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Prince William County School Board Meeting, Tuesday, November 17, 2026

Date	Tuesday, November 17, 2026
Place	Prince William County School Board, Virginia
Length	2h 41m (video)

- Official meeting video (YouTube): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6eODMDxi8gk
- 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 2026-11-23. Each paragraph starts with its time [HH:MM:SS] in the meeting video.

[00:00:01] - All right, the Prince William County School Board will now start our meeting. Call to order, a motion is in order for the approval of the meeting agenda. Vice Chair Jesse. - I move that the Prince William County School Board approve the meeting agenda as recommended. - You have a second. - Mr. Chairman, I second.

[00:00:18] - Any discussion, please vote. It's all in favor, raise your hand, say aye. - Aye. - Any opposed, no opposition, motion passes unanimously. Moving on to motion to enter closed session, Mr. Jesse. - I move that pursuant to section 2.2-3711 and 2.2-3712 of the Code of Virginia, the French Winning County School Board inter-closed session for the following reasons.

[00:00:45] One, to discuss with staff the assignment, appointment, promotions, performance, demotions, salaries, discipline, or resignation of specific public officers appointed or employed of any public body pursuant to Section 2.2-3711A1 of the Code of Virginia.

[00:01:08] To review number two, to review the grievance appeal for employee T27-ZZ004, pursuant to Section 2.2-3711A1 and 8 of the Code of Virginia.

[00:01:27] Three, to discuss and consult with the legal counsel regarding requests for religious exemption pertaining to specific employees under section 2.2-3711A of the Code of Virginia.

[00:01:43] Four, to discuss with the division council and staff actual or probable litigation and specific legal matters involving staff, students, and other civil litigation involving the school division on the section 2.2 that's 3 7 1 1 a 7 and 8 of the code of Virginia 5 to discuss with the division council and staff the resolution of litigation involving open open pursuant to sections 2.2 that's 3 7 a 7 and 8 of the code of Virginia

[00:02:23] Virginia 6 to discuss or consider the acquisition of real property in the Woodbridge Magisterial District because discussion in an open meeting would adversely affect the bargaining position of the negotiating strategy of the school board and for consult consultation with the legal counsel regarding this matter pursuant to section 2.2 that is 3711 A3 and A8 of the code of Virginia

[00:03:03] and to discuss and receive briefing by the staff members related to the security of the school facility the safety of persons using this facility and action taken in response to this matter where discussion is in open meeting would jeopardize the security assist facility pursuant to section 2.2-3711A-19 of the Code of Virginia. Amen.

[00:03:34] Amen. I do have a second. Mr. Chairman. Ms. Zargarpur. I second. Any discussion? Please vote. All in favor? Aye. Hands up. Any opposition? No opposition. Motion passes unanimously. All right, at this time, the school board will enter closed session and re-enter open session in approximately one hour.

[00:04:24] Evening is now reconvene time to open session for Prince William County School Board.

[00:05:15] We must do a closed session certification. A motion is in order. Vice Chair Jesse. I move that pursuant to Section 2.2 of the S-3712 of the Code of Virginia, the closed session of the Prince William County School Board meeting of November 17, 2026, be certified by adopting the following resolutions now therefore be resolved that the Prince William County School Board hereby certify that to the best of each member's knowledge only public number one only public business matter be lawfully exempt from open meeting requirements were

[00:05:50] discussed in the closed meeting to which the certification resolution applies and two only Public Business Matters as were identified in the motion convening the closed meeting was heard and discussed and considered by the school board.

[00:06:08] Do I have a second? Mr. Chairman. Mr. Zargarpur. I second. Any discussion? Please vote. The vote is 8 yes unanimous. Motion passed. Moving on to approval appointments and releases. Mr. Jessie. I move that Prince Rainey County School

[00:06:46] Board approve the appointments and releases of specific employees as presented in closed session. Do I have a second? Mr. Chairman. Mr. Blake. I second. Any discussion? Please vote.

[00:07:15] VOTE 8 yes unanimous. Motion passed. Next, Grievance Appeal for employee T27-004. Mr. Jessie, a motion is in order. I move that Prince Rainey County School Board uphold the superintendent's recommendation of dismissal in employee's case number T27-004.

[00:07:37] And further that the chairman at large is authorized to provide written decision to the employee reflecting the school board decision. Do I have a second? - Mr. Chairman. - Ms. Wall. - I second. - Any discussion?

[00:07:52] Please vote.

[00:08:12] - The vote is eight yes unanimous, motion passed. - Okay, request for religious exemption, Mr. Jessie. - I move that the Prince William County School Board approve the request for religious exemption from compulsory school attendance for the case number RE26-9.

[00:08:29] - Do I have a second? - Mr. Chairman. - Ms. Wall. - I second. - Any discussion? Please vote.

[00:08:45] - The vote is eight yes unanimous, motion passed. - Thank you, moving on to Pledge of Allegiance, I'd like to invite our student representative, Storm Allo, a senior at Woodbridge Senior High School, to lead us in the pledge tonight. - To the flag of the United States of America, to the Republic for which it stands, one nation, under God, indivisible, liberty and justice for all.

[00:09:12] - Okay, thank you Storm. Moving on to Thriving Futures Focus. Thriving Futures Focus, as many of you know, is the opportunity to highlight the exemplary work being accomplished in our schools. It fulfills our vision that every graduate will, Every student will graduate on time with the knowledge, skills, and habits of mind necessary to create a thriving future for themselves and their community.

[00:09:32] Tonight we celebrate excellence in teaching, school leadership, and career technical education. We begin with our Participate Learning Teachers of the Year. Participate Learning is an international cultural exchange program that connects experienced educators from around the world with US schools.

[00:09:49] The program strengthens global awareness, cross-cultural collaboration, and student learning, supporting the PWCS vision of preparing every student to launch a thriving future. Prince William County Schools, in partnership with Participate Learning, hosts more than 350 teachers from 24 countries.

[00:10:07] This program celebrates educators who demonstrate excellence in teaching while helping students develop the knowledge, skills, and global perspectives needed to succeed in an increasingly interconnected world. Vice Chairman Mr. Richard Jesse, School Board Representative of the Ocquon District, will recognize our first National Honoree, Mr. Jesse.

[00:10:27] - The Akron District is proud to recognize Maricera Daly, a third grade teacher at Akron Elementary School for earning the 2026 Participate Learning Teacher of the Year Award.

[00:10:44] Maricera is supported this evening by Akron Elementary School Buddy Lent principal. At this time, I invite Maricera to share a few words on receiving the national recognition and pronounce your name correctly for me.

[00:11:05] - Good evening, distinguished members of the board. - Can we get the mic on? Try it again. - Good evening, distinguished members of the board, superintendents, superintendent Dr. McDade, administrators, colleagues, families and friends, thank you for this opportunity and for this recognition.

[00:11:32] I am truly honored to be recognized tonight as one of the 2026 Participate Learning Teacher of the Year and so proudly represents my school, Okyo Kwan Elementary. This recognition is especially meaningful because it reflects the collective efforts of students, families and educators who inspired me daily.

[00:11:55] Teaching is more than my profession. It is my passion, it is my purpose. Each day, I am privileged to work alongside students whose curiosity, creativity, and determination inspires me to be a better educator.

[00:12:12] They remind me that learning is not a destination, but a journey, and that every child deserves the opportunity to succeed on that journey. That commitment to growth is rooted in a lesson I learned long before becoming a teacher.

[00:12:29] As an educator from Jamaica, I was raised by the saying, good, better, best. Never let it rest until your good is better and your better is best. These words have stayed with me throughout my life and have shaped the way I approach teaching.

[00:12:53] They remind me that growth is a continuous process for both students and educators. Hence, we do not ask children to be perfect. we encourage them to keep learning, improving, and believing in themselves.

[00:13:08] Because every child learns differently, the belief naturally connects to my philosophy. If a child cannot learn the way we teach, maybe we should teach the way they learn. Every child enters my classroom with unique strengths, experiences, and different ways of understanding this world.

[00:13:29] It is our responsibility, therefore, as educators, to meet students where they are, celebrate their individuality, and provide the support they need to thrive. I have been fortunate to work alongside an incredible community.

[00:13:45] I am deeply grateful for the students who challenge me, the families who entrust me with their children, the dedicated staff and administration at Ococon Elementary, the Participate Learning Community, and Prince William County, for their encouragement, support, and commitment to educational excellence.

[00:14:08] This recognition reflects the efforts of so many people who believe in the power of education and how it transforms lives. While my name is associated with this recognition, it belongs to the students, the families, and communities I am blessed to serve.

[00:14:27] Thank you for this recognition and for your continued commitment to public education. As we look forward to the future, I remain inspired by the potential of every child who walks through our doors. As educators, our greatest accomplishment is not simply what we teach, but the lives we inspire. May we continue to ensure that every child is seen, valued, challenged, and given the opportunity to succeed. When we do that, we not only change

[00:15:00] Their outcomes, but we change the future. Thank you. Wow Congratulations, Marissa. Thank you so much. Mr. Jesse. We have another outstanding participate educator to recognize this evening I invite miss Erica Trudenik the school board representative of the Brentsville district to recognize our next honoree Mr. Denik Thank you, Dr. Lateef the Brentsville district is proud to recognize Virginia or Mero a Spanish teacher at Mars stellar middle school who also earned the 2026 Participate Learning Teacher of the Year Award.

[00:15:36] Virginia is supported this evening by Marsteller Middle School Assistant Principal Alexandria Gray. I will say firsthand I met you at a back-to-school night. You may not remember but I was thoroughly impressed with your presentation at back-to-school night. The way that you taught my own child I just am very impressed with you and huge congratulations to you and please let us know what your thoughts are tonight. Thank you very much. Good evening Chairman Latif, distinguished members of the school board, and Dr. McDade. Thank you so much for this recognition. I'm truly honored to be named Participant Learning Teacher of the Year for

[00:16:14] 2026. This award means a great deal to me because it reflects where this journey began. In the summer of 2022, I boarded a flight from Spain with a suitcase full of dreams, lesson plans, and more questions than answers. I came here hoping to grow as a teacher and make a positive difference in in the lives of the next generation on this side of the Atlantic Ocean.

[00:16:42] What I found was so much more than I could have ever imagined. Incredible students, inspiring teammates, and a lifelong connection that embraced me and made me feel that I truly belonged.

[00:16:57] Standing here today, I am reminded of the many meaningful experiences that have made this chapter so rewarding. I want to thank Prince William County Public Schools for welcoming me from the very beginning.

[00:17:13] I am especially grateful to my administrators whose encouragement and support have allowed me to keep growing and becoming a better educator every year. I would also like to thank my colleagues in the World Language Department.

[00:17:29] Their guidance and passion for international education have shaped my outlook and deepened my love for teaching. And finally, I want to recognize some very special people who started as co-workers and became family.

[00:17:46] Wonderful professionals whose friendship and generosity have meant more to me than they probably realized. I believe global learning is about building bridges, appreciating different perspectives, and understanding others beyond cultural and linguistic boundaries.

[00:18:06] As someone who has navigated this experience firsthand, I know how language acquisition can open doors, bring people together, and create a greater sense of connection. I hope to continue inspiring my students to become global citizens who use language not only as a tool for communication, but also to broaden their horizons, embrace new perspectives, and make a difference in the world.

[00:18:35] I am proud to represent Mars Stellar Middle School, a place that has become my second home and will always hold a special place in my heart. While this recognition bears my name, it reflects the kindness, mentorship, and expertise of the many people who have contributed to my personal and career development.

[00:18:58] I am sincerely grateful to share this achievement with all of you. Thank you. - Wow, thank you, Mr. Romero. Congratulations to both of you.

[00:19:15] Participate, if many of you don't know about it, it's an excellent program, incredible program, as Mr. Denik said. We're just so excited to have you all with us and spend the time with us. Truly a terrific program and to see you two rise to the top of that's amazing.

