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

Date Wednesday, December 4, 2024
Place Prince William County School Board, Virginia
Length 2h 57m (video)

- Official meeting video (YouTube): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gXBSZF-23XM>
- 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] - All right, welcome. We are now starting the Prince William County School Board meeting. I'd like to call this meeting Prince William County School Board to order. Notice tonight, pursuant to school board policy 139, school board member participation in meetings by electronic communications, school board member Jennifer Wall will participate in this meeting through electronic means due to a personal matter.

[00:00:21] She is out of state on travel. The clerk will so note in the minutes of the meeting per policy 139. All matters decided by the school board when one or more members of the board are participating remotely must be decided by roll call vote. So we're doing all roll call votes tonight, everyone.

[00:00:38] A motion in order for the approval of the meeting agenda. Ms. Zargarpur. - Mr. Chairman, I move that the Prince William County School Board approve the meeting agenda as recommended. - Do I have a second? - Mr. Chairman. - Ms. Williams. - I second. - Will the clerk please call the roll?

[00:00:55] - Chairman Lateef, how do you vote? - Yes. - Mr. Blake, how do you vote? - Yes. - Mr. Jesse, how do you vote? Mrs. Stradinic, how do you vote? Mrs. Wall, how do you vote? - Yes.

[00:01:10] Mr. Wilk, how do you vote? Mrs. Williams, how do you vote? - Yes. - Vice-Chair Zargarpur, how do you vote? - Yes. - The vote is eight yes, unanimous, motion passed. - All right, moving on to motion to

enter closed session. Ms. Zargarpur.

[00:01:25] - Mr. Chairman, I move that pursuant to Virginia Code section 2.2-3711 and 2.2-3712, the Prince William County School Board enter closed session for the following reasons. One, to discuss with staff the assignment, appointment, promotion, performance, demotion, salaries, disciplining or resignation of specific public officers, appointees, or employees of any public body pursuant to Virginia Code section 2.2-3711A1.

[00:01:51] Two, to discuss and consult with legal counsel regarding the request for religious exemptions pertaining to specific students under Virginia Code section 2.2-3711A. Three, to review disciplinary matters for specific students that would involve the disclosure of information contained in the scholastic record for individual students and to receive legal advice regarding the same as provided by Virginia code section 2.2-3711A, two and eight and four, to discuss with division counsel and staff actual or probable litigation and specific legal matters involving staff and or students and other specific legal matters involving the school division

[00:02:31] that require the provision of legal advice under Virginia code section 2.2-3711A, seven and eight and five to discuss the award of a public contract to employees exclusive representative, which involves the expenditure of public funds and the terms or scope of such contract where discussion in an open session would adversely affect the bargaining position or negotiating strategy of the public body pursuant to Virginia Code section 2.2-3711A29.

[00:02:56] And six, to discuss and receive briefings by staff members related to the security of school facilities, the safety of persons using such facilities, and actions taken to respond to such matters where discussion in an open meeting would jeopardize the security of such facilities pursuant to Virginia Code section 2.2 that's 3711A19.

[00:03:15] - Do I have a second? - Mr. Chairman? - Ms. Williams? - Second. - Any discussion? Please call the roll. - Chairman Lateef? - Yes. - Mr. Blake? Mr. Jesse? Mrs. Trudinick? Mrs. Wall? - Yes.

[00:03:31] - Mr. Wilk? Ms. Williams? - Yes. - Vice Chair Zargarpur? Vote is eight yes unanimous, motion passed. - Okay, at this time the Prince William County School Board will move into closed session,

[00:03:43] return in approximately one hour.

[00:04:46] Prince William County School Board is now returning to open session for closed session. - Motion's in order, 801 on closed session certification. 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 December 4, 2024, be certified by adopting the following resolution.

[00:05:06] Now, therefore, be it resolved that the Prince William County School Board hereby certifies that to the best of each member's knowledge. One, only public business matters lawfully exempted from open meeting requirements were discussed in the closed meeting to which this certification resolution applies. And two, only such public business matters as were identified in the motion convening the closed meeting were heard and discussed or considered by the school board.

[00:05:29] - Do I have a second? - Mr. Chairman. - Ms. Williams seconds motion. Because Ms. Wall is participating electronically tonight, we will do all votes by roll call. I'll ask the clerk to take the roll. - Lateef. - Yes. - Blake. - Yes. - Jessie.

[00:05:46] Chodinik. Wall. - Yes. - Wilk. - Yes. - Williams. - The vote is eight yes, unanimous, motion passed. - Moving on to closed session action items 901, approval of appointments and releases, Ms. Zargarpur. - Mr. Chairman, I move that the Prince William County School Board approve the appointments and releases of specific employees as presented in closed session.

[00:06:07] - Do I have a second? Ms. Williams. - Mr. Chair. - Oh, Mr. Blake. Mr. Blake seconds, please take the roll. - Lateef. - Yes. - Blake. - Yes. - Jesse. - Tradinick. - Yes. - Wall. - Yes.

[00:06:23] - Wilk. - Yes. - Williams. - Yes. - Zargarpur. - Yes. - The vote is eight yes, unanimous, motion passed. - Moving on to 9.02, request for religious exemption, a motion's in order. - Mr. Chairman, I move that the Prince William County School Board approve the request for religious exemption from compulsory school attendance for case number RE24-10.

[00:06:43] - Do I have a second? - Mr. Chair, I second. - Mr. Blake, can I have the clerk please take the roll? - Lateef? - Yes. - Blake? - Yes. - Jesse? - Yes. - Tredinick? - Yes. - Wall? - Yes. - Wilk? - Yes.

[00:06:59] - Williams? - Yes. - Zargarpur? - Yes. Voters eight yes, unanimous, motion passed. - 9.03, parent appeal of SMAPD reassignment of student SR-25054, Ms. Zargarpur. - Mr. Chairman, I move that for the reasons set forth in the Student Management and Alternative Programs Department's letter of November 8th, 2024, the Prince William County School Board approved Student Management and Alternative Program Department's decision to reassign student SR-25-054 to the computer-based instruction program via remote access only based on charges of unlawful acts in the community.

[00:07:33] - Do I have a second? - Mr. Chairman. - Ms. Williams. - Second. - Any discussion? Please have the, can the clerk please take the roll? Ms. Mills. - Lateef. - Yes. - Blake. - Yes. - Jesse. - Yes. - Jodinic.

[00:07:48] - Yes. - Wall. - Yes. - Wilk. - Yes. - Williams. - Yes. - Motion is, I'm sorry, vote is eight yes. Unanimous motion passed. - 904, Parent Appeal of SMAPD Reassignment of Student HS25056. - Mr. Chairman, I move that for the reasons set forth in the Student Management and Alternative Program Department's letter of November 8th, 2024, the Prince William County School Board approved the Student Management and Alternative Programs Department decision to reassign student SR25-056 to independence, non-traditional school based on convictions of unlawful acts in the community and the hearing officer's recommendations and conditions for the student's return to school.

[00:08:26] - Do I have a second? - Mr. Chair, I second. - Mr. Blake. - Any discussion? Seeing no discussion, can you take the roll? - Lateef. - Yes. - Blake. - Yes. - Jesse. - Yes. - Trudinick. - Yes.

[00:08:42] - Wall. - Yes. - Wilk. - Yes. - Williams. - Yes. - Zargarpur. - Yes. - Vote is eight yes, unanimous, motion passed. - Okay, at this time we will stand for the Pledge of Allegiance. I'll ask our student representative, Ms. Rashid, to lead us in the pledge this evening.

[00:09:12] - Thank you. Next up is our Thriving Futures focus, and folks, we have a good one tonight. The Thriving Futures focus is an opportunity to highlight the exemplary work being accomplished in our schools that fulfill our vision that every student will graduate with the knowledge, skills, habits of mind necessary to create a thriving future for themselves and their community.

[00:09:32] We dedicate this time during our meetings to recognizing students, staff members, and schools that have earned an honor award at the state or national level. Tonight, the school board will recognize an

outstanding school's national award and the challenging work they are doing toward fulfilling our collective vision. It is my pleasure to introduce Ms. Lori Williams of the Woodbridge District.

[00:09:50] Ms. Williams. - Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm so excited to see my schools here again. We're just rocking it out. ESEA is the abbreviation for the Federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act, the primary source of federal aid for elementary and secondary education requiring states to establish long-term and interim goals for increasing student achievement in reading and mathematics.

[00:10:16] ESEA provides funds to all of Virginia school divisions for supplemental educational support to eligible schools. The focus of these programs is to raise the achievement level of students at risk of academic failure due to poverty and other factors.

[00:10:31] The Distinguished Schools Program, a project of the National Association of ESEA State Program Administrators, recognizes federally funded schools from each state for their outstanding achievements in education. Each year, only two schools per state are chosen as National ESEA Distinguished Schools, underscoring the prestigious nature of this honor.

[00:10:57] The Woodbridge District is proud to share that the Virginia Department of Education has selected Belmont Elementary School as the 2024 National ESEA Distinguished School. Belmont is recognized for closing achievement gaps between students.

[00:11:20] Belmont, a Title I school with students from 21 countries who speak 22 languages reported an increase in its unadjusted math SOL pass rate from 2023 to 2024. The rates improved by 23% for English language learners, 11% for students with disabilities, 20% for Hispanic students, 17% for black students, 13% for economically disadvantaged students, and 7% for Asian students.

[00:11:53] Additionally, the school's students group scored higher than the state average on reading, science, and math SOLs. Amazing. Belmont Elementary School is represented tonight by Principal Joy Green.

[00:12:09] - Well, thank you very much, Dr. Lateef, Ms. Williams, distinguished members of the Prince William County School Board, Dr. McDade, and Ms. Worley. Thank you for the opportunity to be here tonight. This would not be possible without the amazing team at Belmont, and I'd like to introduce some of our family.

[00:12:30] My amazing administration team, Constance Robinson, assistant principal, Emmanuel Hill, admin intern, our spectacular special education team, Sherry Holden, Jocelyn McFarland, Tina Dickerson, Shahida Akhtar, and Shawana Ahmed, our outstanding librarian, Robin Orlick, Phenomenal general education teachers, Karen Kahn and Jana Morrissey, our terrific Title I math teacher, Caitlin Clark,

[00:13:06] and our fabulous instructional coach, Amy Forbes. Of course, all of our staff members are responsible for this growth in our students. So I brought them along so you could see everybody because we couldn't all fit here.

[00:13:21] So again, just thank you. We are thrilled to be selected a 2024 national distinguished school. This award of course would not be possible without the support of the amazing staff, our outstanding families, the generous community partners who collaborate to meet the needs of all our students. Because of the hard work of our dedicated staff members, over the last two years we have made significant gains in

closing the achievement gaps. We have We've had tremendous success with implementing the seven steps for a language-rich environment,

[00:13:58] and we've also had great success with co-planning and co-teaching. Our collaborative learning teams meet together and make sure that they're planning instruction that's aligned with the rigor and relevance of the standards, and during these meetings we all learn from each other because we all have wonderful perspectives.

[00:14:18] Data-driven instruction is also instrumental in ensuring the success of our students. The teams plan opportunities for responding to the data, including adding spiral reviews, pulling students in small groups, reteaching, and providing targeted interventions.

[00:14:36] We truly believe it takes a village to support a child, and we are inspired that our Belmont family is working together to ensure that all of our students soar. Thank you.

[00:14:54] Thank you. Thank you, Principal Green. Thank you to your staff and the community for helping the students achieve this honor. And I'm just, once again, extremely proud to represent a Title I school. All of my schools really knock it out the box. And again, community is so important and I appreciate all of you for your achievements.

[00:15:11] Thank you. - Thank you, Ms. Williams. And congratulations to our students and school for making an impact and leaving legacies here in Prince William County Public Schools. Before taking a few pictures, Dr. McDade, would like to share a few words, Dr. McDade. - Thank you so much. I'm so excited for you guys, Belmont.

[00:15:27] You are simply amazing. And I had the opportunity to visit your school recently and saw firsthand the level of student engagement and the commitment of the staff at Belmont. You truly are a family, but more importantly, the passion that you have for your students is palpable from the time you walk into the building.

[00:15:44] So this comes as no surprise to me, but I am excited about the fact that the area in which you received this award in closing achievement gaps, as you know, is one of the priorities in Prince William County. So you are officially a school and leaders to learn from in PWCS.

[00:16:00] Thank you for your dedication and for your hard work. You are making and achieving a lasting impact your entire school community. Please extend my congratulations to each and every one of the leaders in that picture that couldn't be here.

[00:16:15] I wanna thank all of you for coming tonight and being here to represent Belmont. And thank you for your continued service to Prince William County students in the Belmont community. Congratulations, job well done. And you continue to not only impress us, but make the entire school division shine.

[00:16:35] - Thank you, Dr. McDade. So we'd like to invite you up and take a picture with the board,

[00:16:39] and we can do that right now.

[00:19:35] Okay, thank you, everyone. At this time, we will now move to the adoption of the consent agenda. Ms. Zargapur. - Chairman, I move that the Prince William County School Board approve the public meeting consent agenda as recommended. - Do I have a second? - Chairman? - Ms. Williams? - Second. - Any discussion?

[00:19:51] Okay, can I have the clerk please take the roll? Ms. Mills. - Lateef? - Yes. - Blake. - Yes. - Jesse. - Yes. - Cherdinick. Wall. - Yes. - Wilk. - Yes.

[00:20:07] - Williams. - Yes. - Zargarpur. - Yes. - The vote is eight yes unanimous motion passed. - Thank you. Moving on to 1301 acknowledgements and recognitions and motions in order. - Mr. Chairman, I move that the Prince William County School Board approve the acknowledgements and recognitions as recommended. - Do I have a second? - Mr. Chair, I second.

[00:20:22] - Mr. Blake. Any discussion? Please vote. Please take the roll. Ms. Mills. - Lateef. - Yes. - Blake. - Yes. - Jesse. - Yes. - Tradinick. - Stain.

[00:20:38] - Wall. - Yes. - Wilk. - Yes. - Williams. - Yes. - Zargarpur. - Yes. - The vote is seven yes, one abstained. Tradinick, motion passed. - Moving on to citizen comment time. Those citizens who've signed up in advance with the clerk may address the school board this evening when they're called to the podium. The citizen comment period for regular school board meetings is one hour.

[00:20:55] Citizens may speak on the agenda items or other topics germane to 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. We ask that the audience please be respectful of each speaker and refrain from any clapping, cheering or jeering to avoid disruption in the meeting.

[00:21:11] If you do not do so, the board will recess and I will ask the room to be cleared to restore public order. Tonight we have seven citizens signed up to speak. When I call your name, please come to the podium and state your name and address for the record. I'll go ahead and call the first five up if they'd like to take seats up or they can stay where they're at.

[00:21:27] We'll go with Ava Schelling, Catherine Haddock, Sean Daly, Fiza Islam, and Raika Kamal. Start with Ava Schelling.

[00:21:55] - Good evening, everyone. My name is Ava Schelling and I am joined by the Woodbridge Senior High Student Voice Committee. We have come to speak out against the proposed bell-to-bell cell phone policy on behalf of our school student body. Three years ago, Woodbridge went into lockdown following a firearm threat in the building.

[00:22:13] Thousands of students, teachers, and staff members waited in the dark to hear either a gunshot or an all clear. In a world where we have to be terrified for our lives in a place of learning, we should at least be allowed a way to contact our loved ones to say goodbye.

