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Prince William County School Board Meeting, Wednesday, September 17, 2025

Date Wednesday, September 17, 2025
Place Prince William County School Board, Virginia
Length 1h 43m (video)

- Official meeting video (YouTube): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=64gSVxOkik4>
- 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 2026-10-29. Each paragraph starts with its time [HH:MM:SS] in the meeting video.

[00:00:02] - I would like to call this meeting of the Prince William County School Board to order approval of the agenda. Okay, a motion is now in order for the approval of the meeting agenda. - Mr. Blake. - Ms. Williams. - I move that the Prince William County School Board approve the meeting agenda.

[00:00:20] - Do I have a second? Mr. Jesse. - I second. - It's a second. Any discussion? Please vote. - Pop it up?

[00:00:43] - Do a hand real quick. - Just do a hand. - The vote is five yes, one not present, two not present at vote. Lateef, Zargarpur, one absent. Dr. Dinik, motion passed. - Moving on to a motion to enter closed session. A motion is in order, Ms. Williams.

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

[00:01:31] Two, to review the grievance appeals of employees T26-001 pursuant to section 2.2-3711A1 and eight of the Code of Virginia. Three, to discuss with division counsel and staff actual or probable litigation

and specific legal matters involving staff, students, and other civil litigation involving the school division under sections 2.2-3711A, seven and eight of the code of Virginia.

[00:01:57] Four, to discuss the award of a public contract to employees exclusive representative, which involves the expenditure of public funds and the term or scope of such contract, where discussion in open session would adversely affect the bargaining position or negotiating strategy of the public body pursuant to section 2.2-3711A, 29, and the code of Virginia, of the code of Virginia.

[00:02:19] Five, to discuss with legal counsel and staff-specific legal matters related to a federal civil rights complaint pursuant to sections 2.2-3711A7 and 8 of the Code of Virginia 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 and open meeting would jeopardize the security of such facilities pursuant to section 2.2-3711A19 of the Code of Virginia.

[00:02:48] - Thank you, Ms. Williams, do I have a second? - Mr. Chairman. - Ms. Zagrapoor. - All right, second. - Any discussion, please vote. It's coming, it's up very, you gotta pull it up now. - Vote is six yes, one not present at vote Lateef, one absent, Tradenek, motion passed.

[00:03:08] - Okay, the Prince William County School Board will now enter closed session

[00:03:11] and return to open session in one hour.

[00:04:17] Prince William County School Board is now returning to open session from closed session. A motion is in order for 7.01 closed session certification. Ms. Williams. - Thank you, Mr. Blake. - I move that pursuant to section 2.2-3712 of the Code of Virginia, the closed session of Prince William County School Board meeting of September 17th, 2025, be certified by adopting the following resolution.

[00:04:43] Now, therefore, be it resolved that the Prince William County School Board hereby certifies that, to the best of each member's knowledge, one, only public business matters lawfully exempted from open meeting requirements were discussed in the closed meeting to which the certification resolution applies, and two, only such public business matters as were identified in the motion convening the closed meeting were heard and discussed or considered by the school board.

[00:05:07] - Thank you, Ms. Williams. Do I have a second? - Mr. Chairman. - Ms. Zagafor second. - I second. - Thank you. Any discussion? Please vote.

[00:05:32] - Vote is six yes, unanimous. Motion passed. - Moving on to the closed session action items. A motion is in order for 8.01 Ms. Williams. - Thank you, Mr. Blake. I move that the Prince William County School Board approve the appointments and releases of specific employees as presented in closed session.

[00:05:50] - Do I have a second? - Mr. Chairman. - Ms. Zagarport. - I second. - Any discussion? Please vote.

[00:06:12] - The vote is six yes, unanimous, motion passed. - On our next agenda item is 8.02, a motion is ordered, Ms. Williams. - Thank you, Mr. Blake. I move that the Prince William County School Board uphold the superintendent's recommendation of dismissal in employee case number T26-001, and further that the chairman at large authorized to provide a written decision to the employee reflecting the school board's decision

[00:06:40] do i have a second mr wall oh she got it any discussion please vote the vote is six yes unanimous motion passed thank you moving on to the pledge of allegiance i'd like to invite our

[00:07:13] student representative karina grover to lead us in the in the pledge i just want to let everybody know that Dr. Lateef is I spoke with him earlier and he's sorry for not being able to make it tonight he's flying back from California after dropping his daughter off at Stanford so their flight was delayed and he won't be landing until later this evening but he wanted to let everybody know he wish he could be here now moving on to thriving futures focus good evening thriving

[00:08:37] Futures Focus is an opportunity to highlight the exemplary work being accomplished in our schools that fulfills our vision that every student will graduate with the knowledge, skills, and habit of mind necessary to create a thriving future for themselves and their community. At each of our meetings we acknowledge students, staff, and schools who have received state and national honors.

[00:09:03] the school board is proud to recognize these honorees for their positive contributions to prince william county's public schools tonight the school board will honor our virginia junior academy science research symposium winners and our 2025 cappy award winners i would like to introduce justin wilk of the potomac district to recognize the accomplishments of our students at the 2025 Virginia Junior Academy of Science Research Symposium.

[00:09:35] - Thank you, Mr. Blake. The VJS, one of the nation's leading junior academies, continues to promote scientific inquiry and innovation, giving our students the platform to shine as future leaders in STEM. The research symposium honors Virginia's brightest young STEM scholars and underscores the vital role of nurturing the next generation of science and technology leaders.

[00:09:58] Congratulations to the PWCS/PWCS students who placed in the competition. Of the high school awards in the fields of physics and astronomy, congratulations to Unuj Duhal, Dimantina, that's Kevin, sorry, Kevin Dimantina, Oguzkan Cutlon from Forest Park High School and Governor's School at Innovation Park.

[00:10:21] The students are joined by a regular here, the Forest Park High School principal, Mr. Martinez, and Governor's School Innovation Park principal, Dr. Jason Calhoun. Thank you all. - Thank you, Mr. Wilks, and congratulations. Ms. Zagafari of the Coles District will recognize our next group of superstars.

[00:10:49] - Thank you, Mr. Blake. One of the middle school awards in the field of animal and human science. Congratulations to our first place winner, Dean Lateef, who attended Benton Middle School, where he earned the award. Dean now attends Colgan High School. Congratulations to Sajila Ahmed from Colgan High School, who has been selected as the 2025-26 VJAS Editor-in-Chief.

[00:11:11] Although she cannot be here this evening, we recognize Rania Lateef for earning first place in the VJAS Psychology field and for being awarded the Roscoe Hughes Genetic Award and the Outstanding Service Award. Rania is a 2025 graduate of Colgan High School and the Governor's School at Innovation Park.

[00:11:28] She now attends Stanford University. These students are joined tonight by Colgan Principal, Dr. Tim Healy. At this time, I would like to invite the Administrative Coordinator of Secondary Services, Secondary Science, excuse me, Dr. Jeremy Putt to share a few words on this achievement.

[00:11:46] - Thank you, ma'am. Good evening, Mr. Interim Chair and Dr. McDade and members of the board. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to you tonight. The Virginia Junior Academy of Sciences has been an active member of the National Academy of Sciences for over 80 years.

[00:12:01] One of the trademark events is an annual STEM-based research competition. Each year, over 600 students across the Commonwealth of Virginia in grades 6 through 7 through 12 participate in the competition. Students can enter their work individually or as a team in one of 19 categories. Students are required to first submit their research papers to be evaluated. Based on the results of this evaluation, they may be invited to participate in the annual VJAS symposium. If selected to participate in the symposium, these aspiring science scholars are invited to present their research in person. This past June, students from across the Commonwealth

[00:12:40] gathered at Farham College in Farham, Virginia to present their research at the VJAS symposium. At this symposium, students were evaluated on their presentations and that evaluation was combined with the evaluation of their research papers. From this combined evaluation, students were ranked, celebrated, received awards, and scholarships. To no one's surprise, supported by the wonderful teachers, families, mentors, and you the school Board, Prince William County Public School students have been recognized as some of the very best science scholars in the Commonwealth of Virginia, and we're very proud of them.

[00:13:16] Thank you. Dr. Putt, and congratulations to our students. It's now my privilege to recognize the additional achievements of Colgan High School.

[00:13:32] The CAPIs or Critics and Award Program for High School Theater and Journalism is a national program that celebrates and critiques high school theater by training student critics and recognizing outstanding student performances, productions, and technical achievements.

[00:13:47] Congratulations to the following Cappy winners. Best Vocalist in a Male Role, Andrew Serrano Bremer, Sophomore, Hadestown, Teen Edition. Best Supporting Actor in a Male Role in a Musical, Jeremiah Gates, Junior, Hadestown, Teen Edition.

