classes as a junior if there's a course match it now is also on their transcript as a dual enrollment course thank you for clarifying that I appreciate that and then I just want to say for this family engagement series I'm looking forward to some specialized ones when it comes to special programs and things of that nature I really appreciate the expansion of that and I will also say I do believe that there is a disconnect now in some of our groups of parents who are new to the area or maybe haven't been through a similar education system.

[02:41:31] And I think that that would be an instrumental family engagement series to have them understand where they fit in and that all the programs are available for them as well. - Yep, definitely, thank you. - So just thank you everyone for your hard work. - Thank you. - Ms. LaTori.

[02:41:46] - So I basically had one question and it goes with like the EOS, Equal Opportunity Schools and Dual Enrollment. So basically, - I know some schools have more dual enrollment classes to offer than others. For example, I come from Hilton High School. We only have one dual enrollment class offered.

[02:42:03] And I know, for example, there's a lot of schools who have like over 10 dual enrollment classes offered. Is there anything that we can do to work on that better? - So, excuse me, specific to expansion of course opportunities, we are working collaboratively with Dr. Sullivan's office to expand opportunities for students where the course may not be located directly in the building, but students would still have access.

[02:42:30] We do know some buildings have more of a concerted effort to expand AP or ACE because that's the program that they have in the building. But we still want to make sure students don't have barriers to access dual enrollment courses. And Dr. Sullivan can speak to some of the opportunities we have coming up.

[02:42:47] And then Dr. Sullivan, also I think it would be important for families to know, too, some of the challenges with dual enrollment in terms of teacher certification, et cetera, so if you can explain that as well. - Yeah, dual enrollment can be offered in a variety of different ways. One of the most predominant ways in Prince William County Schools is at their high school of enrollment with a current teacher and it serves as dual credit.

[02:43:10] What is particularly challenging about that is the certification. So if, let's say it's an English course, a teacher that may be certified in English by the state of Virginia and well credentialed may not meet the very specific requirements of NOVA 'cause they're actually employed by both.

[02:43:29] And so as teachers have to have advanced degrees and specific requirements to meet their criteria for dual enrollment, it's not always a perfect match, which is why we are looking at expanding opportunities to your point where we are no longer crutched by that.

[02:43:47] We're working a pilot program with Freedom High School right now, where students are actually taking courses at NOVA campus. Students now realizing that things like NOVA online can also serve as a high school class, and that's literally hot off the press today.

[02:44:03] Actually, the information went to the principals today and to counselors last week. So this is brand, brand new information. And also, we are in the process of working with some other external partners that have some really interesting creative opportunities for dual enrollment just not ready for prime time yet on that but yes we we see that we track carefully those discrepancies and looking for more opportunities go to mr. thank you I'm gonna piggyback because I've specifically heard from Hilton high school parents in the past couple years

[02:44:38] their frustration over not having access to dual enrollment English classes so I know that's come up a couple times and then they and they did ask me why couldn't they go to Forest Park which is right down the road to take the course and so I'm throwing that out there to you the other question I have is is freedom going to be a specialty program that people can apply to go to or is it only is this opportunity to be at NOVA only for freedom students so in its early stages yes we are working specifically just with freedom because we need a few

[02:45:14] years to get our system in place and to have the capacity of both Nova it is indeed our intention to expand opportunities potentially as a specialty program and to other high schools so we are looking at those same opportunities potentially in place across the division over the next few years the state legislation did passed some excellent legislation last year in regards to expanding opportunities for dual enrollment and potentially funding enrollment so we're eagerly awaiting additional guidance we just have the original language from the bill that was passed and so we are expecting some

[02:45:53] information forthcoming on those aggressive changes so we're doing parallel play of setting ourselves up kind of ahead of some of that state language to make sure our students are first in line essentially for the all those additional opportunities so this is next year is actually the first implementation year at Freedom High School for incoming ninth grade students our current students we've called them early opportunity kids they're helping us also test the system right the structures in place the the agreements between them being a Nova student and following following the Nova calendar

[02:46:30] like there was a lot that we had to work out for our students and so the Freedom kids because you can't beat the geography are our students that are are having that immediate access. But yes, we are very motivated to learn from this process and expand to students throughout the division.

[02:46:48] - Oh good, well this brings me to my next question you alluded to with expectations for the course. I know somebody who teaches dual enrollment and she runs it like a college class, which means no late assignments, no redos, things like that.

[02:47:03] What are the expectations when kids go to these dual enrollment courses? - Yeah, I can say NOVA's been an incredible partner. On our kickoff night, their faculty and staff came out. So we built a pretty strong structure with an advisor there that is specific advisor for dual enrollment kids.

[02:47:21] They very much believe in opportunities and support. And so what's nice about dual enrollment on the college campus is you get that experience, plus you're undergirded by the support at your school and through those extra resources. So NOVA has identified specific staff to support the dual enrollment kids on their campus.

[02:47:39] And so again, this is kind of a sub-pilot year for us to identify those spaces where the students are going to be successful, but what supports they need. They've been provided tutoring opportunities and additional supports to help be successful.

[02:47:57] We are tracking them very closely, and they're doing really well. That sounds excellent. My last little point is I'm sure you're aware of the VDOE is looking at new accreditation and accountability standards and for high schools there was something about employment opportunities college and then military and under the one for college it talked about high schools being accredited based on how many kids are getting taking AP IB Cambridge was not mentioned but also dual enrollment and that high schools can

[02:48:35] get extra credit for getting kids to take enough credits to have an associate's degree before they graduate high school, which is awesome. I know we've had some kids who've done that. - That's correct, yep. - But, so now that does kind of make me wanna make sure that Hilton is able to, be able to do these things.

[02:48:53] So I know they already have AP. So if we can hopefully get some more dual enrollment, I think that would be good for all of our schools, but I'm gonna have to-- - We agree. I know it's been a concern

there. It's great for kids, and we are definitely in support of all options and a variety of different options for our students to excel.

[02:49:13] But dual enrollment is college class. Yes, ma'am. Okay, because I feel like people sort of poo-poo it a little bit. They're like, oh, but there's all these other things. But if you're taking a class that's actually run exactly how you would expect a college class, you're really prepared for that experience when you get there.

[02:49:33] And you're getting the credit, which saves you money. So thank you. - Yep, thank you. - We'll go to Ms. Trudenik. - Sorry, don't go anywhere, it's me again, sorry. So you're talking about NOVA Online. - Yes.

[02:49:49] - Again, as a parent, we get a lot of information coming our way. I did receive a text from Prince William County Schools today while I was in the school board meeting. So whoever's doing the texting does not know where we all are. I'm wondering, is the dual enrollment date to enroll the same for every kid across the county?

[02:50:10] - To date to enroll in the Virginia Online. - To enroll in a dual enrollment course, is the end date the same for everyone? - It typically is. I don't wanna speak for NOVA, but they have a very specific timeline on when the application has to be complete, when the enrollment cycle and the confirmation of schedules has to be done, and it's typically unwavering.

[02:50:33] So we are honoring their timelines for student participation. And again, I'm not saying that I did not get this information. The NOVA online that you're referring to, that's available to all students as well, correct? - That is correct.

[02:50:48] And it is brand new that our schools now have essentially a grid of complimentary courses for them to be able to apply it as a dual enrollment course on their schedule. Literally today. - So we couldn't have done it for the fall. - Yeah, you certainly can.

[02:51:04] We can apply it for the fall. Schools just got the information today. Absolutely still, yes. My ask is, although I know the scoop is hot off the presses and people get really excited about it and read every single word of it, I'm wondering because we're pushing dual enrollment because we know how important it is, as a parent, is that something that can go out via the text that we get so we know it hits their phones?