[00:22:29] In situations like these, our phones serve as lifelines to the outside world. For even more than just safety reasons, cell phones allow us to reach out to our parents, our bosses, our fellow student leaders. They can even directly be used to aid our education. The reality is that school, for all grade levels, is now based almost exclusively in technology.

[00:22:50] It is crucial to adapt to, as opposed to resist, these changes so we can be functional members of a technologically advanced world in the future. Research evidently only shows one side of the story. Our phones are so much more than just distractions.

[00:23:05] Not only would a bell-to-bell policy eliminate these benefits, but it could have catastrophic consequences regarding safety. Before I end, we would be disingenuous to not recognize the drawbacks of cell phones in a school environment, but we ask you to also consider the bigger picture.

[00:23:22] Reflect on the following questions and shift your perspectives. With resources already stretched thin, we know and believe that there are more important problems to focus on in our schools. While we're debating whether to ban cell phones from schools entirely with a bell-to-bell policy, thousands of students are using and getting addicted to drugs in our bathrooms.

[00:23:43] of students are hiding in their dark classrooms waiting to hear a gunshot why are these issues not the first priority on the table today why is it an acceptable plan to redirect the focus of teachers administrators and security officers towards disciplining students for something as comparatively inconsequential as phone usage when real problems in our schools go untouched and unsolved I as well as thousands of other students in the county hope that that you give this issue just a bit more consideration.

[00:24:14] Thank you all so much for your time and we hope you have a good night. - Thank you, Catherine Haddock. - Good evening everyone.

[00:24:29] My name is Catherine Haddock and I am here on behalf of the Woodbridge Senior High School Student Voice Committee. We have come to speak out against the proposed bell-to-bell cell phone policy on behalf of our school student body. Woodbridge has roughly 3,000 students and hundreds of faculty and staff.

[00:24:46] A bell-to-bell policy is simply infeasible for a building containing such a sizable amount of people. One initiative that our Student Voice Committee focused heavily on last year was the "I Just Want to Pea" campaign, and it worked to tackle drug use in our bathrooms.

[00:25:02] A key aspect of the campaign was a "See Something, Say Something" QR code that was attached to each flyer posted in every bathroom stall. This gave students the will to anonymously report offenders in our bathrooms, and a bell-to-bell policy would have just set us back.

[00:25:17] Our side of the story is no different from any other school in our county. We encourage you to reflect in this moment on more than the results of a study or the feedback of other school districts. Have you considered how the bell-to-bell policy will affect us? Have you thought of the pressure this will put on every single PWCS teacher, every administrator, and every security officer to create a constant divide between themselves and students?

[00:25:41] Have you thought of students with anxiety or other medical needs who don't have a trusted adult in the building and need their parents' support during the school day? Have you thought of student athletes student drivers who need to update their parents with transportation changes or simply let their parents know they made it to school? Have you thought about how much time, effort, and money bell-to-bell will take to implement when there are larger issues facing our county schools or how challenging it will be to enforce if there's no definite plan to lock phones away? We ask finally that you reflect internally. Do you use your phones during your breaks? How would you feel if that right was taken away from you? How would you feel if you couldn't

[00:26:20] contact your family members in a life-threatening situation and do you want to be remembered for restricting student rights and taking our county backwards in time or do you want to be remembered for listening to our voices considering the humanity that defines this issue more than numbers ever could by not letting the bell-to-bell cell phone policy be adopted in PWCS thank you and we hope you have a good night thank you Sean Daly Sean Daly okay next

[00:26:56] Faiza Islam. Faiza Islam. Okay. Raika Kamal. Raika Kamal. Kaylee Phillips. And then the last one will be Elizabeth Seipkart. Hello. My name is Kaylee Phillips, and I'm a junior at Forest Park High School. I wanted to provide a student perspective on the proposed cell phone policy. For me, my phone is a tool for managing my life. During the beginning of the school year, I worked as a

[00:27:31] lifeguard. I relied on using the periods in between class changes and lunchtime to contact my employer and to find people to cover my shifts when situations arose. Without my phone, I would not have managed to continue working into the school year. I cannot imagine the stress it would put working students under to be unable to access their phone at all throughout the day.

[00:27:50] Students risk losing pay, shifts, and keeping their job. I participate in school clubs and sports, most of which use phone apps to communicate updates. Our coaches and sponsors rely on these apps to share last-minute schedule changes. Many times I've checked my phone during lunch to see a notification letting us know that the coach's daughter is ill and that practice is canceled.

[00:28:11] I don't have a car so not being able to see that notification until school is over would not leave me with enough time to make the bus and go home. We also rely on our phones to handle school itself. Phones allow students to let their parents know they need to stay after school for tutoring or to retake a test.

[00:28:28] An inability to communicate with parents until school is over jeopardizes the opportunity to access resources meant to help students learning and boost their grade. One of the goals of the cell phone policy is promoting responsible digital citizenship among students.

[00:28:44] I fail to see how we can practice responsible digital citizenship if we are given no opportunity to learn to self-regulate our phone use, a skill that becomes essential as students enter college. This policy sends the message to students that while they're in school, they are nothing but a student.

[00:29:01] I am a student, but I'm also an athlete. I'm an employee, I'm a daughter and a sister. In a perfect world, everybody would be organized all the time, and students would not need to use their phone to find rides, text their parents, or let their boss know they're going to be late.

[00:29:17] However, this is not reality. The cell phone policy asks that students have the organizational and planning skills of an adult, yet does not allow them the freedom granted to adults, the ability to choose to use their phones when it is not harmful to the learning environment. I am in favor of keeping the phone policy as it currently is, but enforcing it more effectively.

[00:29:36] should absolutely be put away during instruction time if the county does decide to implement the new phone policy I hope students and staff will be given adequate time to prepare thank you for your time Elizabeth site card good

[00:30:14] evening thank you for starting the clock I just want to note that the ESEA from Belmont congratulations to them but where were they when I said I needed my child services and he needed help when he was at Belmont and as other factors in 2017 for all hearing people and not deaf collaborative learning teams no cued language transliterators a team of them that's what I asked for and in covering it up with collaborative learning teams so congratulations to them but maybe someone needs to tell them how to cue because there's the

[00:30:54] handshape one two three four five six seven eight placements around the mouth the mouth, the chin, the throat, the side, side forward, side down, side to the throat, chin to the throat. Take a class. I also want to share that with the cell phone, you can do live captions on the phone listening to my voice. So if you take this phone away from my son, he has no in-person CLTs, cued language transliterators during the day. He has only virtual. So do you want the virtual

[00:31:33] to cue bang bang. I don't see this as a feasible option. There has to be a better way. I understand that cell phones are distractions, but you can't rely on the 504 plan which says storage of a personal cell phone stowed away. And when I'm in 504 plans or in IEP meetings, there's arguments and they don't listen to me as a parent. They go on and close the meeting and do what they want to do so I don't know what else to say other than thank you for your time and

[00:32:07] happy holidays thank you that concludes citizen comment time for this evening we will be moving on to student representative time this evening we have joining us tonight is our student representative Allah Rashid who is the senior at unity Reed high school miss Rashid please thank you dr. Latif good evening to the Prince William County school board community and dr. McDade I I'm excited to be back up on the day I start presenting my peers.

[00:32:40] Happy holidays. I hope everyone had an amazing Thanksgiving break spent with loved ones. We are all pushing through these next three weeks until the next long break. The second quarter so far has been going fairly well with students enjoying all of the breaks in November as an added bonus. Many students are happy with school so far and I have not heard any pressing complaints.

[00:32:59] But one of the matters a lot of students have feelings about is the cell phone policy. A reminder that Almudena and I, the other representative, both gave input on the plans miss Porter Lucas proposed and that we reached up to students continuously throughout the process on their feedback from the student Senate to student voice committees we have collected as much feedback as we can parents teachers and admins were also among the people giving feedback in the plans as well now to get into the student feedback I've heard the responses from high school students have been the same with them saying how they prefer what the county has implemented now over the guidelines from the video II with many students thinking about about policies limiting and again unnecessary for the high school

[00:33:38] level as said earlier by the two Woodbridge members student voice committee members parts of the school day where no instructional time is incurring should not require a cell phone policy as it is students free time where they can manage other outside responsibilities being on our phone during a 30-minute lunch or five-minute passing period should not be seen as terrible because it creates time management as students manage their responsibilities outside of school as said by Kaylee from Forest Park from work to family responsibilities students use this time as a way to learn how to use technology effectively, other than running away on phones during actual instructional time.

[00:34:11] The belttable policy is also something that many students think is limiting, as they're already seeing an increase in productivity now, so why add more limitations on their outside responsibilities? Students with outside responsibilities now are hindered and cannot properly keep up with their lives, both in and out of school.

[00:34:27] I also got the chance to speak with other student representatives across the state at the board conference held a few weeks ago, and those with the belttable policy said the same comments I have made, but they do say that they're smaller schools, those students at smaller schools, they do see it working, but

since we have such larger schools in the county, they felt that we wouldn't really work at our schools, and I did agree with them on that part, as the largest school I spoke with was a student who went to a high school with 500 students that implemented the bell to bell already.

[00:34:57] Overall, a consensus from high school students is that they prefer to keep things the way they are now, just to create ease in their lives, that stuff is something that are not going to magically disappear, and if students know how to properly use them now, they can be set for real world situations where this can be put into place. However, I had the opportunity to receive some feedback from one of the middle school student voice committees, and it's very similar to the high school level.

[00:35:18] These students coordinate together to give their personal opinions, with a big one being that at the middle school level, they should be able to use their phones during lunch. They felt that they are growing up and deserve the opportunity to start handling the privileges and that disruptions in the cafeteria would be less likely as students are going to be more occupied.

[00:35:35] Another topic they had was that after assignments were completed by all students, both middle and high school level, they should be allowed to use their phone as they are all done with the necessary instructional time present. Incentive is what these students think is necessary and they believe that this will give just that as it'll promote face-to-face interactions as promoted by the division.

[00:35:54] Because students are more likely to help each other finish their work. Lastly, these students felt that after class work, the use of a cell phone creates a quieter classroom at times because our students can be occupied in some ways. I'm very glad that these future student leaders gave their opinions regarding this issue.

[00:36:12] Now, to shift away from the cell phone policy, I would like to just add on to the school calendar and the holidays present. I think that adding the second Eid of the year is necessary and beneficial to the large number of Muslim families present in the county, including myself, and that this would not only be more inclusive, but make it easier for students to celebrate it with their loved ones.

[00:36:29] Next, I wanted to just touch up on some county-wide things, with the first being how, a few weeks ago, the county held their annual food show at Patriot, and many students were in attendance with their families. they all thought it was a great way to get some feedback and enjoy great food, and it was a nice way to give feedback to the county regarding the food that we eat every day.

[00:36:46] I was also able to see some of our amazing board members in attendance, it was very nice to see you all. I also want to bring up how some of our schools have received recognition as AP honor roll schools and access awards for the inclusivity of their programs, and a lot of students believe that having advanced classes is something that sets them up for success in the future, and that it challenges them, and that they enjoy challenge and many believe that this should be expanded throughout the county regardless of it is of if it is ap ib or cambridge and that it should be something that's very emphasized thank you for allowing me to give remarks today i hope everyone has an amazing three weeks coming up

[00:37:21] until christmas and the holiday season and all the other holidays like hanukkah and kwanzaa spent with loved ones um 2024 has been a great year for the county and i think that 2025 will be even

[00:37:32] better. Thank you, Ms. Rashid. Up next, Superintendent, Dr. McDade. Thank you, Dr. Lateef. Tonight, I would like to recognize two significant observances that remind us of the heart of education and the unwavering belief in every student's potential. The first one, December 2nd, marked Special Education

Day, an opportunity to honor the groundbreaking work of our educators, families, and advocates who have transformed the landscape of learning for students with disabilities. This day celebrates the progress we've made since the passage of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, a cornerstone

[00:38:10] of our shared commitment to ensuring that every child, regardless of ability, has access to a free and appropriate public education. National Inclusive Schools Week is celebrated from December 2nd to December 6th. The theme for this year is Every Voice Matters, which underscores the importance of building schools where every student, regardless of background, ability, or need, feels seen, supported, and empowered to speak up and thrive.

[00:38:36] In Prince William County Public Schools, we are proud to champion inclusivity and excellence in education. Our educators, support staff, and administrators work tirelessly to create environments where collaboration and innovation flourish. Whether it is through specialized instruction, inclusive classrooms, or programs that celebrate diversity, we are steadfast in our dedication to meeting the needs of the whole child.

[00:39:01] As we celebrate this week, let us reflect on the stories of resilience and achievement that inspire us daily. As PWCS nears the midpoint of the second marking period, I encourage families to check in on your students' real-time grades through ParentVUE. If you have questions about your child's academic standing, please reach out to your child's teacher or school counselor.

[00:39:23] While you're in ParentVUE, I encourage you to visit pwcs.edu, click on the Families drop-down menu, and select Family Engagement Events. The Family Engagement Series provides families with resources that will assist with student success.

[00:39:39] The series is led by the PWCS Community Outreach, Business Partnerships, and Philanthropy Department in collaboration with other PWCS programs and community and business partners. Upcoming webinars include Post High School Pathways, which was held on December 5th, Overcoming Language Barriers, Getting Information from PWCS in Your Preferred Language on December 10th, and Advanced Academic Opportunities in Prince William County Public Schools on December 12th.

[00:40:08] One session I hope you will attend is the Gifted at a Glance: A Parent's Guide to Gifted Education and Talent Development in Prince William County Schools, which will be delivered on December 17th. All of our webinars begin at 6:30 p.m. and end at 7:30 p.m. and they offer our families a wealth of information on how to be engaged as a partner in education in support of your student.

[00:40:31] take advantage of these informational sessions to help you get a jump start in the new year. As you may know PWCS has implemented several transportation changes to enhance efficiency and ensure students arrive at school safely and on time. These adjustments include modifying bus routes, staggering school start times, and balancing walking distances between bus stops. And we know that nothing is ever perfect and there may be certain times where a bus might be late when we look at the improvements that we've made over the course of this this year we have seen marked success in our transportation rates and I would

[00:41:10] like to invite our Chief Operating Officer Vernon Bach and Mr. Director of Transportation Mr. Robin Marshall to present an update on our transportation process. Thank you Dr. McDade and good evening Dr. Lateef and school board members as Robin and Tatanesha join me here at the podium I'm

honored to ask asked them to join me here in presenting some significant improvements in our transportation services.

[00:41:48] These enhancements have led to really remarkable increase in on-time delivery of our students to schools, a fully staffed bus driver team, and better communication with our families. First, I'd like to extend my heartfelt thanks to Dr. McDade and the school board for your unwavering support and investment in the comprehensive audit of our transportation department.

[00:42:11] This commitment has really been instrumental in us making these improvements and making them possible. We also want to acknowledge our collaborative partnership with our consultant, Formative, who was a great partner with us in making these changes, and their expertise has been invaluable.

[00:42:28] A special thank you goes out to our entire transportation department for their dedication, engagement, commitment, and hard work in transforming our operations. And additionally, we're grateful to our families their cooperation, especially walking a little bit further to bus stops.

[00:42:45] This really allowed us to consolidate bus stops, ensuring students arrive to school on time. Lastly, I want to express our most profound appreciation to Robin, our new director of transportation. His leadership has been pivotal in driving these positive changes, and we are seeing the benefits of his efforts.