[00:14:02] Best Song, Wait For Me, Charles J. Colgan Senior High School, Hadestown, Teen Edition. Singers include Madeline Byrne, Jordan Floyd, Jeremiah Gates, Malachi Hinton, Andrew Serrano Bremer, and Clark Staley. These outstanding performers are joined by Principal Dr. Tim Healy, Theater Director Larry Warkentine, and Choral Director Carrie Staley.

[00:14:25] At this time, I would like to invite the Supervisor of Arts, Dr. Anna Marie Bolino, to share a few words on this achievement. Good evening, Vice Chair Blake, Dr. McDade, members of the board. As always, I'm delighted to be here with you tonight to celebrate the remarkable achievements of Colgan High School's theater arts students through their participation in the CAPIs, a critic and awards program.

[00:14:47] The CAPES is an international program that recognizes, celebrates, and provides transformative learning experiences for high school theater and journalism students. The program has grown to become a prestigious platform for student voice, creativity, and excellence. While the National Capital Area CAPES Annual Gala is held in June every year, it's a beautiful celebration of student achievements.

[00:15:09] The true magic happens in the daily dedication, collaboration, and passion our students bring to their craft. The students we honor tonight exemplify what it means to be committed artists and leaders in their field. Their success is a reflection not only of their talent, but also of the incredible educators who guide them.

[00:15:30] Colgan has an incredible leader and a passionate arts advocate in their principal, Dr. Healy. Theater director Lanny Workentine and choral director Kerry Staley provide visionary leadership, coaching and mentorship that empower students to grow as artists, collaborators, and confident performers right yeah please join me in congratulating these outstanding performers for their dedication creativity and excellence I'm very proud of them I know you all are as well they're a shining example of the exceptional arts education that we strive for here in Prince William County

[00:16:05] Schools congratulations to the students and staff of Charles J Colgan senior high school for their outstanding performances I just saw Macbeth it was amazing and I am looking forward to more cappy nominations from you guys this year. Thank you Miss Zagapur and yeah that was I was there so I little caveat

[00:16:39] I got to actually hand the award off to Andrew right there for the best male vocalist so that was real special and at the Kennedy Center and I really appreciate you guys representing Prince William County out there so now I would like to to invite our honorees friends and family and colleagues here tonight to stand and recognize

[00:17:04] and recognition of your support for our distinguished guests so parent and before we take a few pictures superintendent dr mcdade would you like to share a few words sure thank you mr blake what an incredible evening of recognition you represent the absolute best of who we are in prince william county schools and i just want to say your accomplishments really remind us that education is not just about academics, it's also about cultivating creativity and curiosity,

[00:17:44] resilience and responsibility to really contribute to your community and to our world. So congratulations to each and every one of you. We are PWCS proud.

[00:18:00] - Thank you, Dr. McDade. At this time, I would like to request our honorees to come forward for a photo with the school board and receive a small token of our appreciation. We will begin with one photo that includes our Virginia Junior Academy of Science Research Symposium winners,

[00:18:15] and then one photo with our Cappy Award winners.

[00:23:43] Let us give one more round of applause for tonight's thriving future honorees.

[00:23:59] Thank you all, thank you. Now we're moving on to 11.01, adoption of the consent agenda, Ms. Williams. - Thank you, Mr. Blake. I move that the Prince William County School Board approve the public meeting consent agenda as recommended.

[00:24:15] - Do I have a second? Mr. Jessie seconds. - Any discussion? - Please vote.

[00:24:41] - The vote is six yes, unanimous, motion passed. - Thank you. Now we are moving on to 12.01, approval of the acknowledgements and recognitions. Ms. Williams.

[00:24:56] - Thank you, Mr. Blake. I move that the Prince William County School Board approve the adoption of the acknowledgements and recognitions as recommended. - Do I have a second? - Mr. Chairman. - Ms. Zagger for a second. - I second. - Any discussion? No, please vote.

[00:25:23] - The vote is six yes, unanimous, motion passed. Okay, moving on to citizen comment time. Those citizens who have signed up in advance with the clerk may address the school board this evening when they are called to the podium. The citizen comment period for regular school board meetings is one

hour and citizens may speak on agenda items or other topics that remain to the operations and policies of PWCS.

[00:25:49] Please use proper decorum and manners while at the podium or you will 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 of the meeting.

[00:26:06] If you do not, the board will recess and I will ask the room to be cleared to restore public order. Tonight we have 17 citizens signed up to speak. When I call your name, please come up to the podium and state your name and address for the record.

[00:26:21] Per policy 1-134, the time allotted for each speaker will be three minutes. - I'm gonna call up the first five speakers.

[00:26:40] Christian Argensen, Marcia Metzger, Adam T. Mathers,

[00:26:51] Marty Weaver, and Charlie Hernandez-White.

[00:27:26] - For those who are signing impaired, allow me to repeat myself. Good evening, Dr. McDade, Mr. Interim Chairman, board members, and student representatives. My name is Christian Argensen. I'm a junior at Colgan High School in ASL III. My address is on file. I wanted to begin by thanking you for the opportunity to allow me to speak here tonight.

[00:27:44] Notice how you were unable to understand me while I was signing. That is currently the situation that the ASL teacher at Colgan High School is currently experiencing. Mr. Earl Parks is a deaf ASL teacher at Colgan who uses an interpreter for all of his school needs. This interpreter is much more than a translation service, but a source of ADA-approved communication and a safety net in case of life-threatening emergencies.

[00:28:05] Just two weeks ago, the students in ASL were informed of the decision to remove the interpreter from the classroom and are currently seeing the real-time effects of it. He's being left out of daily conversations and has no access to important real-time information such as the morning announcements.

[00:28:20] Under the Americans with Disability Act section 504, all deaf individuals are entitled to real-time interpretation under programs that receive federal funding, which include Prince William County public schools. A text-to-speech keyboard originally designed for stroke patients who are unable to speak was provided by the county and does not meet Mr. Parks' needs.

[00:28:38] It doesn't work for deaf individuals who can't hear, nor does it accurately show what he is thinking. He has had to resort to the old school method of writing down what he wants to say for students, admin and other faculty in the school. This decision not only raises serious concerns about equity by removing our deaf teachers only source of communication, but is also illegal for not providing a safe and effective alternative.

[00:28:57] What if the school went on lockdown? How would he keep himself and his students safe from harm? These are real world possibilities that must be considered before removing an interpreter. I and the rest of Colgan High School urge you, the PWCS school board to rectify this change and make right what was made wrong.

[00:29:13] restore this decision and restore Mr. Parks' access to communication, safety, and dignity, and bring back the tools that everyone needs in order to succeed to launch thriving futures. Thank you so much and have a good night. - Mars, Mars, Marsina Metzger.

[00:29:35] - Good evening, Dr. McDade and interim chairman. My name is Marisa Metzger, address 4618 Easterland Woodbridge, 22192. I have two daughters at Colgan. I've got one of them with me. Her name is Krista. they are in the ASL program at Colgan for their foreign language credit.

[00:29:54] I'm here tonight to address the plan for Prince William County Schools to replace the qualified interpreter with computer technology. Our students at Colgan are extremely fortunate to have a deaf teacher teaching ASL in the authentic version of ASL.

[00:30:09] Since our teacher does not use English as a primary language, a qualified interpreter is a necessary, essential for them to effectively learn. ASL is a complex visual language requiring precise hand movements, facial expressions, body language, and timing.

[00:30:24] Where real-time interaction provides substance, a computer cannot capture these details the way a human interpreter can. Additionally, the computer provides no reflection through voice that complements these critical expressions. The computer reads aloud in a monotone. Over the past few weeks during the computer trial period, my daughters report feeling disconnected from their teacher as they're forced to focus on a screen rather than engaging directly with the teacher.

[00:30:49] The artificial computer voices overwhelmingly distraction that disrupts their concentration. If you're unaware, it's a keyboard that has no feedback. Mr. Parks does not understand, or excuse me, he does not see or get feedback if a word is misspelled.

[00:31:05] Effective learning requires human concentration and communication. Removing the interpreter removes the humanity from the classroom, creates an artificial barrier between the teacher and the students. Imagine if this was a different foreign language class. A Spanish teacher, likely bilingual in both English and Spanish.

[00:31:21] This allows the teacher to communicate effectively real time translating her words. Imagine the same teacher in Spanish one class that is strictly Spanish speaking. They are not able to communicate effectively. The only solution to providing a bilingual interpreter to the classroom would be effective.

[00:31:40] I ask that you apply the same logic to the ASL classroom. I urge the board to prioritize student learning, outcomes, and maintain qualified human interpreter to ensure our children can achieve their full academic potential in the ASL classroom. Thank you for your time this evening.

[00:31:57] - Adam Mathers. - Good evening, my name's Adam Mathers. Address is 11715 Howitzer Lane in Woodbridge. I'm also here for the ASL program at Colgan. My daughter's a junior there, she's an ASL three.

