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Prince William County School Board Meeting, Wednesday, October 1, 2025

Date Wednesday, October 1, 2025
Place Prince William County School Board, Virginia
Length 1h 48m (video)

- Official meeting video (YouTube): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P8Q0H2JHpwo>
- 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'd like to call the meeting of the Prince William County School Board to order. A motion is now in order for the approval of meeting agenda. Vice Chair Blake. - Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I move that the Prince William County School Board approve the meeting agenda. - Do I have a second? - Mr. Chairman. - Ms. Zargapur.

[00:00:18] - I second. - Any discussion, please vote. All in favor, raise your hand, aye. Any opposed? No opposition noted. Did you vote, Mr. Denik? Okay, excellent, very good. So it's unanimous, whatever that is. Moving on next to the enter closed session, a motion in order, Vice Chair Blake.

[00:00:35] - Mr. Chairman, I move that pursuant to section 2.2-3711 and 2.2-3712 of Dakota, Virginia, the Prince William County School Board inter-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 and two, to discuss and consult

[00:01:11] with legal counsel regarding requests for religious exemptions pertaining to specific students under sections 2.2-3711A of the Code of Virginia and 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 2.2-3711A7 and 8 of the Code of Virginia, and four, to discuss with legal counsel and staff specific

[00:01:46] legal matters related to a federal civil rights complaint pursuant to sections 2.2-3711A7 and 8 of the Code of Virginia, and five, to discuss and receive briefings by staff members related to the security of school facilities, the safety of persons using such facilities, and the actions taken to respond to such matters, where discussion in an open meeting would jeopardize the security of such facilities pursuant to section 2.2-3711A19 of the Code of Virginia.

[00:02:24] - Do I have a second? - Mr. Chairman. - Ms. Sargeant. - I second. - Any discussion? Please vote. All in favor, aye. Any opposed? - None opposed, motion passes unanimously. At this time, the Prince William County School Board

[00:02:38] will enter closed session and return in approximately one hour.

[00:03:30] Prince William County School Board is now returning to open session from closed session.

[00:03:47] A motion is in order for 8.01 on closed session certification, Vice Chair Blake. - Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I recommend, I move that the pursuant to section 2.2-3712 of the Code of Virginia, the closed session of the Prince William County School Board meeting of October 1st, 2025 be certified by adopting following resolution 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 closed meeting to which this

[00:04:23] 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. Do I have a second? Mr. Chairman. Ms. Williams. I second. Any discussion? Please vote.

[00:04:54] The vote is eight yes unanimous motion passed. Okay moving on to our action items we have the approval for appointments and releases. A motion is in order. Vice Chair Blake. Thank you Mr.

[00:05:22] Chairman. I move that the Prince William County School Board approve the appointments and releases of specific employees as presented in closed session. Do I have a second? Mr. Chairman. Ms. Williams. Second. Any discussion? Please vote. The vote is eight yes unanimous motion passed. Okay

[00:05:58] moving on next to a request for religious exemption motions or vice chair blake thank you mr chairman i move that the prince william county school board approves a request for a religious exemption for compulsory school attendance for case numbers re25-16 and re25-17 do we have a

[00:06:21] second mr chairman miss williams i second any discussion please vote vote is eight yes unanimous Motion passed.

[00:06:43] - All right, moving on to the Pledge of Allegiance, I'd like to invite our student representative, Beulah Sarsa from C.D. Hilton High School to lead us in the pledge this evening. - Pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America to Republic.

[00:07:10] - Thank you, Ms. Sarsa. Moving on next to Thriving Futures Focus. Tonight, let me just get to that. As many of you know, Thriving Futures Focus is our opportunity to highlight the exemplary work being accomplished in our schools to fulfill our vision that every student will graduate with the knowledge, skills, and habits of mind necessary to create a thriving future for themselves and their community.

[00:07:33] We dedicate this time during our meetings to recognizing students, staff members, and schools that have earned an honor or an award at the state or national level. We appreciate how those honorees have positively represented Prince William County public schools, and the school board is proud to recognize them publicly for their accomplishments.

[00:07:52] PWCS recently learned that 30 schools carried the Virginia Naturally Schools designation from the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources. This is the official environmental education school recognition program in the Commonwealth. Schools applying for this award must show their efforts both in the classroom and beyond to increase the environmental literacy of their students.

[00:08:13] Tonight we will recognize the 16 new schools receiving this award. These schools have embraced our commitment to improving environmental awareness and stewardship by educating students and staff. We begin our recognition with Vice Chair, Mr. Tracy Blake, representing the Neabsco District, who will introduce our first award winners, Mr. Blake.

[00:08:34] - Thank you, Dr. Lateef. The Neabsco District is proud to acknowledge my favorite school, I didn't say that out loud, Minnieville Elementary School, representing Minnieville. We recognize Principal, Ms. Deborah Ellis and Gifted Sustainability Coordinator, Bridget Gorns.

[00:08:54] Congratulations. - Thank you, and now I invite Ms. Jennifer Wall, representative of the Great Gainesville District to announce her awardees. - Thank you, Dr. Lateef.

[00:09:10] On behalf of the Gainesville District, it is my pleasure to recognize Unity Braxton Middle School as a recipient of this award. The Unity Braxton is represented tonight, let's see, I'm not sure if I see her, by Principal Aaron Sykes Thurston, is she here?

[00:09:28] And mathematics teacher Mr. Oscar Carrasco is here. - Yes, wonderful. Congratulations to you all at Unity Braxton. - Thank you, Ms. Wall, and then to Mr. Justin Wilk of the wonderful Potomac District.

[00:09:46] - Dr. Lateef, I'm here to promote launching thriving futures here by recognizing in the Potomac District, Ashland Elementary School. Ashland is represented by Principal Anna Houseworth and gifted education teacher, Katie Dupuis.

[00:10:01] Congratulations, Ashland, and thank you for representing our district. - Thank you, Mr. Wilk. from the fabulous Coles District. Ms. Lisa Zargapur, please introduce our award-winning schools. - Thank you, Dr. Lateef.

[00:10:17] The Coles District would like to recognize five schools, five, Bennett Elementary, C.D. Hilton High School, Loch Lomond Elementary, Saunders Middle, and Yorkshire Elementary School. Bennett Elementary School is represented by Principal Shelly Pozell, Assistant Principals Candace Schwartz, and Stephanie Barron.

[00:10:35] C.D. Hilton High School is represented by Assistant Principal Dr. Giselle Feliciano, and science teacher, Ms. Gina Healy. Loch Lomond Elementary School is represented by Principal, Ms. Benith Lagui, and ITC, Ms. Christine McCollum.

[00:10:52] Saunders Middle School is represented by Principal, Mr. Jeremy Bird, sixth grade teacher, Ms. Kathy McCauley, and social studies teacher, Mr. Francisco Palamo. Yorkshire Elementary School is represented by Principal, Dr. Lynn Marsilio, the school finance specialist, Ms. Susan Alexander, and teacher of students with autism, Ms. Megan Surprise.

[00:11:15] Congratulations to you all for representing the Coles District with such distinction. - Thank you, Ms. Zargapur. And now on to Ms. Erica Tredinac from the spectacular Brentsville District.

[00:11:31] - Thank you. The Brentsville District is proud to recognize four of our schools. Buckland Mills Elementary, Chris Young Elementary, Unity Reed High School, and the Noakesville School. Buckland Mills Elementary School is represented by Principal Ms. Menaxi Odedra, fifth grade teacher, Ms. Nicole Thompson, and IB coordinator, Ms. Tessa Swiger.

[00:11:56] Chris Young Elementary School is represented by Principal Mrs. Stephanie Downey, Assistant Principal Ms. Anne Quattrone, and Unity Reed High School is represented by Principal Ms. Millie Polanco, Assistant Principal Mrs. Cameron Matheson, and science teachers Richard Smith and Jessica Heruska.

[00:12:17] The Noakesville School is represented by Principal Ms. Amanda Johnson, Assistant Principal Ms. Dawn Gerganes, and 5th grade teacher and club sponsor Ms. Angela Spates. Great job, guys. Congratulations.

[00:12:36] And from the Occoquan District, I welcome Mr. Richard Jesse. Thank you, Dr. Lateef. The Occoquan District is proud to acknowledge four schools, John Jenkins, Carrie Dell Marshall, and Occoquan Elementary School. Dr. Lateef, can you please introduce a special guest for-- - Sure, from Jenkins Elementary, represented by Assistant Principal is Ms. Catherine Trinkelbach, Ms. Meredith Allen, along with Librarian Jackie Youngblood, and Library Assistant Catherine Roger.

[00:13:05] At Kerrydale is represented by Principal Elise Zafiro, Assistant Principal Ms. Renee Riccotto, Kerrydale EcoCoach and ITC, Ms. Sharon Walsh. And Marshall Elementary represented tonight by Principal Cindy Clematis, Assistant Principal Dr. April Jensen, and fourth grade teacher and sustainability liaison, Ms. Cynthia Cole.

[00:13:29] Occoquan Elementary is represented tonight by Principal Mr. Buddy Lint, Assistant Principal Ms. Maricela Arboleda, Administrative Intern Ms. Caitlin Farrell, and Science Lead Ms. Ashley Johnson.