[00:19:31] Congratulations again. Our next recognition celebrates exceptional school leadership and the positive impact a dedicated principal can have on an entire school community. Mr. Denik, you're up. Continue with our next honoree. - Thank you, Dr. Lateef. The Virginia Association of Elementary School Principals or VAESP is a professional organization dedicated to supporting school leaders, strengthening instructional excellence, and advancing student achievement across the Commonwealth.

[00:19:59] Through its partnership with the National Association of Elementary School Principals, the VA ESP recognizes outstanding school leaders who demonstrate exceptional leadership, foster positive school cultures, and make a lasting impact on their students and communities. It is my privilege to recognize Dr.

Andrew Bookite, Principal of T. Claywood Elementary School, for being named the Virginia 2026 National Distinguished Principle by the VA ESP.

[00:20:26] Dr. Bookite, this award reflects your commitment to those principles and the positive learning environment you have helped foster at T. Claywood Elementary. I'm gonna take a point of privilege again. It's been 14 years that I've personally known Dr. Bookite, Mr. Bookite when I met him, and my mom also knew him prior to that, and I actually heard wonderful stories from teachers about Mr. Bookite when my kids were toddlers, and when I moved back here from the military, I asked my mom where is Dr. Bookite, Mr. Bookite, and we purchased our home in the school district, going to the school where he was a principal

[00:21:06] because I was so excited about the amazing things that he did. All three of my kids went through T. Claywood Elementary School with Mr. Bookite. He is a phenomenal principal and does great things for his community, for his teachers, and I am so proud to hear a few words from you about receiving this honor, it's well deserved.

[00:21:24] - Well, I think that's it, thank you. Distinguished Board, Dr. McDade, everybody else, thank you for taking the time to recognize all the people here today, we appreciate it, it's nice to all be recognized and you guys take the time to do that, I know you're very busy.

[00:21:40] I'm humbled and honored, humbly honored, I guess, to receive this award from VASP, the Virginia Association of Elementary School Principals, and to be recognized by the National Association as the 2026 National Distinguished Principal of Virginia. It's even more meaningful knowing that the selection process included input from and interviews with our teachers, students, and families, along with a school visit.

[00:22:04] But enough about me. As you know, as all principals know, any kind of award like this is not an individual recognition. It instead reflects the entire work of our school community, our teachers, staff, family, students, even our grandchildren, which I'm sure that's mine back there. I'm fortunate to get to work with such incredible, caring, and dedicated people every single day.

[00:22:24] I've been a principal for 26 years. I did start when I was 12, so just so you know. And I'm very thankful, you don't have to laugh so hard. And I'm very thankful to be part of this important profession. We have the privilege of teaching students and coaching teachers, supporting staff and families, and making a positive difference in people's lives.

[00:22:44] I believe strongly that schools should be places where teachers are supported and celebrated, where families feel they have a voice and a place, and where children learn and lead to their fullest potential, know they belong and matter, and experience a sense of wonder and joy each day at school, and where everyone feels valued, included, and respected.

[00:23:03] I am surrounded each day at T. Claywood by our amazing students, dedicated teachers and staff, and families who believe in and support our school. Whatever I may have accomplished as a principal has happened because of the people I have had the privilege to work alongside.

[00:23:18] This recognition truly is a reflection of our entire school community, our entire T. Claywood school community, and I'm incredibly proud to be their principal. Thank you.

[00:23:34] - Thank you, Dr. Buckeye, and thank you, Mr. Denick. And we have one more, no, maybe a couple more. No, we conclude tonight's recognitions by celebrating an outstanding PWCS professional and her contributions to career and technical education. Ms. Trudenick, back to you.

[00:23:50] - Thank you, Dr. Lateef. The Virginia Association for Teachers of Family and Consumer Sciences or BAT FACTS is an organization dedicated to advancing family and consumer sciences education across Virginia. Through professional development, collaboration, and recognition programs, the association supports educators who equip students with essential life skills, career readiness, and hands-on learning experiences.

[00:24:17] At its 2026 Professional Development Institute, the association celebrated an outstanding educator whose contributions enhance career and technical education programs and make a lasting impact on students and communities. Congratulations to Catherine Jett McVeigh, a family and consumer sciences teacher at Patriot High School who received the 2026 That Facts Carl Perkins Community Service Award.

[00:24:42] This recognition celebrates the importance of community service and the meaningful connections between classroom learning and service to others. Catherine, your achievement demonstrates how career and technical education can extend beyond the classroom, inspiring students to apply their knowledge and skills in ways that positively impact their communities.

[00:25:01] The administration from Patriot High School is represented this evening by Assistant Principal Chris Brown. At this time, I invite Chris to share a few words on behalf of Mrs. Jett McVeigh, who is also our FCC LA teacher as well.

[00:25:17] - Distinguished members of the board and Superintendent, Dr. McDade. I'm proud to recognize Katherine Jett McVeigh, FACTS teacher at Patriot High School as the 2026 VATFACS Carl Perkins Community Service Award recipient. This award recognizes individuals who have used career and technical education to make a significant impact on their community and demonstrated leadership in programs and activities that promote student involvement in community service. Catherine's recognition for the VATFACS Carl Perkins Community Service Award stems from her organization of and hosting opportunities for students to give back to their community through events such as Stand Up to

[00:25:55] cancer event, raising $1,100 for cancer awareness, food drives, both within Patriot High School and those organized with community partners, such as Serve and Manassas, construction of handmade tie blankets and reusable grocery bags for Serve, a three-year partnership with the We Help Too organization by donating socks to homeless individuals within our community, participation in boxes of basics with Patriot High School and the Manassas Sorting Center, and annual donation drives for a crisis pregnancy center in Manassas.

[00:26:28] Catherine's work exemplifies inclusivity and provides students with a sense of civic-minded responsibility through authentic activities designed to support the community and those in need. Thank you to Dr. Martin, her entire team in the CTE department, as well as many other PWCS partners for their continued support of Catherine Jett McVeigh and her outstanding support for her students and our community.

[00:26:54] - Ms. Jett McVeigh, would you like to say a few words, or you don't have? You don't have to, I just feel like. - Thank you very much for this recognition. I usually speak for my students, but not for myself. So

thank you. - Congratulations, we're very thrilled for you.

[00:27:13] All right, thank you, Mr. Trunet. Congratulations again to all our honorees this evening. I would like to now invite our honorees, friends and family and colleagues and other supporters here tonight to please stand in recognition of the important roles you have played in the success of our distinguished guests. Any family, friends, please stand up and let's give them a round of applause.

[00:27:33] Colleagues who may have come, thank you. And before we take a few pictures, Dr. McDade has a few words to share. - Thank you so much, Mr. Chairman. To Ms. Daley and Ms. Omerow, your national recognition demonstrates the impact of educators who help students broaden their perspectives, embrace new opportunities, and develop the skills to become global collaborators.

[00:27:58] To Dr. Bucay, your distinguished leadership reminds us that thriving schools are built on strong relationships, elevated expectations and a shared commitment to student success. And to Ms. McVeigh, I've seen you in action. Your statewide recognition highlights the significant role that career and technical education plays in preparing students for the opportunities and challenges of tomorrow.

[00:28:21] Thank you all so much for your dedication and your commitment to our students and their families. Congratulations, job well done. We are PWCS proud. - Thank you, Dr. McVeigh.

[00:28:37] At this time I'd like to invite our honorees to come forward for photos with the school board

[00:28:40] and receive a small token of our appreciation.

[00:32:20] All right, up next is the adoption of consent agenda. Mr. Jessie. - I move that the Prince Rating County School Board approve the public meeting. Consent agenda is recommended. - Do I have a second? - Mr. Chairman. - Ms. Zargarpur. - I second. - Any discussion? Please vote.

[00:32:49] - It was eight yes unanimous. Motion passed. - Up next, acknowledgements and recognitions. Mr. Jessie. - I move that the Prince Rating County School Board approve the adoption of the acknowledgements and recognition is recommended. - Do I have a second?

[00:33:05] - Mr. Chairman. - Ms. Zargarpur. I second. Any discussion? Ms. Chairman? Ms. Williams? Ms. Williams. Thank you. I just wanted to remind everyone that we celebrate these mostly for the next month, so this one happens to be for, I guess, what we would consider athletic directors.

[00:33:20] It's international interscholastic athletic admin, in case anybody noticed, because our athletic directors are amazing. So, thank you. Thank you. Please vote. The vote is seven yes, one abstained.

[00:33:50] Tradenek, motion passed. Up next, citizen comment time. This is the comment time. Those citizens who signed up in advance with the clerk may address the school board this evening when they are called to the podium. The citizen comment period for regular school board meetings is one hour and citizens may speak on the agenda items or other topics germane to the operations and policies of PWCS.

[00:34:06] Please use proper decorum and manners while at the podium or you'll be asked to step aside. We ask that the audience please be respectful of each speaker and refrain from any clapping, cheering or jeering to avoid disruption of the meeting. If you do not do so, the board will recess and I'll ask that the room be cleared to restore public order. Tonight we have six citizens signed up to speak.

[00:34:22] - When I call your name, please come 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 name the six speakers

so you all know the order you're in and you certainly feel free to come up to sit up front if you'd like or stay where you are. Janelle Anderson, Yubo Zhang, David Harris, Blake Hara, Kimberly Melmon-Orasco, and Hina Ansari.

[00:34:44] Janelle Anderson. - Good evening, my name is Janelle Anderson. I live in the Occoquan District. My address is on file. This is my fifth time addressing the Prince William County School Board about locked student bathrooms.

[00:35:04] Tonight, I want to emphasize again that locked bathrooms are not an isolated problem at Colgan High School. Locked bathrooms are a division-wide issue that requires a division-wide policy. On October 21st, Saul Guzman, a student at Fred Lynn Middle School in the Woodbridge Magisterial District, told the school board he had to wait multiple class periods to use the restroom because of school restrictions.

[00:35:29] He reminded us that it is a human right to use the restroom. On November 4th, Jennifer Nicholson, a parent from Potomac Shores Middle School in the Potomac Magisterial District, spoke to you about girls needing adequate time to change menstrual products.

[00:35:46] Jennifer's change.org petition now has 245 signatures. At that same school board meeting, I met a parent in the audience from Battlefield High School. the gainesville magisterial district who was also concerned about locked bathrooms so that's at least four different schools and four different magisterial districts having concerns with locked bathrooms during the school day potomac local newspaper has now published two articles about the locked bathroom issue how much more evidence does the prince william county school board need

[00:36:21] before taking action i am asking you to establish a written enforceable division-wide policy guaranteeing students timely access to clean functioning restrooms throughout the school day including during class changes before school and after school and please do not solve the locked bathroom problem by taking away teachers planning periods i've seen reports that teachers at woodbridge high school are now being assigned bathroom monitoring duties during their their planning time.

[00:36:53] I ask you to forbid this in your policy. Teachers need planning time to prepare lessons, grade papers, and provide quality instruction. Taking planning time away from teachers would simply create another problem. Student safety and restroom access must be addressed through appropriate staffing and sensible policies, not at the expense of classroom instruction.

[00:37:18] Students deserve access to bathrooms, teachers deserve their planning time, and both deserve leadership from this school board. Thank you. - Yubo Zhang.

[00:37:39] - Good evening, Dr. McDade and school board members. My name is Yubo Zhang, my address is on five. Last school board session, PWCS state of school report showed incredible achievement. On-time graduation rate hit a new record, 96.1%.

[00:37:56] Advanced course enrollment rate is up more than 10 percentage points. Dropout rate down to 3%. Chronic absenteeism dropped to 14.2%. Kudos to all from leadership team in this building to bus drivers who get students where they need to be.

[00:38:17] Moving forward, two things I think are critical to continue building upon this success. First, rigor for all. I embrace that idea. But the state has increased the scores that students need in order to pass

SL tests.

[00:38:37] Pass rates will drop. and that will hit every single student in every county in Virginia. When changes like this happen, our high performance tend to adjust faster.

[00:38:53] The most vulnerable groups adjust slower. The achievement gap will widen. We need specific academic support in place for all students so they are not overwhelmed with test anxiety.