[02:51:27] Can we say, hey, Nova Online is available and possibly like a week and a half before the dual enrollment deadline rolls around, can we hit up people's phones with that? because one of the things I did hear from parents this year of juniors, a lot of us missed that deadline to enroll for the next school year in our dual enrollment.

[02:51:46] - I will certainly collaborate with our communications department and we can discuss it for sure. - Okay. - Yeah, thank you. - And then Ms. Wall will follow up with another question. - Yeah, it's also a dual enrollment question since we were on the topic. There's a NOVA campus, an NVCC campus in Manassas that's not too far from Battlefield.

[02:52:08] - We are looking at it. - Okay, okay. And Unity Read, it's right there, up the street. - It is all mapped out on the calendar in my office. - Okay, great. I just wanted to make a couple of comments.

[02:52:23] I asked a bunch of questions earlier, but I wanted to highlight, first of all, the on-time graduation rate efforts. I think this is tremendous. I know sometimes people worry that, you know, we're making it easier to graduate, we're somehow like putting kids through, but I know that's not the case.

[02:52:39] I know we're having kids meet all the standards of graduation and we're just supporting them through that process, so I wanna highlight that. It's not that we're lowering the standards to get kids across the finish line, it's that we're giving them all the opportunities they need to really engage and complete.

[02:52:55] So I wanna highlight that, 'cause I think those trend lines are really going in the right direction. I also wanted to highlight, and you emphasize it, Dr. Sullivan, the increased participation advanced courses that slide 27 and slide 28 and the increased success. I think that is awesome because a lot of times, you know, you worry off, we get a whole bunch of kids in here, first time takers, you know, are they gonna be able to really pull it off?

[02:53:19] You know, maybe you have to, you may think, oh, our success rate might go down because we got a bunch of new kids, but no, that didn't happen. We had kids, we had an increased rate of success and an increased number of students. So I agree, I think that was one of my favorite slides.

[02:53:35] And that data is really awesome. So anybody who was involved in that, I wanna commend them for that effort because I know when kids take those advanced classes, they gain confidence and then they feel more ready to go on to higher coursework at the college level.

[02:53:55] So it's really important for our thriving futures focus. I also wanted to highlight the expansion the Khan Academy resources and also the option to work on those resources at school because I had student my students would did access Khan Academy to help them prepare for AP and for SAT as well but they you know they were highly motivated to do it on their own but some kids need that extra support and just kind of that time and place to focus so I really think that's great and I hope we have kids take advantage of that um and the last thing i wanted to highlight um i think it's

[02:54:34] slide 29 um this essay the number of sats because i remember when the sat was just up to parents like to figure it out and sign up and take it and the fact that we offer kids the opportunity to take it in school and that we have this high of a participation rate is awesome and i wanted to also commend the effort to use that data to help identify kids who would be successful in some of our advanced classes I think all of these little efforts are helping us achieve our goals our overall strategic goals of you know launching thriving futures so I just wanted to highlight those things and

[02:55:13] commend people who are working hard on all of these things I know there's I know there's always we're we're into getting better getting better and I think the data helps us know where we can do that and it also highlights where our efforts have been successful and where we can keep we can keep going so thank you and I just want to make those comments miss Latour sorry I just have one more question about the freedom program with Nova so I wanted to ask is this limited to a few students like is there a set amount of students that are able to apply to this program or can anybody apply that's that's an excellent

[02:55:50] question so the first true application for students would be the current eighth grade class applying for it into ninth grade next year however we are also working with current students in what we're calling early opportunity and for next year we'll be extending that to juniors as well so for this year for the students that enrolled we reached out to all the students that had qualifying data we looked at their existing advanced placement courses and how they can combine to actually get what is a UCGS which is kind of a mini diploma for

[02:56:28] halfway through an AA and then worked with those families to apply. We certainly could have taken more students and so we will continue to cast a wide net for the students at the school to continue to do those early opportunity slices next year while we welcome in the incoming class of ninth graders to begin their participation as a cohort their first dual enrollment class won't actually be to the end of their 10th grade year okay thank you so much a lot one last dual enrollment question for me maybe not a question maybe maybe a question and a

[02:57:04] comment so we don't do study halls in high school anymore I don't know why our libraries are the emptiest rooms in the building sometimes you know in the schools that don't have the dual enrollment capability that don't have the AP classes as much.

[02:57:22] I recognize we're trying to build those up, but time goes on, right? And so I know students who take, from experience, my own children, that take a online course, because they may not fit it in their schedule because of sports or et cetera.

[02:57:39] - Yep. - The school division doesn't allow them to take it in school. So if you wanted to take sort of a dual enrolled class online at NOVA, you don't have time in school to take that class currently.

[02:57:57] Can we, as we address some of the schools that may not have these opportunities to have dedicated time for that student, whether it's in a library or a place to do that course or that work while they're in school? And I don't know why we couldn't do that, but currently that would be something that I think would increase enrollment rather than them having to do it at home, especially for those students who are busy.

[02:58:23] - Yeah. - Whether it's sports or other activities. And I think then you can also expand languages. Right now, it's very difficult to find language teachers. It's really hard. I mean, and I'd like to see us expand languages.

[02:58:40] Hilton used to have the SISL program. They still have it, but it was more robust. One of the things to think about is there are so many online programs for learning languages that are capable for curricular credit, whether it's at the university, 'cause universities are also getting rid of teachers and going to online courses for languages.

[02:59:01] Could we have dedicated times in their schedule during the day that would allow them to sign up for say Arabic or Urdu or courses that we don't offer, but we could give credit for if it's through an approved provider. And on that note, we used to have the schools having their independence during the pandemic and soon after the state gave us a list of online providers that we would say is okay.

[02:59:24] I know that's moved to the central office now and there's some requirements that allow you to be provider and I think I would encourage the school division to expand that list as far and as wide as possible and if students ask for programs that might not be on that list, as long as they meet the state requirement, which it's on the university's obligation to go to Virginia and say we want to be on your list.

[02:59:52] But there's a number, so basically what I'm getting at is can we find dedicated time in the class day, I don't know if that's possible, to do these things? I think that would drive enrollment and create creative opportunities to take far different things.

[03:00:09] - Yeah, I think flexible opportunities is, flexible opportunities are really important. And as we continue to identify the strengths and areas of opportunity for growth our improvement everything you

mentioned is definitely on our radar it will take of course collaboration across the division with my high school colleagues but we are certainly not at a stopping point on looking at flexible options for our students i am super familiar with the regulations around the online courses and how that's set up it is something we're already working

[03:00:44] on and is under modification for the year so as we're tackling some of these areas where we have not necessarily allowed our students to pursue all available opportunities we're looking at them because it expands essentially our course catalog and so all of that is top of mind and we're looking at really closely on ways you know as evidenced by some of the things you've heard about about today.

[03:01:10] - I would truly appreciate it, thank you. So I'm gonna wrap up, yeah, sure, Ms. Tredenik. - With what he just, sorry, with what he just said, I know I'm getting a lot of, with what he said about taking that online course in school, adding to a child's credits that may only need the two classes, I guess my question would be, is that a possibility to explore alongside like the VHSL requirements, because would that count as a-- Yeah, and those are all factors, which is why we're, you know, I'm saying we're looking at all those things.

[03:01:46] I would collaborate with my colleagues. Some of the online, the VHSL will typically, as well as NCAA, require that there are designated teachers with certain amount of instructional time. And so all of those things are part of the story, which is why it's not an easy answer, because we want to make sure we have really clear guardrails when we move forward with any of those changes.