[00:13:45] We are so immensely proud of your hard work, thank you. At this time, I'd like to ask Ms. Melinda Landry, coordinator of energy management and sustainability of the facilities department, step forward and share a few words on behalf of our new 16 distinguished schools.

[00:14:07] Ms. Landry. - Good evening, Dr. Lateef, members of the school board, Dr. McDade, Mr. Bach. My name is Melinda Landry and I serve as a sustainability coordinator with the energy and sustainability team within our PWCS facilities department.

[00:14:27] I'm honored to speak on behalf of these 16 schools that are being recognized tonight as first time, first year Virginia Naturally Schools, but also the 14 additional schools that are celebrating their continued growth of their programs.

[00:14:42] As you said, Virginia Naturally is the official Commonwealth of Virginia's environmental education recognition program for schools. Schools can earn this designation multiple times by demonstrating continuous improvement with their programs.

[00:14:58] Thank you for recognizing their achievements and for celebrating their commitment to environmental literacy and sustainability across our PWCS community. Our 30 Virginia Naturally schools integrate, sorry, integrate environmental literacy throughout their school day.

[00:15:16] They embrace project-based learning and create space for that explorer moment where students ask questions and connect their learning to the world they see around them. These schools reflect the values of PWCS's Vision 2025 launching Thriving Futures strategic plan by providing high quality learning experiences across content areas, both in and out of the classroom, and by using the school building and grounds as teaching tools.

[00:15:47] We're incredibly proud of each school's efforts and the contributions made by their sustainability liaisons. Many of these schools also participate in the PWCS EcoQuest, which is our annual incentive-based program that promotes energy conservation and sustainability through hands-on student-centered learning.

[00:16:11] Their work supports our division's goal to reduce our carbon footprint and protect the environment. So thank you to the school board and Dr. McDade for recognizing our Virginia Naturally Schools this evening.

[00:16:26] And thank you to all of the administrators, staff, and school communities for their dedication to environmental education. Their leadership helps equip our students with the knowledge, skills, and habits of mind to build a thriving and sustainable future for themselves and for our community.

[00:16:49] So together, we're building a school division where sustainability is not just a goal, but a way of learning and leading. So thank you.

[00:17:07] - Thank you, Ms. Landry. I think last year, the charge of this group was, in your office was to increase the number of students who were, increase the number of schools recognized. You not only did that, you doubled it. More than doubled it, right? Yeah, so that means next year we'll have 60 plus.

[00:17:24] Is that right? Okay, okay, outstanding. Well, please, will all those involved in supporting our 16 schools, including family members stand in recognition of their support.

[00:17:53] Congratulations again to our new 16 Virginia Naturally Schools. Before taking a few pictures, Superintendent Dr. McDade would like to share a few words. Dr. McDade. - Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Congratulations again to all 16 new Virginia Naturally Schools. This distinction really highlights the work that PWCS has and continues to do to ensure that we are investing and engaging in a sustainable future and practices within Prince William County.

[00:18:19] And I just wanna thank all of our schools for your commitment towards this work. And a special thank you to Melinda Landry for being here tonight and for being our sustainability coordinator and everything that you do to support our schools and the vision and goals of Prince William County. So congratulations to you all.

[00:18:36] We are PWCS proud. - Thank you, Dr. McDade. At this time, I'd like to request our honorees to come forward for a photo with the school board and receive a small token of our appreciation.

[00:18:51] We can start first with our elementary schools.

[00:20:34] If they can just squeeze in, that's good. - Good.

[00:20:52] - Balance though?

[00:20:53] - They always have.

[00:25:06] - Thank you very much. At this time, we'll move on to the adoption of the consent agenda. 12.01, a motion's in order. Vice Chair Blake. - Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I move that the Prince William County School Board approve the public meeting consent agenda as recommended. - Do I have a second?

[00:25:21] - Mr. Chairman. - Ms. Williams. - I second. - Any discussion? - Mr. Chairman. - Ms. Williams. - I just wanna make sure the public is aware that we have some new course offerings and that's embedded in here. So if they would like to learn more, there's some, there's a course summary also for them to review. It's for 26, 27 school year.

[00:25:38] - Thank you, Ms. Williams. Please vote.

[00:25:56] - The vote is eight yes, unanimous, motion passed. - Next, moving on, acknowledgements and recognitions. 1301, a motion is in order, Mr. Blake. - Mr. Chairman, I move that the Prince William County School Board approves the adoption of the acknowledgements and recognitions as recommended.

[00:26:12] - Do I have a second? - Mr. Chairman? - Ms. Williams. - I second. - Any discussion? - Please vote.

[00:26:33] - The vote is seven yes, one abstained. Tradinik, motion passed. - Next, citizen comment time. Those citizens who've signed up in advance with a 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 on or agenda items or other topics germane to the operations of the policies of Prince William County Schools.

[00:26:54] 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 disruptions of the meeting. If you do not do so, the board will recess and I will ask that the room be cleared to restore public order.

[00:27:11] Tonight we have 11 speakers, sign up to speak. When I call your name, please come up to the podium and state your name and address for the record. For policy 134, the time allotted for each speaker will be three minutes. I'll go ahead and call the first five speakers up just so you know the order and if you'd like to come and sit up front.

[00:27:28] We have Blake Hara, Jesus Torres, Emily Cherry, Dr. Yubo Zhang, and Caitlin Weston. Blake Hara, go ahead.

[00:27:57] - Good evening, board members, chair, and Dr. McDade. My name is Blake Hara, and I'm here again to discuss parents' ongoing concerns over the need to rezone Covington Harper Elementary School. Out of respect for the students, parents, audience, teachers, guidance counselors, and administrators who are watching this meeting, please refrain from using your phones and take notes as you feel necessary, as the speech will pertain to every one of you.

[00:28:18] As previously discussed, you are more than aware, our school is currently operating at more than 130%. On October 16th, 2024, in a five to three vote, Dr. Lateef, Mr. Drednik, Mrs. Zargapur, Mrs. Wall, and Ms. Williams, you voted in opposition, choosing personal opinions over the students and parents failing to even discuss rezoning.

[00:28:37] Based on your documented beliefs, questionable use of federal funds, refusal to rezone, and statements that it would become a rich kid's school, you have not acted in the best interest of our students.

The notion that Covington Opera will become a rich, good school is a fallacy that contradicts the demographic data for Potomac Shores and surrounding area.

[00:28:54] The average student body has increased by 67 students per year from 2017, putting a stress on teachers and taking learning quality away from our children. As elected members, you are required to determine the best interest for the students, not to determine among party lines. The Woodbridge Area Elementary School is already beyond its projected opening date.

[00:29:10] What will you do if the Potomac Shores Elementary School opens beyond its projected date? Will you sacrifice our children's learning because of your personal biases and failure to act? Currently, the conditions have created an unsafe environment where parents feel their students are unsafe and reluctant to participate in advanced grade levels due to overcrowding and the lack of security due to the portables.

[00:29:30] Dr. Lateef, you have four children. Dr. McDade, you have two children. If you were in a position, would you tolerate place name in an overcrowded and unsafe environment? The answer, undeniably, is no. Persistent overcrowding suggests stronger oversight of the school board, the chairman at large, and superintendent by the community in regarding effective zoning practices, biases, and refusal to rezone cupping sharper.

[00:29:53] Members of the school board, with the chairman's repeated votes and super intense failure to advise, advise based on the parents' priorities, this should warrant a vote of no confidence in the chairman at large and superintendent, a resignation or initiation of a recall petition. Thank you for your time.

[00:30:09] And my address is on file, my name is Blake. - Thank you, Jesus Torres. Jesus Torres. Okay, Emily Cherry.

[00:30:29] Dr. McDade, Dr. Lateef, and members of the board, thank you for allowing me to speak tonight. My name is Emily Cherry, and my address is on file. I'd like to begin tonight by thanking you for all you're doing to support students' mental health, not only this month for Suicide Awareness Month, but all year long.

[00:30:45] By ensuring students in seventh and ninth grade take classes on suicide awareness, increasing the number of counselors in schools, and making sure staff are trained in best practices in social-emotional learning, you're helping to keep every Prince William County school students safe.

[00:31:00] Thank you. I think it's important to note that suicide awareness is a social justice issue. According to the Trevor Project, LGBTQ+ teenagers are more than four times as likely to attempt suicide than their peers. 1.8 million LGBTQ+ young people seriously consider suicide each year in the US, and at least one attempts suicide every 45 seconds.

[00:31:26] Research points to increased risk for bisexual youth, transgender and non-binary youth, and LGBTQ+ youth of color. But while these statistics are harrowing and must be acknowledged, as the mother of both a gender-diverse student and a cisgender student in Prince William County, I don't wanna hyper-focus on the scary statistics because there's also good news.

[00:31:48] Again, according to the Trevor Project, LGBTQ+ students who find their schools to be affirming reported lower rates of attempting suicide. Students who report the presence of trusted adults in their school have higher levels of self-esteem. And transgender and non-binary young people who reported

having pronouns respected by all or most people in their lives, attempted suicide at half the rate of those who did not have their pronouns respected.