[00:39:09] Without actions, rigorous goals only stay as lofty goals. Second, our data system. I was very impressed by the whole revamping data governance plan. A renovated data system that puts real timely information in the hands of leadership, administrators, teachers, and parents.

[00:39:33] The Division Elevate 2030 plan names the outcomes and the timelines, what we will achieve, and by when. The outcome data metrics will be in this renovated data system. But what's missing are the implementation measures.

[00:39:51] The monitoring of actions that tells us that we're on track before the deadline arrives. As we're building this new data system, let's add those in between milestones in and make them public so everyone can see that the work needs to happen is happening on time.

[00:40:13] Again, without actions, rigorous goals stay as lofty ones. Thank you. - Thank you, David Harris.

[00:40:34] - Good evening, chairman, school board members, and superintendent. My name is Dr. David Harris III. My address is 17228 Miss Packard Court in Dumfries, Virginia. I am the legal guardian of my niece, a seventh grade student at Potomac Shores Middle School.

[00:40:53] And I'm here because a family's lawful involvement in a child's education must mean more than a name on a school farm. In 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic, I lost my sister. While I was grieving that devastating loss, my niece and her brother came from Alabama to Northern Virginia, hundreds of miles from school and community that they knew.

[00:41:18] They were not simply changing schools, they were rebuilding their lives. During a time when I was struggling with my grief, my husband, Dr. James Harris, stepped in. He helped shoulder the responsibility of getting them settled and their education back on track.

[00:41:36] His involvement was not temporary, it was not symbolic. He was there when our family needed him the most. On October 1st, 2020, Prince William County Schools approved the McKinney-Vento Assistance for that school year and communicated directly with my husband.

[00:41:54] On October 7th, a registrar worked with him on the school records from Alabama, getting them electronic devices and enrollment. And I also want to recognize LaShonda Rice, the assistant principal at Martin Luther King Elementary School, who was instrumental in helping my niece transition from her previous school in Alabama.

[00:42:15] And on December 28th, I was finally appointed my niece's guardian. Now, six years later, Potomac Shrews Middle School lists my husband only as an emergency contact. I submitted educational authorizations, a limited power of attorney, and a required FERPA consent.

[00:42:34] The school confirmed that he can receive educational information and attend meetings. He also participates in my niece's IEP. Yet, neither he nor I currently have ParentVUE access, while the school continues to list him only as an emergency contact.

[00:42:50] He's not merely someone to call in an emergency. He is someone who stepped in during my grief, helped these churches begin again and participate in educational planning and helps with homework and assignments daily. How can someone participate in a child IEP but lack a consistent way to see grades and missing assignments before it's too late to help?

[00:43:10] I recognize that legal guardians, non-custodial parents, and authorized caregivers have different rights. I'm not asking Prince William County Schools to weaken student privacy safeguards. I'm asking for documented authorization to have practical meaning through timely, secure access to academic information and a reliable alternative.

[00:43:29] I ask the school board to review how regulations 79-1, 79-5, 79-4-6, 79-4-7, and 79-4-8. - Thank you, Dr. Harris, thank you. - Blake Harrah.

[00:43:57] - Good evening, board members, chair, Dr. McDade. My name is Blake Harrah, my address is on file. So I never thought we'd come back to this situation where you had various governors and school boards who thought that they had more rights than the parents did. But here we are, we're going back, and we're restricting the step-parents authority.

[00:44:16] Because you've likely just discovered a regulation that was probably, it's ancient back in 2018, and now you're trying to use the strategic plan to justify enforcing it. So it's now being directed that any step-parent, just like Dr. Harris did, that any residential shall receive no parent view account to do anything for the child, for anything other than, whatever, about the child, and if they want one, it shall be under extenuating circumstances only.

[00:44:47] Now you get around this with the regulations of under 794, essentially saying that parent view access is a privilege, which is the primary source of release of grades and essentially everything. Now the only way I can see my daughter's grades is if I must get permission from my wife, which I do have a FERPA authorization on file and if I do get lucky to have one, it's solely district dependent and it's opinion based. There's no appeal process and I've received a comment yesterday that we can't grant one to every step parent because we have almost 90,000 students.

[00:45:22] That's actually true, I wrote that down when it came. So what if my wife becomes incapacitated and you give me read-only access and you have no one to authorize to pick her up or are you going going to keep her for me. My stepdaughter's dad lives in Washington. He's 3,000 miles away. He can't come pick her up. Now you have all the registrars going throughout the county, deleting people without even telling the step parents that they're deleting these accounts. And I can tell you that because the teachers are just watching and they're going, oh, delete, oh, delete. If school board

[00:45:59] member, I asked you, Dr. Medea, yes, that is happening. So now the problem is not the law, right? It's your regulation because you seek as much control as you can. Now I spoke to the registrars of Fairfax, Loudoun, Arlington, Manassas City, Manassas Park and Stafford and none of them have a regulation that is this strict. Fairfax gives full rights to a step parent as long as they have a FERPA filing and Loudoun called this an unprecedented authority of power. Now you know my stepdaughter took it upon herself to take on my last name and go against her biological father for notarization.

[00:46:36] Now, when I told my daughter that I was losing access to her information, she became so upset because she could no longer be proud to show me how well she had done. I love my daughter, she considers me her father, and that is something you will never take away from me.

[00:46:52] No matter how much power you seek to have over our children, the regulation must be amended at a minimum of residential step-parent with the same authority of biological parent as long as they have a firm on file. - Kimberly Melman-Orozco.

[00:47:15] - My name is Dr. Kimberly Melman Orozco. My address is on file. First and foremost, I do want to encourage any parent in Prince William County who has a child with an IEP, I do encourage you, if you have any question about whether your child is getting a decent education, to request from the county what's called an Individual Educational Evaluation, an IEE.

[00:47:39] I encourage you to reach out to Prince William County ask for it and to say that you have questions and concerns and I encourage you to do that one great provider is dr. vari at mine well counseling if you get an ie you will be able to discern where your child is truly educationally because right now in Prince William County we all know that you guys are giving what's known as a special education a to kids with disabilities you're passing them along you're fabricating their grades and that's one of the reasons why we have in literacy crisis within this county where kids are graduating from

[00:48:16] Prince William County schools not knowing how to read Prince William County it's truly shameful how you are engaged in systemic civil rights abuses against with kids with disabilities I know you all think that you're going to get away with these abuses because you've gotten away with them for so long but if you are a religious person I mean all that's dark will come to light I do believe that the moral arc to the universe is long but it always bends towards justice and what you're doing is going to be exposed and I I really wish you would

[00:48:50] push for justice instead of concealing these abuses so speaking of abuses Dr. Medade brought back isolation and seclusion after her predecessor had gotten rid of it Dr. Waltz you've allocated thousands of dollars to bringing back doors to lock kids in after it was done away with and found to inhumane that's going to come to light your misuse of our tax dollars is going to come to light because it's malfeasance of office when you anybody who has any question about that look about what the approved budget is and what the actual budget is and look at the net difference between the two this is an election year

[00:49:29] and I encourage everybody to look at who's donating to dr. Lateef's campaign it's people from Florida from Georgia from Illinois and from out of this county most of it but I think that you all are going to be very surprised what happens this next election because a group of moms and I are going to be starting a super PAC we are going to try to influence this election and flip as many seats as possible Democrat vote Republican Republican vote Democrat this this is a bipartisan board.

[00:50:02] I think that you are already going to, and Ms. Williams, you're speaking or mouthing something. I am very shocked that you would ever consider yourself a advocate for the rights of kids with disabilities after you didn't even listen to the audio recordings of the teachers. - Thank you, Ms. Melman-Orazco.

[00:50:20] - Shameful. - Hannah Ansari.

[00:50:42] - All right, thank you. I wanted to thank the school board for letting me speak again. Super Nintendo McDade, always a pleasure. My address is on file. You guys tried to trick me again this year have a meeting on a Tuesday, but I figured it out. I was able to read the calendar and said, oh, no, it's not Wednesday this week. So I'm grateful that I get my Wednesday free now so I can take a nap after school. All right, since we had a super racist commemoration of 9-11, I thought I'd give an anti-racist account of

Thanksgiving. And in case you didn't know, November is Native American Heritage Month. I also did not know, but I learned this while I was doing research for this speech. There's so many myths regarding Thanksgiving. One of the first examples of whitewashing. It really all starts with the myths I mentioned a couple meetings back, Manifest Destiny. Also, there was no turkey or pumpkin pie, much to my chagrin. It's my favorite

[00:51:21] dessert, but that's hardly surprising. It's not like they had convection ovens in the 1600s. First off, it wasn't a holiday celebrating peace and love on earth, but a truth between the indigenous population and the invading colonizers. And there was no pronunciation held for this one, so I'm going to apologize if I mispronounce it, but the Wapanak tribe had just survived a plague brought on by the colonizers. And let's not forget the introduction of biological warfare with blankets infected with smallpox gifted to the indigenous peoples. And despite having a huge chunk of their population wiped out by said colonizers the indigenous people saw them struggling and did indeed come to help this wasn't also this wasn't the first account of the indigenous population working with the colonizers they've been on amicable terms for about a hundred years and just as a frame of

[00:52:00] reference before Europeans colonized this land there were an estimated 10 million indigenous people here by the year 1900 that number had dropped to 300,000 so that's a pretty big genocide it has gone up some now we're about we're at about 3 million right now give or take and how did the colonizers express their gratitude for this continued assistance.

[00:52:19] They continue to encroach on indigenous land, and we see that culminate now 20 years after the first Thanksgiving, a massacre that killed hundreds of indigenous people. And when I looked this up, I thought hundreds meant like a couple hundred. No, it was like 700. And 200 years later, we see that continuation of oppression in the Trail of Tears, and even modern terms, we see that in the Keystone XL pipeline, infringing and poisoning indigenous lands.

[00:52:41] And we certainly can't forget the times where the colonizing nations, the US and Canada created First Nation schools, boarding schools where indigenous children were kidnapped from their families and civilized and also assaulted and sometimes killed. So while you're sitting at home enjoying your turkey, watching the Cowboys hopefully lose, the Lions win, and maybe watching the somewhat perplexing Peanuts special, why is the only African-American peanut Franklin sitting on one side of the table, segregated from his white peers?

[00:53:05] Take a moment to reflect on what this holiday is really celebrating. Thank you. - Okay, that concludes citizen comment time. Moving on to the Office of Associate Superintendent for Teaching and Learning. information, Dr. McDade.

[00:53:20] - Thank you Mr. Chairman, at this time, I would like to invite our associate superintendent for teaching and learning, Dr. Stephanie Sullivan, to present an update on the proposed school calendar options for the next school year. - Thank you, good evening School Board Chair Dr. Lateef, Vice Chair Jesse, members of the board, and Dr. McDade.

[00:53:42] It is my pleasure to present to you options for the 2027-28 school year. I'm gonna turn the mic over to get us started to Dr. Tiffany Hardy. Dr. Hardy is the director of our professional learning department and she for the past three years has graciously taken on this responsibility to work with our numerous stakeholders to provide options for the division.

[00:54:06] Dr. Hardy. - Thank you and good evening. I'd like to begin by sharing an overview of the calendar planning process. Our core planning team began its work in September. We examined prior year calendars, community feedback, state code, division regulations and policies, the dates in the 2027 and 2028 calendars, and we framed our work around the priority of student instructional time.

[00:54:40] The team considered a range of potential calendar options and variables about which we needed to collect stakeholder feedback. We met with the student senate, a teacher stakeholder group, a parent stakeholder group, and the superintendent's principal's advisory council.

[00:54:58] We solicited the benefits, barriers, suggestions, and questions around each of the different variables that could be considered for the calendar. Teams examined potential start dates, both for teachers and students, the timing of the holidays, the length of the breaks such as Thanksgiving, winter break, and spring break.

[00:55:21] We also looked at the dates that would result as the end of the school year for students and teachers. Based on the patterns that emerged, we were able from the feedback in the core committee to develop some sample calendars that the Executive Cabinet was able to examine and evaluate.