[00:32:13] You know, going back to a couple of years ago, for those that remember the ASL teacher that used to be there, the stuff that these kids had to be put through with that person was untenable. Mr. Parks has been a breath of fresh air, and I'll say that as far as the interpreter goes, I've emailed a number of people, I've gotten responses from several, I appreciate all of those, but every response that I've gotten from everybody on the school board or at the school has been centered around it being a personnel issue with him.

[00:32:38] I've not gotten really anything substantive from anybody about how this impacts students and student learning. And as somebody that works for the federal government, have been around a number of people that have hearing issues have used ASL interpreters the difference the day-to-day difference in the in the timeliness going from a text-to-speech issue or MS teams for those that use it versus an interpreter it's it's worlds that rolls apart and so to try to get him to use that in a brief time period like a class hour and change versus the real-time response you're going to get from an interpreter it's almost a useless class at that point so the surge everyone here to reconsider it you're hearing from a few of us here that feel strongly about it

[00:33:17] that's across the board with the students and the parents at the ASL program. Thank you very much. - Marty Weaver. - Marty Weaver, Occoquan.

[00:33:34] No surprise, I absolutely support our president, governor, lieutenant governor, attorney general, and of course science, about the care and education of our precious children. I support our parental rights and responsibilities for our minor children. Families are the guardians of the family, not schools, not teachers, not school boards, not counselors.

[00:33:56] Schools can't seem to accomplish their mission of teaching basic information, which is necessary to go on to critical thinking skills. Yet, students of all ages are encouraged by a system to be making life-altering, irreversible decisions. They are doing this decision-making with little to no life experiences, but a lot of input from adults with suspect agendas and social media.

[00:34:20] The other group, with all of the letters that keep changing, talk about evidence-based best practices and science. Whose evidence and whose best practices? Who does science, what does science say? XX equals female, XY equals male.

[00:34:36] XY cannot be changed to XX nor the reverse. And if someone's thinking doesn't match their body, then maybe their brains need to be fixed. Not mutilate their bodies inside and out to look like what they think they want, sort of. And now that person is sterile.

[00:34:53] I guess that is one way to control the population. Is this an assault on reproduction? Biology deniers, anatomy deniers, genetics deniers, physiology deniers. This offensive propaganda that is directed towards our vulnerable children needs to stop in our schools, in our society.

[00:35:10] We need to stop enabling the craziness. We want good things for all of our children, and as such, we can't allow the majority to be harmed by the mental issues manifested by a very few. We can't allow very small, vocal, and sometimes militant minorities' delusions to dominate at the expense of mental health of the majority.

[00:35:28] Quoting Dr. Paul McHugh of Johns Hopkins Medical School of Medicine, transgenderism is the only mental illness demanding that the rest of society adopt the patient's delusions as a part of the patient's treatment. Practicing make-believe belongs in the theater department or creative writing course.

[00:35:45] Taxpayers will have to pay for your defense of this nonsense. And lastly, I'd say I believe in Charlie Kirk his nonviolent approach who was assassinated last wednesday charlie white and the next five people could come up um samantha spittle benjamin guy julianne fisher jessica sharr and tiffany port hello and good evening members of the board my name is charlie hernandez white and my address

[00:36:22] is on file as a non-binary student in prince leon county policy 738 helps me to feel as though i can be my authentic self at school without fear of judgment. The ability to use my preferred name and pronouns freely is something I'm incredibly grateful for, incredibly.

[00:36:38] As I actively see the staff at my school trying to use them, and when they mess up, I don't feel afraid to say hey. Could you please say they instead of she? I even remember when I had first begun using my preferred name and pronouns in sixth grade. I was so scared to tell my teachers and classmates that my name was Charlie, but the moment I did, they were incredibly supportive.

[00:36:57] You know, I wanna be a teacher, and a big part of that because of how caring the principally encountered community is the experiences i've had here made me want to be a part of teaching the next generation and i doubt that i would have discovered my love for teaching without policy 738. thank you and please acknowledge continue to acknowledge the identities of all students because we need school to be a safe place for all samantha spittle i am samantha spittle address on file i'm a parent of a sophomore i am here because mr parks the asl

[00:37:34] teacher at colgan high school has had his inter person interpreter replaced with the device as the primary form of communication and you've already heard a lot of great feedback on that tonight even though it's under a trial period it's my understanding that the ada office made the decision and while the interpreter will remain until the end of september the long-term plan is uncertain i appreciate that the colgan administration has shared that they're working with mr parks and will be evaluating the process based on he and the students feedback because of this my hope is that my words are not needed tonight and that those can be heard from them and decisions can be made to benefit mr parks and the students but i also believe it's important to keep

[00:38:12] a spotlight on systems change the sudden shift highlights how important it is to ensure that feedback is truly heard and that support is based on what actually works for students and teachers not on the bare minimum at the september 4th open house family saw the device in action it was presented professionally but the difference compared to a live interpreter was stark this This is not just about technology, it's about connection.

[00:38:34] Typing or a mechanical voice cannot carry tone, inflection, emotion, or cultural context. Research confirms no device can replicate what a qualified interpreter provides, especially in ASL, where meaning goes beyond literal words. And the irony cannot be ignored.

[00:38:50] While Prince William County and the governor are removing cell phones from classrooms to strengthen communication and connection, it appears that the ADA office has chosen to remove a human interpreter and replace that connection with a device. These two messages do not align.

[00:39:05] I acknowledge that these devices serve an important purpose for people with speech limitations. They have value, but using them to replace an interpreter for a deaf teacher is not equitable. It risks becoming autism. The belief that spoken or written language is superior to sign language and that deaf individuals must adapt to systems designed for hearing people instead of receiving the support they truly need.

[00:39:27] Mr. Parks is to my knowledge, the only deaf native ASL speaker in this county. As a second year teacher, he should feel confident to share his needs without fear of job risk or being told to work with less,

which perhaps he is. His students, especially beginners, rely on both authentic exposure to ASL and the dynamic between the teacher and the interpreter.

[00:39:47] Please keep both options available and let this trial be about what is most effective, not just what is cheapest. Thank you. - Benjamin Guy.

[00:40:02] - Good evening, my name is Benjamin Guy. My address is on file with the clerk. I'm here to speak about a critical issue that affects not only the rights of our educators, but the quality of education and safety for our students. I want to raise a concern about a possible decision to remove the sign language interpreter for a deaf teacher who instructs American Sign Language.

[00:40:22] I understand that this educator has been provided with the text-to-speech tool and been directed to use Microsoft Teams for student interaction. While I appreciate the use of technology, this change may not be an effective or reasonable accommodation. The effectiveness of a communication in an ASL classroom is not about one-way transfer of words.

[00:40:40] about dynamic fluid and visually based exchange an interpreter is not just a translator they are a vital conduit for real-time interaction clarification and the nuance of human connection that is essential for both teaching and learning a properly trained language interpreter includes in their work the intended meaning nuances tone and cultural context of the message a text-to-speech tool and chat application are simply not a substitute for this this change puts the teacher at a significant professional disadvantage and compromises the educational experience for every student in that classroom, as well as the communication and inclusion of other faculty members.

[00:41:19] Beyond the classroom, there's an even more serious concern, that of safety. I'm led to understand that there are no visual indicators in this teacher's classroom to notify them of an emergency, such as a need to evacuate or shelter in place due to a fire or active shooter.

[00:41:35] Being dependent on a team's message or an untrained and unqualified faculty or student to interpret and communicate an announcement is unacceptable and is contradictory to Prince William County Schools policy regarding translators and interpreters. I understand that a message may be sent to the teacher using Microsoft Teams, but as we all know, constantly monitoring technology for messages while monitoring students' classroom behaviors and communicating the importance of eye contact, facial expression, those that are necessary for ASL, would be difficult for anyone to manage and could lead to delayed safety communication that increases the risk to our faculty and students.

[00:42:14] I'm also led to believe that currently, the role of alarm is being handled by the live interpreter. A flashing light or other form of immediate, tactile, or visual alert is not a convenience. It is a mandatory life-saving measure that is required by law and common sense.

[00:42:29] Without it, the safety of our students is at risk. - Thank you. - Thank you. - Julianne Fisher. - Good evening, my name is Julianne Fisher, address 13401 Classic Oaks Court here in Manassas.

[00:42:46] This is my daughter, Maddie Fisher, who is a sophomore at Colgan High School. I, like others here tonight, and I'm delighted at the turnout, are here to talk about the American Sign Language program at Colgan. She is in her second year of ASL with her teacher, Mr. Parks, who is deaf, and she has learned a tremendous amount during her time there with him in ASL One last year.

[00:43:07] And I'm here tonight to express my, and obviously other family's concerns regarding the removal of interpreters from classrooms of deaf teachers in Prince William County, including Mr. Parks' interpreter. The idea that the replacement of his interpreter with a text-to-speech software is a reasonable accommodation for this is, I'll be honest with you, not even comparable as having an in-person, real-time interpreter.