[00:32:12] So thank you. Thank you for the ways that you and the school division are helping both of my kids thrive. My fifth grader adores her teacher, who's already gone above and beyond to make sure she feels safe and accepted in the classroom. And my punk rock ninth grader is thrilled to be able to take part in our county's fine arts programs.

[00:32:31] My whole family is resting easier, knowing that the board continues to follow state law by confirming non-discrimination policies that protect my kids' mental health. Thank you. - Thank you, Dr. Yibo Zhang.

[00:32:53] - Good evening, Dr. McDade and school board members. My name is Dr. Yibo Zhang, my address is on file. After serving on the superintendent's advisory council of equity for two years, I would like to share some of my insights from this journey.

[00:33:08] First of all, what does equity actually mean? To me, the answer to this question started to form a long time ago. My dad was born in an extremely impoverished village. For generations, he was the only one who admitted to a four-year college.

[00:33:25] After well-established with a job, he continued to give back to his rural community while raising up our own family. His actions planted a seed in my heart of equity, though at that time, I had no idea what equity actually meant.

[00:33:45] I even sometimes saw his actions as irrelevant to my own educational worlds. As I grow, I learned that fitting various individual needs into the bigger picture of societal needs is a challenging work, and reconciling all of them is a challenging work that we call equity.

[00:34:06] I learned that there is no single definition of equity, as equity is context dependent. Equity conversations, PD sessions are important, especially at the beginning of this work. But what becomes truly impactful is equity become the backdrop and mindset for our work that we do.

[00:34:26] Just like I explained to my kids, I say I love you, that's the backdrop of our family and directs all we do on a daily basis. It does not make sense I say I'm too busy to love you. In the same way, equity is not some actual work, but our work that we do.

[00:34:47] Next, I would like to use this graph to illustrate what equity look like when we quantify it. Every single student should move to their next level of development by effective program factors, regardless of their ethnicity, learning disability, English proficiency level.

[00:35:05] What matters should be our program factors. By that, I mean we should have one or multiple programs that help students get to where they need to be. Equity is not another meeting. Let's make it-- Thank you. I'll work with you. Thank you.

[00:35:23] Next up, Kaitlin Weston. And then after Kaitlin, the next five will be Ian Kahn, Linda Chang, Robin Norris, Gloria Jordan, Carl Gritton. Kaitlin Weston. - Good evening, Dr. McDade, Dr. Lateef, and members of the school board.

[00:35:40] My name is Katie Weston, and my address is on file with the clerk. As you know, this past month was Suicide Prevention Month, and we were thrilled to see all the resources on the PWCS website to support students, families, and schools. At our last school board meeting, a friend spoke during citizen

comment made a request that in addition to all the work that is being done, PWCS use their social media platform to increase awareness and share resources. We were thrilled to see you do this the very next morning and again later that week. We are so grateful for your action to use your platform

[00:36:15] to share resources so that more of us can start the conversation and be the difference. As a parent of a seventh grader, I was happy to hear about the upcoming depression awareness and and suicide prevention training, our PWCS students will be offered as part of the SOS Signs of Suicide Prevention Program.

[00:36:34] The goals of this program are to help students understand that depression is a treatable illness, to explain that suicide is a preventable tragedy that often occurs because of untreated depression, to provide students training in how to identify serious depression and potential suicidality in themselves or a friend, to impress upon youth that they can help themselves or a friend by taking the simple step of talking to a responsible adult about their concerns and to help students know whom in the school they can turn to for help if they need it.

[00:37:06] This sounds like a very valuable training and we are so grateful to PWCS for offering it to our seventh and ninth graders. My ask is that PWCS considers providing this opportunity at eighth and 10th through 12th grades. In a randomized control study, the SOS high school program showed a reduction in self-reported suicide attempts by 40%.

[00:37:28] It seems to me it would be beneficial to give a refresher to students each school year and allow new students in PWCS the ability to learn from this training. However, we know our amazing school counselors are stretched pretty thin. If you do consider growing this opportunity to other grade levels, I hope you will consider additional support for our counselors.

[00:37:47] For instance, if the counselors have other staff members facilitating the lesson at other grade levels, they could focus their time and energy supporting the students who request to meet after the training. Thank you. - Thank you. Next up, Ian Khan.

[00:38:16] - Hello, my name is Ian Khan, and I attend C.D. Hilton High School as part of the Center for International Studies and Languages Specialty Program. I am here to ask you to consider implementing Lunar New Year as an official PWCS holiday.

[00:38:34] As some of you may recall, I came here in May to spread awareness about AA and HPI month. I have come again to ask that Lunar New Year receives the same privileges as the currently recognized holidays in the PWCS calendar.

[00:38:52] Currently, Prince William is one of the most diverse counties in Virginia. As of 2025, there are 50,000 residents being of Asian descent. The PWCS strategic plan's first two core values state that equity.

[00:39:11] We strive to provide equitable opportunities and support for all students and diversity. We celebrate our diversity as a strength and welcome all students.

[00:39:26] However, we are not recognizing Lunar New Year as a PWCS holiday. It is important that you deliver on this promise in your own strategic plan and consider making Lunar New Year a recognized holiday.

[00:39:41] Thank you so much for your time. - Thank you, Ms. Linda Cheng. - Hello, good evening. Thank you for giving this forum for residents to come and speak.

[00:39:57] I'm a very proud parent of a PWCS student that you just heard speak. I'm biracial and my son is multiracial and multicultural and I feel fortunate to be raising him in a county that recognizes holidays that celebrates different cultures.

[00:40:16] I find it a bit of a coincidence that we speak tonight on the eve of one of the many other holidays that PWCS recognizes. We have off for Yom Kippur tomorrow, we had off for Rosh Hashanah last week, and we will have off for Diwali in a couple weeks from now.

[00:40:32] I personally feel it's fantastic that we recognize these important cultural holidays. Recognizing Lunar New Year would show PWCS's commitment to equity and demonstrates the values of respect, equity, and belonging that PWCS has committed to.

[00:40:47] And it will show our students and their families that their cultures and traditions are valued. It would send a powerful message that this tradition and culture matters just as much as those that are already recognized on the calendar. As I stated in May, when I also came and spoke during AA and HPI month to support my son, no family should have to choose to not celebrate an important cultural holiday.

[00:41:12] And that's what families like mine have had to choose to do. I thank you for your continued leadership, for considering Ian's request and hope that you'll take this important step toward inclusion and representation in the county. Thank you.

[00:41:29] - Thank you, Robin Norris. - Hello, good evening. I'm Robin Norris and my address is on file. Here to start off the month of dyslexia awareness in October for the next 31 days.

[00:41:50] I wanted to speak to you all tonight about dysgraphia, which seems to be a cousin of dyslexia. You don't have to have dyslexia to have dysgraphia, but it seems to kinda go hand in hand. Dysgraphia is a written expression disorder, so any time we're trying to use a pencil or pen to write our thoughts down on a piece of paper, it can get a bit muddled.

[00:42:11] Over the past couple of years, this was a sign that I didn't realize was a sign coming home to my household. My children would bring different types of pencils home and I would say, "Oh, those are peculiarly interesting. "Wow, these are neat." And they'd say, "Yeah." And I'd say, "How do you write with those?" "Oh, you know, like everything else."

[00:42:27] Well, if you actually have a pencil grip that's proper, you really can't. And so I didn't realize until middle school and high school that I hadn't looked and nobody had looked at pencil grip. So one of the biggest things that we need to be looking at with kids is are they even holding their pencils and pens correctly?

[00:42:44] Because if they're not, they're not writing effectively, they're not writing efficiently, and we have a whole bunch of issues. So once we get those issues, we give them really cool accommodations, and we say, okay, we need you to type. Well, we kind of missed that part, too, because this generation knows how to scroll and swipe.

[00:43:04] Nobody taught them. I didn't teach them. We didn't teach them at the school level to type. So now I've got, like, this double thing going on with, okay, we're just going to use dictation. Fine. We were nailing the dictation part until this year when the self-esteem kind of went a little wonky when they said, hey, we're asked to sign things.

[00:43:22] We don't have signatures. I said, oh, wait a second. You don't have signatures? yeah we didn't learn cursive so the children don't actually have signatures to sign the behavioral contracts that they're signing so we're working on that but one of the books i wanted to highlight for you all tonight is called writing right it was actually written by a high school student for her girl scout project she's now a student at william and mary and in the back it's just got a whole bunch of fantastic resources for you all and for parents and students alike thank you so

[00:43:55] much have a nice night thank you gloria jordan gloria jordan carl gretton good evening i'm carl gretton of the gainesville district there needs to be a discussion about the school board budget and referendums all year long not just during budget time a school board member talked about bond referendums at the last meeting bonds can be paid by an increase in personal property taxes

[00:44:30] data centers are bringing in huge amounts of money to the general prince william county fund Schools receive money from the general fund and transfer to the school fund at approximately 57%. The school fund percentage can be lowered because as the general fund increases, the school's total funds will be increased even if the percentage of 57% stays the same.

[00:44:56] The capital improvement program for schools should take this enlarged amount into account rather than raising Prince William County taxes. If the correct Republicans get voted in, then property taxes may be lessened or even eliminated.