[00:55:40] Three calendar options emerged that identified and aligned and reflected the variety of stakeholder feedback we had collected. Those three calendar options were shared with the community via a survey that was open for two weeks.

[00:55:56] Tonight, I'll be able to share with you information about the specific details, the process, and the sample calendar options for your consideration. As I mentioned, the core team was committed to soliciting a variety of stakeholder feedback.

[00:56:12] We wanted to use that feedback to inform our process. The left column on this slide reflects the representation on the core team. The right column reflects the volume and the groups who contributed directly to this process.

[00:56:29] The charge of the core team is to develop calendar options aligned to state code, division regulation and policy, as well as to provide that option and opportunity for the community to consider and provide feedback.

[00:56:47] This slide reflects what our academic calendar is required to include, as well as what can be considered. I want to call attention to a Virginia code change that occurred this year, and it reflects a change in the timing of the opening of the school year.

[00:57:04] Virginia Code section 22.1-79.1 was revised this past April to change the potential start date for our students. Previously, Virginia Code designated school divisions could not begin more than 14 days prior to Labor Day.

[00:57:23] This amendment now allows school divisions to open 14 days prior to September 1st. This gives our divisions flexibility for opening earlier than in the past, especially when Labor Day falls later in September. Option A of the options you'll consider reflects this new flexibility.

[00:57:43] Pulling from Virginia Code, division policy, and regulations, we identified all of the commitments that we had to adhere to. In our divisions, students have 180 instructional days with approximately 45 days per quarter.

[00:58:00] important to note that all high school credit-bearing courses require 140 instructional hours. Beyond the 180 days, we contract our teachers for an additional 15 days. There are five days built into the start of the school year for preparation. We also schedule one full teacher workday at the end of each quarter and one of the teacher workdays is on the November Election Day. There's a division-wide professional development day scheduled for Columbus Day Indigenous People Day. We include two dates for parent conferences. They occur both at

[00:58:37] the end of the first quarter and at the end of the first semester. We protect two days as flex days to give our teachers choice in their professional practice and in their own learning. There is one teacher workday that is flexible and it is placed where the division determines is the most appropriate timing. For the 2027 28 school year we've recommended February 29th to be the additional teacher workday given that it is currently scheduled as the presidential

[00:59:10] primary date for Virginia this list reflects all of the federal state and locally observed holidays required by PWCS policy 541 for the purposes of this calendar we use the term holiday to reflect days when the schools and offices are closed our policy includes two days for thanksgiving christmas eve christmas day and new year's day during the winter break and two days for spring break so what does this mean for

[00:59:46] the 27 28 calendar in the left column we've identified all of the dates that are reflected in for the holidays for each of the calendar options some of the required non-federal holidays fall and weekends those will not be recognized in the in the school closings but they will be recognized in the public facing calendar we recognize the community consistently wants one additional day at thanksgiving break multiple days for the winter break and a full week for spring break those community priorities will be reflected in the sample calendars that i'll be

[01:00:26] discussing later in this presentation the right column reflects the list of work days parent conference days and professional development days that had to be built into the calendar options at appropriate times as previously mentioned February 29th we are currently recommending as a teacher workday based on current information about the date of the presidential primary however we are asking the board to approve flexibility in the event the presidential primary election date

[01:00:56] changes next the core team did a comprehensive examination of calendars approved for our neighboring school divisions. Given we have staff members who live and have school-age children in other divisions and we have students whose parents work in other school divisions, we need to examine the neighboring calendars. We were able to add Stafford to this comparison given that they recently approved their calendar. We confirmed the majority of our employees who live outside of the district live in Fairfax County. These are the five divisions with

[01:01:34] whom we share families and students and their approved calendars. Among these, the number of student days is nearly consistent with some variability in the number of teacher days. There's a unique coincidence that is going to occur in the 27-28 school year. Yom Kippur falls on Monday, October 11, which is the same date as Columbus Day, Indigenous People Day. As per division policy, October 11th will therefore be a holiday rather than a PD day. The PD day will be conducted on a different date in October which you will see in the upcoming calendar options.

[01:02:11] This is a continuation of the comparison. Most districts in Northern Virginia have common days off. Some local school divisions did eliminate Veterans Day. You may want to note that Spotsylvania

and Stafford do not have spring break aligned to Easter. Now based on the extensive information collected from our stakeholder groups, we identified three options that reflect a variety of feedback and recommendations. This table recognizes or reflects the

[01:02:47] differences in the three calendar options I previously referenced. They all reflect the required holidays. There is variability in the potential start date for students, the fall professional development date, the length of winter break, the timing of spring break, and the resulting last day for students and and teachers now we move to the three options option a has the earliest possible start date based on the virginia code revision wednesday august for 18th is 14 days prior to august 1st

[01:03:24] excuse me september 1st october 8 is the potential october pd day winter break is the full two weeks spring break is the second full week in april which is aligned to easter this is the traditional timing to which our community is accustomed the last date is the earliest possible end it reflects a monday june 12 for students and tuesday june 13 for teachers option b option b has a traditional start date monday august 23rd which is 14 days prior to labor day

[01:04:04] october 1 is the potential october pd day winter break is the full two weeks spring break is the second full week in April, which is aligned to Easter. And the last dates are Thursday, June 15 for students and Friday, June 16 for teachers. Option C has a non-Monday start date of Tuesday, October 24. October 12th is the potential October PD day. Winter break runs less than two weeks.

[01:04:38] Spring break is earlier and is decoupled from Easter. It's the last week in March. And the last dates are Wednesday, June 14th for students and Thursday, June 15th for teachers. Thank you, Dr. Hardy.

[01:04:54] I'm now going to share the feedback from our community where they were very robust in giving their perspectives on the various calendars. I am pleased to share that we far exceeded our usual response rate for the survey. We had approximately 23,000 respondents across parents, students, and staff.

[01:05:15] The other good news is that we had universal agreement in the top choice and the rankings in general. The overall results brought choice B to the top. The majority of our stakeholders preferred choice B as well as within each subgroup.

[01:05:35] So parents chose choice B, staff chose choice B, and students chose choice B. However, students did have a very close response rate between choice A and choice B where several students were interested in the earlier start time.

[01:05:56] As you heard at our last board meeting, we have improved systems for data analytics which made for even more detailed report on comments and feedbacks from the survey and gave us tools that we've never had before to provide the board with this level of information.

[01:06:14] On this slide you will see the top themes and comments, the number of times those themes were mentioned, the percentage of survey respondents making those comments, and whether those comments were from students, staff, or parents.

[01:06:31] For example, the first theme was around the timing of the school year. We had 779 mentions representing 3.4% of respondents, with most of the comments coming from parents. Other themes included preserving a two-week winter break, challenges with family logistics, the alignment of spring break, reduction of holidays, and alignment with other divisions.

[01:07:01] On this next slide, you will see those major themes divided by the various opposing perspectives. So for example, the earlier start versus the later start. You will see that the majority of respondents making comments in regards to the start time were responding towards a later start time.

[01:07:25] You will see the alignment of spring break as another item that had opposing perspectives with the majority of those who made a comment about spring break in favor of keeping spring break coupled with Easter.

[01:07:41] And again on this chart where you're seeing the opposing perspectives, you can also see the percentage of respondents that made a similar type of comment. were able to use encoding to be able to aggregate the comments from different perspectives.

[01:08:01] There were 299 respondents explicitly asking for less holidays. This was a substantial increase over this type of comment from the last two years where our constituents are recognizing that that does indeed spread the calendar.

[01:08:21] There were, however, 83 respondents asking for more holidays. And the majority of the comments made towards more holidays was about Ethiopian Christmas, which is celebrated on January 7th.

[01:08:37] The remainder of them were a smattering of different holidays requested for consideration. But again, you can see those comments as a percentage of total survey responses. And at this time, we're happy to answer any questions you have about the process, the selections, next steps, or anything else.

[01:08:58] Dr. Sullivan, great, great presentation. On the survey response rate, again, how many people responded? 23,000. 23,000. Was that our highest average? By anywhere that I could find. On average, we've been averaging about 12,000.

[01:09:14] So I do want to thank our communications team. I know I got a text every other day to complete the survey. So I think our communications team did a really terrific job, and our student senate helped to make sure that our students were more robustly represented, because they've typically been a lower number.

[01:09:31] - Right. On Ethiopian Christmas, I don't believe any other division gives that, do they? - Nope. - Okay. And then, I appreciate the breakdown on the survey. I think it's excellent to show that really, no more than 3.4% of respondents had any major issues with any particular item.

[01:09:49] You know, it's pretty low amounts of folks who had comments about particular things. But going back, B is the highest across all four categories of folks, and that's the one that preserves Easter as part of spring break. It does. It gives a two-week Christmas break, which is very popular with the community.

[01:10:13] Sure, sure. Yeah, pull up, if you put up a slide-- I've got B up, sir. B, yeah, slide B. So slide B is the one that's the most popular by all four categories of respondents and that has a two-week Christmas break it has a traditional timing for spring break which means it's tied to Easter those are the major two issues with that one and that's always been historically the most popular thing people like the two-week Christmas break they do this calendar is also very closely aligned to our large districts and that was a frequent comment made by by our constituents as well.

[01:10:52] It is very similar to this year's schedule with nearly all key priorities identified to the best of our ability. - Okay, great. Now, just for a point of, I think it's important to clarify, the school board voted many years ago on a set of regulations that outlined the days that must be considered holidays.

[01:11:17] - Yes, sir. - Correct? That is in our regulation. So we cannot at this time change the calendar to reflect either additional holidays or reduce holidays. That has to be done by changing the actual regulation. - The actual policy, sorry, yes.

[01:11:33] - The actual policy, the policy right now, regulation. So that would have to be done at a different time. And certainly if there are folks in the community who have concerns one way or the other, I continue to say reach out to the school board members. It is, from my standpoint, impossible to give every group, every holiday that they wish.

[01:11:50] I am open to hearing about less holidays. I think there are ones maybe we can consider. I've always, I have my concerns. I personally appreciate, when they're on a weekend, we don't give that to, they don't get the school holiday 'cause if it falls on a Saturday, they don't get the Friday or the Monday off.

[01:12:11] And I think we should, that's part of the policy, correct? - Yes, sir. - And I do think, which came up this year, and I can't remember what we ended up with on the policy, but if there are school events happening on the Saturday of one of the religious days, we still continue to hold those school events.

[01:12:28] Is that correct? - Yes, I know. I believe Mr. Denik asked the question about it on our two by twos and the team is revising the guidelines to be more in line with the board expectations. - Yeah, I mean, I think it's just impossible to cancel school events, especially state events or nationwide events and restrict our students from participating in sometimes one-time only events when other districts and other places don't observe the similar days we do.

[01:12:57] - Yes, that feedback was well received. - Yeah, and I think it's important to leave that up to the parents and the families who wishing to observe those days if they desire to do so. I cannot control, nor does this board control what other districts do, and sometimes important events happen outside of our district on those days when it is critical for our students to attend.

[01:13:19] And I would argue that that might even happen during the week as well. And so I think it's important for our entire system, superintendent top down, to understand what we should clarify that in our policy.

[01:13:34] So there's zero confusion amongst our staff, teachers, principals, and sports folks, and all of that. So I think that's really important to clarify. But that again is a policy change that will not be voted on this evening tonight.

[01:13:50] We're just addressing the calendar, and I appreciate that. Thank you. Mr. Trudenik is up. - Thank you for this presentation. As Dr. Lateef said, I do think it's very important that we, and I would love to see that once it's finalized, 'cause I do know that even if that guidance is given, sometimes there's site-based management and that occurs.