[03:02:10] - Okay, no, that'd be great and I do think if we can find dedicated time during the day, I think we could do some really neat things. It's just hard and there's limiting factors for afterschool. Well, I appreciate it. So on, you know, just my comments that, you know, I think we should all be very proud of our students, our staff, our teachers, our superintendent, our leaders, our leaders at all level for the tremendous success we're seeing in the state of the school report.

[03:02:41] We've made improvement in the most difficult categories to move a school division. If you're going to a conference and you're among education leaders, they're gonna tell you, it's difficult to move the graduation rate. It's difficult to move math and science scores.

[03:02:57] It is difficult to move reading scores. These are not easy things. It's difficult to reduce chronic absenteeism. Yet, we have increased our graduation rate. We've increased our SOL scores. Burdened, by the way, of the damage done from the pandemic.

[03:03:13] We have come back, we're continuing to come back. And so that is improving. We've increased family engagement. We've reduced chronic absenteeism. We've reduced dropout rate.

[03:03:30] And these are the most difficult things, if not to remind you all, but I am taking education courses at UVA and EDD, and they tell me these are all the difficult things. And the research shows that these areas are challenging to move on.

[03:03:47] They're very difficult, yet we have moved insignificantly. And this is, by the way, what we're looking at today is a year over year. I think what really is the remarkable story is the three-year trend. We're in our fourth year here on the strategic plan.

[03:04:03] So I think this is really important, and this is not easy work. This work can only be done when you make these movements done by collaboration and cooperation at all levels, at every level, whether it's

our teachers, our facility folks, our staff, our custodians, our leaders in the building, our instructional coaches, our outside consultants, inside consultants, our folks here at the Kelly Building, our curricular folks.

[03:04:28] These are really challenging things, and I think we should all be very proud of this. And I think the external validation for the work, as Ms. Wall points out, number one, you know, we've increased the graduation rate, but we've done this in the other metric that's extremely difficult, and Dr. Sullivan pointed out, we've increased AP scores and AP participation.

[03:04:47] That is not easy to do. We have increased advanced placement level courses that our students are taking. And one should remember on the scholarship dollars, as a whole division, we've nearly tripled the scholarship dollars one over the last four years, three years, and I think that is, all of those things are external validators of the success, the work the strategic plan has put us on.

[03:05:11] And the last thing is, you know, the outside validators, whether it's Niche who says we were 26 best school division in 2018 to now the 14th best in the Commonwealth, we're nearly in the top 10% of all school divisions in the Commonwealth. Now I don't live and die by these things, but these are data points that address the success of our state of schools that are not just by what internal folks are telling you or what the board is presenting or what the superintendent is presenting, but it's what outside folks are looking at.

[03:05:42] Prince William County Schools is a talk of the work we're doing. Let's go in, I wanna point out the Hazel Health as Mr. Wilk points out, it is a phenomenal program. We have committed to make efforts on safety and security, which you're gonna hear next. We've made efforts on mental health.

[03:05:58] All the most difficult issues that school divisions are burdened with because society continues to fail, we are, I think, doing really remarkably well. And so I want to applaud superintendent, your staff, the entire division, every teacher, every instructional coach, every leader, every custodian, every cafeteria worker, every bus driver in this division.

[03:06:21] This just, these metrics are the most difficult. And I think, you know, if you were to ask any superintendent around the nation, if they'd like to have this number, these numbers and these improvements, they would run to Prince William County.

[03:06:37] - Mr. Chairman, this, well, first is that the conclusion? - Oh yeah, sure, sure, I think I'm done, thank you. - Just as a wrap up, one, I really want to thank my team. I think you all are absolutely incredible. I wanna thank you for all of your hard work in supporting schools.

[03:06:54] More importantly, I do wanna close this segment really just sharing my personal appreciation and appreciation on behalf of the entire school division to our school leaders who are working incredibly hard under immense pressure, our teachers and support personnel within our schools who are showing up every single day giving their absolute best and bringing their full heart to this work for our kids and all of the tremendous work that they're doing is making a difference.

[03:07:27] I think that today what you saw is the best of what's been happening in Prince William County, as well as the areas that are most concerning and most challenging for us. We brought that all to you today. And so, you know, I do wanna acknowledge the fact that, one, all schools, and we heard the parent earlier today who was talking about VLA, which I really appreciated her comments in that no one student or one school community starts in the same place.

[03:07:59] They're all different, they're all unique, they all start in different places. And so we have to celebrate both proficiency in meeting proficiency, and we also have to celebrate growth because students in schools do not begin and end at the same place.

[03:08:17] And there's so many of our schools that have not yet met our goal, threshold goal of 85% in our strategic plan, but they are doubling down on growth and showing tremendous progress at a time where, that you'll recall in 2021, I've shared with the board, all of the research coming out of the pandemic on how many years it would take for students to recover from the damage that was done.

[03:08:42] And in many instances, it was five to six years. So we're still within that window of time, but I am proud of the work that our teachers are doing in the classroom and the support that our kids are getting. And I'm proud of our leaders in this school system because we're seeing schools who, again, may not be at the 85% or the 80%, but the amount of growth that students are making is double what the expected growth is year over year.

[03:09:12] One that comes to mind is Featherstone, which is a Title I school, and looking at their growth, I mean, it is a school to actually watch and study. So just thank you to all of our school communities for their hard work to our students and our families as we continue to improve in Prince William County and prioritize learning for every single student and meeting the needs of every single student.

[03:09:37] I'm excited about the future of this school system, the work that we're doing, and the opportunities that exist for us to continue to grow. - Thank you, Dr. McDade. So that will wrap up the state of the schools. Truly appreciate, and as we get ready for the safety and security update, I also wanna emphasize what Dr. McDade just said on, I also, and I forgot to thank our families, our parents and their commitment and their support for their children and their engagement has dramatically improved over the last few years with all the different work we're trying to do and the work they're trying to do and the attention given to all of this post pandemic.

[03:10:15] So I really appreciate that. Mr. Bach, you got 10 minutes, 12 minutes to get through your slides and then you'll have questions. So let's not dilly dally on each slide. You teased us up, or teed us up nicely. You know, I did have some prepared comments tonight.

[03:10:30] I'm gonna deviate for those for a second, in part because I can't find my bifocals. But it's a good thing because I really think, Dr. Lateef, you were alluding to best in class. And so I just wanna share with the board kind of an example that highlights this morning that we are best in class.

[03:10:48] And this is becoming a common occurrence for us. we had a district travel several hundred miles to visit us and Ron and I joined them at about 6:30 this morning at Gainesville and it was a delegation from one of the larger districts in the nation, a top 15 district in size came to visit and they wanted to discuss and see some of our layered safety and security measures in the district.

[03:11:13] This is becoming a pretty common occurrence for us. Word is out about Prince William and I do think we're a best in class and leading district with the layered approach that we've put in place. I can't be more proud of the work that Ron and his team have done in the past two years.

[03:11:30] And I reflect on just the amount of initiatives that have been put in place to keep students and staff at the forefront of safety. And it is our top priority and we take it seriously. We've got a great team that's focused on that.

[03:11:48] I will tell you that, you know, when you hopefully you'll and I'm trying to get everybody charged up at 1015 about safety and security. I know it's hard to do that at 1015, but I'm charged up. We're charged up about it. And it really is a testament to the school board support and Dr. McDade's forward thinking.