[00:43:05] So again, I want to thank Dr. McDade and the board for your support and continued support, and at this time I'll turn it over to Robin to share more about the exciting improvements absolutely thanks a lot so I want to reiterate Burns sentiments about our gratefulness to the community because this truly wouldn't be possible without the cooperation of our families as well as our schools and members of the other community huge thank you to dr. McDade members of the board for being and supportive in some of the initiatives that we wanted to move forward this year that I'm gonna present on in a few.

[00:43:43] But I do wanna take a second to introduce you all to our new Assistant Director of Transportation, Tatsanisha Wallace. She started with us about the second week of school, really hit the ground running. She comes to us from DC, brings a wealth of knowledge, not only in transportation, but leadership as well.

[00:44:04] And the team has gravitated to her very well. So she's been an instrumental part of my involvement with all of these changes. So thank you to you, absolutely. So to go on with the transportation update, I'm gonna start by giving a high level view of what the transportation operation looks like.

[00:44:28] So we transport a little over 72,000 students to and from school every day. Of that 72,000, 69,000 of them are our general education students, and about 3,200 are students that we transport with disabilities.

[00:44:47] The types of transportation that we support, to and from school, we transport to base schools. We also transport to specialty programs, about 72 programs, which consists of 184 routes, as well as 28 different private placements.

[00:45:03] Along with the PWCS calendar, we also follow about 19 other calendars that we have to follow. So on any given day when schools are closed here for PWCS, you may still see buses on the road because we are transporting students outside of the county.

[00:45:21] We support field trips, and our definition of a field trip is anything, any type of transportation request that falls outside of to and from school transportation. So this includes athletics, field trips, and

things of that nature.

[00:45:37] Last year alone, we completed almost 12,000 field trips for the duration of the school year. And we do all of this with about 695 FTEs for drivers, and we transport to and from about 10.5 thousand bus stops.

[00:45:55] Our buses travel over 34,000 miles per day, which equals up to about 11.4 million miles per year. So our buses are moving around. This is a big county and we're running anywhere from around 700 buses every day.

[00:46:10] So of those 700 buses, it's always a guarantee. And I wanna shout out our vehicle services team that no more than 2% of our buses will be down for maintenance. So we have a 98% fleet readiness percentage.

[00:46:26] So huge shout out to that team. So here's the highlight, in my opinion, of the presentation. Coming into Prince William County Schools, one of the big things that Vern brought to my attention was just the disparity in on-time performance, mostly amongst our elementary schools.

[00:46:49] As you see on the screen, our high school on-time performance was about 78.6%, middle school on-time performance was 75.3%, and elementary school was as low as 41.8% average in the beginning of school last year.

[00:47:07] But if we look at the week of November the 22nd, you'll see high school was at 97.5%, middle school was at 99.7%, almost 100% on time for middle school the week of November 22nd. Elementary schools was 90.5%, which is almost a 20% increase from the beginning of school last year.

[00:47:29] So there's a lot of factors that helped out with this on-time performance increase. We have a phenomenal team. We have dedicated bus drivers and bus attendants, our route managers, area coordinators, and I mentioned vehicle services earlier.

[00:47:48] We have a scheduling team that puts together some very tough routes, very tough routing schemes, and we have a customer service team that service our communities, and they are the voice of transportation every day. So I wanna give a few shots out to the various teams that exist within transportation.

[00:48:07] But if we look at the different factors that impact on-time performance. So this year, we eliminated about 600 bus stops for efficiency. The original goal was about 1,500 stops, but we put together a stop assessment team to go out to each one of these stops to assess.

[00:48:26] Some stops were reinstated for safety, and we landed on 600 bus stops. Driver vacancies, and this is huge. This time last year, we had about 53 vacancies in our driver FTE.

[00:48:41] We got 40 positions added over the summer, which would have made this 93 last year. And as of Monday, we have zero driver FTEs. We have all of our driver positions filled, which is huge.

[00:48:57] And this wasn't just an effort from transportation, but we partnered with our partners in communications as well as HR who put together some very comprehensive advertising plans to get these positions out and get people in these seats very quickly.

[00:49:14] Yeah, it was a huge lift starting the school year with over 50 vacancies to now as of Monday being zero. So thank you to my partners over in communications and HR for partnering with us on that.

Lastly, I wanna talk about just traffic flow at the schools.

[00:49:33] We also partner with the risk department to go over any logistical issues that we find at the bus loops that prevent buses from getting in and out of our schools. A lot of our buses serve four different schools, so if it gets caught up at one school, that'll automatically make it late for the remaining schools that day.

[00:49:52] So any traffic flow issues, we partner with risk as well as the school principals to mitigate those issues promptly. And lastly, ridership, something we did differently at the beginning of this school year, well before the school year started, was we implemented an opt-out process in ParentVUE.

[00:50:08] So at the end of the school year, when parents go into ParentVUE to check report cards, they have to answer a series of questions. And one of those questions that we had added was, will your child need transportation next year? And if they click no, that let my team know that we didn't have to worry about routing that student.

[00:50:28] Traditionally, we routed every student that was eligible, whether they needed transportation or not. And that just put strain on the team to kind of go back after school starts to readjust routes. And it just wasn't the most efficient use of time and resources.

[00:50:44] So that helped out tremendously this year. Now, this is a kind of a history what driver vacancies traditionally look like here at PWCS and while I go through this to people in this room as well as members who are watching this live or maybe pre-recorded you can scan this QR code with your cell phone if you or if you know somebody who would love to be a school bus driver or or attended here at PWCS so this is taking straight to our website to apply for this position even though I say we have zero vacancies do not be discouraged we're

[00:51:19] going to get you in here. So if you look at 2018, we had about a 9.6 vacancy rate at the end of the year to as high as a 16.3 vacancy rate in 2022, which you'll see after that, the number of allocated vacancies was decreased with the promise of, you know, if you're ever able to ramp up your driver pool, then we'll get more positions. So thank you to Dr. McDade and the board for giving us 40 last year, bringing us from 655 to 695. And at the end of last year, we actually had more

[00:51:58] drivers than we had positions. So we had positions added mid-year. And I'm hoping I can have similar conversations this year as we're at 0% right now. So stay tuned for that. And yes, please scan this QR code if you are interested in being a part of this amazing team. So you may ask what changed to get 1-0 FTE vacancies as well as increase the on-time performance as high as we did. There was a few things that helped us out and helped us get to this position. So firstly we implemented a sign

[00:52:33] on and referral bonus. So the sign on bonus is for new drivers coming into the division. The bonus ranges from 1,000 for people who do not have a CDL at all. They can come here with us to train to get their CDLs in-house and then once they obtain their CDLs then they'll be transferred into a bus driver position and they'll get a \$1,000 sign-on bonus. If you do have your CDLs but you still need to get your school bus and passenger endorsement, there's a \$2,000 bonus for that and we'll help you get those endorsements as well. But if you're coming in ready to drive a bus from day

[00:53:10] one that's a \$3,000 sign-on bonus and there's been a lot of drivers taking advantage of that incentive which was a huge help for us getting that vacancy down to zero. We increased staff like I mentioned before we collaborated with comms and HR we are very detailed when it comes to our

performance management we look at on-time performance daily but we also meet weekly about even though let's see on the elementary level it's great that we're at 91.5 I'm sorry 90.5 percent on time but that means that there's still 9.5 percent that are

[00:53:50] getting the school late so the team works weekly to see what what routes can be massaged what things can be moved around to get those buses in on time so we shall see that on time percent is gradually increased throughout the year as the team works through that we integrated zendesk with Amazon connect Amazon connect is a tool that just allows us to look at our customer service data in a way that we couldn't see it before so as you see here we had a little over 5,000 tickets submitted since the start of school and we achieved

[00:54:25] a SLA rating of almost 90% and SLA is a service level agreement and and that's a time frame that we have to respond to the ticket so we've reached that at about 90% and our overall satisfaction rating is 81.8% and we're gradually working to get that higher and higher as the school year goes. Last three we consolidated bus stops as I mentioned before about 600 bus stops from last year to this year we also purchased 10 passenger vans that are also being used in our driver trainee program so as drivers are training to get their cdl's they're also

[00:55:03] transporting students to and from school via vans and just getting the feel of how transportation routes work how to manage their time to get to stop to stop on time as well as to the school and uh lastly we enhanced uh our timeline to receive data from our partners throughout the division um that's that was very instrumental in in getting all of our routes created on time communicated to schools and families and having our drivers come in a little bit early to run dry runs to find any you know gaps or issues with the routes that were created and on that note the

[00:55:40] the importance of getting that data on time in years past we may have received a thousand or two thousand changes about a week before school and this is a real scenario that happened this year we had a address change come in for a student and because of the way the routes were set up at this school one of my schedulers had to adjust nine different bus routes impact 68 students times that they're getting picked up as well as it took that person three hours of uninterrupted time which is hard to get in the office a lot to complete this task so you can only imagine how

[00:56:17] heavy that lift is if we're getting two thousand of these the week before school starts and that just creates us that just forces us to re-create our whole routing scheme so um thank you to our partners for getting that data to us early because a lot of this did not happen this year which is why we were able to get routes out on time lastly i want to just talk about future enhancements so we are investing in our team we are looking at every opportunity when it comes to professional development that that we can find conferences that we can send people to to find out the latest transportation technology

[00:56:57] that other districts around the country are using bus stop efficiency is something that we're going to start looking at yearly as students move around graduate population shift in different parts of the county so besides just keeping our bus stops static we're going to look every year to see what can be moved for the benefit of efficiency.

[00:57:20] We are modernizing our operation year after year, similar to professional development. We're just looking for all of the newest technology that we can bring here to help our students and community. We're also looking at applying for this clean school bus grant.

[00:57:37] We already own and operate two electric school buses, but we're looking to expand that even more as electric technology is getting more advanced within the school bus genre.

[00:57:53] Lastly, enhanced video technology. We have cameras on all of our buses. The camera is high quality, audio and video. The issue that we find with our camera system is that it's not over the air. So if we have to pull the video, we have to wait for the bus to return to the bus lot, pull the video, replace the hard drive, download it, and do a whole lot of manual things rather than having a camera system that we can just pull over the air while the bus is out.

[00:58:23] So that's, you know, a future enhancement that we're looking into. I'm excited about the transportation data dashboard. Vern and I and Tatsanesha already previewed it, and we are gonna have that presented to Dr. McDade later on this month.

[00:58:39] So I'm excited to get her feedback on that. And lastly, a new parent app for monitoring bus locations is something that's forthcoming. We've heard the community loud and clear with their frustrations with the current parent app. So that's something that we're looking to enhance as well.

[00:58:56] So we should be coming back with more updates about that. And I wanna thank you all for your time and go to any questions that you may have. Also, if you're watching live or prerecorded, you can scan this QR code to apply to be a bus driver. So, or bus attendant.

[00:59:12] - Right, right, thank you. Mr. Wilk, yeah, I'll be brief. I just want to laud, praise, compliment, whatever you want to say to your team and the work you've been doing. One thing that you guys did not mention that I can attest to myself is the high quality customer service that I'm hearing more and more from.

[00:59:30] Of course, not everyone's happy, but I'm hearing much more praise, getting less inbound emails about not having a response to different things, but it's been very helpful. And I also like the pragmatic approach your team has taken when there have been requests for like a stop change from a constituent or a complaint.

[00:59:50] Your team goes out, looks at it, looks at, you know, analyzes the logistics and maybe sometimes it changes, other times it does not. And I think even if the person doesn't get what they want, it all at least makes sense based on the system as a whole as you see it.

[01:00:05] So anyways, thank you so much. Appreciate you guys. - Thank you. - Mr. Dennett. I also just wanna say thank you. I think the changes that you guys have implemented are great. I think the allowing us as parents to choose whether or not we're gonna use the bus stop makes so much sense, especially when you have a transfer student that doesn't use the bus stop because they drive.

[01:00:29] That was like mind blowing for me. I was like, oh, we're taking up spaces on a bus that we don't use for three years in a row. And I mean, just that small strategy is great. And the kids, they all seem to be fine walking that further distance. got coats on now it's just amazing to see those positive changes as parents because it's a little colder when you're walking a little bit further so um thank you guys for all your hard work uh welcome to the team i'm excited to come meet you because i do like to come visit transportation it's one of my favorite places to go so thank you guys thank you miss williams thank you um i i also

[01:01:07] would like to express my gratitude for our newest team member coming on board and for robin for everything you have done to truly transform our transportation department I have heard positive feedback not only from bus drivers school staff community member everyone I think this is the first year that I have not received a ton of emails about how horrible our bus scheduling is I do also appreciate you recognizing that a bus might not always be the appropriate answer it doesn't make sense to send a full-size school bus out when there may be only five students and I love that innovative approach as well as providing an

[01:01:46] alternative for those who are in training to get their CDO to sort of test the waters and be employed and not just simply be training to be a bus driver because I couldn't imagine going through all that training and then being like I don't really want to be in there with a bunch of students because it's one of those things you just don't know until you know I also appreciate it seems to be that there's a little bit more availability of activity buses for schools too which is a major improvement I know we had some schools that didn't have activity buses I'm always going to advocate for activity buses for our specialty students as well but I know it's a long shot but I got to throw that in there but I do appreciate that the new customer service

[01:02:24] focus it is much helpful I think for not only our administrators and our secretaries and office staff in our schools to not have to deal with angry parents because they can't get through to transportation and I will say as someone who knows a few bus drivers, they're thoroughly impressed with the communication now within the transportation department, and I'm always overjoyed when I hear inter-departmental work because we do not exist in a vacuum or a silo.

[01:02:54] So I love the fact that you are utilizing our other departments to be more effective. It gives better communication to vision-wide, but it also allows everyone to shine, right? Because each of us make up a piece of that puzzle. So I do look forward to the new innovations that are coming down the pike.

[01:03:10] I'm sure there'll be more and I appreciate your service. Thank you. - Thank you. - Mr. Blake. - I just wanna say thank you, welcome. And thank you for the intentional, pragmatic approach that you've been taking towards the transportation. I don't think I've been contacted since the second week of school, so you guys have done a good job.

[01:03:31] And like all my colleagues have said, I just wanna reiterate what they said, each one of them, so good job and keep up the good work. Thank you. - Jesse, sorry. - I have two questions. One's sort of a stupid one.

[01:03:48] When you say tickets on there, immediately I think about running the red light us up. What are your tickets? - Right, no, so the tickets are in Zendesk. It's almost like a work order. So if a family or a school calls with an issue, then my team will create a ticket so we can track it to make sure that we're following up in a reasonable amount of time.

[01:04:11] - Okay, thank you. The other question is sort of related to the bonuses that were given out. What are we doing for the drivers that's been there five, 10 years? Anything in that area? - So that's something that we can come back to the table to discuss.

[01:04:29] There are talks around attendance incentives, but of course I have to bring that to you all. to, you know, yes, and, oh, I'm sorry, there is a referral bonus tied into this.

[01:04:45] So they can refer a outside driver to come in and there's a \$500 bonus and there's no cap to the number of drivers they can refer. - Has that been used for a lot?

[01:05:01] - Yes, yes, absolutely. - Good, thank you. - You're welcome. - And a good job presentation and a good job with the results. - I appreciate that. - Ms. Wall. - Thank you, there's a lot to celebrate here.

[01:05:16] great job to the whole team it's really encouraging um i'm hearing from families that they appreciate the increase on on-time arrivals and this making a big difference i have a number of schools that are fairly rural with long routes so they're appreciating that at least their kids are getting to school on time um and i think the number the november 22nd numbers are great so i just want to commend the division for filling those positions um i had just a couple of questions the traffic flow at some of our most challenging schools i was wondering how closely we work with the county um on solutions for some of these trouble spots yes we work we work closely

[01:05:54] um with the county especially when it's issues that that falls outside of the school's property um so they'll they'll uh support us with enforcement for for the public streets and anything that's that's on the on the school property we handle that internally okay awesome And then do we have any updates that on improving traffic flow at some of our most troubling spots?