[00:43:29] This change will significantly alter the dynamics of the learning environment in the classroom as he is now expected to do the following. He will need to sign what he wants to say and wants to teach, then type out what he has just signed on the computer, wait for the computer to transfer the text-to-speech, and then repeat the process.

[00:43:46] This does not allow the students to see the signs as the concept is being taught, and I feel will result in students having a harder time learning how to put everything together. Especially in ASL 1, if a student wants to ask a question, they must type their question, then wait for Mr. Parks to read it, then sign his response, then type his response, and then wait for the text to be spoken.

[00:44:08] This exchange, which would take seconds with an interpreter, will now take minutes, and I suspect will result in only a fraction of material being taught despite Mr. Parks' best efforts. This change will particularly affect ASL one classes as they have no background to build upon regarding ASL as a language and will affect the upper levels as well as they learn more challenging concepts.

[00:44:27] I'm very disappointed in Prince William County school system for even considering this change. It seems like one of those situations where it sounded really good on paper, but no one thought about the real world impacts. I feel that students, parents and teachers affected by this decision are owed an explanation as to why this change occurred.

[00:44:42] And I'm hoping that somebody with some common sense will take notice and that this decision will be reconsidered to let Mr. Parks to continue to have the resources he needs to be an effective teacher at Colgan and to be a part of the community, because right now he's not, and it's an absolute shame that this has happened. Thank you.

[00:45:00] - Jessica Schauer. - Good evening, members of the board. I wasn't able to make the first board meeting, but I wanna take a moment to share how appreciative I am of Prince William County Public Schools, proving its commitment to foster a safe, inclusive, and welcoming environment for all of our students.

[00:45:22] So thank you for maintaining policy 738. Tonight, I'd like to talk about social media, specifically Prince William County social media. On Facebook, Prince William County Schools has 69,000 followers, PWCS News has 12,000 followers, and on the Tiki-Taki, you guys only have 2,000 followers.

[00:45:46] You have to up your game on that one. Altogether, that's more than 83,000 people following across the three platforms. So these channels are a direct and reliable way to keep the parents, students, and community members connected. These social media accounts strengthen relationships and share updates and celebrate achievements.

[00:46:06] Absolute beautiful videography on it. They encourage community engagement. They're doing a great job. However, September is Suicide Awareness Month. And while Prince William County Schools does have a web page on their site with resources, not a single post has been made on any of those social media pages.

[00:46:32] This would highlight the supports for mental health or discuss suicide awareness. That's 83,000 followers and that's a missed opportunity to connect families with life-saving resources. This could have included videos such as learning the warning signs or conversation starters.

[00:46:49] It could have been sharing one of the many resources from the National Alliance on Mental Illness or information about Hazel Health, which is a telehealth service that we have here in Prince William County. Each post would have been a chance to show families that Prince William County schools are serious about mental health and suicide prevention.

[00:47:07] But the good news is it's never too late to start sharing. So this is a very easy ask and it's a powerful opportunity. By prioritizing social media outreach around Suicide Awareness Month, Prince William County Schools can demonstrate care for our students and provide resources that may truly save lives.

[00:47:27] I urge the board to make this a priority and begin a discussion and a plan of action about ways that we can use social media to help keep families informed about suicide prevention. Thank you very much. - Thank you. Tiffany Fort.

[00:47:46] - My name is Tiffany Fort and my address is on file. - Good evening and thank you for making this opportunity available to address topics of issues. I'm a junior at Colgan High School in ASL three. I have had two ASL teachers, the current one being Mr. Parks.

[00:48:02] I have a question for you. Would you trust a 13 year old to manage an emergency? As with previous speakers and I'm sure many after me, I'm speaking on the current situation in ASL at Colgan. As has been said, Mr. Parks' interpreter is being denied and we have been given the accommodations of technology of Microsoft Teams and the text-to-speech keyboard.

[00:48:28] With this, I would like you to consider this scenario. You're an ASL1 student, about 13 or 14 years old, and you have just learned how to spell your name. Not much more. All of a sudden, the school goes on lockdown, notice being given through the PA system. According to an emergency procedures paper that we were given just yesterday, I believe, you are now in charge of notifying Mr. Parks the situation as he cannot hear the PA. The lights have to be turned off. You're scared and you're responsible for keeping yourself, your teacher, and the other students safe through broken or non-existent communication. Without an interpreter, mistakes can easily be made and lives would be at

[00:49:03] risk with this lack of communication. Now, you're an ASL2 student. You can express slightly more advanced ideas, but your signing isn't amazing yet. Your receptive skills aren't perfect either, but you can grasp basic ideas and have a general conversation. You're sitting in class when the student next to you starts having a medical emergency but some whatever emergency

[00:49:39] a seizure low blood sugar fainting pan attack whatever it may be the teacher would need to call the nurse or 911 depending a counselor but without an interpreter Mr. Parks and the students cannot communicate with each other or with emergency services about what is going on Mr. Parks cannot communicate without typing words out on his computer and having that delay of typing versus understanding.

[00:50:03] That is not effective communication. That is delayed communication and is extremely likely to risk someone's life. Removing access to an interpreter in our classroom creates many issues, and I've only touched on one. But there are many others that-- - Thank you.

[00:50:18] The next five speakers are Cameron Barber, Amy Guy, Josie Miller, Carl Gretton, and Jeffrey Lofgren.

[00:50:36] - Hello, my name is Cameron Barber. I'm a junior at Colgan High School. I've been taking American Sign Language for three years and for the past year and a half, we've had an amazing teacher named Mr. Parks. Mr. Parks is deaf and communicates 100% using sign language. For the time he's been at our school, he's had an interpreter to bridge the communication gap, both between his level one students, as well as other teachers, administrators, and students that do not take ASL.

[00:51:01] Recently, we learned Mr. Parks is having his interpreter taken away because the PWCS ADA board has decided he doesn't need it. The issue here is, you are forcing Mr. Parks into a position where he has to communicate, goodness where he has to communicate without using what is in a way his voice imagine being told you're not allowed to speak anymore and you're only allowed to type wouldn't you be angry others speaking about this topic have signed their intros could you understand them I'm going to assume the answer is no this is what it will feel like to anyone who tries to speak to mr. Parks from now

[00:51:35] on you are creating a communication gap that will be difficult to bridge now I know he has been given a way to communicate using Microsoft teams but by having him type, us students in his class are losing our exposure to the language. In both the Spanish and French classes that Prince William County offers, by the second and third levels of their classes, students are expected to speak fully in their respective language in order to learn more effectively. We will no longer have that option. Watching videos simply won't be enough to keep us up to the speed we need to be at to stay successful in our curriculum, and our grades will start to slip because what we're learning is basically an extension

[00:52:12] of English. In Mr. Parks' class, we learned about audism. Audism is a belief that deaf people should assimilate with the hearing world. As a result of this, many deaf children are forced to learn spoken language rather than ASL for the benefit of others. Does this sound familiar? This decision at its core is audism. We love having Mr. Parks as a teacher, and it would be devastating if we lose him next year because of this. I urge you to think about the effects this decision could have not only on Mr. Parks, but on his students and his fellow teachers. I hope that a decision can be made that benefits these people rather than hurting them.

[00:52:47] Thank you for your time and I hope you have a wonderful evening. - Amy Guy. - Hello, my name is Amy Guy and my address is on file. I'm giving my time to my daughter who is a student at Colgan High School.

[00:53:07] - Hello, my name is Elizabeth Guy and I'm a sophomore at Colgan High School. I second my father-- - You can't see your time. You gotta do, you gotta speak or nobody-- - You can read mine. - What she has to say, yes. - That's great. - All right. Hello, my name is Elizabeth Guy and I'm a sophomore at Colgan High School.

[00:53:23] I second my father's comments regarding Prince William County Schools' decision to remove the ASL interpreter from my classroom at Colgan High School. But I believe it's crucial to not only hear a parent's perspective on this issue, but that of a student's as well. I know that there are a few of my classmates speaking on this issue tonight, and I thank them for doing so.

[00:53:43] As a student, I understand the importance of my education and my safety. And due to this decision, I do not believe that either of these points are being protected. Addressing the safety issue, it has

come to my attention today through a paper I was given by school staff that in the threat of an emergency it will be communicated to my teacher through Microsoft Teams or by the students and staff that are not qualified in ASL.

[00:54:06] That includes PA announcements signaling these emergencies. As a student who has seen the number of emergencies that happen in schools, I am scared that adults of the county think this is a proper way of handling these situations that happen so frequently. The education issue seeing my teacher try to communicate with us through text has damaged my ability to learn as he cannot see what he is typing and cannot hear what comes out so he has resorted to signing the information and proceeding to type the information into a word document for those who can't understand this has made instruction time much longer and harmed the face-to-face

[00:54:40] interactions needed to properly learn ASL this is autism thank you good evening My name is Josie Miller. My address is on file with the clerk. I'm a junior at Colgan High School in the ASL 3 class.