[03:12:06] And you all being very vocal about this vision of pursuing state of the art technology, being at the forefront of the resources that are out there keeping our students and staff safe. one thing I want to add you know it's unfortunate we that we see school safety issues and violence occurring in schools across the country but when those things happen Ron and the team circle up immediately and we have a great partnership with an organization that goes into a school within a 24 hour to 48 hour period of an act of violence occurring in a school and they complete an after-action review we circle up almost immediately when we get that

[03:12:43] after-action review and we're looking at what what what are the key takeaways from that incident that occurred at that school and what lessons can we learn and what can we implement immediately to enhance even further our layers of safety and security one final thought I'm gonna turn it over Ron it really is you know we can't guarantee anybody's safety in our schools but what we can do is implement a layered approach and layer those things upon top of each other to really, if you think about that block of Swiss cheese, the more layers you have in there, the less holes you have in the cheese, right? So that's kind of how we view safety and security

[03:13:18] of putting all these layers on top of each other to really minimize risk as much as possible. So thank you all for your support. And with that, I'm going to turn it over to Ron. Thanks, Vern, for the introduction. I'll be presenting the cheese this evening. So we'll go from there. So our goals fall under strategic initiative, commitment number two, which is positive climate culture and our overarching goal is for 90% of our secondary students to report their feeling safe at school in the climate

[03:13:56] survey in April we started off this process is about 79% we've increased it last year to 84.5 for our secondary schools and really we took a nice jump last year in high schools from 81 to 87% and middle schools in 72 to 76% I think a good portion of that was what the implementation of our weapons detection system at those schools and just for reference our happy elementary school kids are typically floating around 88 89 percent on a regular basis just for context there I think with the implementation of our new cell phone

[03:14:36] policy I think that's also going to have a positive effect on those numbers at the end of the year we are supported by our safe school advisory council and That's a lot of text, so I'm gonna break it down a little bit. It's a stakeholder group that we put together, consisting of our parents, our school board members, Ms. Wall and Mr. Wilk, our public safety partners, as well as our central office staff.

[03:15:01] And our goal is to review our policies and procedures, look at our initiatives, and make recommendations on how we improve school safety and security. There's more of that.

[03:15:17] Okay, let's review some of our physical security measures we've put in place. We have completed our secure vestibule project. I'll have to give the school division a lot of credit. We started this in 2007 and '08 with the goal of completing all of our schools, and we really stuck to that.

[03:15:34] And this year we opened with all of our schools having secure vestibules. There are some school divisions that are just starting that project now, and I'm glad to say that we have completed that.

We've completed our KnoxBox installations, which are access to master keys and small safes on the outside of the buildings for our public safety officials.

[03:15:54] Should they come up on our schools and need to get in, that provides them with access to master keys to our building. We've also provided lockdown shades to all of our schools for a lockdown and crisis. And we've also installed over $7 million in equipment in about a 20-month period.

[03:16:15] So Mary Hirsig in our office ran hurt on that, and I give her a tremendous amount of credit for all the work done, working with all the schools, our vendors, and also providing training and technical support for all of our schools. So that was quite a lift.

[03:16:30] Over the last two years and moving into next year, we'll be completing an upgrade of our 800 megahertz radio systems. That was required for a couple reasons. Infrastructure updates at the county level, whose system we ride, and also Motorola phasing out technical support of our radios that we had, which are about 12 years old.

[03:16:52] So what does that look like? It's all the handheld radios at our schools. It's all the radios on our buses that our security patrol staff use. And we'll finish that up next year with about 240 buses left to do. So we'll get that completed and we'll be good to go there for hopefully another 10 years or so.

[03:17:13] I wanna give a shout out to Ali Karem and the facilities department and their locksmiths. They are moving at high speed. They completed 50 schools with access control upgrades. Those are also with FERCADA, so that gives us a management tool under one umbrella to manage those with and also seven central offices.

[03:17:36] That is a web-based system, so that also gives us central office control and control of our lock systems our security operations center we completed residences at unity braxton and rip on middle school both of those were older older systems where we had trailers in place that were removed during renovations and we're able to replace that with modern architecture and and buildings there for our security residents so let's talk about our security operations center a little bit that was able to open this year the week before school started thanks to our facilities department

[03:18:16] on a major eight month renovation over at that uh building over on the independent hill complex we are fortunate to live in an area where we can hire highly qualified people for these positions dave brown retired as the executive director of the tsa's freedom center which is their main operations center for the tsa to come and run our operations center he was able to hire five additional staff they have over 150 years of experience between them and managing law enforcement crisis incidents as well as security operation centers we are currently operating Monday through Friday between 6 a.m. and 6 p.m. and I

[03:18:54] want to focus on the fact that these are incident managers they are not call takers when when schools call in with an incident that occurs they are developing a course of action working collaboratively with school administration communicating with all of our stakeholders centrally and developing operational support to those schools, which means security, any of our facilities operations, as well as communications or support services to those schools.

[03:19:24] So how does that support our principals? They're able to make one call into the Security Operations Center and then refocus their efforts on what's happening to them in front of them at the schools while we manage all the back end and make sure supports are on the way to the schools.

[03:19:40] We have received a lot of positive feedback from our school administrators on the ability to do that and provide that support to them. So we can look at a couple numbers. Events managed through the end of September, 194 events managed, lots of alerts sent out, a lot of calls received, providing information to schools.

[03:20:06] And the top three events by frequency are medical emergencies, 911 calls, fire response at schools, school threats, typically social media, and after that police activity in the area of schools where we can manage getting those schools in secure postures until that event has ceased and we can put them back to regular operations.

[03:20:33] So two years ago, we implemented what we called security basics. This is starting our third year. There's about 17 to 25 things that we focus on every time one of our staff walks on the school property and that's our security posture at the school we want to make sure those things are in place every single time every single day we generate a tremendous amount of data on that from our we've got 17 to 20 people from my staff on the road every day supporting school security posture and we measure what we find moving into our third year for the first month of school we've actually improved upon where we ended out last year by a couple percentage

[03:21:13] points the schools are really doing a great job their administrators and school security staff are focused on our security posture and they're hitting 98 99 percent now on focus on those issues and just to give you an idea about improvement I'll talk about one issue which is probably our most important issue was making sure our schools are buttoned up and all of our doors are locked so when we started this a couple years ago about 12% of the time we'd find one or more doors that were unsecured at our schools I can tell you last month we made 411 rounds of schools we found less than we found one door

[03:21:50] open less than 2% of the time and if you factor in mechanical issues at doors we found that needed to be repaired that that averages less than 1% of the time we're finding unsecured door that's a another really focused effort at our schools to make sure we're buttoned up and secure all right let's talk about our weapons detection system a little bit implemented last year we had full implementation by the mid end of October and so let's look at our discipline codes we had one focus and one focus was to get the firearms out of our schools

[03:22:28] over the previous two years before that we had eight loaded weapons that were removed from our schools that's just not good enough any goal that's not zero is not an effective goal we made it through last year with zero firearms and our schools reported and for other weapons reported in schools whether to be you know knives tasers brass knuckles whatever pneumatic weapons our discipline codes for last year during that same time frame we're down 72% a really

[03:23:02] amazing effect on that for this year still zero firearms reported to date We've had six other weapons reported, three knives, two box cutters, and a pneumatic gun found in a vehicle in a parking lot.

[03:23:20] So that would be paintball guns, airsoft guns, things like that. We are clearing at a 92% rate, so 92% of the kids that walk through are Evolve. No problem. They move on. No search.