[01:06:19] I think for instance Colgan was one of the schools with You know so many kids in it. So just traffic backing up Gainesville high school Do you have any updates on roads opening around there anything you can share if not that's fine. I understand. Yeah Miss wall one of the things we're working on with Gainesville is specifically is is obviously the the intersection coming into Gainesville high school we are working through that with VDOT's been a little bit slower progress than what we've wanted to see but working on potentially a traffic circle there which could mitigate and and obviously increase the flow of traffic in and out

[01:06:58] of there in a safe manner so that's one thing that we're working on pretty consistently you know Colgan's a school that we've watched closely we've had our staff out there several times to suggest improvements it's something that you know I'll look into a little more deeply here to just reflect back with the team to see how that's going and I appreciate you flagging that we'd be happy to come back at any time to give the board a further update the I will say the traffic safety committee I think at this point has had an impact at about 53% of our sites in the division so that's you know over half our school sites and it has had a significant impact it's a definite partnership with the school

[01:07:38] staff and our level associates and we've asked anytime a principal or school staff are considering a traffic change or a flow change that they really work through the committee and that's just yielded some really positive results we'd be happy to come back at some point and share those results with the board thank you i appreciate that and i'm glad the committee is working well and then my last comment would just be the implementation of the opt-out opt-out process i'm really glad we have an opt-out process for kids who aren't using the bus i think that's just really fantastic and I was curious did we get a good response from that and for families

[01:08:14] who did not respond but are not riding the bus do we track folks like that who didn't opt out but yet are never riding the bus and if if we have a problem in that area I don't know if we do or not but if do we proactively reach out to anyone who may not have opted out but is not riding the bus don't know if that could further give us additional transportation yeah so a little more than 3,000 families did choose the opt-

out this year so that was a huge help for us any any family that did not respond we automatically opted them in now as far as families that or students that do not ride we don't

[01:08:52] necessarily compare that to the opt-out list but we'll contact everybody who's traditionally not riding to see if transportation is really needed or not and if it's not then we can readjust those routes now let's say there's there's a stop with ten students but three of them are not riding we won't necessarily contact those families because the bus got to go to that stop anyway but if there's a empty stop we'll definitely contact those families thank you that makes that makes perfect sense and lastly I love the feature enhancement slide I'm very excited about the transportation dashboard and the videos

[01:09:30] on the buses that will be high quality and through Wi-Fi, I'm assuming, so that you'll have instant access to whatever happened on the bus. And my question is, will that be tied to the Security Operations Center? Will the SOC be able to see what's going on in the buses, or will the SOC be able to see the transportation dashboard? Yes, yes. So the transportation dashboard will have different roles, depending on how the role is set up, will determine what they see. As far as the over the air cameras that is something that the sock as well as our schools would have access to and i know the members of the stock are very excited about that future enhancement if i could

[01:10:10] add one additional uh just piece of information there miss wall in our security operations center all of our pwcs vehicles are gps enabled and so at any given time in the sock they're monitoring all of our buses they know real time where our buses are located and our white fleet so should there be an emergency issue involving one of our vehicles they they know exactly where that vehicle is located on the uh in the sock on the their dashboard that's a really great improvement enhancement thank you for highlighting that i don't have any further questions i just want to say thank you to the team it's great transportation is significantly improved over

[01:10:46] my time on the board thanks to many efforts miss dargapur uh thank you so much for this presentation i do have one question uh about and i don't know if this is an us thing or if it's a division thing but um i'll just give you a perfect example today on my way here i was driving on yates ford road and a bus at five o'clock was stopping to let kids off and people were blowing past the bus with the stop sign out um so are where do yeah you're nodding yeah you know where where this is headed, the cameras on the stop signs.

[01:11:22] - Yes, so that is a future enhancement that we are entertaining. Actually, the camera company that's going to help us get our cameras over the air also offer a stop arm enforcement program.

[01:11:37] So that's something that we have to partner with the county to enforce as well as get county ordinances created. So that's a process that has to happen, but it is something that can happen in the future.

[01:11:53] - Okay, thank you. I just love the work you've done. I'm so glad you're here with us, thank you. - Thank you, pleasure to be here. - Williams. - Thank you, just really quickly, when you do find out about the grant, if you could just let us know, 'cause that's something from a few directors and administrators since ago, I had started to inquire about what the electric bus is.

[01:12:14] So I'm just interested where we land with that. - Absolutely, and there is a part in the process where we do have to get the board to sign off. So we have to bring it to you anyway. - Okay, thank you guys. That was outstanding presentation. Congratulations, great work.

[01:12:30] And I asked the public to take a look at the presentation, a lot of great information there. Thank you, Dr. McDade. Next up. - Thank you. - Thank you so much. - Thank you. - Next we have Dr. Neal. And he is going to be coming before us to do our quarterly updates.

[01:12:53] - So good evening, Dr. Lateef, school board members and Dr. McDade. I'm gonna spend a little bit of time tonight going over our quarter one update. It is a streamlined and refined presentation that is aligned with our State of the Schools presentation that we gave earlier this year.

[01:13:09] So the purpose of this really is to give you an update on the commitments that we have made at the end of that presentation. The data that I will discuss is going to cover active enrollment, our attendance and chronic absenteeism rates, data regarding literacy, academic performance, and data towards graduation, progress towards graduation at the end of the present at the end of the data overview dr. Sullivan will join us and she will address the actions that we've been taking to look at some of this information so just as a reminder three of the areas that we committed to focusing on at the state of the schools

[01:13:44] presentation was accelerating academic growth ensuring we're addressing literacy skills and keeping students on track for graduation also during that presentation we identified our English learners and our students with disabilities as groups that we really wanted to focus on for this upcoming year. I should note that all of the data that I'm going to be presenting is accessible at the school level and so we are trying to very much align the information we are sharing with you with the information that our schools can use for improvement. So this table is pretty standard it shows you our enrollment at

[01:14:22] the end of the first quarter for our active students so it shows the diversity across the division and a breakdown across all grade levels. So when we look at our academic growth and achievement information a few areas stand out. One attendance and chronic absenteeism patterns in the first quarter are similar to what we saw last year. The same is true for our the vertical scale score for mathematics similar to what we saw in the fall of 23 across all grade levels. And when we look at our two groups that we've targeted for improvement our english learners and our students with disabilities we do see that they have a

[01:15:02] higher course failure rate in their first quarter than our other groups so this plot shows the average daily attendance from the start of the school year to october 31st you can see that it hovers right around 95 average daily attendance with a few dips in there in general those dips especially the ones in october tend to occur where we have days off from school so that would either be a work day or a holiday.

[01:15:31] Chronic absenteeism is defined as missing 10% or more of the membership days. So for 180 days in the school year, that equates to 18 days of absences. These can be excused or unexcused. So the reason is it does not matter.

[01:15:47] And it is a current part of our accountability system, and it will also be a part in the future accountability system. So when we look at our chronic absenteeism rates as of the first quarter, you can see they are slightly higher than they were last year. So last year at the end of the first quarter we were at 14.7. We were at 15.4 this year so it is slightly higher and that does hold when we break it down by level. So this indicates to us that it is an area that we should maintain a focus on but due to the variability and the low number of days it's not an area of concern yet but it should

[01:16:22] remain a consistent focus similar to how we approach this in the prior years. So the Virginia growth assessment is a mandated assessment from the General Assembly. They did make a change this year where we can have alternative assessments and Prince William County did apply and get approved to use HMH as a replacement for the reading VGA. However, we still administered the math VGA to students in grades three through eight. I do want to note that in grade eight you do not take this assessment if you are in an accelerated math course. So if you're in algebra one you would not take the VGA.

[01:17:00] Lastly, the VGA is reported on a vertical scale score ranging from 900 to 2000, which allows us to look at change over time, growth from year to year. So this table shows the average vertical scale scores for the last three years in mathematics.

[01:17:20] So the far right column is the current year, and you can see when we compare across all grade levels to what we saw in prior years, there is a fairly similar initial score at the start of the year, which is what we would expect.

[01:17:37] When we look at literacy, there have been a few changes here. One is PALS, which is what you have heard me report on for the past couple years, has been replaced with VALS, which is the Virginia Language Literacy Screening System. It is a more comprehensive measure that looks at fluency, decoding, phonics, and comprehension.

[01:17:56] And instead of a MET benchmark, didn't meet benchmark, students are placed into risk bands based on their score, and those risk bands are high, moderate, and low. The HMH literacy assessment has been used in place of the VGA reading, so it is administered in required administration for grades two through eight, three times a year, and provides a reading score, grade level equivalency, and Lexile.

[01:18:24] So this table shows the assessment windows for vowels, so you can see there's a fall, a mid-year, and a spring assessment window in grades one through three. What's important to note on this assessment schedule is that initially it's for all students.

[01:18:40] So you can see in kindergarten and grade one, they are assessed multiple times a year. And as the student goes up in grade level, the assessment then gets used for targeted needs. So if a student demonstrates a need for intervention, they would participate in the VALS.

[01:19:00] So this bar chart shows the percent of students in VALS risk bands. You can see that it is broken down, kindergarten at the top, kindergarten L learners, kindergarten students with disabilities, first grade and so forth, all the way through third grade.

[01:19:15] The gold bands is the high risk band and you can see when we look at this plot, our students with disabilities and our English learners have a higher tendency to be in those high risk bands than other students. When we look at HMH growth, so this is our baseline data for the year, it was the beginning of year data collected in September, you can see that 44% and 45% of our elementary and then middle school students were reading on or above grade level on that initial assessment.

[01:19:47] When we look at our English learners at the elementary level, 24% were on above grade level and 19% of our English learners in the middle level were on or above grade level. And similarly with our students with disabilities, 18% and 14% respectively on or above grade level.

[01:20:05] Again, it is important to note that this is our baseline data and will be used as our starting point when we conduct mid-year assessments. So this bar chart shows the percent of students on or above grade

level on the HMH growth with a comparison to the prior year.

[01:20:21] Because it was required for all students this year, which is the gold band, we tended to have a higher number of students participate. When we look at second grade, you'll notice there isn't a comparative year, and that is because we did not have a large enough sample size to provide a reasonable comparison.

[01:20:37] Now, the following two tables show that HMH growth data, again, comparative, but broken down by categories. So this is above level, on level, approaching, below grade level, and far below grade level.

[01:20:54] Again, note that the second grade sample size is too small to allow reasonable comparisons to be made. So this is new information we haven't shared before.

[01:21:12] This is coming from the FOCUS Student Support Dashboard, which provides real-time data on critical risk factors for students. can be behavior, attendance, and course performance. For the for this presentation we have focused on course performance and the focus student support shows cumulative course failures and gives them a risk factor rating. So again this dashboard can be used by school staff and is monitored by principals to ensure progress is being made and design appropriate interventions. So this was

[01:21:47] extracted from the elementary focus student support dashboard the dark blue represents students who are performing well so they essentially have zero risk factors when it comes to course performance the light blue or gray band represents students have one risk factor and then the gold band which is hard to see at the elementary level represents the percentage students with multiple risk factors related to course failure and so in the first quarter it's fairly straightforward if you're on the gold band you're failing more than one course if you're on the light blue it's one course and in the dark blue zero courses

[01:22:25] when we look at the middle school level you can see that again all of our students at the middle level 85% are not at risk at course failure at this time the light blue expands when we look at English learners and students with disabilities a higher percentage of students have risk factors related to course failure, and the same holds true when you look at multiple risk factors in the gold band.

[01:22:54] And we see that same pattern manifest when we look at our high school. We see 74% of all high school students don't have any risk factors related to course failure, but then we see the light blue, and when we look at English learners and students with disabilities, we see that risk factor increases.

[01:23:14] Progress towards graduation is another metric we have not shared in this presentation before. So this is monitored and tracked using a progress monitoring dashboard. And this dashboard includes key indicators, including course credits earned across academic areas, verified credits, and other components as defined by the diploma type.

[01:23:38] Core academic classes are key indicators towards progress towards graduation. And so that is what we are sharing here tonight. So there are two bars on here. Gold bars represent course credits, blue bars represent verified credits.

[01:23:55] So this is the percent of students who are in their fourth or greater year in high school, so essentially our seniors. And you can see when we look at the course credits, the gold bars, anywhere from

93 to 94 percent of the students have met the criteria or are currently meeting the criteria for their core course credits.

[01:24:15] When we look at the verified credit, which means not only have they passed the course, but they've passed usually a test associated with that course, the range there is more variable running from essentially 72% to about 92% of the students earning the verified credit across those course areas.

[01:24:34] So at this time, I'm going to turn it over to Dr. Sullivan to talk about some of the next steps. Thank you, Dr. Neal. Thank you. I'm happy to share with the board today just a few of the key strategies we are employing to continue our growth in student performance.

[01:24:51] One of the areas we're really excited about is transforming work with our principals, our school leaders and our teachers around all this available data. We love being able to accumulate information, but the key reminder with the data is that it's information for action.

[01:25:09] How do you use the information regarding student performance to modify instruction, provide additional support, identify tutoring needs so that our students can have the best advantages in targeting their specific needs. Our curriculum systems allow for schools and principals and teachers to identify specific benchmarks and standards that students need additional support in. VALS identifies the very specific phonics sounds and decoding issues that a student might need additional help in and through our all-in tutoring programs other

[01:25:47] intervention programs through L support classes as well as our special education programs they're able to use that information to target student needs so we've spent a significant amount of time in this work we've got work to do still in this area but it is a high priority for the division we are continuing to use credit recovery and credit accrual accrual options for students to earn course credit and these are rigorous pathways for students to have a second pass at courses they may have struggled with, have the content delivered in a different way with more flexible options that for some of our students just

[01:26:27] having the content differently is an asset for them. Some of our students really thrive in a digital environment, others don't and we just want to make sure our students can have the best available choices. Through the focus student support dashboard that Dr. Neal shared with you our schools are actually developing individualized plan for students and when I say our schools I do want to call out that this work is being led by our school counselors our school counselors are using those dashboards to track individual students that are showing deficits in one area or more I'd rather say struggles in one

[01:27:03] area or more and putting together a plan and monitoring that plan throughout the year for that student success they often work with their school's success coaches or in our younger grades additional staff and personnel to make sure that each one of those students are on track this improvement and technology has been a huge asset to the division and making sure that we can identify students by name and by need and not just students that rise to the forefront of our attention. Something we're really excited about is the Virginia Department of Education

[01:27:39] a few years ago approved locally awarded verified credits in some areas. In Prince William County we had not employed those in our high schools for social studies and we have every single high school this year using a locally award verified credit process for either American history or world history and this means that students can create students can complete an alternative local assessment that meets

the verified credit requirement those assessments are inquiry based units they're heavily based on research and writing and they allow students to develop the work over a

[01:28:19] period of time this is a unique way for students to meet the rigor of the standards but complete the expectations in a new way we think this is going to be particularly advantageous to some of our English language students who have competence in subjects like world history but maybe had not mastered the English language well enough to be able to complete the formal exam they can use some language modifications in the new testing so that is rolling out in all of our high schools this year and really excited about that change something that I think is thrilling and we're gonna highlight a little bit more here today

[01:28:54] is our partnership with Varsity Tutors and this is a platform that we launched the soft launch in the spring and launched a little louder this fall and a little extra louder today and you'll see some subsequent information as well.