[00:45:11] Hopefully Democrats do not want to raise property taxes. Closely evaluate school bond referendums and be creative to vote against the bonds and determine how to make capital improvements. We already pay for income tax, sales tax, gas tax, property taxes, capital gains, social security tax, vehicle license tax, alcohol tax, lottery winnings tax, meals tax, and upcoming bag fee and road taxes.

[00:45:35] Personal property taxes may be going up again. With upcoming possibilities of school bond referendums, personal property taxes can be used to pay for these referendums and taxes may go up. Prince William County families are having a hard time paying for all these additional taxes.

[00:45:51] And one final statement is, please keep balls out of girls' stalls. Thank you. - Hina Ansari.

[00:46:14] - Thank you for letting me speak again. I know this is three times in a row. Do I get a free sandwich at 10 or no? Superintendent McDade, thank you so much. Thank you to the board, my address is on file. I signed up to talk about cell phone policy and I actually tried to look it up, but I just found the press release. And I wanted to talk about how it's interesting that I was experiencing in the classroom.

[00:46:32] It says that you should, it's trying to enhance engagement and participation in the classroom, but they can't use their cell phones during lunch. And I'm curious, what class are they taking during lunch that they can't look at their phones for? And when I talk to the students, they're like, "Oh, well, you know, I wanna, you know, I mean..."

[00:46:48] Sorry, I saw somebody behind me. Oh, but anyway, I just, I'm very confused about how we're measuring the success to the cell phone policy too, because we're talking about how the kids are supposed to be enhancing their engagement and participation in class, but are we measuring that? And what are we measuring that by? Are we measuring that by the grades that are going up, by the SLL scores that they haven't taken yet this year?

[00:47:08] And I just, I'm conflicted that there's no, and when you look at the policy, it doesn't say what the outcome is. It talks all about the punishments and how many strikes you get, which is interesting that it's four and not three, because I feel like American schools should have baseball based, you know, penalties.

[00:47:24] So you strike one, two, three, then I guess the fourth one is you're out and that's it. But I just, I would love for the board to push back on the policy and just be like, can you give us a quantification of what the cell phone policy is supposed to do? I mean, I did, I was just talking to some students from Battlefield High School who are visiting the meeting and they were saying, oh no, we liked the cell phone policy.

[00:47:43] It's better and the kids are talking more. But I remember the anecdote you told in the first meeting, Dr. Lateef, where you were saying the kids are reading more. I'm like, I would argue that it's an analogy of reading and looking at your cell phone, you're still not talking to each other. unless you're talking about the book, but from what I've seen, that's not what happens at all.

[00:47:59] And then to extend that a little bit further, the technology is hampering the ability to not use the cell phone because I was in a class last week and the internet went out and the kids were using their cell phone and I was like, well, what do I do? Do I punish them for taking their cell phone out for doing their assignment or do I say nothing and be like, just do your assignment, it's fine.

[00:48:17] So I don't know, anyway, that was all I had to say. Thanks so much and the capital season starts next week, y'all. - Thank you, that is the end of citizen comment time. We will move on now to 1501, our legislative priorities. This is on for information and Dr. McDade.

[00:48:35] - All right, thank you. To share information on our legislative priorities, I wanna welcome our Chief Information Officer, Mr. Matt Guilfoyle, and we have our lobbyist, Jim Counsel. They'll come forward and present our legislative priorities. - Come on up, Jim.

[00:48:54] - So good evening. Yes, as Dr. McDade said, I'm here joined with our longtime representative in Richmond, Jim Council I was just asking him how long he has represented us down in Richmond and he he believes it's been for more than a decade so he's been doing an outstanding job for Prince William County Schools for quite a while and we appreciate his support so this evening I'm just going to hit some of the high points from our legislative priorities and the full document is available on board docs as well as then mr. council will just give some brief remarks on last year session as well as the upcoming session which does include the

[00:49:30] biennium of course is an election year as well also I do want to make note that Diana Galata the director of communications she's sitting back here because she and I are in a handoff year she'll be taking the lead on this moving forward after this year she'll be also be working with you all to visit in January down in the General Assembly so as I mentioned our legislative priorities this year continue to be focused similar to last year on a few key areas one of which is to continue to really grow and strengthen our teacher

[00:50:06] pipeline we want to look for continued flexibility and support for our teaching staff both in terms of salaries as well as other incentives I know our HR department has strategic priorities focused on looking for example along more affordable housing for teaching staff and so we're going to be working on legislative priorities that focus on continued incentives for teaching staff throughout the state of Virginia as well as on continuing to ensure that we have competitive teacher salaries and retention and our HR

department and you all the school board have done a continued great job on ensuring that we have competitive salaries and then the one of the other key areas that is new

[00:50:46] this year that we are going to be focusing on is that the Virginia Department of Education as recently as this week has been announcing changes to school performance as well as the potential changes to student cut scores when it comes to SOLs and what that means really for those who may not be familiar with it is that means really changing the goalposts in terms of when you take the SOL what counts as passing and what doesn't count as passing and so we all agree and we all believe in ensuring that our students have a rigorous education that will prepares them well for life beyond Prince William County or life beyond the state of Virginia what we are advocating this

[00:51:24] year though is that as the state is considering these changes that they take the time to actually ensure that they have fully thought it through and at this point they have not had the opportunity to really have done all the homework that we believe needs to be done to ensure this is done in a way that doesn't negatively impact students especially those who are already at the high school level and could potentially impact their graduation requirements or have other negative impacts on students.

[00:51:50] And so we are simply advocating this year that these changes that the state has been looking to make both on cut scores as well as on the performance measures for schools, staff, and students, that those are paused until we can ensure that we have proper implementation.

[00:52:07] And I will say that the BDOE has been having almost daily phone calls with the state. My staff have been on those calls. We continue to ask questions and many of those questions are those are good questions. We don't have answers yet, which I think does support our case to say, look, we're just simply asking that we pause until we have really a full thought out plan.

[00:52:28] So that's one of our other key areas of our legislative priorities this year. And then lastly, the other one I do wanna highlight is just the continued advocacy that state, that local control of school boards remain local control of school boards and we want to ensure that the state doesn't usurp the authorities and the constitutional authorities of school boards so that'll be some of the other areas that we will continue to advocate around i'm going to now ask mr counsel to make a few remarks and then we'll take any questions good evening mr chairman school board members dr mcdade good to see you all again just a couple brief observations on the last general assembly session and

[00:53:07] focusing on funding first when the legislators got to town the commonwealth was showing about a 1.1 billion dollar surplus and everybody had their own way they wanted to spend it but i can tell you that k-12 did pretty well we got almost one half of that one billion dollars and some of the big items that we got at the last session and i'm sure you're familiar with them already but first of all the 1 000 per teacher bonus was part of that at a total of about 134 million

[00:53:41] we got special ed per pupil additional funding of like 53 million on our ells we got more than 62 million for additional funding for them and then the big enchilada the one we've been fighting for for years, with the help of JLARC, we finally got elimination of the support cap.

[00:54:04] So that meant about \$224 million to schools in the state. I will mention that while full elimination cost about \$224 million, the governor originally proposed only about \$83 million towards the support cap. And if we had gone with the governor's number, it would have cost prince william about nine

million dollars so i'm assuming we got somewhere between 15 and 18 million on elimination of the support cap so i think we have a lot to be proud

[00:54:38] of in terms of funding accomplishments when you get to the non-funding what i call the substantive 150 plus bills that really is not so much to brag about this time i mean truth be told were primarily forced in a position of playing defense against so many objectionable bills and just a couple of them that we were successful on and there were many but i'll just mention a few of course there were some gender sports bills as you would expect there were bills that wanted to

[00:55:12] incorporate as part of graduation part of the u.s naturalization tests that did not go through there were bills that wanted to control content in school libraries we were fortunate to get those ditched and also some parent bill of rights bills that would have been very difficult for school divisions so they did not pass on the brighter side a couple positive things we did get through we were very much in favor of the nutrition bill that's going to end

[00:55:46] the discolorization of many of the foods served in our cafeterias a couple other things we wanted more time where we could use temporary substitute teachers and we got that expanded from 90 to 180 days one of the particular disappointments and i'll mention this one because it ties into what matt said about cut scores and assessments there was an sol bill that i know has given us It's all a lot of consternation, and it passed and requires that SOL tests be given in the

[00:56:24] last two weeks of school. That was originally proposed by Enrico Teacher, who is also chairman of the Senate K-12 subcommittee. We managed to defeat that bill, and we thought we were in good shape on it, but then at the last minute, he managed to get it tacked on to Delegate Helmer's bill, which covered a a lot of SOL additional features.

[00:56:49] So the only bright spot with the idea of the test in SOL is that feature of the bill requires a reenactment this next session in 2026. So we do get one more bite at the apple on that one.

[00:57:07] - Mr. Counsel, thank you so much for being here. It is always one of our favorite meetings to have you up here. Can you speak a little bit towards what you see or you anticipate on JLARC this year. Is the General Assembly looking at changing funding formulas for school divisions across the state?