[03:23:35] It's conducted. average national rates are in the mid 80s at best and the schools are really doing a good job focusing on getting kids in school on time for this year we implemented Evolve at our home football games we've had no disruptions we've had people going through with no problems we had a couple connect connectivity and maintenance issues that we cleared up and our schools central office staff

does do go out every year and provide evaluations of our football security processes at the schools and they're doing a great job with that. We'll follow up with the basketball varsity basketball season coming up and we'll be

[03:24:13] running Evolve at those basketball games this year also. We do have the ability if we have intelligence or other reasons to believe to run Evolve at other events as needed. Oh so let's talk about some of our programs and training we put in place. So we implemented the Say Something tip line in 2021 through the Sandy Hook Promise Foundation that's provided a school division at no cost. We hit about a thousand tips a year. The most of those are of the mental health

[03:24:48] variety or the threats against schools or students or self-harm. We are able to provide 24/7 365 support for any life safety issues that occur. One of our focuses this year through Say Something are Save Clubs. Those are students against violence everywhere and Jake Edwards and his team is going to focus on working with schools to make sure their clubs are effective at communicating what our tip line process are and what are those things that you look for in their fellow students that might indicate they

[03:25:25] may be subject to violence so that's what the save clubs are there for that's a focus for us this year. BARC was implemented in 2023. BARC overlays our Prince William County Schools email system and does keyword searches. It provides a 24-7 call center also that looks at those and advises us of incidents that are critical in nature and we also provide a 24-7, 365 response to those incidents to support schools last year we implemented a contracted security

[03:26:03] officers at schools that helps out when schools have vacancies we do provide support and that we make sure their school security officer certified prior to them stepping a foot in any of our schools and they're there to really to provide physical security checking doors making sure our inside and outside of our schools are buttoned up while schools are hiring additional staff to come in for vacancy. So that's been a huge help at our schools. I'm excited to say that we kicked off our aspiring leaders school security officer cohort this Monday during our in-service. We have 23 school security officers that are

[03:26:39] in that so we've hired over doubled our number of school security officers over the last two years and we're looking to provide leadership training to them so they can move up and aspire to a higher level and and have them be prepared for that. So that's a year-long cohort and maybe when we graduate we'll bring them back to the school board in May and run them through here and see what we can do there. We are running a vape detector pilot that's going to kick off. We're getting those things in place at seven schools. Three middle schools, three high schools, our non-traditional school. Numbers of those schools already had some

[03:27:18] processes in place but what we're looking to do is implement common strategies across all those schools so we can really look at the data and see if it supports schools moving forward at division-wide. And I'll be honest with you, you know, my main effect of this and when we were looking at this is kids don't want to go in bathrooms because of what's going on in there. And we're looking to improve that. So, you know, we need to get people out of there so people can use those for what they're needed for, right? And feel good about being able to go there and do that. So that's really what we're trying to affect. Reunification software

[03:27:57] or Synergy, we're working with our IT and communications department. We have a central office trained team to go out and assist any schools in reunification. There's a software package that we

actually currently have that we're spinning up to make that a little easier and make that an IT-based process so we can account for all of our kids during reunification.

[03:28:19] On Monday, we were out running a functional exercise to run through those processes at Colgan High School with our central office team. So we continue the training on that particular program. So another one of our goals for this year to complete the cycle is to have 100% of our schools receive crisis management training.

[03:28:45] Jake Edwards and his group are all hired and trained up. And already as of today, they've already been out in over almost half our schools. So they're gonna make that goal without any problem, make some return visits to lots of schools. His team is also doing 18 other trainings, whether that's an in-service central office trainings.

[03:29:05] They go out and work with students during lunch breaks. So that's a great opportunity for us to work with students. And they're also responsible for training and certification of our 200 SSOs that are in the school division. So that is a lot of training.

[03:29:22] We provide six in-person trainings annually, over 30 hours of training to our school security staff, and our new hires get three days of training and a four-day mentor training program before they go into their school so they're aware of what's going on. So if you're a first-year school security officer in Prince William County schools, you're going to get 80 hours of training in your first year and 30 hours following up every other year.

[03:29:45] I know that's the best in the state, and I'm not so sure it's not the best in the country, So we have a really robust training program for our security staff, and Jake and his team really, really manage that at a high level. Okay, that's all I have for you this evening.

[03:30:02] I want to add, if you can't be fired up about that, something's wrong. I mean, we really have put a lot of layers in place, and I do. I just want to say, just out of the gate, too, obviously there are security measures that we put in place that we keep close to the vest that we don't share for the overall community.

[03:30:20] but these are the layers that we do feel comfortable sharing and putting in front of our community, and there's a lot. So I want to thank Ron and his team. They're always very forward-thinking. And, Dr. Lateef, you stepped out when I was mentioning this, but it's really – You thanked me? I did. And I thank Dr. McDade because, really, you guys have given us the resources and the charge to stay best in class here and look at the latest and greatest technology that's out there and leverage that in our school division to keep people safe.

[03:30:48] So thank you. - No, listen, we appreciate it. I think this board is generally in, we're very grateful for the leadership for you all. You know, when the board makes, you know, you guys have, when we went on toward Loudoun County's command center, you guys have had an open mind about all the different things that we should maybe consider or not consider and really been very good about it.

[03:31:12] You know, when we talked about vape detectors three, four years ago, I remember it was like, those things were put and they would go off like nonstop and they became something that everyone ignored. Loudon did it, you know, I think they may have evolved, maybe it's better, but I appreciate the fact that you're continuing to look at all these different things, you're continuing to look at the evolution of the different technologies.

[03:31:33] We really appreciate it and I think what's also very important, and the public should remember what Vern just said, Mr. Bach just said about, there are many things we don't tell the public that are very important for the security, obviously, that the board is regularly briefed on, division councils briefed on, and that the school division does employ.

[03:31:52] That's very important. So we have multiple layers of security. Some you see, some you don't, some you know about, some you don't. And I think it's very important for the public to realize that we take this very seriously. I know you all don't sleep and this is very serious stuff. And we do appreciate, the board is very grateful.

[03:32:09] This has been a, it is so important that it is a standing item in our closed session. It is, you know, it wasn't like that a few years ago, but it is a standing item that this board takes very seriously from a closed session standpoint, from an open session. We appreciate this.

[03:32:26] I just, one quick note, question, then I'll let the others jump in. But I heard BARC alerts are up since we stopped phones usage. Is that true? - I'd have to look at the data on that to see where that's at, so I can't comment on that. I don't have those numbers. - Okay, okay, very good.

[03:32:41] We'll start, let me start with Ms. Williams. She had her hand up. - Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am always excited about security 'cause I'm little and I can't run, so it's really important to me. I wanna also piggyback the chairman's comments.

[03:32:58] The amount of security and attention to detail that has been done in the past several years, but most recently is phenomenal. It's a tremendous amount of work at every level from in the building to the Kelly Leadership Center, and I just want to applaud you for having a full view on security and not piecemealing it because it's very important.

[03:33:20] And Mr. Crow, I think what you acknowledged about the bathrooms is what most of us feel about bathrooms in schools and we hear often. And I just want to thank you for stating that 'cause a lot of times we hear about security things but the public doesn't hear it from us that we've received the message and we're acknowledging it.

[03:33:39] So thank you very much for that. One of the things I did not see in this presentation, which annually I ask, but at a different time is how are we with our MRU and our relationship with the county police? I don't need a thousand updates because it's late, but it's just not on there. So if you could just speak to that for a second, and then I have one more question.

[03:33:58] Sure. We've always had a fantastic relationship with our police department. That dates back to the 70s, so that's been around forever. There's people who built that a long time ago, and that's continued to go on up until these days. We just got two more SROs in our unit, so that's really a positive part for us.