[01:29:09] Varsity Tutors right now is available to every K-12 student in Prince William County Schools. They can each go through their clever platform to log in. So if If there's a student watching this right now and they're at home and they're struggling with calculus and their parent is looking at them quizzically and trying to figure out how to offer help, it happened to me when my child was in seventh grade, but we're going to use calculus and that child can log on to Varsity Tutors, write out their problem and get live in-demand help 24/7.

[01:29:48] Not that we want them online in the middle of the night, I do want to emphasize that. And it will provide that support in multiple languages. So if a student is more comfortable in getting their help in a different language, they can choose a different language. And so this is useful for a great many range of topics.

[01:30:07] The live tutor is sharing a whiteboard with the student. And so literally mapping out the questions and the problems with them, it is not AI. It is a human being on the other end guiding the students through the steps.

[01:30:23] In addition to that, students can take additional courses that they might be interested in learning more. You may have that fifth grader that is super excited about advanced math in sixth grade, but a little nervous about some of the skills and content, but they know they wanna be on that advanced trajectory, they can do some additional coursework.

[01:30:43] There's essay grading features that allow for live feedback on essays. Many of our English teachers have started using it. and then a huge range of really cool high interest classes. I think this is so important because it fills some of that need at home for some of our students that maybe are missing out on some key skills, want to do some additional enrichment opportunities and can't do it in the school day.

[01:31:08] And to share a little bit more about that, I am queuing up, I'm supposed to say it really clearly for the folks in the back, a very short video to a minute and a half and gives a quick highlight over all those features of Varsity Tutors.

[01:31:26] - Welcome to Varsity Tutors for Schools, the leader in live online learning. Varsity Tutors for Schools gives you 24/7 access to a collection of powerful learning tools and resources designed to support your learning goals. Connect with an experienced tutor at any time with 24/7 on-demand chat tutoring for immediate academic help.

[01:31:46] Elevate writing skills to new heights with on-demand essay review and coaching, ideal for crafting outstanding essays, especially for college applications. Choose from hundreds of live group classes each week where students get expert instruction and collaborate with their peers.

[01:32:02] Elevate academics and dive deeper with course-specific content. Prepare for higher education with test prep and admissions classes as part of our college and career readiness offering. Cultivate curiosity through enrichment classes covering topics from coding to game design and beyond.

[01:32:19] Learn from the icons with celebrity-led star courses and take a star-studded journey through captivating subjects. Varsity Tutors for Schools personalizes learning for every student and creates a roadmap for their success. Practice tests help identify strengths and areas for improvement.

[01:32:36] Those test results help define a personal learning plan. Self-study and practice problems then provide the support needed to master specific skills and foster success. Unlock unlimited access to a world of knowledge and personalized learning today.

[01:32:51] Access the platform through your school portal and click on the Varsity Tutors icon. Your child's academic success starts here at Varsity Tutors for Schools. Thank you. You can see why I'm excited about that resource now available to all of our students in Prince William County.

[01:33:09] And through our approaches at making more tools available for students, further connection with parents, and continuing the professional learning journey of our teachers and our staff, we are targeting every available option to support our student learning needs.

[01:33:25] Thank you. - Thank you, thank you, Dr. McDade. Thank you, Dr. Sullivan. I can be a personal sort of advocate on the fact that Varsity Tutors does a terrific job. My kids have used them for many years. They are incredible and really work well.

[01:33:43] Mr. Neal, I had a quick question on slide 14. Dr. Neal, sorry, Dr. Neal. 14, on above or grade level on HMH, - Third grade and eighth grade trending a little bit better than last year. Everyone else not.

[01:33:58] I know it's just a percent or two, but 1% stresses me out. - I do want to, because of course-- - And I know he said more people are taking it this year, yeah. - Yeah, and I do want Dr. Sullivan to give a little bit of background explanation on the HMH assessment, so that everybody understands the purpose of that assessment and how it's being used, how the data's being used.

[01:34:22] - Great, thank you. - Yeah, we're definitely always concerned about a dip. I do wanna restate something Dr. Neal mentioned, that this is the first year we've had the level of requirement of the assessment.

[01:34:39] And we have found in previous years, students that may have been struggling were not necessarily given the opportunity to assess. And so there is about a 4,000 student difference in the number of students that are taking the assessment now and the students that did not take the assessment before or more often are struggling students.

[01:35:05] That being said, we're still going to take every single indicator and work through it. Through the HMH growth assessment, schools and principals, teachers are provided direct links into how to address the curriculum and that is extremely powerful.

[01:35:23] It is not just a data point like you see here. You go into the resources, and it even clusters students for you for the teacher to say this group of students needs additional support in this area and

helps them target it.

[01:35:39] So we are definitely disappointed in any dip that we ever see in our student performance, but with our testing of all students and our commitment to now utilizing that data. We are taking that approach to really make it useful information, hope to see some really big gains in January.

[01:35:58] - Thank you. Ms. Zargar. - Thank you for all of this information. I know we have been talking primarily about like VLA and things like that. How do I say it like this? What do we do in math?

[01:36:14] Because that's a really important subject as well. We know that if we can get kids to algebra by eighth grade that they can take the higher level maths as they go on through high school, if that's their path. So are we doing something similarly, at least within the county, 'cause we know it's not a state thing, but do we have something similar so that we can be tracking our math with our kids?

[01:36:35] - Yeah, we have an internal plan to really accelerate access to accelerated math that starts in elementary school. To be transparent, one of the challenges that all divisions have had to face this year new standards in ELA and in math in the same year with the requirements on professional learning for our in ELA and so for our elementary teachers that is a significant amount of change in one year and I have to say they are handling it

[01:37:10] exceptionally well we are working with teams at individual schools to have them and work towards how to scaffold instruction to those higher levels of cognitive thinking that are really necessary for success in advanced math. And so our elementary teachers who are the backbone of the organization within the same school are really leveraging both changes.

[01:37:35] So it is definitely a multi-year process. One of the things I will mention is this year we are also undergoing, pending some release of information from the VDOE, a math adoption cycle. This division hasn't had a coherent math adoption in many, many years.

[01:37:53] Meaning when there is not a clear curriculum in place, people fill the gaps in ways that are not necessarily in service of learning the advanced skills. And so you may have seen our calls for parents and teachers and students to participate in the math adoption cycle.

[01:38:11] And so last summer, we trained all of our teachers in the HMH and UFLY curriculum for ELA. This upcoming summer, we have planned to train everybody in the new math curriculum, and any new assessments that may come with it.

[01:38:29] So we have a whole roadmap laid out, and we're just hopeful that the information from the VDOE comes as planned. - Perfect, thank you. I just know that it is hard. It's been really hard, and I know next year has some things coming down the pike as well.

[01:38:44] So thank you, especially elementary teachers. I know how hard you're working on this, but I just wondered if the division had sort of had a focus on math too, but I'm glad we're looking at the new curriculum and I want us to consider that lift for our teachers as well. So thank you.

[01:39:02] - Ms. William. - Thank you, Mr. Chairman Lateef. Sorry, my train of thought there. So I'm curious to learn a little bit more about the FSS dashboard, the one that we utilize to track critical students who have critical risk factors, and what do we do, how are we monitoring those students to ensure that they're no longer on that dashboard?

[01:39:30] I'll start with that. - So I can address that from a division level with the caveat that the tool is intended for use at the school level so that our counselors, our principals, our educators can look at that dashboard say where are students and design direct intervention so what I showed you is an aggregate when this tool is used by others they can actually drill down to the student level and and identify specific students that they want to target an intervention for so from a high level for a 30,000 foot it's

[01:40:07] something that we can look at to say yeah we're seeing some changes in our focus student support dashboard on attendance or behavior we're seeing a lower number percent of students with risk factors it's a monitoring tool but as we can drill down deeper at the school level they're able to use that information to guide their actions so it's much more action-oriented when you get down into that portion of the dashboard thank you and then how or do the FSFS dashboard and the monitoring dashboard do they work together are we

[01:40:44] asking staff and you may not know but how what is our division sort of statement towards staff and how do they interact if they don't when it comes to our staff utilizing information so if I can if I'm interpreting your question correctly it's how are we using the different dashboards in order to guide what we're doing and and do they overlap or so all of our dashboard most of our dashboards are drawing from the same data pool our student information system but they are designed with different purposes so our graduation dashboard for

[01:41:22] example what I've shared here is really accessible to principals and central office staff there is a comparable tool that can be used in our student information system that is accessible at the school level for our counselors to use for example and again they can go down to the student level to design specific interventions so all of our data sources are aligned which is something we've been striving to do so that we're all working from the same data pool but we do have different dashboards depending on the purpose and the intended audience who's going to be using those thank you I'm almost done I

[01:41:59] appreciate that because I think that's a very innovative approach and it saves a lot of time for our counselors and our staff and really aggregates that data in a purposeful and meaningful and targeted way so that's why I was asking because I'm sure parents are not as familiar with the jargon and how we operate the other thing I wanted to know is how do we explain or do we when it comes to verified credits and the difference between a regular credit and a verified credit when we're offering that not only to the student but to the for the student's family for understanding is there dr. Sullivan do you know how we go

[01:42:36] about explaining the difference yeah I can't speak to that actual conversation between the school and parent, what I can say is that all of our resources do identify those differences and which credits require a verified credit.

[01:42:53] For our students that are English language learners, one of the big areas for process improvement we landed on after a research dive is that we had to do a much better job of communicating that to our parents as they onboard and as they enroll because the systems are very different.

[01:43:10] So I think by and large, from our work and our work with stakeholders, we identified that that was a deficit area for us. And we are now putting in place some new, we actually already did it and made a translated plan so that when families come through the Global Welcome Center in particular, they're getting that information in authentically written language materials in their language and not having to just translate them through a feature and getting a sit down meeting explaining that.

[01:43:42] Our work identified that that was a real missing link and making sure that parents understood the importance of that. I would feel quite certain that my colleagues have ensured that in those roll up meetings between eighth and ninth grade, I know right now we're talking about making transition meetings even more robust, that parents are getting that information.

[01:44:06] - Thank you, I appreciate it. and I only have two more things but they're very brief. I brought that up because I knew that was, there's been process improvement and I think it's good to highlight and I appreciate all the extra effort and time and attention because that was a sore spot.

[01:44:22] The last two things I want to say is, one, what do we do for students who may start the year below grade level, right? But like really aren't below grade level, they just didn't want to take the test right that day or for whatever, because I know we have groups of students like that.

[01:44:38] Is there a time period, how are they evaluated to then be moved into different groups or the plan changes? What is, do you know anything about the timeframe or how we deal with situations like that? - Yeah, I'll give you two different answers that I think really work in tandem. I was just at a school when they did this data review.

[01:44:55] So I can speak authentically to what I've seen. So one, the mid-year would obviously be an opportunity for a student to truly demonstrate their skillset and then potentially move out of additional services. Through all in tutoring, students are consistently monitored for those areas that they're struggle and able to move out of certain intervention, if you will, by benchmark and by standard.

[01:45:21] And even the plans that we have in place, they do have milestone points where a teacher could make an adjustment if they're now seeing that skill that maybe they didn't see at that original test.

[01:45:37] So there's three, four answers, because the data's different, students are different, but what we're seeing is through collaborative learning teams, through teacher meetings, through parent meetings, those adjustments are being made when there's new data that comes in that suggests to us that the student has mastered this.

[01:45:55] - Thank you, I appreciate it, 'cause I know that was a sore spot for some parents, and well, me personally, I have one of those who doesn't wanna do it at the beginning of the year. So I appreciate that there's new ways to monitor their students and it's updated regularly because it's a resource issue as well. And students change levels.

[01:46:11] And the last thing I just wanna say is, obviously to praise you for the minute and a half long video on varsity tutors, I-- - Well they gave it to us, I can't get any credit. - Well it was one of the things that I'd asked for simply because in talking to students in schools and some of the parents, they really aren't as aware of varsity tutoring, I think as they should be, and some people are still focused on paper.

[01:46:33] So I know we don't direct staff to do anything, but I would love if we could get that pushed out via text with the link to the video, because I think the video does an amazing job of summarizing all of the available options and allowing parents to know what options are there.

[01:46:49] So I just wanna thank you again for not only presenting the data, Dr. Neal and Dr. Sullivan, but for the other insights as well that correspond with the data. - Ms. Wall. - Thank you.

[01:47:04] I just wanted to say that I'm so pleased, Dr. McDade and your team, that you bring these quarterly updates to us. It's just awesome for us. It just is very helpful. And I also am very pleased with the

emphasis on data, the dashboards and the data, and that not just that we're collecting the data, but that we're making it easier for educators and leaders to use the data to help kids.

[01:47:31] And I really liked that you said, we need to be able to identify kids by name and by need. think that's fantastic um the varsity tutors um program or services i guess is excellent as well and i really hope that kids will take advantage of it and i am assuming that we show kids how to access it how to find it and what it can do for them so i'm i know kids are really tech savvy they're more tech savvy than a lot of us and um in our uh adulthood but i i just really hope that we're making a good effort for um to educate kids on all of the things that it can do like supporting

[01:48:07] an essay for instance for college applications that's really powerful um my last comment would be i think with all of the professional learning professional development and all of the things that we're giving putting on to teachers to help them i do think we need to start looking at um looking at the length of our work day and finding ways to create more time and space for our teachers to learn the things that we're asking them to do, to learn how to use the data, to complete the literacy training and the math instruction and everything else.

[01:48:39] Other than that, I don't have any questions. I just want to commend the division for bringing the board these quarterly updates and keeping us surprised of how we are doing because at the end of the day, it's the most important thing that we do is educating children and helping them succeed academically. So thank you.

[01:48:56] Okay, great. Thank you, Ms. Wall. Mr. Jesse. Yeah, I want to thank you for this presentation. To me, it really emphasized the growth in the way that we are trying to make improvements in our system.

[01:49:16] As I said at the last presentation where, you know, I'm not happy with 70 percent, I think we're going to do better this year. I like to see us do as well as Belmont Bay did with a significant increase and i got a feeling we might be able to do that with with this new system coming in so i'm really grateful for for what you're doing and i appreciate it and i'm looking for some good results uh one thing i was going to ask since this something uh some of the

[01:49:55] teachers that i've talked to who have been really good teachers like with 100 pass rates in their sol and so forth they have concerns about the new phonics have we do we have a group of teachers who are proven successful in sol scores and so forth do you ever get together with them and say how are we doing what's your opinion about the new programs and so forth if not i would just

[01:50:29] recommend that we do something like that because you know belmont bay for example i think was 25 percent in math increase we should want to know what that teacher did and those teachers did and we want to make sure that what we're doing now is not impacting negatively I understand organizational coherence but sometimes you know you have to have some modification but I'm impressed and I thank you guys for what you're doing this year and I'm looking for some

[01:51:03] really good results. Thank you. Okay, great. Thank you guys very much. That was excellent. I echo everyone's comments, especially Ms. Walls. This is our core business and we appreciate the updates and continue to keep up the great work. Thank you all very much. Dr. McDade. All right, just to close out superintendent's time. Again, thank you, Dr. Sullivan, Dr. Neal. Also, as this will be our last board meeting before we close out 2025, I want to wish all of our families a happy holiday season, and encourage you to take this winter break to relax, recharge, and spend time with loved ones and friends.

[01:51:42] I look forward to continuing our work together in the new year and the endless possibilities for an even brighter future for all PWCS students. Winter break begins December 23rd and classes will resume on January 6th. And wishing everyone a wonderful holiday season with your family and friends.