[01:14:11] And speaking about a 3A school that's very close to my heart, Brentsville, some of our competitors don't participate same holidays that we do and then we're right before playoffs and we miss a whole week of practice and that's detrimental for cheer that's detrimental for football and all those different things that happen so i i would like to see that once we get it the writing that that we're going to

have so i'm sure i know our director of school activities and athletics is working on it alongside our level associates i'm confident they'll present it to miss botello to share widely with the board

[01:14:47] but everything that you shared was aligned with the work they're doing awesome thank you so much and the um you know the other thing amongst my colleagues we've we've talked about this and i know when we first started to vote in new holidays um i i really did make a mention back then once you open the door it's hard to close it and and we did that and you know that was a caution that we talked about and something that we said once you once you add a holiday it's hard to to turn down another group of people that want a holiday added so um and in looking at the calendar

[01:15:19] unfortunately the uh the holiday that looks to me like one that a lot of our jurisdictions don't follow and and do send their kids to school is veterans day so and again before anybody hems and haws at me i am the wife of a veteran purple heart combat veteran so nobody come for me i'm just suggesting that you know our local jurisdictions do not celebrate that day I know it's a federal holiday so that might be one that we could look at I know we as Prince William County Schools do a great job of celebrating our veterans that whole entire week so that could be an option that we look at I don't know

[01:15:57] if we could do a survey possibly with with that date specifically I know that surveys are crazy to do but is that something that we could reach out and ask you know we would happily support the board and its request for information and as it considers the policy, we'll certainly work through.

[01:16:14] - Possibly, if other board members were willing to do something like that to look at, is there room to flex amongst our constituent base across the county, are they willing to give on any of these days to have some more room in our schedule would be my ask, so that's all.

[01:16:33] - Mr. Wilk, thank you for doing this and I appreciate your time and the amount of work that it goes into surveying. a long time ago, I used to work for a surveying company and all the work that goes in behind the research and creating the questions and all that stuff. And that kind of goes with me about one of the questions and with my colleagues point about the holidays.

[01:16:55] You know, I do believe we need to have a very serious conversation about the number of holidays. Although the last question was it something more like, and I apologize, I did not take the survey as a parent 'cause I probably knew how I was voting.

[01:17:10] but was it just an open-ended, like any comments for the group or the committee? - It was, it was open-ended. The respondents were asked to select their preferred and then had an opportunity to provide comments and open-ended they were.

[01:17:26] And so we received a wide range of comments, which I really appreciated because it gives us insight into the voice of our community. But what you see is the majority of the themes of the comments from our respondents. - No, I appreciate you gathering all those and collecting that.

[01:17:42] One thing kind of going back with, you were mentioning Veterans Day and it could be more. I think you get more of a direct response, of course, to a topic if you flag it and call it out in the survey and asking a question, should we reduce the number of holidays on our calendar?

[01:17:58] Yes, no, indifferent, or I'm not the researcher on the surveys, but however you wanted to word that, I think we, I would think an overwhelming majority of people would vote to reduce the number of holidays. Just my thoughts, but we would have to do the survey to show that.

[01:18:15] - Yeah, we could certainly help the board in gathering information for their policy consideration. - Well then let's do the survey. - Yeah, no, I mean, Mr. Wilk, I think, however you came up with that conclusion, when only 1.4% out of 20,000 respondents have actually said they want less holidays, sure, if you ask the question, you'd see more, but I don't think you'd have some overwhelming support.

[01:18:39] So I'd be very careful to make these sort of conclusions for the current data of a 20,000 survey plus people response and there is no overwhelming sort of community outrage to the number of holidays we have.

[01:18:55] It is not something I receive emails for nor see in a regular basis. But if, sure, if you wanna ask the question directly, sure, you're gonna get different responses, but let's be crystal clear on the current response, 23,000, 1.4% asking for less holidays.

[01:19:12] That's not a lot of folks. Thank you. Respectfully, I said, I think so. That's my opinion. You might think it's absurd, and I understand. I said, even if you did ask the question, I'm not sure you're going to get something far more than 1.4%, but you certainly can. If we ask the question, you don't think more than 1.4%? You would get more, but I don't think you'd get some significant crazy number like you're sort of proposing to the public here. Let's do it. Yeah, I mean, that's fine. I'm happy to do that like I said the board is willing to entertain any changes to the holiday schedule

[01:19:50] if the public so desires but I don't see I just want to be crystal clear to the public here that we are not seeing some overwhelming sort of desire to reduce the number of days okay I am and it's not because of the survey and an open-ended question that people would have to at that point specifically say I also want to do say when calendar committees were created in the past a large amount of members were shot down immediately and told that we can't talk about these regulations because our policies, because these are exactly what the school board policies are.

[01:20:27] So if we start off with a barrier to something like this, then you are going to kill a lot of responses potentially to asking a question about things that the policy dictates. And I respect the policy that dictates where we're at with that right now. I recognize that the policy says that these X amount of days are gonna be off.

[01:20:47] I also recognize that the state of Virginia says, you know, 180 days or 990 hours, but we also have a policy that says 180 days. So if we're talking about the continuity of learning, if we don't wanna reduce the number of holidays, but we do see, again, I'm not gonna use overwhelming, people I've talked to, I'll use different words, people who I've talked to, and I do have office hours regularly, I go to more, I go to a large amount of events and talk to constituents.

[01:21:19] So people that I have talked to would like to see summer a little bit longer. People that I talk to like the two week Christmas break. However, if you have to choose, when you juxtapose A, B and C together, you either shorten your calendar summer or you get a shorter holiday Christmas break.

[01:21:37] So there are ways to do both. And as a board, we could look at the 180 because we do have a neighbor that does 178, cut two days if we're not gonna cut a holiday or something like that, add a couple 10 minutes on to every day, like the Waltz era with the snow days or whatever, and then you have a longer school day, but you also then have the ability to have some more days off, whether it extends summer, whether it keeps Christmas holiday break two full weeks.

[01:22:08] So I apologize to the chairman if I gave the impression that I was speaking for the board, that an overwhelming majority of people, that was not my goal, an overwhelming majority of people that I have talked to, okay? So I just want to put that out there. So for the community to know, there's not an onslaught of emails about this coming at me.

[01:22:27] My conversations. - Ms. Williams. - Thank you. I appreciate your perspective, Mr. Wilk. I would just caution the board. - I was next, but I'll let it go.

[01:22:43] - Thank you. I think that from our board perspective, should be cautious being the 10th most diverse county in the nation for years we have had historically very set Christian traditional American holidays and we've seen an uprising in the past several years of holidays and it's from different groups coming into petition even at the beginning of the school year we were still being asked I believe about Asian holidays if I'm not mistaken I could be forgive me I think they were talking about a lunar new year and things of that nature so I think it just depends on again where you are in the county and the group of people that you're talking to and how you ask the

[01:23:22] question I've always been a fan of longer school I know I'm the odd man out but I just love learning and I'm kind of a nerd and I think it's really hard for our staff to get everything done in the hundred and eighty days that we have on the calendar 99 hours however long it is especially considering post-covid we keep getting inundated with new requirements of the summer I'd love to see a day where our staff could like start the school year with the professional learning day that just teamwork and getting to know each other we don't have time for those kinds of things often so I will forever be hesitant in shortening the calendar I am a big fan of education and believe that

[01:23:59] we should be educating for global perspectives and and sort of this three month off in the summer is not always the most prepared but also I don't want to get in anybody's vacation day so that's just my perspective I don't hear the same sort of rhetoric so thank you very much. Ms. Trudon. Um I can I ask maybe you don't know this but we just voted to add Eid al-Fatar. Last spring. Last spring okay we just did that and when we did that I had the discussion up here as we talked about each holiday that we had like I said

[01:24:34] the door opens again. What I'm what I'm hearing from Mr. Wilk and you know shockingly in in my district during that time frame when we were getting ready to vote on that we did get emails. We did get constituent conversation saying, I think this is opening the door, we're adding too many holidays, Lunar New Year, and I even said, let's add Lunar New Year.

[01:24:54] If we're going to add Eid, let's also add Lunar New Year. So, like, I believe that we do not need to continue to keep adding holidays. I think that it's making our calendar difficult, it's making, getting our learning in difficult. So, again, when we did that, I said we're opening the door.

[01:25:11] Today, I suggested taking a holiday. - What are we talking about? - What do you mean point of order? I'm on the calendar. - She can speak, she's speaking. Yeah, no, she can speak. Well, she's speaking to the calendar. - We're talking about calendar and adding holidays.

[01:25:28] That's exactly what I'm talking about. And me, again, if we're talking about districts, I just brought up Veterans Day. My district will have a fit. They're gonna be upset if I try to do that. I was offering an option because we're talking about the calendar and where we see difficulties. This is the time for that conversation and for having those conversations.

[01:25:46] So that's why I'm talking about it. I support your willingness to look at that to do it, and I would love for a survey to go out and ask if our actual parents and students believe that we have too many holidays on the calendar right now.

[01:26:02] I would love to see that. And if we're wrong and the data's wrong and everybody's good to go, great. But let's ask the question. Let's not just write it off and say that there's no way people agree or disagree. Like, it's crazy. I bet if we asked if we want year-round school, you'd get a different answer too so.

[01:26:18] - Mr. Jesse. - I think it's an interesting conversation. I think doing boundaries are a big mess and when you start taking away the holidays, you're really gonna have a big mess.

[01:26:40] - Ms. Wall. - Thank you for the presentation and for the thorough analysis of the responses. I really appreciate how we were able to drill down into some of these hot points that are kind of getting flushed out tonight a little bit. longer school year, shorter school year, holidays, more holidays, fewer holidays, et cetera.

[01:27:01] It does reflect the diversity of responses that I have received when I've had engaged people in these conversations. I do get a variety of responses and people are very opposed on some of these issues. If we were to like do one of those mathematical things where we like have the range, right?

[01:27:17] On some of these issues, the range is really big. Even though there is a clear median, there's gonna be a big range on some of these issues. couple of points just to you know raise maybe different viewpoints well first I'll start with I do think separate and apart from our decision that you know to vote on a B or C or a modified version a survey disconnected with the current calendar discussion may be helpful you know asking about like what is your general feeling about Prince William County calendar what you know you think we have too many holidays if you had to eliminate some holidays what would your

[01:27:52] first or second choice be you know some of these like broader questions might be some helpful data that aren't necessarily connected and tied to actual dates because we are so hemmed in we are we really are we don't have a lot of wiggle room with the actual dates but it would be interesting I think it would be useful to inform artists our perceptions of the range of opinions I do here and I personally have my own concerns about a very chopped up calendar as far as this impact on learning and its impact on students in a routine for learning we see this in winters when we have a lot of snow days

[01:28:31] you know kids just they can't get into a groove you know they're like do I go to do I wake up today or not you know like am I learning or not and it's very disruptive and sometimes when our holidays fall randomly in the middle of the week and things like that you see that kind of disruption where you have to relearn the routines especially with the little kids so I do have that concern impact on learning and then the other impact I do see is well you know families families who have extended family who live overseas or far away they do appreciate our longer breaks and they also do appreciate our longer

[01:29:06] summer breaks because they can pick up and like take off and go to Europe or India or wherever for a month or six weeks even if they wanted and so that's just kind of the flip side of you know not everybody is gonna be in favor of a very long summer and not everybody's gonna be in favor of a short summer and and I think those are considerations you know that we we have to consider since we are very diverse County and we have people from all over the world and all kinds of holidays get celebrated I do value having a day off for some holidays but I also value being in school for some holidays because there's a lot of

[01:29:44] learning that can take place around a holiday if you're actually in school and talk about the holiday um so that's anyway some random thoughts um but i do i don't actually have a question um my i'm interested it's interesting to me that everybody liked option b the most because i actually like option a personally because i like an earlier start so i'm in that category an earlier start and an earlier end just because of the impact of the calendar on not just the learning calendar but lots of other things that are happening in ap classes and dual enrollment and other things at the high school level where June becomes very

[01:30:19] difficult to keep kids in school because they've already taken their finals they've already taken their AP tests they've already done the learning that's required of them and so it's it just becomes more problematic and more difficult although I do know a lot of kids they don't go to school the last couple weeks and you know certain kids in high school so we also have the issue of the high school the middle school and the elementary school and the needs are a little bit different and the calendar has pluses and minuses for those different groups of students anyway those are some of my comments just to consider my colleagues on the board to consider things that I'm thinking about and thank you very much for presentation thank you mr. Blake yeah mr.