[03:34:16] So, you know, less SRO sharing at the middle school level, and we expect we're going to get two more come January. So that's the best staffing level we've had in seven, eight years. So, you know, I know the police department is always struggling, you know, with staffing, and they're getting staffed up.

[03:34:33] And they know the schools are important, so they're pushing those our way. So that's great. And I want to add, too, with that, Chief Newsham is a great supporter of ours. We have Kim Mercer, who's a liaison lieutenant with Prince William County PD, that actually sits in Ron's office and is a liaison for us between our office and PD.

[03:34:54] So she's a great resource, and Chief Newsham has offered that support to us, and it's been great. That's what I was going to say. Chief Newsham and the entire force, they have been so responsive to Prince William County Schools every time we call for anything.

[03:35:10] They are there quickly and so I can't say enough how much we appreciate their support. - Thank you for that. I mean, I know, but I wanted to make sure that we acknowledge the reciprocal relationship that we have with them because it is very important. And I also had a chance to meet one of our new SROs who's at Woodbridge Middle.

[03:35:28] And so I know that that is a fantastic program that continues to grow. And we have much more diverse officers all across the county, which also makes a difference. And just on that note, the amount of diversity that we have with our school security officers, you spoke to how integral they are to being on site during the day.

[03:35:49] But I also wanna mention that they develop relationship with students and they're an integral part of the mental health of our schools as well. I know from my experience, 'cause I can't talk enough about my schools, Featherstone, the security officer there was integral to just acclimating my son back into the pandemic.

[03:36:06] They happened to bond over anime, and it was just not just he's there to protect the building, but this is a bond and a personal relationship that made my child feel more comfortable and less anxious to be in a building who wasn't worried about outside threats, but just internal.

[03:36:21] So I just wanna speak to the multiple layers of service that they offer that's similar to our SROs, but it's a little bit more personable and much appreciated too. It makes an elementary level security less scary, and it helps develop those relationships for good communication in the future.

[03:36:38] So I think that's important. And the last thing I wanna say is, I'm a big fan of Mr. Edwards' videos that he plays in school for students that makes security not scary, and they're able to have a little bit of fun and learn at the same time. So my request is, could he make one for parents to tell parents how we should react, or guardians, or people, adults, If an emergency does occur at our school, because I know as a parent, there's my mom bear response, would be charge up there, go right now, get my kid.

[03:37:09] But it might not always be an appropriate thing to do, which is hard to rationalize. But I would love to see something like that, not that it's my ability to make that charge, but I know his videos are fantastic 'cause I have a sixth grader who's still talking about him. So might be food for thought, like a Title I camp or something like that, because I think as a board member, that's also the question that we get when there's an emergency, I wanna do this, how come I can't?

[03:37:34] Why does the school respond like this? What's the difference between the police response and the school response? And I know that there's a lot of groups out there supporting our mission, but I think that's the missing link that we have not really talked to other than this is what we do as a division. So thank you very much for all you do.

[03:37:53] - Great, Mr. Denning. - I just wanted to say thank you for that presentation. It was short, sweet and to the point, which I like. excited about the vape detectors I would love them everywhere and that's just my opinion you know bell-to-bell take the phones vape detectors everywhere let's do it no secret what I'm in for in favor of I really enjoyed hearing about the aspiring leaders school security if I can ever be invited to see something I would love that the SSO training you're talking about us being the best in the

[03:38:32] commonwealth oh i think there's no doubt about that yes yeah or the united states that's great i'll take it um the less sharing of the middle school sros too that's great i've i've noticed the presence um i've also appreciate when there's security concerns and things like that that you guys address them so quickly um lately i just think there's such an improvement um you know being on the other side and then on this side now you can see the evolve mint of it no pun okay

[03:39:07] it's late but anyways um i just wanted to say thank you for that and um i appreciate all that you guys do and i want to add one additional comment you know we didn't put that discipline codes up but there are a lot of discipline codes that are down vaping overall is actually down significantly because we think the the evolved system and they're you know there have been some students who have come through and it has detected so word travels pretty fast so vaping has is

[03:39:35] significantly down as well now it's outstanding general miss wall all right uh thank you for the presentation i sit on the safe schools committee so i know a lot of this already but um i i think it's really important for the public to know and so i really appreciate that we have a presentation that can be shared out with the community and that they can they could watch this presentation if they want to and and learn more about it great job on the secured doors that's awesome um and

[03:40:12] wow down weapons down 72 that's a pretty good roi on those evolved scanners i know there was some concern in the community about whether that was going to be a good investment it seems like we are gathering some data to show that it is so i appreciate that and i do actually like the 92 clearance rate on getting through the scanners that was also a concern with the the community like it's not going to work and it's going to take forever to get through but I think you know we're working through those and it's helping our students feel safe and I think those the data showing that that was a pretty big jump for high school students saying they felt safer and I've heard

[03:40:51] anecdotally students tell me that that they are like it's kind of a hassle but I appreciate it it makes me feel more safe so I think that's great I agree with the vape detectors in the bathrooms. I have heard for a number of years that kids feel uncomfortable going into the bathrooms 'cause they know kids are in there vaping, they're doing things that they know are illegal and shouldn't be done on school campuses.

[03:41:14] And the irony of saying like, we're a drug-free zone, and then they walk in and there's obviously some stuff going on. So I'm glad that Evolve is helping with that. And I also am glad that we're piloting vape detectors in schools.

[03:41:31] I know it's not a complete, like, what is the word I'm looking for, solution, 100% solution, you know, for the problem. There are many reasons why kids might be doing this in school. One is the addictive nature of the drugs that are out there nowadays.

[03:41:48] But I would be interested at a later time knowing a little bit more about how that pilot is going and what we've learned from it. I hope it's enough of a pilot that we have different methods that we're testing or different devices or something so that we can get some some data from that if we're looking at kind of rolling that out i know some of the our schools have had them for a while and have did that on their own initiative um and so i'm i think that's that's helpful it just lets kids know that we we're looking um so i appreciate that and i had one question about the contracted school security officers are those does the

[03:42:22] contract the company that we contract the officers from do the vetting or do we do the vetting for those officers and then do or do we both vet those folks and and if you could speak a little bit more to that thank you yeah so uh the company we use does do the vetting for those they are required to do certain things contractually to make sure that they can come and work in our schools and then after that point then we take them on and we do the school security officer training certification with them prior to them going to our schools and then teach them about the various things that are part of our school program that we want them to accomplish

[03:42:59] they are solely focused on physical security okay so they're not necessarily working with our kids but they are making sure our schools are buttoned up that we'll walk around inside that all of our doors are closed during instruction that they're outside being visible when kids are outside during arrivals and departures and that's the focus of what they're there for okay thanks very much anyway great job thanks for the presentation and I think it's very valuable information for the public outstanding just at one point we talked Ron about putting cameras in front of the bathrooms like just to see

[03:43:37] who's going in and out of them as as one of the deterrents to that we know who's going in and out at a time maybe something bad goes down I mean is have we did we do that are we doing it and we thought yeah we did when we were put in all these new cameras and make sure they're around the bathrooms the we're We're doing our pilot with Vercada vape detectors that integrates with the camera system.

[03:44:03] So when it pops on that, pops, pulls the camera together, and you can look on your phone and go, oh, there's who's coming out of our bathroom, and when they alerted, we can deal with that situation. Great. All right. Mr. Jesse. Just one quick. I listened to a lot of mystery books and so forth.

[03:44:24] The one thing the other day I heard was not only a lot of people doing something wrong know that the camera is up, and if you put a camera where you can get it from a lower level, you can oftentimes prevent the people with hoodies and stuff not being identified, and I think you're doing a great job.