[01:51:59] Mr. Chairman, that concludes my superintendent's time. - Thank you, Dr. McDade. We'll move on to committee updates. have miss wall um with the safe schools advisory update yes thank you dr latif um so at the safe schools meeting we met on november 18th and from 6 30 to 8 and um the one of the most important things that we did is we elected officers um so now we have a chair or i guess a chair a vice chair and a secretary and so thank you to the individuals who stepped up and agreed to volunteer to serve in those capacities um we also reviewed and approved the minutes from the october meeting

[01:52:38] and then we received a school safety audit summary and threat assessment we reviewed the threat assessment survey data and a threat assessment is something that's administered um it's not our survey it's an external survey and so we walked through all of the questions and some of the questions are worded a little funny and it makes the responses a little off but it does provide useful data and the committee reviewed that data and discussed the implications of that data what we're going to do with it what does it tell us and how can we improve the safety posture of our schools based on what we're hearing is there additional professional development needed is

[01:53:15] there training needed are there additional resources needed so that was a really productive discussion and then we adjourned at eight the next meeting will be january 6th the snow date would be january 13th and as always the public is welcome to attend there is a little citizen comment portion at the beginning and we actually did hear from a citizen this last time so that was really nice um anyway that's an update on safe schools thank you miss wall does anyone have any questions for miss wall okay miss wall you can proceed with your update on the internal audit committee okay so internal audit committee met on november 6th and we uh reviewed the completed

[01:53:54] audit report for antietam elementary school um they had a good audit we reviewed the status of the in-progress audits which are gains of a high school fundraising and employee retention we reviewed the schedule for the upcoming november and december school audits which will be unity reed bevel and dumfries and then we presented or our auditor presented to the committee members the draft 2025 internal audit plan and so the committee had a chance to take a look at that and discuss it and that audit plan will be coming before the board actually maybe we did look at it

[01:54:34] today i'm not sure with no it will be on a future agenda with no additional if there isn't any additional feedback from any school board members that will be on consent so i don't think i have any other updates the committee is working really well we have some good ideas for what we want to do with audit for the coming school year.

[01:54:55] - Thank you, Ms. Wall. And I appreciate your efforts on audit committee. I think it's important for everyone to know that the audit committee is chaired by Ms. Wall and the internal auditor is a direct report also to the school board and provides oversight, compliance functions, and also make sure that we're doing what we're supposed to do with taxpayer dollars.

[01:55:17] And we work closely with a joint audit committee with the Board of County Supervisors to continue to make sure we keep our AAA bond rating triple-triple. Okay, next we'll move on to, I think we're up to 18.01 policy 729, the cell phone free education.

[01:55:34] So for this, just to update everyone, this is our third or fourth meeting in a row that we will be talking about, the really third meeting. We've had a presentation on how the pilot went. In the last board meeting, we had a robust discussion on what board members felt and staff felt about the different options that we will be having.

[01:55:56] I'd like to have, if tech, Jim, can you put up the different options on the screen? I know they're not included in today's, yeah, there we go. So we have options two and three there. So what I've asked the board over the last few weeks is to give full consideration of the different options.

[01:56:15] I felt that it was important for board members to make a motion on the option they so chose and we would come to a consensus based on the different votes we might have. I also believe that it was important that every option be fully considered by folks and given its due process.

[01:56:34] And I think that is why we didn't show up here with a preconceived motion. I will ask the board members, I know Ms. Williams has a first motion and will entertain the motions. And what I'd ask the board members is As we have the discussion on the motion, keep it brief to your concerns about what you believe you'd like to see happen.

[01:56:52] And then we will go through the votes relatively quickly. Ms. Williams. - Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I move for option one, which is not being displayed. - Yeah, let's show up. Can we, yeah, I'm sorry, put up option one. We have them on two different slides. - I move that we, well, it's already written out here very nicely.

[01:57:13] I move that Prince William County School Board approve option one For policy 729, cell phone free education requiring cell phones and personal electronic communication devices to be turned off and stored away during all instructional periods regardless of location, including field trips for high school students, for elementary school students and middle school students.

[01:57:34] All cell phone and personal electronic communications device must be turned off and stored away after the tardy bell and until dismissal bell during any instructional periods regardless of location. This includes field trips, except while on a school bus, or yes, except while on a school bus or other transportation to or from field trip location, or if the teacher determines that the use is appropriate for instructional purposes.

[01:58:03] And option one is the current pilot policy. - That's right, so just for clarification, option one is as is, that would be bell to bell, essentially at elementary and middle, the elementary is changing a little bit, but it's bell to bell, elementary, middle, and high school will be as is, where students continue to use their phone during lunch and between classes.

[01:58:21] I need a second for Ms. Williams' motion for option one. - Second. - Mr. Blake seconds the motion. Okay, you can have a discussion option one. Ms. Williams, you can briefly tell us. - Sure, thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have put this motion forth because I do believe there has been a considerable amount of time and effort spent in not only asking for our staff's voice on this, but our students' voice.

[01:58:45] I would be extremely remiss as the board member who instituted or helped institute putting students on the dais and because of that, now we have student councils and obviously student groups, as we heard here, citizen comment time.

[01:59:01] I do not believe, and also in addition, the majority of emails that I have received has been in favor for option one. I would be remiss without saying that there have been some ask for modification of our current policy, but the majority of responses I've received have been for what we currently do in pilot now in the school division.

[01:59:22] I do recognize that cell phones can be a distraction, but I have stood firm in my commitment and belief that it is our job as leaders and in the education business to instruct our students how to best utilize this technology to prepare them for life after graduation.

[01:59:40] I also know from speaking with high schoolers my district and a lot of parents that there are significant amount of high schoolers that are responsible for not only themselves but for their siblings and also they are employed while I do recognize that there are other forms of communication utilizing a text message now actually to my surprise is being done by employers they are not just emailing as most of us I think of our age group my age group anyway is accustomed to I was kind of surprised listening to some of the students so that's actually how they talk to their employers as the

[02:00:18] student mentioned earlier during citizen comment time there is not enough time in the Bell dismissal to get to your bus or to make any alternate arrangements if something comes up they will just simply miss a bus it may not be able to make it home or make it to their whatever activity so this is why I'm in favor of it I understand that the governor's model guide model guidance is exactly that it is model guidance I understand that again that it can be a distraction but I would be remiss if I did not provide this option I do not believe at this period of time that this board I have the majority of support for

[02:00:55] it but I cannot be anyone who I other than who I said I would be when I ran for this position and I will continue to be the person who provides that outlet for the voice of those who are not always able to express it the most, so thank you.

[02:01:13] - Okay, any other comments on option one? Okay, we'll do a roll call vote. We've been doing roll call votes all evening. The motion on the floor is for option one. Ms. Mills, can you please take the roll call?

[02:01:29] - Lateef? - No. - Blake? - Jesse? - No. - Tradinick? - No. - Wall? - No. - Wilk? - No. - Williams?

[02:01:45] - Yes. - Zargarpur? - No. - Okay, next motion, Ms. Trudenik. - The vote is seven no, one yes, motion failed. - Say it again, I'm sorry. - The vote is seven no, one yes, Williams, motion failed.

[02:02:01] - Thank you, Ms. Mills. We'll move on to the next motion, Ms. Trudenik. - I move that the Prince William County School Board approve option two for policy 729, cell phone free education requiring all cell phones and personal electronic communication devices must be turned off and stored away during the bell-to-bell school day and during any instructional periods, regardless of location, including field trips, effective January 1st, 2025.

[02:02:31] - Thank you, Mr. Denik. Do I have a second? - Mr. Chairman. - Ms. Wall. Ms. Wall seconds the motion. Okay, discussion. Mr. Denik. - Again, it's been no secret that I am in favor of this.

[02:02:49] This is an executive order that came down from the governor. The previous board voted to support an executive order that came down from the last governor and implement it in the same timeframe that he asked. This would be what we would be doing here, except for this executive order, does not harm our children, it helps our children.

[02:03:10] This is essential for protecting our students' focus, education, and well-being. This will not hurt our kids. We've seen that it has only helped through the pilot program. Why wait to make more improvements that remove distractions and have a positive impact on the culture and climate in our schools.

[02:03:28] If we know it helps their education, why would we wait to implement it? If Dr. McDade says we're ready to implement it in January, why would we wait? Let's help our kids now. I do wanna address, 'cause I feel like there's a little bit of a misconception with students who have IEPs or 504s.

[02:03:48] They will be given accommodations. I don't want that to be a rhetoric that gets pushed out negatively or falsely. They will be given accommodations. And please, if they're not, and you deserve it, please reach out to us.

[02:04:04] That's what we're here for. And I would urge you to consider asking again. It hasn't been implemented yet. And when it is, is when we'll figure that out. I have students who work.

[02:04:20] I have students who play sports. I have students who drive. We all know how to use technology at this point, and knowing our kids arrive to school safely is simply done through an iPhone, through a Samsung, through a Life 360 app.

[02:04:37] I get a ding as soon as he arrives to the parking lot of a school. If you as a parent don't know how to implement that on your phone, I also ask that you reach out, 'cause we have so many people that can point you in the right direction to implement those things. Our students not being able to use their phone from 7am to 2pm does not also include in an emergency.

[02:05:00] That phone is in their backpack and is still in their possession. We did not take it from out of their possession or yours. So if there is an emergency, I believe that they will still have access to that phone in their backpack during that time.

[02:05:16] I just think it's silly to say that they wouldn't be able to have access. We also, I went to Prince William County Schools and survived with no cell phone, came out, still was able to contact my parents in an emergency.

[02:05:32] We went through 9/11 in Prince William County Schools. So I just really believe that this is going to do great things for our kids and their education. It's gonna provide them time. It's gonna give them focus that they don't have right now.

[02:05:49] And I really think that it's gonna be good for our kids. So that's my vote. - Thank you, Ms. Trenenек. - I'll go to Ms. Wall, but just one clarification. We laid out in the policy and the discussions in the prior meetings on what would happen if there are emergencies.

[02:06:06] And to be clear, students are trained in lockdown drills and it is important to continue to follow those guidelines when there is an emergency. Many times they're asked to be quiet and not use their phones and things like that. So there are proper best practices that our security division has worked with our staff to teach the students when we do the lockdown drills.

[02:06:29] I'll go to Ms. Wall next. - Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I wanna say thank you, first of all, to all the parents, teachers, and community individuals who've reached out to me to share your thoughts on the proposed cell phone policy. And I appreciate and commend the advocacy of student leaders in putting forth the strengths of their various positions.

[02:06:48] I think that's important. The discussion that we've had over the last month or so has been an important part of the process. And I know we all want to find the best way to make our schools better. I thank everyone for weighing in regardless of what the board decides tonight the division will have communication protocols in place to help get important messages to and from students to handle those emergencies and to address any unique unusual or critical situations that may arise so I hope everybody can feel assured that that is at minimum going to be the case and regardless of what we decide to do the pilot has been successful so far and just from the pilot we're seeing measurable improvement in student learning behavior into student interaction focus

[02:07:28] and I'm confident in the division's ability to implement all of the options on the table tonight including option two which would take place in January um I've been asked by some parents why don't we just continue with the pilot and take the win and I think some of the students talked about that tonight as well and I want to address that for just a second um besides not just wanting to settle for good enough there are a few reasons first cell phones have become ubiquitous in schools with great impact for both good and ill and we've seen from the pilot the powering off these devices will power up every student's potential all of the research would present we've been presented and that we've I've looked at and others have looked at shows that beltabel cell phone free

[02:08:07] environment addresses the realities of cell phone distraction in the learning environment and two it directly tackles the related problem of cell phone addiction by our students which is real for many. Our students deserve a phone-free education. Our schools do a lot of things, but first and foremost, they are schools. By restricting access to cell phones, we're putting focus back where it belongs, which is on learning. And by restricting cell phones from bell to bell, we will create a space for our students to connect with their education, not their screens.

[02:08:37] Our scores will go up, our grades will go up. I'm very convinced of this. Second, if we silence the notifications, we can amplify the learning. The average student gets 240 app notifications a day. Every notification is a potential interruption that derails critical thinking and concentration so removing phones and the temptation that those phones present silences those notifications and frees our students to focus on the learning taking place in the classroom currently our students check their phones between classes and at lunch and anecdotally I've been told in some cases they're even checking them in class that kind of distraction is not helpful whatever is trending

[02:09:17] on social media will still be trending in our students' minds and most definitely will affect their focus and their concentration in their next class and throughout the school day. I've heard from many parents who want their children to be able to focus on learning and not get caught up in the drama that so often follows school-time social media use.

[02:09:35] Third, without cell phones in the classroom, in the hallways, in the bathrooms, or in the lunchroom, research has shown that our students and our parents will develop greater communication skills and students will learn greater responsibility. So we haven't talked a lot about this, but I fully expect that a move to bell-to-bell will be an adjustment, and for some it will not be easy.

[02:09:54] It will be an adjustment for parents and for students who are accustomed to communicating with each other throughout the school day. And that adjustment for many is going to involve adopting independence. Research on cell phone use in schools shows that students need experiences in being

independent in order to develop self-confidence and gain essential skills as they grow into competent, capable adults.

[02:10:16] It's much more difficult for students to develop that independence and those essential life skills while they're tethered wirelessly to parents via a cell phone all day while at school in that same vein some have suggested the office staff will be flooded with calls from adults wanting to get in touch with their kids but i have confidence that parents will quickly discern between what communications truly cannot wait and what communications can wait until the school day ends pick up and drop off changes items left at home unsigned permission slips illnesses family emergencies or any other urgent issue or family emergency all of those things can always be

[02:10:54] communicated to the student schools were capable of managing parent child communications before every child had a cell phone in their pocket and they'll be able to do it again and then fourth and i promise i'll wrap up some of you may recall that i've advocated for a division-wide cell phone policy in years past and in that context it was to address troubling student behavior like meetups in bathrooms to sell or use drugs or otherwise coordinate inappropriate activity at school. It was for students taking or exchanging inappropriate images with each other during the school day in violation of Title IX. It was to address text message invitations to settle scores

[02:11:30] with fights in the cafeteria or hallways and to invite the rest of the student body to record the fight and post it to social media so it can go viral. It was to address destruction of school property and the latest TikTok challenges. It was to address defiant students who ignored their teachers and instead watched youtube throughout class it was to cut down on cheating using those amazing devices every student has in their pocket there are a lot of reasons why cell phones at school and not just in the classroom prevent avoidable issues to our students and our ability as a school division to fulfill our primary responsibility which is education of our children so restricting the use of phones from beltabel addresses all of these prior concerns of mine

[02:12:06] and the concerns of parents that i represent so finally we know that beltabel works beltabel has already been implemented successfully in a number of our schools we've seen it in action and it works when middle schools went bell to bell in my district three years ago implementation was much smoother and easier than anyone had expected including myself it did not require extra staff or money it actually freed up staff from dealing with difficult student title 9 violations which reduced dramatically once beltabel went into place so research shows less green time equals better focus better grades and overall better well-being for our youth and this policy shift is about

[02:12:42] prioritizing education in school every minute matters so I think let's reclaim that learning time at the end of the day my duty is to provide the best learning environment possible for all students and in the balance I support option two for that reason thank you thank you miss wall miss let me go to who we haven't heard from yet mr. mr. Jesse yeah I just want to make clear that last time I said I was going to support option one and so why have I

[02:13:14] changed what i did say last time was that i really believe that the bell to bell is the best policy but for the moment since we were already doing the uh having the cell phone during uh intermissions and lunch but since the majority of the board uh wants to go and proceed now i think that's the best method so that's why i'm changing my votes i'm also been told dr mcday that you feel that your

[02:13:49] staff is ready if we go with January I believe that the staff will be better positioned if the board decides to go bell to bell the staff will be better positioned to implement this in August it is while whatever the board decides to do certainly we are going to comply and make that work but it would be a huge disruption to do it in January and not give schools ample time to actually plan for this shift so it would be my preference that we would if this decision is made that it is made if for August implementation to give schools ample time to prepare for this this

[02:14:29] change and to give parents and students an opportunity to prepare for the change - Okay, thank you. - Go down to Mr. Wilk and then Mr. Blake. Okay, so thank you, Dr. McTade. Thank you, everyone.