[00:57:27] Is there something more ambitious they may try to do with the change in the administration? What are you hearing? - I don't think we're gonna see any change in funding formula. You know, JLARC has discussed doing something with the LCI for years.

[00:57:45] And as many retiring senators have said, the only good thing about the LCI is it kept us from being sued. Nobody likes it. Everybody agrees it's not the proper way to devalue school division wealth for purposes of state and local funding, but I don't see anything happening on changing the formulas. Another concern we have, unlike last session when they came in with a billion dollar budget surplus, with everything going on in Washington these days they have a special task force to watch that

[00:58:21] situation and I would not expect us to enjoy any kind of surplus this coming year like we did last year miss Williams has a question yes ma'am good evening gentlemen nice to see you as always I'm gonna start introduce a backup for members of the public that aren't quite familiar with what we're talking about with the legislative agenda if someone could explain the difference because we have mixed in video e issues along with General Assembly and just if you could inform the public the difference in how maybe they work together sure so one of

[00:58:58] the key things here is that at the state level of course the Board of Education has certain rulemaking authority which is separate and apart from the legislative process which would be determined by the General Assembly what we might be seeking in this case is that well the Board of Education may have taken action that we would be subject to we may be seeking essentially a legislative solution in order to in effect override that determination for to at least allow us a pause again as we might be talking about in this specific case for the cut scores as an example while those cut scores determinations may have been voted on and determined by the Board of Education we might be

[00:59:36] seeking a legislative solution to at least help us with a pause until such time that we can have that re-evaluated so it is a two-track part uh there is that piece that is set by essentially the administration the governor's administration and we will have a new governor regardless of party it'll be one party or the other but it will definitely be a new governor and we will have a new administration and so ensuring that we have time for that new administration as well to come in and evaluate and make sure that we have continuity as well as clarity one of the biggest challenges we see of course at our schools is really that constant change and that uncertainty is really probably the

[01:00:15] biggest driver of that causes a lot of consternation for kids teachers and so what we're really asking for is that we just have some stability and an opportunity to evaluate that thank you I appreciate that because I think I could get confusing right because we often talk about them as two separate entities they're kind of married together so I just wanted to make sure that as much as possible we're on the same page the next thing I wanted to we kind of touched on a little bit is Jay Lark and they had the study and we all know the public schools aren't fully funded it went to a committee if I remember correctly last year do we is it just what happened are you referring to the committee that the

[01:00:53] committee for the committee that's the one that actually got through the support cap eliminate are they doing any that's what you're referring to yes is - Is there any further action, or is that-- - I'm not aware of any new revolutionary funding force that they're considering at the moment.

[01:01:12] - Okay, thank you. And then, you said something about a reenactment. - Yes. - Could you explain that a little bit more? - Yeah, the bill that passed that requires SOLs to be administered in the last two weeks of the school year has a reenactment and renewal clause on it, which means that part of the bill is not effective until they actually vote favorably upon it again in the next session.

[01:01:41] - Thank you, I appreciate that. 'Cause if we're not familiar, that sounds, A, I wouldn't know what it was, and B, there's a lot of panic right now about the SOLs being moved to the final two weeks. And from just in a casual observer, it looks like it's already done. So I appreciate you taking the time to explain that. And then the last thing I'll just ask, 'cause we never say this, when does sessions start?

[01:02:01] We go down in January, But I think it's important because we ask our community to be involved at all levels. So if you could just kind of fill us in when session starts and then members of the board, we tend to go down in January. January is for advocacy, not just for us, but for other groups as well, correct?

[01:02:17] - I have not looked at the date, but it's the second Wednesday in January. - And the General Assembly starts when? - That day. - They go into session, same day? - Yes. - Okay. Just want to make sure we're all aware, 'cause I usually am encouraging our members of public to be informed citizens and to advocate for whichever legislation is down there, and I think we never talk about that.

[01:02:38] I'm gonna finish my questions there, and I just wanna say thank you, Mr. Counsel, for your service. One ask I have is that if we could be, with the speed of the VDOE, and sometimes the General Assembly, if maybe we could get some quicker updates, because I know it moves really fast, but I think this past year, and I don't know what the future holds, but I think this past year was very fast for most of us in comparison to years prior.

[01:03:04] So I would love to see you back again if anything else important for that mid-session. Thank you. - Thank you. - Mr. Counsel, a couple more questions. You remember last year, at the last minute, they pulled the funding for the, they had put in the bill for mental health, Hazel Health, they would pay for the states.

[01:03:28] My understanding there was like 15 million or something put in the budget to cover all school divisions to pay for the telehealth mental health services called Hazel Health from sixth through 12th grade. And I thought it passed, but then it got pulled at the last minute and then there was some, the governor's office said that they would, they had 15 million sitting in their budget to do something with and instead they created a grant program on this.

[01:03:55] Are you aware of this? - Yeah, the bill permitting school divisions to offer telehealth passed. - Okay. - And then initially there was funding in there that didn't make it, I think, through house appropriations. But as I recall, you're correct that then the governor had some money that he was gonna be able to devote to it.

[01:04:15] But I remember I had conversations with Matt about it. Y'all were already doing it and funding it. And so I can't really tell you today what happened to those governor's funds. - Matt or Jim, can we put that in, Can you consider putting that back in to lobby for that?

[01:04:35] Because then that would reimburse us for at least our sixth through 12th grade component if there's some interest at the General Assembly. - Yeah, no problem. - Yeah, I think that would be something that I'd ask Mr. Counsel to at least get us some credit back and even consider going more aggressive and saying, look, they should cover all school divisions, all grade levels, Prince William, Fairfax.

[01:04:55] I think Alexandria are all doing this for all grade levels, Dr. McDade? Do you know if they're doing it for other grades? - No, Fairfax is. I'm not sure about everybody else. - Okay, okay, great. Thank you very much. Does anyone else have any other questions, concerns on the legislative agenda?

[01:05:11] Mr. Wilk. - Number one, hello, good evening. Thank you for being here, sir. The top priorities about strengthening teachers pipeline and stuff like that, and obviously, you know, that's a broad, that's great, you know, we've been trying to say that for years with the decline of enrollment with teaching colleges and stuff like that.

[01:05:30] Is there any talks at the General Assembly targeting specific subject areas or areas of expertise. We see more and more studies about special education teachers being very hard, very desirable to try to recruit to your school system, but you're getting a lot of difficulties getting them to go into that field of study.

[01:05:50] It's harder for districts now with bargaining and stuff to just say for those specific group of teachers, we'd like to give you X amount of raise or something like that. Is there anything possible at the General Assembly they're looking at some way to incentivize people who go into specifically special education.

[01:06:11] I don't remember anything specific from the 150 some bills last session. You know, I know there were some bills that more, I guess, in the way of career and technical teaching that tried to attract teachers, but I do not remember anything on the special ed front. We can certainly consider it for this next session. Yeah, I mean, it'd be something I think to consider. I was trying to to help one of my delegates draft the bill for committee but didn't make the deadline and stuff like that but I know they're spec specifically in this

[01:06:49] immediate vicinity there's members of the House of Delegates who have children with special needs so it's just I think something with the rising number the diagnosis of children on the spectrum autism you know it could be an area of priority to again try to again incentivize not only people to go into public education teaching but you know highly desired areas tough to fill positions yeah we can we can make that in addition to specifically call that out thank you mr. Wall I had a question and then maybe a comment about item number three improving school and student performance and assessment mm-hmm it

[01:07:28] looks like there are a lot of things going on here with SOL test was this all in one big bill so I don't know that it would be a big bill that's what mr. counsel was referring to that was really worldly more of a sneak in bill so essentially there there was a there does what doctor that's what mr. counsel was referring to that essentially there was really two sentences that were one was that we would have to implement this two-week window of SOL implementation and in that same sentence it said that students it would also count as 10% of

[01:08:07] their grade and then that's what mr. counsel was referring to that it was really attached as a writer we thought the bill was dead and then it was sort of brought forward through another bill at the last minute and so that's also what mr. counsel was referring to that actually has to be essentially re-upped and reauthorized again this session right now that those are two separate things the SOL implementation and the 10% grade requirement those are to go into effect not this spring but the following spring so the spring of 27 I I think I got the year right.

[01:08:41] And then the separate and apart from that, but connected is this work that VDOE has been doing around cut scores. And they go together because obviously if you change cut scores, there could be potentially an impact if you're saying it now counts as 10% of a student's grade.

[01:08:57] And we don't know the answers as to what does that look like? How are they connected? What is the implication of that? And those are some of the questions that we're saying why we want this pause so that we can work through that and understand that. - Okay, thank you, that's a good clarification. - I will just say, and I agree with everything Matt said and all the confusion over it.

[01:09:16] At the Board of Ed meeting last week, they seemed to be signaling that they understood a phase-in was gonna be necessary, and they sounded like they were leaning towards a four-year phase-in. But beyond that language right there, I can't tell you what they think it means yet.

[01:09:36] - Sounds like there's a lot of confusion on this issue. And while some of these things, I do think we need rigor in our assessments, which I think encourages rigor in our instruction, which hopefully yields a better outcome for our students.