[03:44:49] Okay. Thank you, guys. This was excellent. Appreciate the presentation, and I assume this will be up on the website for anyone to look at in board docs if anybody, if the public wants to take a look at the presentation on security. Thank you. We're moving on to a revision of policy 1901, standing committees advisory boards.

[03:45:07] This is on for just information this week. This is something that the board will be addressing in two weeks and if anybody in the public or any of the board members have any questions, concerns, staff will be available to answer this over the next couple of weeks and we'll bring this back for a final vote.

[03:45:27] And this basically is just essentially how we operate the different advisory task force and committees for the school board and looking at how those are run to help improve their efforts. - I'm happy to address it, Mr. Chair, just briefly.

[03:45:43] - Yeah, if the division council, Mr. Wade Anderson, is here to answer any questions or concerns, if anyone has. - Essentially, the policy revisions will bring some uniformity to how all the board's advisory committees operate, standardizing bylaws and making sure that there's FOIA compliance with the meeting requirements of Voya.

[03:46:02] And also clarifying one issue is the terms of appointees. So that clarifying the board member appointees will serve and their terms will be up even if they haven't served their full year will be up if

they're appointing board member does not return to the board and that the new board member will be appointing the members.

[03:46:25] So any questions? - Okay, seeing there's no questions, we will move on to board matters. And last week we started with Mr. Wilk, this week we'll start with Mr. Blake.

[03:46:40] - Thank you, Mr. Chair. Good evening, everyone. I just want to talk about some of my recent activities these past couple of weeks. And I actually got to visit the SOC where David Brown and Mr. Bach provided an insightful tour.

[03:47:00] And I got to meet the dedicated team was working quietly inside that sock to ensure our safety and it's just uh you know it's a it's really uh an amazing thing to see and it really as a parent and as a school board member it made me gave me a real level of uh comfort and you know just safe feeling safe like i know my kids are safe and i know your kids are safe so that was a great a great experience and uh then i i was able to attend the eighth annual suicide awareness walk at forest park high school where i was joined by

[03:47:36] my fellow board members mr wilk and mrs zagapoor and dr mcday was there as well where we got to hear some powerful testimonies from both our peers and the students that were deeply moving and underscored the importance of mental health awareness in our community and then i was also honored to I attended an IB celebration at Beville Middle School. I would thank you to Dr. Thomas for the invitation. It was inspiring to see the characteristics of the IB students knowledgeable

[03:48:12] and caring being celebrated as well as the word of the week at Beville was established which I thought was a fitting thing. I also I also got to go to the literacy night and book fair at King elementary this event was a wonderful mix of learning with pop with pizza popcorn and breakout sessions there was a great family there was great family engagement and miss poe was really starting her new tenure off on the right foot there at king elementary one session that really stood out

[03:48:46] was the educating the families about the vla and then they had another one another breakout session where they had like a jeopardy game that was really fun i wish i wish i could have did that when I was in school. And then on Tuesday, I had the privilege of hosting Congresswoman Spanberger in the Neyapsco district as we visited Dell City Elementary and we got to learn about the RTR program, teacher residency program, and deepen our understanding on the residencies and apprenticeships within the future teachers and school leader workforce.

[03:49:25] And it just emphasized that this was a sustainable solution to teacher retention and not a temporary fix. So this just highlighted the importance of recruiting, preparing and retaining extraordinary teachers.

[03:49:41] And I think this is a great opportunity and a great program. And I'm glad that our county is, I guess, you know, participating or really not participating, we're leading the way in this. So thank you and have a good evening everyone.

[03:50:02] - Thank you, Mr. Blake, Ms. Wood. - Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just want to, again, reiterate how thankful I am and appreciative of all the staff at all levels, especially my district 'cause I'm biased, of course, but not just my district, all the way around.

[03:50:20] My students, the students that live in my district don't necessarily just go to my schools. And, you know, it's just worth the time and effort to just again say thank you and to express gratitude for all the hard work that gets done because it really is a collaborative team effort.

[03:50:36] And the more collaboration that we are doing as a division, it really shows in all areas and all levels. And then I'm not gonna take my full time, but I just want to say thank you to all the parents and staff who spent a very long day, if you were not prepared for it, at Robotics VEX Funday that was at Potomac Middle School.

[03:51:02] This was my first time as a board member and as a parent coach. The parent coach part was a lot harder than the board member show up and be excited. It ran out of steam before 12 o'clock. And who'd have thunk? But I bring this up because there's a robotics VEX day at Forbes Park on October 26th.

[03:51:23] But I mentioned this because a lot of individuals think that robotics is a club. Robotics is not a club. Robotics is a sport. And our robotics coaches in the schools, my commitment to them is to advocate for a greater stipend.

[03:51:39] It is all year long. And in my case, just as the parent who shows up, I'm showing up twice a week for two hours plus however many VEX events, which are all day events. And I really think that it's important that we take time to pay them with their worth, if possible, with our budget provided, because they are providing our students the number one in demand soft skills that will get them employed, period, hands down.

[03:52:05] And it's teaching them how to fail and fail gracefully and learn. And failing is part of learning. So I'm gonna keep to my commitment of not using all two minutes. Really close, but not there. So thank you and have a good evening and robotics. - Ms. Wall.

[03:52:21] - All right, thank you. So I wanna start out by congratulating a student named Kyra Tiller, a 2024 Badfield High School graduate as a girl leading change. She was honored last week at the White House for her work as a disability rights activist.

[03:52:38] And she was one of only 10 students to be honored in that fashion. She's a freshman at the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill and a 2024 graduate of Battlefield High School in Haymarket. So as a student with epilepsy, she began advocating for legislation to ensure students with disabilities are fully accommodated and protected during emergency situations at school.

[03:52:59] And in time, she went on to found and became the executive director of a national student-led disability rights organization called Disabled Disruptors to help students across the country take action and lead their own change. So I thought that was a really neat thing and I wanted to highlight her efforts and congratulations to her.

[03:53:18] And it's really great to hear of our graduates and their accomplishments when they leave PWCS and the great things that they do. This week I've been to a lot of, or this last two weeks I've been to a lot of events but I wanted to highlight a PTO event I went to at Tyler And Reagan had an eighth grade info night where they highlighted specialty programs, kind of a time for parents to ask questions about Battlefield and Gainesville.

[03:53:41] And they also had somebody come out from TJ and talk to the kids about what is, let them ask questions and talk to them about the application process and get a head start on that. So that was really

great. I wanna take a minute to thank parents who serve on PTOs and the Parent Advisory Councils, Principals Advisory Councils.

[03:54:00] I'm not sure what we're calling them now, actually. Maybe we're calling them both, but I really wanna take time to thank parents who put a lot of time and effort into serving at their schools. Their talents are very much appreciated and very much a part of the school climate and culture.

[03:54:19] And they provide such a valuable service for our teachers and our staff and our students and for the community in general. I've seen, I've been to a lot of events where the PTOs are sponsoring the event and it creates a very community atmosphere and brings everybody in.

[03:54:35] So I just wanted to highlight all of the great people that we have who serve in those capacities. I really appreciated the security update tonight. There are a lot of important things that we're working on. And I know in addition to security, we are either working on or will be working on things like grading and retake policies, cell phone usage in schools that's coming up, college career counseling support.

[03:54:58] I hope we can continue to improve on getting transcripts ready to go within weeks of a student completing their school year so that rising seniors can take opportunities to apply, get a jump on admissions and apply, especially to colleges where they have rolling admissions.