[00:55:05] I'm here tonight to discuss the fact, like many others, that the deaf ASL teacher at my school has made a request for the accommodation of an interpreter that was granted without issue last year and again this year, but was abruptly changed with no warning. Prince William County is offering the least accommodation required to be legally compliant, which is directly opposed to what they promote.

[00:55:27] Aside from the cruelty of removing a reasonable and already awarded a combination, removing a hearing adult from the classroom is a safety issue and negatively affects the teacher's ability to effectively manage the classroom. Above these core issues of denying a reasonable accommodation and issues with safety and classroom management, I'd like to talk briefly about the message you're sending.

[00:55:49] The HR department just won an award for the message of inclusivity with the You Belong Here campaign. This initiative supposedly fosters a culture of belonging but what I want to know is for who it claims to instill the five pillars of belonging making sure everyone feels valued included engaged welcomed and supported but is that really true because if you meant it you would know that removing an interpreter doesn't just force a deaf teacher to replan his entire teaching style or question his ability to manage his class or keep us safe but it very specifically isolates him from his school community and from being a fully contributing member of the staff. You are excluding him from the school culture and

[00:56:27] social aspect of the school. How does he fully participate in staff meetings, in planning meetings, at pep rallies or assemblies? Thinking technology is enough for learning and completely ignoring everything else is the definition of audism. It's discrimination at its core even if you are legally compliant. What message do you think you're sending to us as students who have just learned so much about the discrimination of deaf people? What message are you sending to people who aren't even involved in this.

[00:56:56] That it's okay to discriminate if it's legally compliant. That anyone working here or planning to work here should expect a fight if they have a disability. That deaf students who have interpreters in class will have to be on their own once they're in the real world. If it's a priority to make sure that we the students ourselves see ourselves reflected in the staff, who does that apply to?

[00:57:16] Are we only wanting to reflect students' race and religion or should students with disabilities be able to see themselves reflected in staff too? Thank you. Carl Greton, and then the last two people, Hina Ansari and Rena Sapp could come up.

[00:57:37] - Good evening, I'm Carl Greton of the Gainesville District. Happy Constitution Day. The Virginia Education Association is calling for stronger financial controls of the Prince William Education Association, PWEA, following a sharp drop in the local union's cash reserves from 1.4 million to just 63,000 in two years.

[00:57:59] Dr. Lateef, the Prince William County School Board Chairman told Inside NOVA the news was very concerning and as a betrayal of trust at the most basic level. A letter from VEA President Carol Bauer shared anonymously with the Potomac Local News outlines concern from a recent internal review.

[00:58:18] The report shows PeeWee is spending \$53,000 more each month than it brings in and has accumulated \$692,000 in credit card charges over a 20-month period. Talk about waste, fraud, and abuse.

[00:58:34] Images obtained from Potomac Local News show school supplies and personal items, once housed inside the union office, discarded in a dumpster outside the building. Gainesville District School Board Member Jennifer Wall told Potomac Local News that she is troubled by the situation and believes union members deserve transparency and accountability.

[00:58:56] What has this county of Prince William County come to? Union members will probably make more money now because they do not need to pay union fees to a possibly defunct Piwea. Democrats have yelled with their hair on fire regarding high costs of eggs and gasoline.

[00:59:14] Sue Haas says he is working to lower prices. Unfortunately, he is too late because Republicans have already accomplished this. Do not worry, union members. Republicans will help you solve your problems. Fortunately, non-members are protected by the Virginia Right to Work law.

[00:59:30] and the victory for non-union government employees prohibiting forced union dues in the public sector. PWEA members, with a good sense to heed these warnings, can resign and revoke their dues and check off authorization.

[00:59:48] Through a wise school board, you would have refused to act as a collection agent for the union. Thank you. - Jeffrey Lofgren. - Good evening, I'm Jeff Lofgren.

[01:00:04] I'm a parent to two pretty rad kids here in Prince William County. So I wanna thank you to the board for your tireless dedication to our students and for championing values that make our community strong. We see every day your commitment to fostering an environment where every child feels safe, supported, and ready to learn.

[01:00:22] And frankly, I see that commitment in here, these kids standing up for their teacher. Beyond that though, our shared commitment to education must extend beyond this room. We can't ask our schools to do more with less. So tonight I'm gonna urge every person in this room, every person who's watching at home, pick up your phone, send an email, contact your national and local representatives and ask them, demand that they fully fund our schools.

[01:00:49] This is more than a simple request for money. It's a promise. It's a promise to the next generation that we will provide them with a safe and good education equipped with the resources they need to thrive. Let us work together to fulfill that promise. Thank you.

[01:01:08] - Hannah Asari. I thank you to the school board for letting me come back. I hope you didn't miss me. I was here last time too, Super Nintendo McDade. I put these pop culture references in for you and my address is on file.

[01:01:23] I just wanna stop and say I was really impressed with the products of Prince William County schools over here. Wow, they're doing their own little political activism here. I'm part of the DSA if you guys are interested, so let me know. But I came here to talk about the cell phone policy, which I'm kind of conflicted about. As a substitute teacher last year, if you had asked me about it, I would have said off with their heads for every cell phone violation.

[01:01:42] But this year, as we currently descend into fascism in this country, I'm concerned that their last lifeline is the cell phone. And I know that it's their responsibility to not get to that. I think it's the fourth strike is where they lose their cell phone and their parents have to come get it. I don't know, I haven't gotten to that point.

[01:01:57] I have only ever asked the kids to put their phones away, please, and then they still don't. But you know, what are you gonna do? But if they get disappeared off of school premises, then they don't have their cell phone. And that's like the last line of defense for them. And I feel concerned that we're not, I mean, we talk about safety and safety for kids in school.

[01:02:14] And so I'm like, they might need their cell phones. And some of them can't speak English very well. They use their cell phone as a translation tool. And I know the school laptops are good, but they're really not good. I had one student tell me she's swapped out her laptop four times this year. And it's only the fourth week of school, the third week of school.

[01:02:30] I don't know what day the school started. But anyway, I was just gonna say that that's what my concern is now, 'cause I don't wanna talk about anything too random. But anyway, I'm really impressed with these kids over here. I think they should have written my speech for me. Thank you.

[01:02:45] - Thank you. Rena Stapp. - Hi, good evening. I'm Rena Stapp. My address is on file with the board. Good evening, Superintendent McDade, members of the board. As an engineering nerd and an FLL robotics coach here in PWCS, it warms my heart to see all those amazing students achieving such high science awards.

[01:03:09] I don't know if my kids will ever be there because they tend to have other interests, but it's great to see it here. I'm also very impressed with the activism of these students that came to talk in support of their teacher. I wanted to say thank you to you all for keeping Prince William County equitable and inclusive for all students by standing strong with 738-5.

[01:03:32] And Ma, I'm a little ahead. I know it was voted in today, October 13th through 17th. You voted to recognize National School Lunch Week. My daughter strongly requests that you bring back mini calzones. I have encouraged her to reach out to PWCS Nutrition.

[01:03:49] I said, "You draft something, I'll help you email it." But I wanted to get that on your radar 'cause if we don't hear back from Nutrition, I may be back asking for the mini calzone. She says it was the best lunch option that is somehow not here this year. So thank you for your time.

[01:04:10] - Thank you, and before we go on, I just wanna say that I wanted to let everybody know that Dr. McDade is one of Northern Virginia's magazine's 50 most influential people of 2025 and i just wanted to share that with everybody so you could clap and cheer right now okay congratulations dr mcdade thank you for your representation and for your team and everything you guys do for our community we really appreciate

[01:04:42] it thank you moving on to 14.01 the proposed sale of vpsa bonds for the fall of 2025 a motion - Vice Chair Breit.

[01:05:04] - I move that the Prince William County School Board, A, authorize the completion and submission of the application to the Virginia Public School Authority, also known as VPSA for the fall 2025 standalone bond sale in the amount of \$105 million to finance certain capital improvement projects for school purposes.

[01:05:22] B, authorize the superintendent or such other officer as she may designate to submit such documentation as required by VPSA. C, request for the Board of County Supervisors to authorize the application for a fall 2025 VPSA bond sale, and to take such other actions as may be necessary to complete the bond sale, and D, direct that this resolution shall become effective immediately.

[01:05:48] - Do I have a second? - Ms. Chairman. - Ms. Zagaford. - Second. - Second. - Any discussion? - Ms. Wall. - I love to see that we look like we are spending less money than we thought we were going to be spending, so I think this is great.

[01:06:05] I want to commend the team for working to reinforce the principle of good budgeting. So thank you for the reduction cost for our CIP. I appreciate it.

[01:06:20] - Thank you, Ms. Wall. Please vote.