[01:30:57] chairman I'm just one of my apologies I didn't know where we're at on the agenda I thought this was up for a vote and I didn't regular realize this was all for information so please disregard that motion no no problem so again just to To recap, option B is the one most popular across all categories of respondents.

[01:31:21] It was only close, I guess, amongst the students, but they still came out in favor of option B. So that's what we'll be voting on tonight, is which option you all want on the calendar, A, B, or C?

[01:31:36] Yeah, we're just-- We're not voting it now? We're just information today. Really? It'll be brought back to the board on December 2nd. All right. It's on for discussion, fine. Yeah. So look, it's out there now for the public to sort of opine on and please respond to your school board members regarding which options you'd like.

[01:31:55] Like I said, the board remains, you know, I started out the discussion saying I'm more than happy to discuss whether or not we have too many or too little holidays. We can certainly put that on the agenda as a discussion. If you want to do a survey, that's fine. I think I'd add the survey to, you know, I know certainly Jen Wall would want to see a survey on the start times, and I saw Fairfax is announcing a full movement of shifting all times to later in the day to start no school before eight o'clock.

[01:32:26] There are certain things, if we're gonna put out a survey that I think I would love to see, and there's a lot of data I'd love to collect, and especially if we're getting responses now of 20,000 plus, we would love to see robust data come in on where people stand on stuff.

[01:32:43] But yeah, I'm more than happy to have that discussion, and I don't want anyone to think here tonight that I'm trying to stop that discussion. I started it with the idea that we should have that discussion. I have no problems. I know people hear from other folks about it, but I just, as responding to the survey, those are just my thoughts tonight.

[01:33:02] - Thank you, sir. I do want to emphasize that we bring to the board recommendations aligned to current policy, and we certainly support the board if the board engages in policy revision. So our

committee is looking at existing policies, and again, will be highly responsive with any revisions as you've seen in the past.

[01:33:25] We're happy to support the board in gathering any information to consider revisions. - Ms. Jargapour. - Yeah, thank you, Dr. Lateef. Just to Genwal's point about learning, being in school during a holiday, Fairfax County Public Schools was in school during Veterans Day.

[01:33:44] My school held a-- we had a presentation. We had students read speeches, poetry, a mini concert. And it was a day since so many parents were off. They were able to come in. We did a lunch. Parents were there all day long.

[01:34:00] Kids were excited. So it was an opportunity to invite the community in for something that we don't often have time for. So I think it is a valid point to talk about it like that. And in Fairfax, we have had that day off sometimes, and we've been in school on those days.

[01:34:19] I also remember when we used to have a half day at Wednesday before Thanksgiving, and now it's pretty much a day off. So there are some things that have shifted in the past decade or so. I do remember the last Eid that we had, and we had a lot of people who work for Prince William County who were calling out, and all of a sudden, we're scrambling to get things covered.

[01:34:49] So it's also worth considering which holidays have employees who also celebrate these things because that was one where we were possibly gonna run triple and quadruple bus routes and have some classrooms that didn't have the same amount of adults in the building.

[01:35:06] So things to consider also, thank you. - Mr. Will. - Thank you, I just wanna end, I don't have the full. My point and what I'm looking at is this. Ever since I started teaching 19 years ago, I have seen the slow constriction of a calendar.

[01:35:27] What I see are students getting out and teachers getting out towards the end of June and coming back early to mid-August. All I'm proposing and thinking is instead of every year when we kind of come to the table and look at really are we voting on a longer Christmas break and a shorter summer or vice versa, maybe start looking outside of the box or thinking outside of the box on other options.

[01:35:53] And this is not a reflection of you guys, this is policy stuff. So I just want to put that out there with disclaimer. - Thank you, sir. - Yes, but for the board to look at some policy options or other ideas rather than I feel like a continuation every year of just kind of just going through the motion, in my opinion.

[01:36:10] And that was the point of tonight of things to talk about, not the vote, but before we vote, thank you. - Okay, Mr. Jesse. - Yeah, if the issue, Mr. Wilkes, that you want the survey to...

[01:36:30] I'm willing to support that as long as, in addition, if they want to cut short of time, what do they want to cut? I want to know, you want to cut it one day, two days, so what two holidays, one day holidays, you want to cut out.

[01:36:48] I think that should be part of the survey. - Okay, up next, student representative time. Tonight we have our student representative Storm Allo, a senior at Woodbridge High School. Mr. Allo.

[01:37:04] - Okay, thank you. Good evening Chairman Dr. Lateef, members of the school board, superintendent Dr. McDade, and of course the wonderful students and families of Prince William County

Public Schools. I wanna start off by addressing one of the main concerns that we found regarding engagement throughout the division.

[01:37:20] Our data shows that our middle school students are currently the least engaged demographic amongst our student population. The Student Senate has made this a priority to address. We recognize that student leadership does not suddenly develop when the students enter high school.

[01:37:36] It is cultivated, encouraged and supported long before then. That is why we are currently working to extend our outreach and engage even further with our middle school students. The Student Senate is planning division-wide middle school student leadership workshops to take place in January.

[01:37:51] At these workshops, we hope to equip our younger students with some new skills, confidence and opportunities to grow and become more active leaders in their schools and their communities. We are already seeing this type of commitment take shape at the school level. Last Friday, Woodbridge Senior High School Student Voice Committee had the pleasure of hosting Lake Ridge Middle School's Student Voice Committee.

[01:38:11] This visit provided an opportunity to strengthen our partnership with our feeder middle school, help develop the leadership skills of our younger students, and offer guidance and support as they navigate student concerns within their own school community. We hope that this is the beginning of an even stronger relationship between the two schools, and hopefully this can also encourage other high schools to reach out and begin to directly engage and collaborate with the local middle schools to establish those partnerships and strengthen the community between our PWCS schools. On another note, there is work happening beyond student governance. A local Girl Scout has partnered with Colgan High School's environmental club and three middle schools,

[01:38:49] Benton, Saunders and Woodbridge middle schools, to establish composting bins at the middle school level. Through this partnership, younger students are learning about public speaking, sustainability, and the importance of protecting the environment.

[01:39:05] This project is almost entirely student-run, with the middle schoolers presenting to their administrators, deciding locations, and voting on the type of compost bin they want to build, ultimately taking leadership to a new level. From what I've heard, the participating students are enthusiastic and engaged.

[01:39:21] So thank you to those students for the initiative and willingness to make a difference. We are incredibly proud of you all for taking an active interest in environmental stewardship such an early age, so keep up the good work. Additionally, I'd like to recognize Ms. Zargumpur for recently visiting Hilton High School's Student Voice Committee. We sincerely appreciate our school board members' continued support and willingness to engage directly with the students, listen to our perspectives and participate in the conversations on the issues that matter to us, so thank you for that. Moving on, the Office of Teaching and Learning proposed the

[01:39:56] revision of policy 603 automatic math acceleration and it was approved by the school board tonight in summary students in grades 5 through 8 shall be automatically enrolled in accelerating math courses based on their end-of-year math SOL scores for students who do not automatically qualify alternative pathways to placement include parent or teacher or parent teacher or parent guardian recommendations demonstrated aptitude and even just student interest Parents or guardians may choose

to opt their child out of these and out of enrollment in these advanced courses by submitting a written request. PWCS is committed to providing all students with access to rigorous mathematics

[01:40:35] instruction and that prepares them for success in high school and beyond and this policy is an effective way to extend the accessibility of these courses. Finally as we approach Thanksgiving next week I think this is a very appropriate time to reflect on what it means to be grateful for the communities that we belong to. Along with recognizing what we have, gratitude is also about recognizing our responsibility to contribute to that.

[01:41:02] Whether that means simply being more mindful of food waste during the holidays, supporting those in our communities who may be a little bit less fortunate by donating to our PWCS food pantries, or simply taking the time to show appreciation to the people who make our schools better places to learn and grow, we all have an opportunity to give back. As students we are very grateful for the opportunities that PWCS provides us and we are equally committed to making the most of those opportunities and creating more of them for the students who will come after us. So thank you, I wish everybody a wonderful rest of your week and happy early Thanksgiving. Thank you Storm. Now turn over to Dr. McDade for

[01:41:40] superintendent's time. Thank you Mr. Jesse. This week November 16th through 20th Prince William County Public Schools recognizes both International Education Week and American Education Week. International Education Week celebrates the importance of global education, cultural understanding, and diverse perspectives that enrich our classrooms, as diversity is our superpower.

[01:42:01] PWCS takes extraordinary pride in preparing students to become global citizens and collaborators. American Education Week provides an opportunity to recognize educators, support professionals, families, and community partners who make public education possible.

[01:42:18] Thank you to everyone who contributes to the success of our students and helps bring our vision to life every day. Tomorrow, November 18, we celebrate Education Support Professionals Day. From our bus drivers and custodians to our food service teams, instructional assistants, and administrative support staff, these dedicated professionals are essential to the daily operation of our schools. Their work ensures our students have safe, welcoming, and supportive learning environments. Thank you for the vital role that you play in helping every student thrive. This Friday, November 20th, we recognize Substitute Educators Day. Our substitute

[01:42:55] educators provide critical instructional continuity, ensuring students keep learning when their regular teachers are absent. Their flexibility, commitment, and willingness to step into classrooms across our division make a meaningful difference for our students and schools. We appreciate their service to PWCS. As we approach the Thanksgiving holiday, I want to highlight that we have 21 school-based food pantries that are open operational and fully stocked providing essential resources to families experiencing food insecurity while Thanksgiving is a time of celebration for many we recognize that some families experience food

[01:43:33] insecurity research indicates that students with unmet essential needs such as adequate nutrition rest and a sense of safety can struggle academically and find it difficult to fully participate in learning our school-based food pantries are one of the many ways pwcs is helping ease that burden ensuring our students and families have access to essential resources and know they are supported by their school community through the pwcs elevate 2030 strategic plan our goal is to have a minimum of 40 food pantries open by the

[01:44:06] end of 2030. in the spirit of thanksgiving i want to extend my sincere appreciation to our staff community partners, and volunteers who make this work possible. Their generosity and dedication reflect a commitment to ensuring that every student has the opportunity to thrive.

[01:44:26] Please consider giving this holiday season by supporting our efforts through SPARK, the education foundation for PWCS. To learn how, simply go to our PWCS website under Community, then click on the Making a Donation link. Ensuring a thriving future means knowing what resources are available. I encourage our families to join us from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. on Thursday, November 19th for our next Family Engagement Series webinar, Strong Families, Strong Communities, Resources to Help Your Family Thrive. Families will learn about health and wellness services available through Lunara Health and transportation resources through OmniRide.

[01:45:06] This free virtual session will connect families with valuable community resources to support their well-being and success. As a reminder, offices and schools will be closed to the public next Wednesday, November 25th, and closed in observance of the Thanksgiving break next Thursday, November 26th, and Friday, November 27th.

[01:45:25] I wish to express my gratitude to our nearly 19,000 dedicated full-time and part-time PWCS employees. Your unwavering commitment to our students and families makes a difference every day. I wish our students, families, and staff a safe, restful, and meaningful Thanksgiving holiday.

[01:45:43] May this season remind us of the power of compassion, community, and caring for one another. That concludes the superintendent's report. - Thank you, Dr. McDade. We are moving on to the committee update. Tonight we have two committee updates from Ms. Wall regarding the internal audit committee and the school health advisory board meeting that took place this fall.

[01:46:06] Ms. Wall, you have the floor. - Thank you, Mr. Jessie. I'm gonna start with the Audit Committee. The Internal Audit Committee met on September 16th and then again on November 4th. And I'm just gonna cover both of those at the same time.

[01:46:22] The Audit Committee consists of Dr. Lateef, Mr. Blake, and me. And I also wanna say it's currently Fraud Awareness Week, which is November 15th to 21st. So it's particularly fitting that I'm talking about internal audit today. On the 16th of September, briefly, we received an update of audit activities.