[03:55:13] I am, wow, I'm fast running out of time. So I will not say the other things that I was gonna say. And I just wish you all a great evening. Enjoy the beautiful fall weather and everybody keep up the great work. - Mr. Jess. - Yeah, I haven't been to a lot of events this period, but one thing I wanna say for back to school nights, I think it would be useful for the school, back to school nights are not really conducive to meeting folks as far as the school board members are concerned.

[03:55:49] So I found that the video that Dr. McDade did and Dr. Lateef was good because they were always shown. What I would recommend is consider for each district, school board member also be part of that video when they do that on a positive note i just wanted to highlight something uh and tell you a little bit of why i'm so passionate on this subject you know my wife took over a title one school uh and it was a low performing school and when she

[03:56:24] got a word that in the newspaper it said her school was one of the lowest math scores in the county the game was on and after that she turned that school into a high performing school i think on all four tests most of her scores were in the 90s so you can't tell me a title one school can't perform they can one of the things i want to say is just because the kids are in a title one school doesn't mean that they can't achieve good scores of the 21 schools that

[03:57:03] I talked about I just like to say there were eight schools from Brentsville that were in had 80 or above in the scores there were three schools from Gainesville one school from Coles Neabsco you had one school and it was a title one school that was in the 80s and above and Occoquan had three schools and Potomac, Covington, Harper.

[03:57:30] You talk about the fact that you're overcrowded and so forth, but that school also was in the '80s. And then one school from Woodbridge, another Title I school, Featherstone, was one of the schools.

[03:57:47] So it can be done, and I think, again, it's something that I think we need to focus on. So thank you. - Ms. Trudin. - Thank you. - Thank you to the parents who spoke tonight regarding the VLA and dyslexia.

[03:58:04] I appreciate you bringing awareness to both of those things. I also appreciate that you stayed for the longest meeting ever. Also, okay, well, that I've had maybe. I also am thankful to my appointee who spoke regarding safe schools.

[03:58:21] Once again, I'm truly thankful to my appointees for your involvement and your activism and the fact that you pay attention and that you attend all your meetings. appreciate it. I wanted to also talk about farm field days. The first time I've ever experienced it I went to the fairgrounds. Innovation Elementary School was one of my schools that was there and I got to walk around and see the kids learning about farm animals and soil and water and Virginia Studies because they take that SOL. It was fourth grade. It was really cool to see the

[03:58:57] kids and how excited they were but my favorite part was running into unity read teachers and students there the students were there volunteering out of the kindness of their heart I asked you know what do you get for this of course they got lunch they did say they got lunch which they were really excited about but I just wanted to shout out my unity read kiddos especially the ones that I've seen in multiple clubs I see you guys doing big things and trying to be in different places so kudos to you kiddos all county middle school choir is this Saturday and one of my favorite kids is going to be performing so I'm

[03:59:33] very excited to go to that for the first time football in the Brentsville district is no joke Patriot and Gainesville are making huge huge huge strides they I can't open social media without seeing something about those gentlemen not only are they fine athletes but they are fabulous in the classroom a lot of them can't wait to see what they do at the collegiate level unity read small but mighty still is winning some of their games as well and of course Brentsville is always showing out a little bit as well so I'm very

[04:00:08] excited to go and watch all the fall games please make sure you invite me to the other sports too that I may not be aware of I know I'm headed to volleyball and field hockey, I think. So thank you again, and that's it.

[04:00:28] - Mr. Will. - Thank you. Given I kind of kicked off this night about four hours ago, I'll be short with, quickly, since the last meeting, I did have the pleasure of attending Patti Elementary School. Had a movie night run by their amazing PTCO.

[04:00:45] On the fifth, Forest Park, as Mr. Blake mentioned, had their suicide awareness walk. last year they weren't able to do it in the spring. So they brought it back this fall. So thank you, Dr. McDade for continuing to come and support the event and Lisa and Tracy for also being there as well.

[04:01:04] On the seventh, I did go to a Forest Park girls field hockey game. On the 11th, Triangle Elementary School had a movie night as well. Then on the 12th, Ms. Zargarpur and I came to another event together at the county chess tournament that was conducted at Forest Park.

[04:01:20] And then last night I was able to attend the Forest Park fall concert. So thank you, have a good night. - Ms. Zargarpur. - Thank you, Dr. Lateef. Well, as Mr. Wilk and Mr. Blake said, I was at the walk for suicide awareness at Forest Park.

[04:01:38] And just because I did have a family member who struggled with suicidal ideation and some attempts, every year that I go, it's a little bit different.

[04:01:53] Getting some space from that time in our lives is it's it's good to see that that person is doing much better so every time I go I remember the first time I went I just couldn't not cry and now I get to

participate a little bit differently so it's very personal to me and if you are struggling please reach out for for help went to a chess tournament with Mr. Wilk we did our annual fake game where we I don't know who won that one but I still don't know what the pieces are called got to go to Osborne Park string concert it was amazing it was so so good and I also got to see the

[04:02:33] JV volleyball game a little bit while I was there and it was really exciting to watch I always think I could do that and then I know if I got out there I couldn't but they were so much fun to watch I got to go to McCullough Elementary for their, Ms. Wall, I don't know what we call it, principal or parent advisory committee, and their PT, I think it's a PTA there they have, and they were talking about the activities they have planned for the year and the community partnerships.

[04:03:02] So I encourage everybody to join the PAC at your school so that you can hear about what's going on. I got to hear a little bit about some of the the continuous improvement plan that they have in their school, and just listening to the activities they have planned for the kids was really exciting.

[04:03:19] I'm going to log off now because it's late and I know everyone wants to get out of here. - All right, outstanding, great work this evening. A couple of things you want to mention, just since Mr. Denning brought it up by football, the top 20 for a 6A division in the state came out and six Prince William County schools made the top 20 with number two being Battlefield.

[04:03:44] It's pretty darn good. And so congratulations as we get towards playoff time for all our fall sports. We're doing well with field hockey, soccer, cross country. All of our athletes are working hard. Robotics has kicked off for the season.

[04:04:01] Debate has a massive tournament at Colgan this weekend actually. And so very exciting stuff. I want to thank all of our parents and families who participate on our Safe Schools Committee. Jen Donnelly, thank you for being here tonight and for being here in the comments earlier.

[04:04:20] I appreciate our folks who are interested in dyslexia and educating this board on it and for being available for questions and, you know, addressing some of the concerns in the county schools regarding what more we can do for dyslexia.

[04:04:37] I truly appreciate Congresswoman Abigail Spanberger for coming to visit, as Mr. Blake pointed out, on Tuesday to Dale City Elementary School to take a look at our teacher residency program, which by the way, VCU has across the state, but the largest site now will be Prince William County Schools.

[04:04:55] I appreciate Dale City Elementary, Dr. McDade, the entire team and staff working with VCU on research-based practices that really make a difference in not being afraid to try things. I'm very excited about that.

[04:05:11] That same day, I spoke at the Prince William Chamber of Commerce event on affordable housing. I shared the stage with Chief Newsham. And, you know, just to add on safety and security, we have a great partnership. I really enjoy working with him.

[04:05:26] I think the work that the police do in Prince William County and the schools together has been tremendous at keeping our students and families safe. But it was a really good program. And we had a lot of community partners there. I wanna shout out to Sentara Hospital.

[04:05:43] They're working with us to help build community clinics within a couple of schools. We're piloting a number of programs with them. They are committed to really working in the community. They

were there at the affordable housing event and I really appreciate all their efforts and all of our community partners who continue to support our school division, we truly are grateful.

[04:06:04] With that, I'd like to close tonight's meeting and the meeting is adjourned.

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