[02:14:45] I'm gonna talk a little bit about some of the topics that I have concerns about with this. And I'm also gonna broach on some areas that I think we really need to factor and focus on if we are going to implement this policy, which it looks like we are, but now it's a matter of when.

[02:15:02] So I call this three buckets and three considerations of what we need to look at. First is the governor's mandate. So the first option was not an option because it goes against the final guidance of actually an executive order, order 33. But it is worth noting because people have said, why did you guys start with a pilot this August knowing this?

[02:15:23] Well, the executive order was not finalized until the end of September. So we're operating with the VDOE's timeline here, but we had to make a decision and we went forward with a pilot program in a lot of our schools. Governor Youngkin's bell-to-bell policy requires phones to remain off at the start and until the end of the school day.

[02:15:46] While some divisions have already implemented this policy, others are moving with alacrity to update their regulations. I do find it interesting, I didn't put this in my speech, but I know there was a headline today in Inside Nova about Culpepper doing it. And everyone's thinking, oh, well, Culpepper can do it, then Prince William can do this.

[02:16:02] Well, I called them 'cause I have relationships with a lot of these leaders down there. And I said, explain this to me. Was it communicated to your families that you are going to be bell to bell? And they said, actually, yes, this fall we started bell to bell.

[02:16:17] The problem was we didn't have a way to keep the phones locked up and it actually caused disruption. So this new thing, let's call it lock boxes. I forget the actual term that they're doing is still bell to bell. But now they're making their kids put the phones in lock boxes because the bell to bell in the fall without the lock boxes was not effective.

[02:16:38] So we're looking at potentially launching in January. We don't have lock boxes or cubbies or whatever you want to call them in place. So we'd just be following down a road of a great exemplar down there using it as a case study. But the main point I want to mention is this didn't just come out of nowhere.

[02:16:54] They had bell to bell starting in August. Here's another one. I was ironically from my job out in Frederick, no, Warren County, excuse me. And it just so happened the day I was doing my job job presentation that they just started their bell to bell.

[02:17:10] And I said, did this just come out of nowhere? And they said, no, it has been communicated in phases ever since the onset of this school year. So there were no surprises by this. Yes, there are some

divisions that apparently I think are switching. I'm not gonna say generally like every state's going the way I'm talking about it, excuse me, every county is going this way.

[02:17:31] But I'm just giving you some case studies with local districts in our area. So let's now talk about the existing pilot program and policy changes. So our current pilot program launched in August was thoroughly communicated to parents and students. Why issue a program that has shown promise rather than hastily implementing a new policy with just two weeks notice before Christmas holiday break?

[02:17:55] Clear communication is paramount and we must ensure all families, particularly those who do not fully grasp the reasoning for the change are adequately informed. Although I understand that the VDOE finalized its guidance after we initiated the pilot, implementing a mid-year change risk appearing perfunctory, undermining the goodwill established with students and families.

[02:18:18] Schools currently have established routines and enforcement practices under the pilot program. These routines ensure students and teachers understand expectations and adherence is palpable. If we pivot mid-year, do we have the necessary staffing to monitor hallways and lunchrooms effectively?

[02:18:37] With two weeks notice, will schools have the resources and manpower to enforce these changes? How much funding would it require to hire additional personnel to assist high schools with this mid-year enforcement? Want to note upcoming state legislation.

[02:18:54] So recently, State Senator Valkenberg co-sponsored a Senate Bill 738, which would allow school districts to create their own cell phone usage policies while maintaining local autonomy. This bill could offer divisions more flexibility to align policies with their unique needs.

[02:19:12] The 2025 General Assembly is slated to begin January 8th and it would be propitious to monitor the legislation before making any drastic mid-year changes. While there is no guarantee that this legislation will pass, it could provide an opportunity to revisit the cell phone policies later in the year.

[02:19:31] making a mid-year change now, only to potentially revise it again in the spring, risk confusion and inconsistency for all stakeholders. So why not January? Why is my position to start it in August? I will agree with Ms. Wall, Ms. Tregenick, that instruction and social emotional learning are critical priorities for me, as they are for this entire board.

[02:19:55] While I support the concept of bell to bell, there are significant concerns about a January implementation as I lay out. Again, these are not, I'm not trying to overgeneralize. I do not mean by saying this that every educator, student, or parent feels this way. This is just in my conversations.

[02:20:12] So some educator concerns. Will teachers have the necessary administrative support to enforce this policy consistently with two weeks notice? How will teachers manage confiscated phones and will they be liable for any accidental damage?

[02:20:30] Could this policy create unnecessary power struggles between students and teachers, especially given the likely resistance from students who are not expecting this change mid-year. Without clear disciplinary procedures and administrative backing, teachers could be seen as the bad guys, straining teacher-student relationships.

[02:20:51] Communication gaps. With only two weeks remaining in December, how will we ensure all stakeholders are informed of this change and its rationale? Non-English speaking families who often rely

on phones as their primary means of communication with students could be disproportionately affected.

[02:21:08] How will we address equity and concerns with these families? Our front office is prepared to handle an anticipated influx of calls from parents who do not speak English. Our division prides itself on serving a diverse student population, including families who speak over 149 languages.

[02:21:27] How can we reasonably expect schools to provide interpretation services for parents within this short timeframe. Without equitable support for non-English speaking families, we risk alienating a significant portion of the community and potentially facing federal discrimination challenges.

[02:21:46] Student feedback. I was able to connect with some students and some of them were kind enough to share some surveys that were done in their school's leadership. This is just, again, a small sample, but this was of 86 students at one of my high schools at Forest Park. Again, small sample, I get it, 86%, but still useful information.

[02:22:05] 71% of the students surveyed use phones to coordinate rides and pickups. 70% use phones to communicate with coaches, club sponsors and other extracurricular leaders. 84% reported that teachers encourage cell phone usage in some capacity with the assignments and the work that they're doing.

[02:22:24] Changing the policy mid-year sends the wrong message to students who have adhered to the pilots program requirements. It undermines trust and risk fostering resistance, particularly among students who feel blindsided by the abrupt change. Conclusion, balancing the governor's directive, the effectiveness of our existing policy and the potential for legislative changes, I believe it would be noxious to students, teachers, and parents to implement this policy mid-year.

[02:22:52] Starting in the fall would establish clear expectations from the beginning of the school year, ensuring thorough communication and addressing equity concerns comprehensively. I do support this bell to bell initiative from the governor and the executive order, but I do urge this board to adopt a more measured approach by delaying the implementation until the upcoming school year.

[02:23:14] Thank you. - Thank you, Mr. Wilk, Mr. Blake. - Thank you, Chairman. So I just want to read this as a school board member, my priority is to create an environment where students can thrive academically, socially and emotionally.

[02:23:29] I fully support restricting cell phone use to enhance focus during instructional time. However, I believe that implementing the bell to bell policy in August 2025 is the most practical and effective approach to ensure its success. This timeline offers an opportunity for comprehensive preparation, allowing our schools to develop clear and consistent protocols, train staff thoroughly, and integrate necessary technology to support effective enforcement.

[02:23:59] The extra time ensures that every teacher and administrator have the tools they need to implement the policy seamlessly. Additionally, it will allow us to address potential challenges and adjust based on feedback from teachers, students, and families.

[02:24:16] It also shows respect to our diverse community by considering transportation and extracurricular coordination. We want to ensure that no family is disproportionately affected by the sudden policy change, and that all students have access to the resources they need to succeed.

[02:24:34] Stability is key. mid-year changes could disrupt routines which already are in place and potentially create unnecessary confusion starting in starting in 2025 in august 2025 will allow for a

smoother transition for both students and staff minimizing disruptions furthermore this approach aligns with the video ease plan review process it allows us to incorporate best practices that are being and refined at the state level, ensuring that we are part of the broader conversation about improving education.

[02:25:11] By taking this thoughtful, inclusive approach, we can ensure the long-term success of this policy while prioritizing the wellbeing and success of our students and families. And for this reason, that's why I implore this board to delay the implementation of this cell phone policy until August, 2025.

[02:25:34] - Thank you, Mr. Blake. Mr. Blake, Ms. Williams. - Thank you. I'm sure we all know my position. I just want to remind the board that without delay, we will not provide enough time for our students who are on IEPs to reschedule all of those meetings to an order for their IEP to be compliant.

[02:25:52] That is quite a heavy lift. So obviously I stand alone in my position, but I would ask the board to be mindful of the work that's involved for that because it's significant. And then also whatever decision is made, whether it's January or August, to be mindful for our regulations that they are clear and spelled out.

[02:26:10] Currently some schools interpret it as an offense per class per teacher and some schools interpret it as an offense, period. And so that stacks on discipline. So when we do, whatever policy we do decide, if we could have very clear spelled out regulations and be mindful also how this will affect our students who are walking around the building with phones and how we will be able to instruct the staff to know that those students are permitted to have phones versus students who are not.

[02:26:37] Thank you. - Ms. Zargar. - Thank you, Dr. Lateef. Boy, a lot has been said here. I am in favor of a bell to bell policy. To be clear, in my own personal mom-ness, I had a child who was up to no good with her phone.

[02:26:54] I took it away from her and she had a device, a separate device given to her by a friend or something. And she would use it to do her shenanigans, call them that i really don't think having access between bells and at lunch will cut down on some of those shenanigans shall we say and i know that 85 to 90 percent of our kids don't do shenanigans but for kids like mine and for kids if you have one out there in the audience who you're worried about we want to cut down on the vaping and the whatever they're meeting up for like miss wall had

[02:27:33] said talking about all the different things that happen as a way to connect to those shenanigans whatever they may be so I am in in favor of it I am also a teacher and I understand that January is not a great time to start something new it feels like it to the rest of the world that's because you sent your kids back to school to us and we're still tired two weeks is not always a long enough time so giving the time till August makes a lot more sense to me as a professional educator even though and I say this when we get to our code of

[02:28:11] behavior stuff so this is the warm-up I guess the adults are the ones who were responsible for helping kids with their behavior if we consider phone a behavior it's all of us it's parents it's teachers that said no matter what anybody's thinking the teacher in the classroom is going to be that first line of resistance they're the ones who have to notice the change say the thing remind the thing do the thing thing the thing the thing the thing and administrators have to be able to back them up and a mid-year switch is not a good time we've got VLA we've got math we've got SOLs coming we've got kids we got to get

[02:28:50] across the finish line and you want to add this which sounds like nothing but But if you're not in the schools, it is a something. That's why I'm preferring to wait. Now, I get the sense of urgency.

[02:29:05] Three years ago, I had that sense of urgency. And when I would say, "I think we should ban phones," people went, "Oh, we can't." So I'm glad you're with me now. We're gonna wait till August on, I'm gonna be voting for August though, thank you.

[02:29:22] - Okay, so very good, thank each of you for your comments. I think if anybody wants to know what I think, I think Jennifer Wall very clearly laid out, you can just re-watch her clip, of everything she said is where I believe, and she and I have had this discussion for four or five years now on this board.

[02:29:44] I truly believe cell phones are a barrier to one's potential. As I teach students in med school and in residence, the ones that impress me the most are the ones that have their knowledge in their head. They don't need to go to their phone. They don't need to Google something.

[02:29:59] They're engaged with what's in front of them. They're engaged with the work that's ahead of them. They're engaged with all the work they're doing. And I think, you know, over time the research has shown that this dependence on phones, the tethering to this technology is disruptive to learning, disruptive to maintaining a strong set of basic foundational knowledge for the work that needs to get done.

[02:30:26] which I've pointed out in the past, test scores worldwide have been dropping since 2012, around the same time phones and social media became ubiquitous in everyone's pockets. I believe the student's mind should be focused on the lessons in front of them and not on the distractions in their pockets.

[02:30:42] I will continue to prioritize learning and not scrolling. That is the effort I have done and I've been committed to and I will support this motion. I'll be voting for both motions too and whatever comes next, but we will have a cell phone band to band policy in Prince William County Schools.

[02:31:01] Bell to bell, bell to bell. Did I say band to band? Bell to bell. And I, at this time, I'll ask the clerk, Ms. Mills, to take the role. - Lateef? - Yes. - Blake?

[02:31:18] - We're voting on two, so let's be clear. - This is for January. - Yeah, that's right, so just-- - We can reread the motion. - You guys can vote the way you want, I am voting. So this is the motion to effectively make phones banned from bell to bell starting in January.

[02:31:37] That is the motion that's on the floor now. So I'm voting yes on that. - Thank you, Blake. - No. - Jesse. - No. - Tridinik. - Yes. - Wall.

[02:31:53] - Yes. - Wilk. - No. - Williams. - No. - Zargarpur. - No. - The vote is three yes, five no, motion failed. - Okay, next I'll take a motion.

[02:32:11] or we need to get something that gets passed. Yeah, so I'll give it to Ms. Zargarpur at this time. - Mr. Blake, are you sure? Here, Mr. Blake, you read it.

[02:32:32] - I move that the Prince William County School Board approve option three for policy 729, cell phone free education requiring cell phones and personal communication devices to be turned off and stored away during the bell to bell school day and during any instructional periods, regardless of location, including field trips, effective August 1st, 2025.

[02:32:58] - Mr. Chairman. - I do have a second. - I have a second. - Ms. Williams is second. I heard Ms. Wall tried to second too. So, and then I heard Ms. Zargarpur tried to second. So we have a lot of seconds here. If anyone has any points that are any different than what we've already discussed, I'm happy to entertain them.

[02:33:16] I do appreciate the board's efforts on this work. This has been a long journey. I know, and I appreciate the student representative, the student senators and the student board reps and all their comments and the students who've come to the school, who've written both to the board and who've come here to speak.

[02:33:36] I truly appreciate their input on this matter. And I can tell you that every board member has given full consideration over the last few months and over the course of the year of the pilot on this issue. This was not something any of the board members I know have come to a conclusion reflexively.

[02:33:53] This is something that they've all thought through very well and I appreciate the board doing this work and I would appreciate and I think it's important for the community to understand where this board, we gave a full consideration to every motion and I think as the board comes together, I hope for a unanimous decision on one of the selections we choose.

[02:34:11] So we will now take a vote on motion three. I will ask Ms. Laura Mills, our clerk, to take the roll call on this one. - Oh, sorry. - Oh, Ms. Tredenik. - Sorry, I, unfortunately I can't support this motion 'cause it goes against the governor's order, which is to start in January.

[02:34:31] And that's still what I believe in and what I'm voting for. It's what I just said. So I think it would be hypocritical of me to sit up here and vote against it. While I am excited that you're gonna ban cell phones, take them away, bell to bell in August, I think it's late.

[02:34:47] It's late for my junior. I'm happy for the senior kids, especially the one on this board, who's very excited. We're not taking her phone away. Kudos to you. I think you guys did a great job advocating for yourselves. I think students did an excellent job talking about this. I think conversations were great.