[01:06:48] - Vote is six yes, unanimous, motion passed. - Thank you. Now we move on to our student representative time. Tonight we welcome Karina Grover from Charles J. Kogan High School. Ms. Grover, you have the floor.

[01:07:08] - Thank you so much. - Hello, and good evening to the incredible PWCS community, esteemed members of the school board, and our superintendent, Dr. McDade. My name is Karina Grover, and I am a senior at Colgan High School. Tonight marks my first time on the dais as a student representative, and I couldn't be more excited.

[01:07:28] I look forward to representing students in the best way possible, and I'm eager for us to ignite meaningful change together this year. Before I continue my remarks, I would like to pause and ask everyone to join me in a moment of silence to honor the victims, families, and heroes of the September 11th tragedy.

[01:08:02] Thank you. While I was not alive during 9/11, I believe it is important that students continue to learn about this tragedy. Understanding the impact it has on our nation helps us honor the lives lost, recognize the resilience of our communities, and carry forward the values of unity and compassion.

[01:08:22] Next, I wanna recognize the accomplishments of our student voice committees. A countywide program implemented by Dr. McDade herself, this year we officially have SVCs in all middle and high schools across PWCS. That is such a huge milestone because it means students now have the opportunity to impact schools countywide.

[01:08:42] Last year, Woodbridge High School opened the very first SVC center, a space where students can share feedback on both school and county issues. This year, Patriot High School is now working on creating their own SVC center as well. well. Having dedicated spaces like this where students know their voices will be heard is so important to improving our schools and ensuring PWCS continues to grow

stronger with student input. Additionally, many SVCs are having their first meetings, starting off the school year strong by discussing topics such as AI in schools and counseling experiences. There are a lot of

[01:09:20] good conversations happening at these meetings. I am so excited to see what we all accomplish this year. I would also like to highlight the creation of the Girls Flag Football in PWCS. As a big football fan, go Bengals, I was so excited to hear that this program was being implemented. While I may not have the skills or the mindset of a football player myself, I'm thrilled to see my peers out on the field and to finally see girls represented in the sport. Best of luck to all teams this year. As for cell phones, of course, we are seeing mixed reviews across the County. On the positive side, Woodbridge High School is now averaging only about

[01:09:59] 10 cell phones confiscated per day, which is a huge accomplishment considering they have nearly 2,900 students. Gainesville High School has also reported encouraging results, sharing that students are adjusting to the new phone policy fairly well. However, countywide, some challenges still remain.

[01:10:16] Students at some schools are reporting that teachers and administrators are becoming more lenient with enforcement, which raises questions about consistency around the county. Along with cell phones, technology continues to be a major topic of discussion, especially school laptops. Many students have reported frustration with their performance and reliability. Often, waiting for laptops to load takes up valuable class time, causing students to lose meaningful learning opportunities. Meanwhile, Gainesville High School, which currently uses iPads, has reported very positive results. Students there say that devices run faster and with fewer issues compared to the laptops used at other schools.

[01:10:55] Across the county, students have expressed that they would appreciate access to iPads. For example, students of the CFP program at Colgan High School know that iPads would be beneficial that would help them with recording, editing, and preparing auditions, which are tools that support their academic and artistic success.

[01:11:14] It's also worth noting that many middle school students already have iPads, which have made their learning more efficient and accessible, showing how beneficial these devices can be for high school students. I suggest that PWCS expand the iPad Pilot to more high schools as it has already shown clear benefits compared to laptops.

[01:11:33] Furthermore, I want to address the issue of website blocking. I take AP Comparative Government, a class where we study and compare the governments of six countries around the world. It's such an interesting class and I'm really curious about how other governments function. Recently, I had to do a project on different governments and needed images for my presentation.

[01:11:51] However, when I tried to search for pictures of the 2020 Russian election, many images were blocked. When I searched for information about Nigeria's government I only found a few results and often it was just maps, not information about the government itself. It doesn't make sense why PWCS would block tools and resources that are essential for educational success. Students need access to accurate information and materials to fully engage in their learning. Additionally, these blocks make it harder for teachers to teach. Shout out to Miss Watts for adapting to these challenges, even though she shouldn't have to. The student Student Voice Bill of Rights states in Article 2.4a that students can request access to sites

[01:12:31] to support their learning. PWCS should honor this by allowing students to request access to the websites they truly need. A simple online system where students can request unblocking and adults can

review and track those requests would be efficient and safe. This would ensure that both students and teachers have the tools they need for meaningful learning while keeping their internet safety in mind.

[01:12:52] Next, I would like to highlight PWCS's new automatic math acceleration policy for students in grades 5 through 8. This policy is designed to make sure every student has access to rigorous math instruction that prepares them for success in high school and beyond.

[01:13:08] What really stands out to me is that the policy recognizes that test scores do not define a student. Teacher recommendations, student interest, and parent input are all considered when placing students in advanced math. While I'm no longer in middle school, I think back to when I was, and I know how much I would have appreciated and benefited from the chance to take advanced math, even if I didn't receive the perfect score.

[01:13:29] This is a step in the right direction for students. I also want to speak on the updated PWCS attendance policy. PWCS makes it clear that attending school regularly is essential for students to reach their full potential. This policy not only reinforces Virginia's attendance law, but also emphasizes the shared responsibility of schools, families, and students to make attendance a priority.

[01:13:53] For example, at Colgan High School, an administrator started a zero-absence incentive to encourage students to come to school. Each week, about 20 students who had perfect attendance are recognized and receive rewards like free snacks, a free ticket to a sports game, and my personal favorite, a pass to skip the lunch line.

[01:14:10] Hilton High School does something similar, except they get to choose a gift card. Activities like this engage students and demonstrate how schools can turn attendance into something motivating for students. And I just received an email I was selected for this week, so yay, free lunch.

[01:14:28] Now I would like to speak about an issue that I've become aware of and that I want to inform PWCS about. A concern has been raised regarding the American Sign Language Program. A deaf ASL teacher whom students consistently describe as an outstanding educator previously had access to an interpreter.

[01:14:45] recently however that support was removed claiming that he does not require one both the teacher and many of the students disagree despite these hardships students have advocated for what they believe in by creating petitions collecting statements from their peers and reaching out to administration to resolve this issue this is advocacy in action and I'm proud to see students stand up for what they believe in now it is your turn PWCS students have done their part now we ask you to do yours show students that their voices are heard, that they have power, and that PWCS truly values both its educators and its learners. Thank you so much for this opportunity to speak. I know

[01:15:21] this is over four minutes, but I want every student to know that your student representatives are here to support you. Please continue advocating for what you believe in, and never hesitate to share your concerns with us. Together we can make sure student voices are heard in PWCS. Thank you.

[01:15:38] and now we move on to superintendent's time dr. McDade the floor is yours thank you so much vice chairman Blake I am proud to begin my time by announcing that the National Merit Scholarship Corporation has selected six PWCS students as 2026 National Merit Scholarship Program semi-finalists a semi-finalist must have an outstanding academic record throughout high school be endorsed and recommended by a high school official, write an essay and earn SAT or ACT

[01:16:15] scores that confirm the student's earlier performance on the 2024 PSAT National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test. These students now have the chance to continue in the competition for thousands of National Merit Scholarships, which are collectively worth nearly \$26 million and will be awarded in the spring of 2026.

[01:16:38] Congratulations to Luke Davis and Alexander Gushi of Battlefield High School, Rebecca Clark from C.D. Hilton High School, Julianne Lim from Charles J. Colgan Senior High School, Benjamin Fu from Gainesville High School, and Luke Pomfret from Patriot High School.

[01:16:59] We plan to honor our National Merit Semi-Finalists at a school board meeting later this fall. And I want to also personally invite our families to attend the back-to-school nights and the many school-based events and activities throughout this school year, as family and community engagement is one of our key commitments.

[01:17:17] I also encourage families to get involved in one of our school advisory councils and to complete the survey for Vision 2030. We are currently developing our next four-year strategic plan. We're sunsetting Vision 2025 and launching Vision 2030.

[01:17:34] your voice matters and we want to hear from you. You can find a copy of the survey on our website at pwcs.edu. Also be on the lookout for two-way communication from our teachers that is translated directly through school status. Last year this tool brought us together and provided the greatest opportunity to improve communication in support of student achievement. By the end of the 24-25 school year our staff made over 2 million calls, sent over 5 million emails and delivered over 8 million text messages. Since the

[01:18:10] integration of school status, staff members sent over 30 million messages to our families. This increase in communication better supports our students, families, and communities. In recognition of Suicide Prevention Month, I want to remind our community of mental health telehealth support as an available resource to our parents and guardians for their children. This is available to every student in Prince William County Schools free of charge.