[01:09:54] And in that sense, I'm in favor of making our tests more in line with the NAEP and other things, like are our schools good, do we compete? But I also see what you're saying. I may entertain a

motion to pull of item three since there is so much going on right now and maybe we shouldn't have it as a legislative priority for this coming session if there is so much ambiguity and the possibility of extending it or phasing it out over four years or whatever, it might not be something that we want in our legislative priorities for this year.

[01:10:30] I'm just saying that. - So my suggestion, obviously it's the board's prerogative, but my suggestion would be to leave it in. And the main reason for that is that as Lori referred to the speed at which things happen in Richmond, the key with legislative priorities is that it enables mr. counsel to operate understanding the board's intent and so if something does happen we don't necessarily have to come back to the board and say now what would you prefer to do now what do you want to do and in a 60-day session mr. counsel does the best he can do he can work best when he has the full understanding of what the board's intent is so I would I would recommend leaving it in to at least signal the board's intent but that's obviously the board's prerogative

[01:11:09] - Okay, thank you. - So that's great, so what I'd ask Ms. Wall to do is consider making recommendations for language changes then for clarification on what we might want to represent. I will say, you know, and it's from my personal standpoint, I have zero issue with improving and increasing cut scores.

[01:11:29] I have zero problems with asking for more rigor. I have zero issues with the governor's changes to the math curriculum. And so from my standpoint, if you're saying, what does the board wish? I think we should maybe have a further discussion on this at the next meeting on where we are with that.

[01:11:48] But that's kind of where I am. Like, I'm not interested in pushing a legislative agenda to slow down some of those things. - Mr. Chairman. - You miss, Dr. McDade. - I would ask that we have some opportunity to kind of educate the board on what all of this means, because I don't think that the push in every district I know in the commonwealth that is concerned about the cut scores it's not about rigor it's about methodology and how we use or don't use the right standards for determining cut scores and so right

[01:12:25] now there's been no transparency in how the score the cut scores were developed in addition trying to make cut scores for SOL based on NAEP there's a whole lot that I think should be discussed about that when NAEP only assesses a couple of classrooms in a school division and so there's a lot when it comes to data and statistics that are questionable that many of the superintendents we have collectively challenged and there has not been transparency so this is this isn't a discussion about rigor this is a discussion about transparency and how

[01:13:04] cut scores are developed and whether or not they are fair for our students so I would I would I think that there's more discussion that should be had with the board to fully educate the board on what's happening perfect that would be great we can have that discussion at the next meeting or before that regarding this item okay all right guys any other questions thank you thank you okay with - With that, we will move on to student representative time.

[01:13:35] We now move on to Beulah Sarsa from CD Hilton High School, our student rep for this evening. Ms. Beulah. - Thank you. Hello and good evening to the Prince William County community, members of the school board, and Superintendent McDade. I'd like to begin my remarks this evening with an update from our student senate.

[01:13:54] Last week, on Monday, September 22nd, senators held their first official meeting here at the Kelly Leadership Center. they discussed a wide range of topics, such as progress with their student voice committees. I am happy to share that students at our schools have gotten creative in their mission to amplify student voices by holding public forums, attending back to school nights, and utilizing Canvas for updates and reminders.

[01:14:18] Feedback from our senators has also shown us that student voice committees are actively working to turn our schools into more positive and welcoming places. Committee members at Patriot, Gainesville, and Potomac High Schools respectively have made great efforts to get hallways painted with student artwork, put up idea posters in the hallways where students are encouraged to write down their concerns and opinions, and even plan a school garden.

[01:14:42] Senators also spoke with Dr. Nade Shaver about the upcoming school counselor summit on October 13th, where some of them will provide insight and feedback to our counselors as they serve on a student panel. Additionally, our student senators spoke with Dr. Sullivan, the associate superintendent for teaching and learning about their perspectives on AI as the county gets ready to make co-pilot available to students next semester.

[01:15:08] We discussed the importance of keeping up with technology like AI in a rapidly developing world, the best ways to launch the co-pilot AI to students, and how we might regulate its use in the classroom. We'd like to thank Dr. Sullivan and her team for seeking out our input and taking our perspectives into account.

[01:15:26] Moving on, I'd like to take a moment to talk about student opinions on the enforcement of our dress code. Students feel that our dress code, is a part of which is a part of our code of behavior is not being as forced enforced as well as it could be while we know that how a particular school chooses to enforce the dress code varies we are asking for schools to aid in bringing more awareness to the issue of inappropriate dressing and stricter enforcement this may look like code of behavior assemblies or presentations finally i'd like to acknowledge the efforts made by our schools to increase student attendance for those of you who may not know last month was attendance awareness month that month schools around the county made an effort

[01:16:05] to spread awareness about the importance of being present and prepared for each school day. Incentives like gift cards and sweet treats during lunch, along with communication from administrators at different schools have really made the difference. Let's keep up the great work as we start with the new month.

[01:16:20] Once again, thank you for the opportunity to give voice to the student perspective and have a great rest of your night. - Thank you, Ms. Sarza, truly appreciate it. We're up next with Dr. McDade, Superintendent's time. - Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This month we recognize three important observances in our schools, Disability History and Awareness Month, ADHD Awareness Month, and Dyslexia Awareness Month.

[01:16:45] Together, these observations remind us that every learner has unique strengths and challenges. As a community, we are committed to building inclusive classrooms where students with disabilities, ADHD, and dyslexia are seen, supported, and celebrated for the contributions that they bring to our classrooms every day.

[01:17:05] By honoring these Awareness Months, PWCS reaffirms our belief that diversity is our superpower and that every student deserves the opportunity to thrive. I invite you to visit the Parent Resource Center section of our website at www.pwcs.edu for resources regarding dyslexia, ADHD, and other disabilities.

[01:17:28] In preparation for securing thriving futures for our students after graduation, college and career counselors in every high school are scheduling university visits, college and career planning, Naviance work sessions, scholarship and financial aid opportunities, and career and self-discovery explorations. Additionally, PWCS will be hosting two college fairs in October. The first is at Unity Reed High School on October 6th, and the second is at Potomac High School on October 15th. Both will be held from 6 p.m. until 8 p.m.

[01:18:03] For more information and registration, please review our PWCS College Fair webpage by going to pwcs.edu and selecting Departments, Student Services and Postsecondary Success, and Navigating to College and Career Readiness before landing on PWCS College Fair.

[01:18:22] These college fairs provide an excellent opportunity for students to begin the planning process for postsecondary education, which will include tiny talks, meet and greets with in-state and out-of-state college and university representatives, free application for federal student aid, also known as FAFSA information, and more.

[01:18:40] Furthermore, I invite our graduating seniors and their families to join us from 6:00 to 7:30 p.m. on Tuesday, October 7th, for a family engagement series. In the family engagement series, that'll be an informative online seminar in which students and families will gain an overview of FAFSA and the Virginia Alternative Student Aid, or VASA, more information can be found at www.pwcs.edu.

[01:19:08] And speaking of college preparation, all grades nine, 10, and 11 PWCS students will take the PSAT or preliminary SAT on October 16th. Grade nine will take the PSAT eight, nine, and grades 10 and 11 will take the PSAT NMSQT.

[01:19:28] The PSAT is a diagnostic test of future performance on the SAT and it provides students opportunities for potential scholarships through the National Merit Scholarship Program during their 11th grade year of high school. The PSAT also helps guide academic planning for participation in advanced coursework and a qualifying PSAT math sub-score can be used as a substitute test in place of the Algebra I SOL as a verified credit toward graduation requirements.

[01:20:01] So the PSAT is an important milestone when it comes to opportunities for our students. Please be advised of the available dates for students to register to take the SAT and ACT. Both tests are academic measurement tools used by institutions in the college admissions process.

[01:20:18] It's also important for PWCS to ensure that we are graduating students that are meeting college readiness benchmarks, and these tests are the only ways that we are able to determine whether or not students start meeting those benchmarks. All grade-level PWCS students will take the SAT in the spring of 2026.

[01:20:36] This test is given at no cost, and we will share more information as we get closer to the date. Whether we are providing post-secondary planning, course selections, dual and certification enrollment, internships, or mentorship opportunities, PWCS is here and committed to helping our students navigate

the path ahead, ensuring that every student graduates on time with the knowledge, skills, and habits of mind necessary to create a thriving future for themselves and their community.

[01:21:06] Mr. Chairman, that concludes Superintendent's time. - Dr. McDade, thank you, and if anyone missed that, you should go back and watch her comments. I think they were really important, especially regarding the PSAT and college preparation information. There was a lot of information there.

[01:21:23] As was, just to add on to her last week's email that came out Friday, a lot of good information about what to expect and I think you did mention the college fair is coming up next week. Please look on the websites for the dates, times, places, locations and go there.

[01:21:39] They are great, go there early. They are filled up and it's hard to park. Okay, next up we are on revision of policy 648-1801. We have a number of first readings here, 1801, 1802, 1803, 1804.

[01:21:58] These are on for the public to take a look at and for the board to take a look at. And these items will be on for action at the next school board meeting on October 15th. Does anyone have any questions for Dr. McDade on any of these?