[01:46:39] We went over the feedback that had been gathered from school board members, cabinet level, officers and associates and Dr. McDade and others, and the internal audit committee feedback as well in preparation for the 2027 internal audit plan. And we discussed our future meetings schedule and timeline for putting together that 2027 internal audit plan.

[01:46:58] And so that was the focus of the 16th. On November 4th, we received a status update of audit activities, including the completed in progress and upcoming audits. A large portion of work that the internal audit, office of internal audit does consist of conducting those school audits and there are specific things that the auditors are looking for ten categories and we're also looking at adding three new areas of focus I'm not going to spend a time on enumerating each of those categories but the two three new areas of focus will be school sponsors student club compliance shadow IT and

[01:47:33] utilizing AI tools we also discussed our enterprise risk management program and and risks related to FOIA and FERPA compliance, that's an ongoing audit. We discussed follow-up audit

recommendations because when internal audit makes a recommendation and there are certain recommendations that are given to schools, and then we have a follow-up process to say, how's it going, are we getting these things done, or do we need any additional support in getting them done, and so forth.

[01:48:01] We discussed fraud hotline update, including the new poster and marketing materials that were produced, and it's an updated, more modern refreshed posters so that's very good and it was just those were distributed throughout the division in our schools because it's a joint effort for all of us to be on the lookout for fraud we discussed risk assessment results in the proposed 2027 internal audit plan that's going to be coming before this board in December for consideration policy 190 requires the chief internal auditor to create an internal audit plan and present it to

[01:48:33] the board for approval so stay tuned for that the plan the internal audit plan will is designed to clearly outline planned assurance activities while also balancing advisory services continuous monitoring and evaluation of emerging risks and flexibility to respond to any emerging issues so the committee will next meet on February 24th 2027 the second committee I wanted to give the board an update on is the school health advisory board and as you know that board is has a purpose to advise the school division on broad

[01:49:09] topics or specific aspects of the coordinated school health program we've met twice this school year our first meeting was on September 18th and then most recent meeting was November 6th I have a lot of updates I just want to keep everybody I guess in a loop I'll try to be brief the highlights for the September meeting were about physicals and immunizations that's always a big push before the school year starts and the committee is focused on giving guidance for how to improve compliance with the law and we discussed community vaccination clinics as a mean to means to improve compliance and also how to

[01:49:46] encourage people to participate and take advantage of the community vaccination clinics we talked about lots of other things there was an annual nursing skills fair where there was some hands-on competency training for 13 different skill stations.

[01:50:01] We talked about Northern Virginia Community College partnership that we have and finalizing of an MOU with Northern Virginia Community College to provide clinical experiences for nursing students in school settings. We heard about new school nurse orientation and some other things with student health services, enhancing our services for pregnant and parenting students.

[01:50:26] We heard a little bit more about the cardiac emergency response plan, which we're putting in place address cardiac emergencies and we just talked about a lot of things talked about homebound program which got moved from student health services to student registration and enrollment services that's a that's just that that's an administrative move makes sense to do that and then we had an in-depth discussion on the reinsertion of insulin pumps and glucose monitors and the board discussed various aspects of implementation of that there's there was a law passed this summer or went into effect sorry this summer from the

[01:51:01] General Assembly and the division is under active review for moving forward with compliance with that new law so that was a point of discussion for our November 6th meeting probably the most significant thing to come out of that meeting if of the board's benefit is knowing that we now have leadership of chair a vice chair and a secretary on the Shab who come from our appointees as board members so that's great news thank you to Dr. Sampson and Dr. Kayla Goodwine for facilitating the board's

action in that area and for your ongoing support for the board the school health advisory board there were a number of things we talked about in that meeting some impact on summer meals again

[01:51:41] immunizations and physicals more about the cardiac emergency response plan and additional discussion about diabetes support there are over 200 kids who have type 1 diabetes in the division and over 140 of them are wearing glucose monitors in addition to pumps and so there's a lot of there's a lot of advancement in technology to support students and so it's a really exciting time for PWCS to leverage the skills of our division to support these children with their health concerns and health needs I should say not concerns and those discussions were very productive and I'm confident that we'll figure out how to do it here in PWCS and we'll become leaders on this issue for other divisions in the

[01:52:19] Commonwealth to follow so I commend everybody working on that anybody listening out there who's working on that. And that concludes my report about the school health advisory board and internal audit committee. Thank you very much.

[01:52:35] Thank you, Ms. Wall. Just a quick question. Remind me again. When are we voting on the plan? The audit plan? Did we do it already? Next. It's on December. Okay, great. Just a reminder for the board, please review the audit plan.

[01:52:51] Thank you, Chair Wall. Moving on next to 1901, the Ombudsman Report. We have tonight Monique Bookstein, please, you're up.

[01:53:07] I'm up. Let's go. Thank you. Good evening and thank you Chairman Lateef, Vice Chair Jesse, School Board members, Dr. McDade, and the PWCS community. I appreciate the opportunity to continue to serve as your Ombuds and present this annual report.

[01:53:26] individuals across our school division face moments of uncertainty. A parent may not know where to turn. An employee may be struggling with a workplace concern. A student may feel unheard. The Office of the Ombuds exists for those moments.

[01:53:42] Tonight I will share what the office does, what was heard during the 25-26 school year, and what the patterns may tell us about the opportunities to strengthen our community. Before we take a look at the data, I want to begin with the purpose of the Ombuds Office.

[01:53:59] the ombuds office is a resource for the entire pwcs community people often reach out when they are unsure where to go when communication has broken down when a process feels difficult to navigate or when a conflict has become challenging my role is not to take sides or make decisions for people it is to provide a safe confidential space where they can better understand the situation consider their options and identify constructive next steps in practical terms the office helps

[01:54:37] make complicated situations feel more manageable to understand how the office works it helps to take a look at the values that guide it as an organizational ombuds i follow the international ombuds association standards of practice and code of ethics as shown here these are more than professional principles on paper they shape how every conversation is approached and how each visitor is treated. These standards come to life through four principles that distinguish the

[01:55:11] Ombuds Office from other PWCS resources. The four principles are confidentiality, informality, independence, and impartiality. Confidentiality means identities and communications are protected to the fullest extent permissible. Informality means I do not investigate, make findings, or

participate in formal processes. Instead, I help visitors understand options and decide what next steps make sense for them. Independence means the office is independent in structure, function,

[01:55:50] appearance, and decision making. Impartiality means I am a designated neutral and do not advocate for any individual or entity. With those boundaries in mind, let me explain how the work looks like and practice. The office works at two levels: with individuals, I listen, clarify options, identify what may be driving the issue, provide information, and help them explore those options.

[01:56:22] At the organizational level, I provide feedback and serve as an early warning system by identifying patterns and systemic issues that may need attention. This dual role matters. A conversation may help one person move forward while patterns across conversations can help pwcs identify opportunities for broader improvement so what can someone expect when they actually contact the office the process is structured but flexible most visitors arrive feeling overwhelmed by the

[01:56:56] situation in front of them they often leave with something very different clarity the process is not about telling people what to do it is about helping them discover options they may not have initially seen depending upon the situation that support can take several different forms services may include active listening coaching facilitated conversations shuttle diplomacy conflict assessments referrals policy clarification feedback to decision makers and conflict management training

[01:57:33] the service is not a one-size-fits-all the approach depends upon the person the concern and what would be most useful in that moment. With that foundation in place, let's turn to the activity of the past school year. During the 25-26 school year, the office engaged with 354 visitors.

[01:57:56] The annual number is but one snapshot. Let me put this year in context with the office's history. Since 2019, more than 1,854 individuals have chosen to share concerns, questions, and observations with this office those conversations provide insight into experiences occurring throughout our division who is reaching out also helps us understand where the office is

[01:58:25] being used most and where additional outreach may be needed of the 354 visitors 63 were employees 28 parents and guardians seven percent community members and two percent students among the 225 employee visitors, 132 held certified positions, 53 administrative positions, and 39 classified positions. While employees account for the largest share of visitors, one of the encouraging aspects of this data is that the office

[01:59:03] continues to be used by parents, community members, and students as a resource. Beyond two contacts the office, timing can also reveal patterns. Employee Employee makes up the largest share of contacts, often bringing workplace concerns, policy questions or conflict resolution needs.

[01:59:26] Employee contacts were highest in April and May. Parents/Guardians contact the office when support is needed with student-related issues, communication challenges or navigating school processes. Their busiest month was January.

[01:59:43] members include prospective families partners and other with pwcs related questions their contacts were high in september march and april finally students bring concerns about their school experience peer relationships and policies students contacts peaked in august overall the fourth quarter was the busiest time of the year these peaks are useful because they help us anticipate when the need for support may be the greatest. We can also take a look

[02:00:17] at engagement across different school and organizational levels. Among the 224 employees who contacted the office, 73 worked at the elementary school level, 63 at the central office level, 51 at the high school level, and 37 at the middle school level. I would like to note an employee's work location does not necessarily tell us where the underlying concern originated. This chart is about who contacted the office, not an indication of where problems exist. Now

[02:00:54] let's take a look at the same question from the parent/guardian perspective. Of the 98 parents and guardians, 44 raised concerns with the elementary school level, 25 with middle school level, 24 with the high school level, and 5 with the central office or policy matters. The distribution is fairly broad, which reinforces that families may need navigation and communication support at every stage of a student's school experience. Community members represent a

[02:01:27] smaller group, but their contacts add another perspective. Among 24 community members, 21 raised concerns with the central office or policy matters, two related to the middle school level and one at the elementary school level. These contacts can include prospective families, partners, and others who are trying to understand or navigate PWCS processes and we also heard directly from students. Eight students engaged with the office this year with contacts

[02:02:02] concentrated at the high school level. The number is modest but the perspective is important. Students experience our systems directly and their willingness to seek support can tell us whether they know this resource exists and feel comfortable in using it. I believe continued student focused outreach remains an opportunity. Equally important is understanding how people learn the office exists. Visitors use several entry points to contact the office: 13% by

[02:02:37] phone, 38% through the Ombuds email, and 49% through the online booking calendar. Offering multiple ways to connect matters because people have different perspectives, preferences, schedules, and comfort levels when discussing a concern.

[02:02:55] how people first hear about the office is another part of accessibility this chart identifies several sources of awareness including the PWCS website marketing prior experience school board communications and referrals this is useful because awareness is a prerequisite for access a resource can only help people if they know it exists and understand when to use it these patterns will help guide future communication and outreach once someone

[02:03:31] reaches out I also provide flexibility and how the consultation itself takes place consultations were delivered in several formats 33% by phone 27% virtually 21% in person and 20% by email that balance reflects an effort to meet visitors where they are because confidentiality is central to the work email exchanges are essentially intentionally brief and visitors are encouraged to use another method for a deeper discussion. Now I want to move

[02:04:09] from how people reach the office to what they're bringing forward. The offices use the International Ombuds Association's uniform reporting categories to classify and track concerns. This creates a consistent way to identify themes over time without disclosing individual cases. The overall top reporting category was evaluative relationships, primarily involving supervisor employee interactions the second highest category was educational partners which covers questions concerns or issues between educational partners

[02:04:49] such as teacher parent teacher student or principal parent interactions the third highest category was services administrative issues which covers questions and concerns related to services provided by PWCS the overall categories become more meaningful when we look at the experience of different group. For employees, evaluative relationships was the most common category. Communication and supervisory effectiveness were the leading subcategories. In everyday terms, these concerns

[02:05:26] often involve whether expectations are clear, whether feedback is useful and timely, and whether issues are addressed effectively. For example, imagine an employee who has been doing good work, but keeps getting mixed signals about what is expected. They don't want to file anything formal, they just want to understand where they stand. In this situation, we might discuss how to ask for clarity in a way their supervisor can hear. Parents and guardians brought a somewhat different pattern. For parents and guardians, educational partners was the most common category. Customer service,

[02:06:06] communication, and equity of treatment were the leading subcategories. For example, a parent has sent several messages about their child and either hasn't heard back or they received an answer that didn't properly address their question. Often, the parent isn't angry. They are worried and may feel stuck. Part of my role is helping them find the right person, the right words, and realistic expectation for what happens next. Community member contacts showed another distinct set of needs. For community members, educational partners

[02:06:45] was also the most common category. Customer service, communication, and special education were the leading subcategories. These are process heavy areas and questions can become stressful when people are unsure about requirements, timelines, or where to go for accurate information.