[01:18:37] This initiative provides access to Hazel Health which is a well-established telehealth provider and again it is at no cost. Our partnership reflects the growing need for accessible mental health support especially for young people facing anxiety, depression, and stress. Their service provides critical support to families who may not have access to other resources and can ensure students are assisted quickly. To take advantage of these services parents or guardians must first opt in via ParentVUE to share their child's information with Hazel Health to qualify for the free services and then initiate

[01:19:15] services by registering with Hazel Health. PWCS is committed to ensuring that all students have access to the mental health resources they need to thrive in a positive climate and culture. Speaking of a positive learning environment, I would like to welcome all PWCS students and families to our Family Engagement Series Town Hall event at Unity Braxton Middle School from 6 p.m. to 7 p.m. on September 25th. The focus for this event will be the cell phone free education policy. This Town Hall will ensure understanding of the policies implementation, provide a platform for families to ask questions and share

[01:19:54] feedback, and highlight resources and strategies to support healthy device use at home in school we will have partners that will be present and resource tables at this event so we welcome you to join us and you also can join virtually by registering on their PWCS website when the division is working

together and effectively communicating as a unified school system with common objectives goals and vision the outcome is success for every student thank you to everyone who has worked so diligently to get this school year off to a successful start

[01:20:29] And as we approach the midpoint of the first quarter, I encourage families to check in on your child's progress through ParentVUE and with your child's teacher. As a reminder, schools and offices are closed on Tuesday, September 23rd in observance of Rosh Hashanah.

[01:20:46] Mr. Vice Chairman, that concludes the superintendent's report. Thank you, Dr. McDade. Man, 8 million emails, huh? Wow, that's a lot. Right.

[01:21:01] We are moving on to committee updates. And tonight we have one committee update from Ms. Wall for the internal audit committee. Ms. Wall, the floor is yours. Thank you. The internal audit committee met last time we got together, which was September 3rd.

[01:21:20] And we received a status update of audit activities, including audit and engagement reports completed since our last meeting, which included some school audits and other things. We received an activities in progress follow-up and started our discussion of the planning process for our new strategic plan or I guess our input for our new audit plan, sorry, for the next year.

[01:21:47] We were, the audit committee reported that they were able to audit 23 offices and schools this year. Five of those were turnover audits, meaning new leadership, either a new principal or a new financial specialist at the schools. And we have a lot of good things coming up with the audit committee.

[01:22:02] I don't know if there are any questions from board members, but it was pretty routine, and we have more things coming up in our next meeting. Super, thank you. - Thank you, Ms. Wall. That takes us to board matters, and we started with Justin last time, so we'll start with Lisa.

[01:22:22] Ms. Zargapur. - Thank you, Mr. Blake. I wanna thank the students from Colgan and the parents who came out to talk. I appreciate the information you gave, the points of view you gave.

[01:22:38] On this day, September 17th, we observe Constitution Day, which commemorates the signing of the US Constitution in 1787. This day is officially known as Constitution Day and Citizenship Day, recognizing both the historical signing of our document and all who have become US citizens, whether by birth or by naturalization.

[01:22:58] The preamble begins, we the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union, establish justice, ensure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote for the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.

[01:23:17] We recognize Constitution Day for a few reasons. We are commemorating a historic moment. This day marks the conclusion of the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia, where 39 delegates signed the document that established a new government framework for a young nation. We're celebrating this as the supreme law of the land.

[01:23:33] The U.S. Constitution establishes the principle that the government's power comes from we, the people, and created a system of checks and balances to prevent the concentration of power in any single branch. It's also our civic education. A 2004 federal law was passed mandating that all publicly

funded educational institutions and federal agencies provide an educational program on the history of the US Constitution on this day, and it is an effort to promote civic literacy and engagement among citizens.

[01:24:01] The Constitution is more than a historical document. It is an enduring framework, a living guide, and the protector of our individual rights. The Bill of Rights protects our fundamental liberties such as freedom of speech, religion, and press.

[01:24:17] These protections are the foundations of our free society. The Constitution is the legal means by which we the people ensure that the government serves its vital purposes without violating our rights. Our founding fathers who collaborated and debated the Constitution into life felt strongly about an educated public to carry on the mantle of democracy.

[01:24:38] James Madison said, "A well-instructed people alone can be permanently a free people." Adams wrote, "Liberty cannot be preserved without a general knowledge among the people." Thomas Jefferson wrote, "Educate and inform the whole mass of people."

[01:24:54] They are the only sure reliance for the preservation of our liberty." Ben Franklin was a champion for education and founded the Academy of Philadelphia, which is now the University of Pennsylvania. He advocated for studying a broad series of subjects and emphasized practical learning, critical thinking, lifelong learning and that education was essential to a flourishing society.

[01:25:16] He was an advocate for public education for all and he taught his own daughter, Sally. He founded public schools and public libraries. And as a teen, he wrote under the pen name, "Silence Do Good," who was a witty, outspoken widower mother to express his thoughts on society, including those related to women, showing his leanings toward educational opportunities for all.

[01:25:37] I leave you with this quote of Silence Duguid, "Without freedom of thought, there can be no such thing as wisdom, and no such thing as public liberty without freedom of speech, which is the right of every man. As far as by it, he does not hurt or control the right of another."

[01:25:54] And this is the only check it ought to suffer, and the only bounds it ought to know." Thank you, Ms. Lagerford. Ms. Williams. Thank you, Vice Chair Blake. I am excited as the school year is underway.

[01:26:11] It seems to be this general undercurrent of everyone making the best of their school year. I also wanna say happy Constitution Day. And as someone who's always championed student voice, the students in the audience who spoke, our student representative continuously fill my heart with joy and my mind with the knowledge that we are producing amazing students who are going to be prepared for their future and who know how to use their voice and feel comfortable doing it, which I get chills every time.

[01:26:42] So thank you for coming. I just want to, during my board matters night, just kind of say some general things, feedback that I've heard from being in buildings and back to school nights, I haven't been to a lot 'cause I'm still robotics parent coach. I feel like I live at the middle school and other things.

[01:26:58] But some common themes that I'm hearing are that we're having tech issues with laptops, wifi connections, the ability to load apps, things of that nature. I bring this up because I think it's important that we share this information, but I also think it's important that we recognize that while we have an amazing staff for IT, which I know for a fact 'cause I talk to them all the time, there are also overlaying or other issues.

[01:27:24] Wi-Fi in general is acting a little funny. The device issues. I bring this up because I think it's important we continue to have these conversations, not to say that they're negative to our division. Because I feel like a lot of times when people go to speak up, they're hesitant because they feel like it's a criticism, people get in trouble, or someone's not doing their job, and that's not always the case.

[01:27:45] So I just want to say thank you to the individuals and the students who do express that and the fact that they are comfortable. Because there's always a lot of layers to an issue, and sometimes we only hear one side, and it makes it difficult, really, to kind of see it as a holistic issue. So I wanted to say thank you for that.

[01:28:01] It also brings me to the bus app. There are a few schools that are piloting it. The bus app is, we didn't make it. We're doing the best that we can. I know that we had an amazing transportation department. We really do. But I just ask for everyone to have patience because one of the things that I know as a parent and as a board member, but specifically as a parent, is there's a problem and I'm like, oh, we have to fix it.

[01:28:20] Because every other area in our lives, it's very easy to do so. In a large school division, sometimes things are out of control, but that doesn't mean we don't know or we don't wanna hear. So I just want to acknowledge the fact that I know I've been hearing it. I know our transportation department has been hearing it. and we're doing the best that we can with something that is not necessarily our product.

[01:28:39] In other news, to highlight on what our student representative was saying, and it is Constitution Day, please take time to understand how our systems work and overlap. I was hearing a lot of critique about SOLs, that is the Virginia Department of Education thing. But you're welcome, as our community, to also reach out to them.

[01:28:57] So I just want to emphasize that as a community, we should all be using our voice at each correct level to express what we need to think that education will be better for our families and communities. And with that, I have 14 seconds. So I would just like to say, I hope everyone attends their back to school night, parents, guardians, other adults, please stay involved in your students' academic progress at all levels.

[01:29:22] We want to see you, and we want to share in the experience of community. Thank you. - Thank you, Ms. Williams. Ms. Wall. - Thank you, Mr. Blake. Congrats to the six semifinalists for the NumSquat Award. That's what we called it in the '80s. don't know if we still call it that the num squat award um congratulations and good luck going forward um bull run middle had their first football game last night in the rain it was awesome um sadly they lost in overtime but they had lots of spirit and it was really fun um i'm looking forward to the unity braxton town hall on september 25th i would like to know what families think and i would like to hear what their concerns are and help work through that um i too am hearing tech

[01:30:02] issues at some of my you know with some of the tech so good luck to the tech team as we continue to work through some of those challenges i'm also hearing that the transportation issues seem to be coming under control um i would be interested in an after action analysis of kind of what happened this year as compared to last year which i remember was pretty awesome um okay let's see i think that's my small items i wish to address three main items tonight um first item one happy constitution day and citizenship day we were all in the same wavelength so far that's pretty cool Today is the day, it is Constitution Day, commemorating the signing of the U.S. Constitution in 1787,

[01:30:39] an event that laid the foundation for our government and protected our rights. As a public servant and recovering lawyer, this reminds me of my duty to uphold liberty, representative government, and the rule of law. It also reinforces my role as a model of civic engagement and respectful political dialogue while advocating for your children's futures.