[01:22:15] Okay, briefly just 1801 is on interscholastic activities, athletic programs. It's lined up to get us more in line with VHSL changes and rule changes that happened last year. For 64801 is activity participation before testing days, 690.04 private school placement and policy 951 on parental family involvement in schools.

[01:22:35] Please all, everyone take a look at that, share any concerns with school board members, school board members have any concerns, please share them with me and Dr. McDade, and we will be voting on those next board meeting. This takes us now to board matters. Last meeting, we started with Ms. Zargarpur. This meeting, we'll start with Mr. Wilk.

[01:22:52] - Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for all the speakers who came tonight, especially the large contingency in the Potomac district. So thank you all for coming. Just a recap of the last couple of weeks, We've had the board collectively have a very busy couple of weeks with all of our back to school nights, which I believe are now all wrapped up, starting with our high school very early and then our middle.

[01:23:15] And then again, with our elementary schools, which I believe are all done now. Earlier, right after the last board meeting, I did have a chance to attend the back to school nights at Potomac Middle, Grand Park Middle, and then previously I was at Potomac Shores. So I did make it to all three of my middle schools.

[01:23:32] Following that weekend, we did get to, I did get to go to the Forest Park football game. I saw my colleague Lori Williams that Saturday at the VEX Fun Day Robotics, hosted in the Potomac District at Potomac Middle School.

[01:23:49] My son actually joined me. He actually wanted to come, that was good. And so, let's see. This week, I'll touch back on this, but we had our groundbreaking ceremony for the next Potomac Shores Elementary School opening in the fall of '27.

[01:24:09] I was joined by a number of my colleagues, other elected officials, and there's been a lot of media about it, in the newspapers, some of our stuff and videos. So I would encourage everyone to go look at that. Other events, back to school nights, Patty Henderson on Friday for the first time I worked, they

needed volunteers to run the football chains the side and i did it so that was fun um new job new thing only screwed up twice but it was the first time doing that um something madden couldn't teach me um and then i did also attend three more

[01:24:45] elementary schools back to school nights uh comington harper mary williams and swans creek i do want to recap it was brought up earlier about overcrowding in the potomac district and i do well Well, first of all, Ms. Trojanek did vote in favor of the changes of the lines.

[01:25:05] I wanted to correct that. But a lot of times I think, you know, I know for sure sometimes, you know, and people have approached me about this, there's a lot of requests and things that are presented that are often not in the board, my, the board's control.

[01:25:22] I think there's a misunderstanding on what level of government or what body of government or what entity controls certain aspects of all that goes into building new schools and a growing, developing community.

[01:25:38] And I do want to thank the administration for things that were more in my control, things in starting all the way from this year, you know, something that might seem as simple, but the porter potties being removed, gone, bathroom trailer added, done, additional camera, done, on-site security at the trailers with my repeated follow-ups done, making sure we're having an active evaluation of additional cameras that is ongoing, but things, can I have, Joseph, okay, thank you, sorry, can I take a minute, okay, but those are things

[01:26:15] we're working on, those are things that administration has been extremely helpful, even something as simple as making sure that the one last porter potty, the residents do know that that is not ours we cannot remove it and that is the parks and recs so even putting stickers on that which was my request it might seem something minute and stupid but it was important for me to make sure that was designated there but then there's things that are outside of my control we the board do not control the residential development and growth we have no control that we have forecast models but simple things that I'm hearing right now for example in that

[01:26:54] development that places homes in the cherry hill area are possibly being bought up and those could be rezoned for residential that's more additional people that would come even after this new school is built something we can't control another body someone asked me at a back-to-school night can you build another exit out of our community I know that's that is not me but that is another body you know single-handedly changing boundaries that is not me that can I tried that cannot be done anymore so long story with this ramble I know

[01:27:31] you're looking at me some people I'm taking some of Lori's previous time um but my point here is I do want to say we are doing what we the best we can with what we can control at this point what I can control and what I can get the support from administration to control the other point is a lot of other factors added up to where we're at as I said with the speech at the groundbreaking ceremony things that were beyond our control but I'm trying the best I can I know team our members of our administration are working with me the best they can so again I just wanted to add that as further context for the

[01:28:10] dialogue that's happening there so thank you mr. Denny thank you um my apologies for missing last meeting. It was my son's 18th birthday, so I was not going to miss that since that only happens one time. I had the privilege of going to see our newly formed sport, and I'm going to take this opportunity

to say that I hope that I've heard some rumors that it is just a club. It's not quite a sport yet, but I'm hoping that we are going to consider it a sport and our girls are going to be able to letter in this sport. So this is my formal out loud request to make sure

[01:28:49] that that's going on. It was very cool to see them get to play in Commander's Dome. The Brentsville High School girls played the Battlefield High School girls, which was the game that I got to watch. The talent these girls have and the excitement and joy and fun that they bring.

[01:29:07] As a football mom, I had way more fun watching the girls play than I ever do on a Friday night watching the boys I will tell you that so if you have not gone to go see a game it is quite thrilling to watch and these girls have some great talent and I'm super jealous because I would have loved to play that sport back to school nights have been great I've loved getting to see parents and especially getting to hear the students and hear what's happening in their classrooms what they love about their schools how excited they are for their teachers and the atmosphere in the brunsville district uh is positive and thriving and fun um and thank you

[01:29:46] for inviting me and letting me be a part of those nights um shout out to our staff that we have um laura and her team have just been wonderful to me um in making sure keeping us all on track and task and um so thank you for all that you do mr jesse yeah i'd like to say you know i'm not fully back doing everything i used to do with the situation but i did join the groundbreaking

[01:30:22] ceremonies and i do agree with mr wilkes explanation of some things the one thing i said when i was at the groundbreaking i think i said it to miss patel i looked around and all those new buildings that are surrounding the new school and I said to her by time we build a new school they're going to fill up the building and you know we can't build as fast as a development and so that's that's a issue and the other issue of course is we have title one schools that we

[01:30:57] can only have so many people in the classroom so that's part of the other problem the other event that i went to was that woodbridge high school had a play this year this last week and my wife and i went to that and i hope to get more active here in the month of october and get back to some of the things i used to do thank you miss wall uh thank you to erica for that great endorsement about going to see a flag football game and i think that's a great idea and i look forward to doing that um wow it's hard to believe it's already october 1st um in my visits around the

[01:31:34] Gainesville district it's been great to see the hard work that's happening in our schools back-to-school nights are going well almost over we're partway through the elementary schools I attended some back-to-school nights at Bull Run and Reagan Middle on the 18th on the 19th I went with mr. Blake to the Virginia School Board Association's meeting on legislative advocacy and two presentations that stood out to me were about school safety and security made me feel really good about what we're doing here actually we are leaders in this area And the other presentation was the rise of vaping in schools and the serious nature of the problem.

[01:32:06] And so it was really educational. On the 22nd, I attended Potomac Shores Elementary School groundbreaking as well. It was a fabulous, beautiful school. Very excited for the community to relieve the overcrowding that is happening on the east end of our county. I know we have a new school opening next fall and then this one the fall after that.

[01:32:22] So we really are working hard and we do care about these issues. Those of us in the west have lived through overcrowding for a very, very long time. so we're not we understand we do understand your pain you have had a lot of great things happening in your schools to compensate for that that I hope you appreciate those things because they are a lot and they're extra and there are things that had didn't happen for schools in my area at the time you know different administration different funding and all the other things but I hope you do appreciate the good things that are happening to help you in the Covington Harbor area I also attended the cell phone free panel for the most recent parent engagement meeting it was a pleasure to talk on that topic I have

[01:33:01] lots of thoughts on it, I've done lots of research, I've done lots of reading, and I've been listening to lots of students and teachers, and I think it's going really well. Obviously we have things we need to work through still, but going really well. Appreciate everybody who's been working hard on that. Let's see, I went to back-to-school nights for Sudley Elementary, I went to Battlefield Counseling Department's Junior College and Career Night, appreciated the high-quality instruction that was delivered. Last night I went to a triple header for elementary back-to-school nights with a stop at at Gravelly, followed by Sinclair, and wrapping up at Tyler, and completely missing dinner.

[01:33:35] It was a great night. It's a whirlwind, but it's been great to see how our hardworking teachers and administrators and parents are enjoying coming into the schools. One of my favorite things is when the whole family shows up to an elementary event, and you got the little kid in the stroller, and the baby on the shoulder, and the kindergartner, and the fifth grader, and everybody comes in with the parents, and kids are so excited to see their parents at school at night.

[01:33:59] It's just really exciting to see that. Truly, it's a beautiful site. I do want to address a serious matter that has been brought to my attention because of recent events and other things. Some of our students of conservative viewpoints are having a challenge being accepted and welcomed on a level playing field in the popular discourse, and that's having direct implications for which clubs and extracurriculars are offered at our schools, and it does take tremendous courage to organize a club with other like-minded individuals.

[01:34:32] The privilege of being able to speak freely and assemble freely with like-minded individuals should be equally offered in our schools by law and policy, and yet some students do feel justified in standing in the way of other students who want to set up a club that they don't like. And so as leaders, we need to be aware that this is happening, instruct and correct those who are misguided, and support the students whose rights are being threatened by either ignorant or intolerant peers.