[02:35:03] But again, I am supportive of Governor Youngkin's orders. And that's why. - Please take the roll call. - Lateef. - Yes. - Blake.

[02:35:18] - Yes. - Jesse. - Yes. - Trudinic. - No. - Wall. - Yes. - Williams. - No. - Sargapur.

[02:35:33] - Yes. - The vote is six yes, two no. Tredinic Williams, motion passed. - Okay, so for everyone, just because we had a long discussion, this will be option three. Cell phones will be bell to bell, restricted in elementary, middle and high school beginning in August.

[02:35:51] Currently, Dr. McDade, if I'm not wrong, they are restricted in elementary and middle and will continue as is in high school. - That's correct. - Is that correct? Elementary and middle already are bell to bell, no phone. High school can use their phones during non-instructional time, which is cafeteria and hall, and that'll remain until June.

[02:36:11] And then we'll be prepared to implement bell to bell across all levels starting in August. - Thank you, Dr. McDade. And thank you to your staff for all the great work they've done. We really appreciate this. And I know this took a lot of time and effort. Moving on, 18.02 revision of policy 370, General Contract Authority's first reading.

[02:36:31] Mr. Youssef, you have anything to add here? - Dr. Lateef, Dr. McDade, and members of the school board.

[02:36:49] I'll be very brief. Just to give you a background and overview of what the changes to this policy is. On March 6th, 2024, the school board authorized the chief financial officer and the chief operating officer as designees to approve construction contracts, modifications up to 25% of the awarded contract price or \$250,000, whichever was greater.

[02:37:21] This was in response to the time it would take to approve change orders. There were a lot of construction going on, projects going on at that time, and the potential delay that it could cause this construction projects. And this delegation remains in effect until the board's organizational meeting in January of 2025, and effectively suspended the applicability of board policy 470-08.

[02:37:50] And one of the requirements were that staff would look at the current policies and come forward with a revised policy. So when we looked at the different policies that affected procurement and contracting, we found that there were nine policies.

[02:38:08] So if you look at the list, there's a number of policies that are recommended for deletion. And the reason is we are consolidating all of this in one policy, which was policy 370, General Contract Authority, and we're renaming it to Contracting and Procurement.

[02:38:28] We felt that it would be more efficient to have everything in one place, and at the same time be as close as possible to include requirements of the Virginia Public Procurement Act and so you will see a number of policies being deleted and policy 370 is the one that is being kept in terms of the key changes we have summarized the different types of contracts and the approval authority and fiscal limits in appendix a of the policy we are increasing the threshold

[02:39:04] for school board approval or recommending the school board increase the threshold from 250 to 500 000 and then we have modifications to non-construction contracts at 25 percent of the awarded contract price of 500 000 and modifications to construction contracts at 25 percent or one million dollars of the aggregate of all changes thank you mr yousef does anyone have any questions Those are concerns about the policies.

[02:39:39] And this extends to 1803 and 10, are we correct? Pretty much all the same. - Yes. - So this is the first reading for all of these issues. - Yes. - Okay, you're not gonna go through this for each one of them, are you?

[02:39:56] - I wasn't, I can't. - No, so very good. So everyone has some homework here. We will be coming back to vote on these. If you have any red lines or any concerns about this, if the public has any red lines or concerns about this, please send them to the school board.

[02:40:11] Please make your comments known to Dr. McDade and Mr. Yusuf on any of these issues. We will be back here to vote on the final changes in, I guess it'll be January, correct? - Yes. - Correct, okay. All right, thank you, Mr. Yusuf.

[02:40:26] Thank you, sir. Moving on to 1811, revision of the policy 541 holidays, Mr. Anderson. - Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This is a policy change that was brought about by the board itself.

[02:40:42] suggestion of at least having the board consider adding a second eat a lot of holiday to the calendar I know it came up during the discussion of the calendar at the last meeting and this is up for a

first reading for the board's consideration thank you Mr. Anderson does anyone have any questions for Mr. Anderson Dr. McDade anything no I don't have any questions okay so this is essentially to for the public to take a look at this for us to be able to change and add a holiday we have to look at the original policy of all the holidays we had.

[02:41:18] So we're looking to add the holiday of Eid al-Adha and that is, will be voted on at the next board meeting and adding Easter as recognized on the calendar as well. Correct? Okay, so please take a look at this.

[02:41:34] If anyone has any concerns on this, I'd ask them to extend any concerns, emails to the board, to the superintendent's office. We will now move on. There's no further discussion. We'll go on to board matters. And we started with Dr. Mr. Blake last week. We will start with Mr. Wilk this week.

[02:41:52] - Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would normally kind of ramble of all the things I've gone to. It is on my social media and it will be in the board newsletter. So I'm gonna move forward. I do wanna wish, it's weird saying, Merry Christmas, Happy Holidays this early into December, but this will be our last meeting that is not with the joint BOCS.

[02:42:10] So this last one here, right? So wishing everyone that. Otherwise, I'm just, I'm in shock. Erica and Lori voted together. So I yield the remainder of my time. It's, it's, it's the season.

[02:42:26] Mr. Denik. Christmas miracle. 'Tis the season. I just want to say thanks for a great year. Thanks to the, all the staff for putting up with all of us newbies for Dr. McDade, especially for dealing with all of our questions and Wade who I'm not even supposed to talk to while I'm here.

[02:42:47] Merry Christmas, happy holidays, happy new year. Can't wait to crush 2026 with you guys, thanks. - Thank you, Mr. Denick, excellent work. Mr. Jesse.

[02:43:03] - First of all, happy holidays to everyone. And since I'm the only veteran, I think on the board, and last time I didn't wish my fellow veterans, you know, their due.

[02:43:19] So happy holidays to everyone. I'm very, I went down to the VESBA convention. It was very well, I liked it. But you know, what I said before is that we want to be one of the best school assistants in the state.

[02:43:43] And I think we are. But you know, when I went down to the convention and most of the school boards from the stuff was there, and they were saying how everybody is great well the issue is if everybody is great why are we at 70 percent so you know that's the thing that I I don't like I'm looking forward to our school I'm very impressed with what the Dr. McDade and her staff is doing this year and I think we're going to improve and I'm looking for improvement and I want want us to realize

[02:44:23] that we should not have any school that cannot get above 70% so that's something that I will stick to I want and I said to people in my district I want our schools to be the best in the county and I still do and I understand that I will not talk to the principals and so forth about their position that where they stand on SOL I will talk to dr. McDade about that and I'm impressed with what

[02:45:02] dr. McDade is doing so I expect a lot of good things I want to thank the Woodbridge high school students who spoke tonight I understand I didn't take your position I want to give my apologies to my colleague here who I I said I was going to vote for number two, but I also caveat, I said that that depends on where Dr. McDade stood and I'm clear that I did what was the best for the superintendent.

[02:45:32] So, thank you. Have a good holidays and look forward to seeing you next year. Thank you, Mr. Jessie. Is Ms. Wall still with us? Yes, I am. Okay. I'm going to go to you, Ms. Wall, because I know you, yeah, you're far away.

[02:45:49] So, first of all, ha ha Mr. Wilk. - Can we put Ms. Wall back on the screen? Okay, she's on the screen. Okay, great, go for it, Ms. Wall. - Okay, I was gonna say, ha ha Mr. Wilk, that occurred to me too, kind of funny. So I wanted January and many of the objections and other points that were raised, I really do believe can be overcome.

[02:46:13] And also some of those things we were already doing. But anyway, I will take the win on a bell to bell. It's not as fast as I like, but it gets us where I think we need to be. I like to be there in January, but I support some of the concerns that have been raised by administration about the timing.

[02:46:33] So I do think we should take nominations for a motto or some kind of slogan, and I'm gonna propose screens down, grades up, the formula for academic excellence. - Very nice, Ms. Wall. Loaded with the lines tonight. - Yeah, yes, indeed.

[02:46:49] I wanted to make a correction on item 12.02 on the consent agenda. I misspoke. The internal audit plan was on consent agenda this evening. I don't know if anybody really noticed that. I thought it was, but I wasn't sure because I hadn't read it really closely. But it was on consent, so it is in place for the coming year.

[02:47:08] I don't have any idea how much time I have. I'm sorry. I wanted to highlight. I went to the VSBA. Oh, thank you. the VSBA conference the week before Thanksgiving, and one of the things that I attended was on cell phones, and we also talked about staffing support and legal issues, and the EndNote speaker was really powerful.

[02:47:28] She discussed poverty and how to support students who are experiencing generational poverty. So I just got a lot out of that, wanted to say that. I wanted to congratulate the VHS Theater Club on a successful performance of Clue. The staff was amazing. The kids really pulled off a great show, And I wanted to honor the battlefield football team.

[02:47:48] They experienced a tough loss against Patriot and a very cold night. I'm really proud of the team and how hard they worked this season. I hope everybody has a wonderful, happy holidays. Merry Christmas. Hope Thanksgiving was great. And we will meet again in January.

[02:48:05] - Thank you, Ms. Wall. Ms. Williams. - Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate the jokes, Mr. Wilk. Where are we if we do not have our humor right? I just want to mention that we had this week, earlier this week, Monday, I believe, our joint legislative breakfast.

[02:48:21] This was the first time in, I think, history, or at least since I've been on the board, that we had elected officials from all level of government. We had a congressman-elect Vindman, as well as our state and local counterparts on the board of county supervisors, where we discussed our legislative priorities.

[02:48:39] And it is, of course, my favorite time of year when the General Assembly gets ready to gear up in session, and I will make my annual plea to the public, and that is get involved, go lobby, see what bills are being presented. It is not only what we do here locally, but it is also things that are outside of our control that happen at the state level.

[02:48:58] So most of the things we hear complaints about are state level. So please get involved, reach out to your elected and follow the progress on what is going on down at the General Assembly. Our next board meeting will be a joint board meeting on December 17th at the county complex and that will be between the school board and the Board of County Supervisors.

[02:49:19] I'm trying to hurry here. I want to give a big congratulations again to Belmont. My, I was also at VSBA. I provided an update to that in the school board monthly roundup, but I will say for those of us who were in School of Law Jeopardy, we came out was winners.

[02:49:37] I just love the fact that we got little gold medals and I want to congratulate our school board lawyer because that is a reflection of how well you continue to educate us and keep us updated on the School of Law. So congratulations, 'cause you don't ever get any shout out. So next up, 'cause I'm running out of time, I am excited for the Battle of the Bridge, which will be at Woodbridge, which is robotics.

[02:49:58] There are also plenty of holiday season concerts and activities, please be sure to check them out. And then moving on from that, I just want to again say Our decision was made on bell to bell, but I will continue to advocate for listening to the voice of our constituents, our staff and our students.

[02:50:19] I appreciate all the time and effort that was taken by them to really express their desires. And I appreciate the decision made by the board, but I hope that we will in the future, if we're going to ask for such input from everyone, that we really listen.

[02:50:36] 'Cause otherwise there's no point in asking for input and they will they will no longer share with us if we disregard their messages that's a fact last in my 24 seconds i'm going to call out the elephant in the room we have a new incoming administration our county is the 10th most diverse county in the nation there's genuine concern but from our school families and some of our school staff about what may or may not be coming up in regards to deportation and other things what i will say is school divisions we do not ask that status I don't think that can be stated enough but I do want the staff and the

[02:51:13] students to know that I hear the stories that you're telling the principals and I hear the concerns from our staff and from the little children and I just hope that during this holiday season yes I'm out of time that there's holiday season that we remember to be kind and understand that everyone is not in the same situation this is not political at all we're all human beings and please please please if you have extra to share during this holiday season do so because every student in our division won't have food thank you. Ms. Zargarpur. Oh yeah I'm sorry

[02:51:45] Mr. Blum. Thank you Mr. Chair um I too have attended a lot of events during these past couple weeks that you can follow on my social media if you want to want to see about it but I would like to take a moment just to highlight that varsity tutor program again which has been an essential resource for for our students as noted during the state of the school's presentation.

[02:52:11] And I just think it aligns perfectly with the commitment that we're trying to offer our students here at PWCS. And I want to wish everybody a happy holiday, a Merry Christmas. And also, I'd like to steal a page from Ms. Wall's book and leave you guys with a quote tonight.

[02:52:33] And education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world. Nelson Mandela. Thank you. And have a good night. Thank you, Mr. Blake. uh miss sorry thank you so uh this is the um the the proof of the winning so uh wade this is for you yeah there you go so um yeah we attended vsba and one of my favorite parts about it is getting to see the colleagues here on our board we we um

don't get to do stuff like that very often and it was really fun to just go to these different events go to the different um workshops i went

[02:53:13] to the school law our team won the school law medal there that was fun i went to a arlington county did a a session on how to combat racism and discriminating language in schools and they had a great presentation it was really well done and i was really glad to attend that we went to the region four meeting and talked about things that are going on in our general local area um i love that i also get to meet up with board members from across the state their problems might be similar and their solutions are varied and it's nice to hear about

[02:53:52] how they are approaching problems that they see uh it's one of the ones though if if you are a state senator or delegate lift the cap would be the the one that's common among all of us the joint legislative lady of breakfast was great and it yeah i don't think i've ever seen a a congressperson elect show up so that was fun um and i will echo the sentiments of our christmas miracle with miss trudenic and miss williams that was a beautiful moment and i wish everyone a happy happy hanukkah merry christmas happy kwanzaa happy new year i look forward to seeing everyone

[02:54:27] back in january okay thank you miss dargapur um wonderful great uh you know we we just had Thanksgiving I'm let me just wish everyone you know in advance right now happy holidays happy Hanukkah Merry Christmas Kwanzaa everything coming up this December we still don't have two and a half weeks left to school so we still have a lot of work to do and a lot of exams to get through I want to thank my board members specifically miss Williams mr. Jesse mr. Blake for their work on the student discipline committee I want to thank miss wall for intern her

[02:55:05] or work on internal audit, governor's school. I wanna thank all the board members who went to the VSBA meeting. We are soon coming to the end of Ms. Zargarpur's vice chairmanship and I've appreciated working with her over this last year and in her advice and counsel over this last 12 months has been very important, so very grateful for that.

[02:55:29] I wanna thank the staff. I wish you all a very Merry Christmas and Happy New Year and thank you for all your hard work. I do want to clarify a couple of things. Just, you know, we, this, you know, I've been pretty consistent on, you know, where I've stood on the cell phone policy.

[02:55:49] And I, and I am, you know, in many ways, impatient on, on success, success for the school division improvements and all of that work. But, but that, that impatience comes with measured work an effort that has to be accomplished in a thoughtful and methodical way for that success to be achieved and realized.

[02:56:10] And that includes our strategic plan. And while I did vote for the cell phone ban to be effective in January, I have wanted this for the last four or five years. Regardless of what the governor was telling us, we had piloted this long before, we were moving in this direction anyways.

[02:56:28] In many ways, what the Virginia Department of Education has made recommendations has really been based on the guidance given to them by school divisions across the country and across the state. And so we will be in compliance, but our efforts here in the school division, first and foremost, I truly do believe in local control.

[02:56:49] And I believed in that during the pandemic. I believed in that now. And I believe that we on this board make the best decisions for our students and our families in this community. And so I continue

to rely on each of you on this board for guidance and counsel, superintendent for your deep regard for the students and the core work we have to do here for the learning.

[02:57:12] And I'm very grateful for all of it. And I truly wish you all a wonderful holiday season. At this point, the school board meeting is adjourned.



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