[01:30:58] Looking ahead, July 4, 2026, we will celebrate 250 years of American independence, a remarkable milestone. I respectfully request that our school division form a commemoration committee to organize learning experiences and provide resources for educators similar to our 9-11 Patriot Day Commission that we did a couple years back. Yeah, maybe Mr. Wilk and I can collaborate on this again. Item number two, National Security Officer Appreciation Week, which is happening right now. Our Prince William County Schools benefit from a dedicated team of security officers who help keep our schools safe. PWCS prioritizes safety through trained personnel,

[01:31:35] smart technology, and proactive planning. Regular emergency drills and trained staff ensure swift responses. Families can learn crisis codes for added readiness. Safety technology like digital check-ins and alert platforms enable real-time monitoring with law enforcement. The Say Something program empowers students and staff to anonymously report concerns and please do say something if you know something school security officers community safety officers and school resource officers maintain a visible responsive presence across our 100 campuses i encourage you to make take a moment when you're in schools to thank these professionals who work daily to ensure our schools are secure

[01:32:12] and i really do appreciate all that they do item three civic virtue and respectful discourse I urge our division to enforce professional behavior and social media policies that are on our books that uphold civic virtue and model respectful discourse.

[01:32:27] Our schools must remain places of learning, respect, and civic responsibility, not arenas for political extremism. We have a duty to uphold the safety and dignity of our learning spaces. As public leaders, we must lead with courage and clarity. If anyone endorses murder or violence as justified, I urge swift action per our policies.

[01:32:45] On a personal note, I advocate increasing speech and debate programs I've advocated in the past. In high school, speech and debate taught me critical thinking, careful listening, and respect for differing opinions, all essential skills so much needed in the world. We must teach students to reject threats, harassment, and violence as means to settle disagreements.

[01:33:03] In times of tragedy, we look to voices of wisdom. Alexander Shultzenitson, who endured great struggles and witnessed the consequences of violence and lies, in the former Soviet Union said, the simple step of a courageous individual is not to take part in the lie. One word of truth outweighs the world. May these words remind us of the importance of truth, moral courage, and compassion as we navigate the coming days ahead. Thank you, and good night. Thank you, Ms. Wall. Mr. Jesse. Thank you. This will be hopefully pretty

[01:33:40] short. As most of you know, my wife has been in the hospital, in and out. Everything is going well, So I have not attended a lot of events this year. But what I do want to say is a couple of things. As a board member or as a supervisor, we cannot meet with three people and discuss any potential what do we want to do programs.

[01:34:05] That's against the policy here in the state of Virginia. So we have to, if I want something, I have to call around and talk to people. so what i'm going to be doing is asking our board members to consider a couple things the number one thing is we need to hold a boundary hearing we have two elementary schools that are coming online and there is no boundary hearing yet for those schools so why it's because we as board member has not set down and set a date we need to set a date for boundary hearings for the new woodbridge

[01:34:43] Elementary School and Occoquan Elementary School. You were talking, Ms. Williams was talking about IT issues. I do think we have some significant IT issues.

[01:34:59] So again, I'm willing if somebody else, another two members, to sit and let's have that put on the agenda as something that we can discuss to see what we can do about it. Transportation, I asked last meeting, but I again will say we have a good transportation department but something went wrong this year and we need to have a discussion about that.

[01:35:27] So with those two things, three things, I will yield my time. Thank you. Thank you. Mr. Wilk. If you would have started with me I would have yielded my time, but now I'm talking. So I want to thank the families for coming out tonight.

[01:35:44] want to thank the students for advocacy on being out here to speak on behalf of your teacher and your program and your class thank you for being here tonight the last couple weeks i've had the pleasure of going to two back to school nights of middle schools potomac shores and potomac middleton tomorrow is grand park i'll be there mary williams had a science night i also had the pleasure of being part of a really um maybe monumental or historic um forest park high school at before their football game uh the choral teacher there orchestrated and had um over 500

[01:36:19] students from 13 schools come out and sing the national anthem so i thought that was pretty cool um for that um but anyways i was thinking karina was like i wasn't born when 9 11 happened and then i thought about my colleague miss wall and i when we worked together to create that committee um to commemorate or i guess honor remembrance of the 20th anniversary of 9 11. um and you know circumspect on this but i will say in memory of this you know i i think a lot of us in the room

[01:36:57] minus the students all remember where we were when the planes hit or the pentagon was hit um i remember i was a senior in high school and uh i still remember i was in a math class we had a substitute teacher that was back in the day when the tvs you were lucky to have one in the corner of the room and it was big bulky tv and i remember it being turned on um but then you know seeing going back and seeing a lot of the footage in the last couple days and seeing that it's it's crazy to think that we've gone this many years since that event and it's important that

[01:37:32] our students the karina and all our kids here from colgan and other students across this county remember this event because as i posted on facebook um night there was a tragic assassination and thinking of another assassination that occurred at doorstep in minnesota i thought about 9 11 as a time when you know we as a nation actually came together in unity with a shared purpose after those attacks and i use a quote that posted but it's something i you know

[01:38:10] At the time, I didn't really like George W. Bush, but he's grown on me over the years and some of the things that have occurred. But this quote that he said sticks with me, still resonates with me.

Terrorist attacks can shake the foundations of our biggest buildings, but they cannot touch the foundation of America.

[01:38:32] And that sticks with me now because I feel like, as people have said now, our country, I feel, is more divided and more polarized than ever. And, you know, it makes me think of a time going back that many years ago when we were united, we weren't Democrats, we weren't Republicans, we weren't, you know, whatever you want to be, your label, Independent Reform Party, I don't care, Libertarian, but we were Americans, we came together, and I just want to reflect on that, especially during the times we're living in right now.

[01:39:03] Thank you, Mr. Wall. All right, well, it's my turn. So the beginning of the school year is always one of my favorite times as a school board member. And over the past few weeks, I've been out at our schools, visiting classrooms, shaking hands, and wishing our students and teachers a strong start to the school year.

[01:39:28] I continued my annual tradition of visiting every school in the district, in the Neopto district, including King, Enterprise, Bel Air, and Dell City, to say welcome back in person. And I also had the privilege of attending several back-to-school events, including Garfield High School's back-to-school night, Hamptons, and Bevel's sixth grade back-to-school nights.

[01:39:52] And the energy in those hallways and the pride from those students and parents reminds me of why we do this work. And outside of the classroom, I had the honor of joining my colleague down here this weekend, Mr. Wilkes at his Breast Cancer Awareness, his, what was it called, The Pink?

[01:40:12] Pretty in Pink Breast Cancer Awareness. It was great, I got to see him sing. They had this eighth grade rock band from Benton, the period eight. They are serious. Look, I was telling you, so they did.

[01:40:28] Look 'em up on YouTube, check 'em out. We're gonna be, you know, the next thing coming out of Prince William, it was really good. And good job, good job, Justin. And it was a great reminder of how our schools are deeply connected with the broader community. And I also want to just take this moment also to thank our principals, teachers, and staff for their hospitality and incredible work they've done to ensure the smooth opening of our schools this year.

[01:40:54] And I also want to brag about Garfield and the graduation rate is now at 92.1%. And across Prince William County, we're also, the SOL scores are on the rise, like Dr. McDade said in the last meeting, you know, and all of our core subject areas at every grade level, elementary, middle, and high school, they're just seeing significant increases in progress.

[01:41:24] And this progress shows that when we invest in our students and support our educators, we see results. so thank you guys. And speaking of student achievement, I also want to recognize my Garfield Red Wolves girls flag football team. They were one of the four schools from Prince William County chosen to kick off at the commander's practice facility yesterday. And this is another historic moment for our students, a huge step forward in expanding opportunities for girls in athletics, so it was good. I know we had like 60 girls trialed at Garfield for 25 spots, so yeah.

[01:42:01] but we cannot stop here like you've heard before our strategic plan 2030 is underway and historically communities like mine have been underrepresented in that process so i want to personally invite every parent grandparent caregiver and student in the neafco district to take part in the community

meetings and the surveys your voice matters and they will help shape the future of prince William County Public Schools. And finally, this Friday night at the Garfield High School season

[01:42:34] opener, we have a Veterans Appreciation Night and our Red Wolves are taking on the battlefield. So I invite Ms. Wall to come down here to Dell City Friday and come and wear your school colors and help us honor our veterans while cheering on our students and what we will be sure to be an exciting game and um together let's just keep pushing forward for our kids every child every school every day thank you there being nothing further to come before this board i now declare

[01:43:12] this meeting adjourned



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