[01:34:58] Because of laws like the Equal Access Act, put simply, if a public school district recognizes any non-curriculum high school club, it must allow any other club to exist without prejudice. So anyway, the core principle is viewpoint neutrality. Schools cannot deny student club recognition and access based on the political religious orientation of the group.

[01:35:19] As the saying goes, I may disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it. And with that, I will end my comments tonight and I hope everybody has a great evening. - Thank you, Ms. Wall, Ms. Williams. - Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As we start October today, it is not only the celebrations that we honored earlier in last month's meeting, but Breast Cancer Awareness Month, Domestic Violence Month, LGBT History Month, Economic Awareness Month, and ADHD Awareness Month.

[01:35:49] I bring these up because it's symbolic of me. We often sit up here and talk about a singular issue from a singular lens, but nothing goes without touching something else. If you have, for example, Ms. Wall was saying, for clubs and free speech, our students are welcome to do that, just as there are students welcome to object.

[01:36:06] It's finding the balance and respecting others in what it is they do, but recognizing there is a limit, especially for safety for other students and just anyone around. We have to be respectful, but we also have to mind that it's not just a free-for-all for everyone concerning.

[01:36:29] I am very proud of our VEX Funday that I saw Mr. Wilkes with. It is a chaotic day for middle schoolers and then often their first venture into robotics. I've been advertising robotics for quite some time. I am a full-time robotics coach.

[01:36:45] It is a lot. I do have good news in that we are slowly progressing on our pilot for Unified Robotics. We have a few middle schools who are aware of this pilot participating in the pilot, and there'll be further expansion. I bring this up because we often talk about neurodivergent students.

[01:37:04] And I will advocate this year while we are building our strategic plan that we are mindful of our neurodivergent students and our staff and our community members because neurodivergence doesn't always mean special education. It is literally the way that your brain operates. There's no off switch for it, but it is important because not only do we have students who fall under the neurodivergent spectrum, but we also have teachers.

[01:37:25] And we talk about being accommodating. We should be accommodating for them as well. The rise comes from being educated about neurodivergence. So I'm hoping that while we are in the business of education, each one of us will take time out to learn a little bit more if it doesn't personally affect you, because you may not think it does, but it does.

[01:37:46] If you're going outside and you're going to communicate with somebody else, you don't know upon appearance. So please take the time to be considerate of others. It's often something that you just can't see. It's not worn on someone. I would highly encourage all of us to stay alert and aware from this point on until January, we move quick.

[01:38:05] end of the school end of the report card season we launch into no school in November holidays celebrations I encourage parents and family members as well as students stay on top of your grades stay on top of end of the semester assignments tests and quizzes that may be coming up and this is a good time here to really really out and get out and join your community because community is important and it looks like all kinds of different things and I will continue to preach that because we are a school community we are made of difference and it's only through accepting and learning about our

[01:38:44] difference that we will thrive together thank you Ms. Zargarpur thank you Dr. Lateef I'm gonna keep it short tonight one of the things I'd like us to be thinking about as we move into we're gonna be adopting a calendar soon so I'm hoping that the staff is listening if there is a way to be able to give teachers a little bit more time in the calendar if there's some half days that can be added in before report cards are due so that teachers have unencumbered time there's very little that we can just do from our seats I can't change standards I can't change the VLA I can't change what tests

[01:39:24] we have to do but I think if we could consider ways to give teachers the gift of time especially before the end of a grading period um i will tell you fairfax county does give us quite a few days for

planning some of them are considered unencumbered and i can work from home that would be a great plus so teachers could get their work done they always do anyway this is just be making sure they have that time we get several half days or shortened days throughout

[01:39:58] the year in fairfax and we're often able to either have conferences with parents or catch up on grades or get ready for the next quarter so i just would like us moving forward to be able to consider something that would be able to enable teachers to have a little bit extra time to get some things done with that i want to say good night mr thank you dr latif um always great to be here um i just want to talk about over the past few weeks i've had the privilege of representing neapsco at some

[01:40:33] incredible events and i'd like to share a few moments that really stood out to me one that ms wall mentioned earlier that truly grabbed my attention was at the vsba advocacy conference there was a session on vaping and what we learned was was really alarming i would just give an example just imagine a student thinking that they're trying to flavor vape and not realizing that it's packed with THC speeding up their biological clock by 13 years. I mean and I

[01:41:09] mean we also learned that 60 to 90 percent of the products the baked products actually contain THC non-nicotine and the aerosol delivers twice the concentration of this drug which makes the addiction happen faster. So these are all just health risks that are real. This is why we need education and prevention so much for our students so you'll hear more about this from me in the future guaranteed but another highlight was attending these back-to-school nights I was able to attend Beville and then several of my

[01:41:45] elementary schools, Dell City, Neabsco, Enterprise, Miniville, Penn, and Bel Air, walking on all those hallways and seeing all those families, teachers and students and um i went on the like the third through fifth grade nights and the schools were still packed so it was good to see that families were still coming out and it reminded me of why dale city is so special i want to also just take this moment to thank all the administrators teachers and staff who make these nights possible because i know on these days it's often a 12-hour day

[01:42:19] so your dedication does not go unseen um and then like mr wilk said and mr we also celebrated the ground breaking for the Potomac Shores Elementary School. This is going to be just an awesome school, a great symbol of what we can do when we work together. So I look forward to seeing that.

[01:42:41] Looking ahead, I want to spotlight the 2025 IB College Fair this Saturday, October 4th, at Garfield High School from 12:30 to 3 p.m. It's open to the public. It includes sessions on paying for college scholarships and the hvcu experience students can register at strivefair.com please spread the word this is a great opportunity for all our families and i also want to highlight uh

[01:43:16] i also just want to take this time and highlight the importance of title one funding um just reiterating especially since we just at all of these back to school nights we also held our title one nights at each of these schools, and all the schools in the app store are Title I, which means families have access to programs and resources that make real differences, smaller class sizes, extra academic support, literacy programs, after school tutoring, and family engagement initiatives.

[01:43:46] These investments help ensure every student has the opportunity to thrive and they can reinforce our commitment to equity across the district. And finally, as we begin October, we recognize bullying prevention month too often we see bullying in schools or even in our communities our kids are

watching they see how we treat one another and they take their cues from us my belief is simple bullying is a distraction from real leadership respect empathy and courage that's what moves communities forward that's the example our students deserve let's keep leading with those

[01:44:22] values because that's what our kids deserve thank you thank you mr blake all right um well it's fall and football is going on and I'm excited about what's happening with high school football and middle school football around the county very excited about the games been to a couple games excited about our marching bands they've had some battle the band competitions saw the fabulous one over at colgan the other day and and for people to know the colgan marching band won the battle of band competition up in fairfax that was a held last weekend so that's pretty good to Mr. Denik on the girls flag football I think this is a great program I think it should be

[01:45:00] encouraged I think one of the things we saw years ago Prince William County led on robotics be named as a VHSL sports official sport debate I don't know if you know this but VHSL started as the organization to run debate over 80 years ago and then they started adopting all the different sports They adopted robotics, and I think we should consider, if you'd like, lobbying the state to do that, and so VHSL make it an official sport.

[01:45:34] Fairfax, I saw, has adopted it as well, and with Fairfax and Prince William doing it, that's nearly 20% of the students in the Commonwealth, so that's a good start. So, if you're interested in doing that, I'd be happy to work with you on that. Fall's great, clubs are signing up at schools, student council elections are happening everywhere, College fairs are coming up this week.

[01:45:54] In the next couple of weeks, if you're a senior, you should be talking to your counselors right now. Your application should be being worked on right now. And then I think you should be reaching out to all your folks who are gonna ask for your recommendation letters.

[01:46:11] Teachers don't, many teachers have to write numerous letters and they need time to do that. So the sooner you get to work on your college application, the better it is for everyone involved, including yours, and it increases your chance, especially of getting admitted to the schools that you'd like to go to if they have rolling admissions.

[01:46:30] Those schools that do rolling admissions admit as the applications come through. So if you wait till the last minute, a lot of spots are gone. And so please take a look at the kind of schools you're applying to and consider doing that work. I am excited about the start that the school year's had.

[01:46:47] We've, halfway through the first quarter, we're gonna have touch base days. I encourage our families to go to their schools, follow their students' progress on Canvas, and I encourage you to communicate with your teachers on your concerns. Addressing overcrowding, when I got elected to this board seven years ago, we had a massively overcrowded school division across the division everywhere.

[01:47:13] My children have been, all of them, in schools with trailers and have been in trailers for their courses, And I'm well aware of the challenges we've had with overcrowding. And we've worked really hard to sort of mitigate that where we can and some of it takes time and that's new construction builds that in there.

[01:47:33] And so while I really have tried and worked hard as a board to address our overcrowding, it's not possible to address all of it all at once. And so we've continued to work very hard on this. It's a high priority for the school division.

[01:47:49] It has been for many years, and we continue to make significant progress on this. But as Ms. Wall says, I think the quality of education in our school divisions has continued to increase while we've dealt with these challenges. And so I'm very grateful to the superintendent for the work she's doing and for the school division, the school board for all their efforts on this matter.

[01:48:11] At this time, we will adjourn the meeting. Thank you, have a great week.



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