[02:07:03] Helping people understand the process can often reduce confusion before it escalates. Student contacts add an especially important voice to the picture. Student visitors also reflected themes with educational partners. Academics and equity of treatment were the most frequently noted subcategories with a number of small for our student visitors these figures should be viewed carefully but they still remind us that students may need a confidential place to

[02:07:39] understand options and ask questions about experiences that directly affect them data tells us what people brought to the office visitor feedback helps us understand whether the office was useful to them. Among visitors who completed the anonymous post-visit survey, 90 percent said they would refer others to the office, while another 90 percent said they would reach out again if needed. One of the most revealing survey questions asked what visitors might have done

[02:08:13] if the Ombuds Office had not been available. Some indicated they would have filed a grievance. Others said they would have done nothing, delayed action, or even considered leaving PWCS. that's where early conflict resolution adds value addressing concerns before they escalate benefits individuals supervisors schools and ultimately students while these percentages matter the experience behind them is just as important the feedback from visitors points to a consistent

[02:08:49] theme people often arrive uncertain about what to do next the ombuds process gives them the space to be heard, consider options, and leave with greater clarity and practical next steps. That is the human impact behind the charts and percentages today, helping people move forward from uncertainty toward a more constructive path forward.

[02:09:14] In addition to casework, the office advanced several initiatives this year. I continue to provide ongoing feedback to the school board and PWCS leadership through regular reports and consultations on emerging patterns and concerns to increase awareness of ombuds services, I met with various stakeholder groups and provided staff training on effective conflict management practices.

[02:09:42] To strengthen my professional learning, I became a certified practitioner in administering the Conflicts Dynamics Profile Assessment. I would also like to note that I continue to serve as the chair of the International Ombuds Association's K-12 Ombuds Group, bringing best practices from across the country into our work and sharing our expertise with others.

[02:10:06] As I close, let me offer some reflections and a look ahead. Author, scholar, and educator Ralph Nichols said, "The most basic of all human needs is the need to understand and be understood.

[02:10:21] The best way to understand people is to listen to them." In doing this work for close to 20 years, the one thing I know for certain is, at its core, Ombud's work is about helping people navigate difficult moments. While the data I have shared tonight certainly demonstrates the value of the office, I think what it truly reflects is the impact of every individual who felt heard, every conflict addressed constructively, and every relationship strengthened through better understanding.

[02:10:53] Thank you for your continued support, and I'm happy to answer any questions you may have. Mr. Will. Thank you. Ms. Bookstein, thank you so much. That was great. I really appreciated the details of that presentation. Of course, Ms. Williams and Ms. Jessie were instrumental in helping bring that role on, so thank you.

[02:11:14] Who? you it was close um anyways um i'm trying to be nice and magnanimous look at that um so miss bookstein uh my questions for you real quick are how many what is your experience when people i guess will say show up broadly do are there a lot of miss um conceptions that like you're kind of in a sense a legal advisor or something like a counselor in that regard that you're going to help them take action or something is that a common theme that kind of people

[02:11:50] start off the conversation with thinking of your role if they don't really understand it I think they do and I think there there is a misconception with it I do try when I meet with my visitors first off to clarify what my role is so I explain that but yes I do think that a lot of people think my role is one that I can take action so I do explain what I can and cannot do and And generally, that includes that I can't.

[02:12:14] I don't investigate things. I don't dictate how things should be run in the organization. OK, perfect. I appreciate that, because I think I've had a couple anecdotal people say that, like, oh, I thought this or that. And same thing when they come to a board member, too.

[02:12:29] They think we can do things we can. But anyways, what are some ways that the school board can help you further expand potential outreach or awareness that your office exists? It's good to see the numbers are climbing steadily.

[02:12:44] I'd love to see even more. What are your thoughts on further elevating or promoting the position so that people know that they can come to you? I just think that awareness piece is trying to get that out there as often as you can.

[02:13:00] I think if you hear people that you learn they're struggling with something and they don't know where to turn, say, this is a great first step. This is a place where you can kind of think things through.

She's your thought partner in this. I think awareness, such as coming before the board here once a year, does also help for people to understand the role.

[02:13:19] But it's one of those things. It's tough, because when I say I'm an ombuds in any room, pretty much someone goes, what does that do? So it's hard. So I take it any way that I can. So if there's advertising, I try to outreach as much as I can.

[02:13:36] But understandably, I'm also working the cases that come through, 'cause it's a one-person shop. So, but anything that you could do, I'd be happy to talk to you offline about that, too.

[02:13:51] - Ms. Williams. - Thank you, Chairman Lateef. Good evening, Ms. Wilkes-Line. Thank you for your report. Thank you for continuing to be our ombudsman. I know that it is not a position, like you said, that most people run into on a regular basis.

[02:14:07] Congratulations for becoming a certified practitioner and continuing to be chair. 'Cause I know that that is a renewal. I appreciate all the feedback that your office gives for us. I know that we're not talking thousands of perspectives, but I do see the themes are still pretty consistent when it comes to what people are concerned about.

[02:14:29] I think that's a very good neutral lens for us on the board to continue to be aware if we still have issues with equity, still have issues when it comes to treatment of people, or it looks like also with employees, supervisory things.

[02:14:44] And I think your office provides a good neutral place for people to gain understanding. Often most, as you know as a conflict practitioner, most conflict arises out of a misunderstanding. And I think it's also helpful for us as a board because you're a neutral office, you don't have sides, you're not, there's no stake in the game per se to provide a very clear lens of what the individuals are coming to you are looking to solve and that can help us build our policy and continue moving forward in the right direction so thank you uh mr wilkes on my other question which is what we

[02:15:18] could do to help um so and thank you for your presentation thank you miss wall thank you spokstein for your um presentation tonight we really i really appreciate it i know um we talk regularly about how things are going and um i've reviewed this presentation before so i don't really have a whole lot of questions but I did have one that I thought would be beneficial and that is on this slide how did the visitor learn about the office so I had one point of feedback I'm trying to find

[02:15:52] the slide I don't remember which slide it is 17 yes 17 um the referrals is a good solid number website is great I'm glad people are finding us through the website because I know you made a lot effort to make that really accessible. Marketing I'm assuming that's through posters and things in the schools and PWA is really small, school board is also really small, but other unknown I was wondering if you had some insight into when somebody says they learned about the office through other unknown do we

[02:16:32] know that's actually your largest category so I wondered if you could share some insight with the board about how people are learning about the office and whether maybe the whether it's just there's a category there that we we don't know about or or whether it's they don't easily fit in one of these other categories absolutely great question I think what that has to do with is a lot of times people may know about the role somewhere else that could be kind of the other category they may have heard about it from someone else I I don't put on there Facebook or you know community engagement things like

[02:17:10] that it might be an area for me to kind of look at to see if I want to have it more in-depth to understand where people are reaching out I do see it because they'll put down if unless it's unknown and a lot of times I do get a lot of unknowns because people just don't know what to expect with what the role is and so but with the others I do see that I just don't identify it specifically in there be quite a large graph for everyone but I do find that I'm hearing a lot of folks come to me when they sit down and say I heard about you from someone else and so I get a lot of that a lot of feedback that I heard you this was a great office to kind of think things through so I think a lot of word

[02:17:50] of mouth is really probably a big one on there and so again it just depends if they want to answer the question or not it's not required so that's why I get a a lot of unknowns so maybe they're where we might think a word mouth might be a referral they might be treating it as like my friend told me about it or my co-worker or something like that okay okay yeah and then I think that the interesting data that you shared and I want to thank you for that at the very end of the presentation with where people might go oh my gosh my thing is just crazy here where people might what they might do if they didn't have your

[02:18:28] office that's actually really interesting data like how they would have tried to solve their 14% so they wouldn't have done anything which isn't which is kind of depressing actually to think they would just didn't wouldn't have done would have done nothing but I do think that's actually really helpful and 8% so they would have left our division so I think you are providing value to our system and I appreciate the feedback and the responses that you have and for the ongoing work that you do.

[02:19:00] I really do appreciate it, thank you very much. - Thank you. - Thank you, thank you Ms. Bookstein. - Thank you. - Appreciate it. All right, I think up next we have on the agenda, this time of the year we award members who've taken courses offered by the Virginia School Board Association to extend their knowledge and stay current with best practices.

[02:19:21] Tomorrow kicks off the Virginia School Board Association's annual conference and many of our board members will be in attendance representing and Prince William County School Board. So on behalf of the Virginia School Board Association, I'm pleased to announce awards earned by four board members and the superintendent from the VSBA Academy for their commitment to effective school board governance.

[02:19:41] For completing 84 credits in two years, the awarded distinction goes to Mr. Tracy Blake of the Neabsco District. All right, Tracy. For completing 66 credits in two years, the award of honor goes to Ms. Lisa Zagrapoor of the Coles District and Ms. Jennifer Wall of the Gainesville District.

[02:19:59] For completing 48 credits in two years, the Award of Excellence to Ms. Lori Williams of the Woodbridge District. And for completing 15 credits in one year, the Award of Recognition to Dr. Latonya McDade, Superintendent of Prince William County Schools. Congratulations to all.

[02:20:16] All right, up next with board matters, we'll start with Mr. Blake this evening, and let's stick to the time, 'cause everyone's gotta go tomorrow early in the morning. - All right, thank you, Dr. Lateef.

[02:20:32] Over the past couple of weeks, I've had several reminders of what it looks like in our schools and community to just show up. And at Penn Elementary, I was able to join the school for pastries with Patriots. And I had the opportunity to meet a lot of veterans who were our parents, grandparents, and family members of the students.

[02:20:53] I joined Cub Scout, PAC 108 again, and they raised the flags. Everyone had American flags. And the Penn choir performed the official songs from each branch of the armed services. It was great. a great Veterans Day celebration. But more importantly, our students got to see that service engine is just about something they read in the textbook. These are people in their own families, communities who answered the call to serve. So thank you again to all of our veterans. I also stopped by Minerville Elementary's talent show. And when I say it was standing room only, I mean standing room only. Our kids were singing, dancing, acting,

[02:21:33] playing instruments, and their families showed up for them. One student even performed Mozart's Piano Sonata number 11 in their A major. It was a piece for some of our younger students might recognize from Bluey, and I thought that was very cool.

[02:21:48] It was really cool that he played that. I think it was like fourth grader. And we talk a lot about positive climate and culture, but sometimes you don't need a survey to know. When it's happening, you can feel it when you walk into a building, and I felt that energy at King Elementary, where the community came together to celebrate earning the DOE Distinguished Designation.

[02:22:10] And I'd like to congratulate King as one of the five Neabsco Elementary schools earning that designation this year. So there's a lot to be proud of in the Neabsco district. Saturday, I attended the fifth annual Justice Like Me event at the Prince William County Courthouse with Ms. Wall and Ms. Williams, Ms. Zargarpur.

[02:22:34] And what Judge Rollins and Judge Lucas started five years ago continues to give our students something incredible, important, incredibly important exposure. Students weren't just hearing about careers in law and public service. They were sitting in the courtroom serving as jurors, interacting with judges, attorneys, law enforcement professionals, and others in the justice system. Sometimes a young person needs to see themselves in a space before they can imagine themselves belonging there.

[02:23:04] And finally, Friday night, you already know where I was. My guardrail, the Red Wolves, Went into Woodbridge this time and came away with a win. Their first playoff victory, 17-14, in the program's postseason since 2007.

[02:23:24] So congratulations to them. And this was after one week after losing to the same team by two points. So our young man came back, responded, and got it done with the season on the line. One pack. And as we head into Thanksgiving, I'm grateful for all of these moments.

[02:23:41] But I'm also mindful that some families in our school community are trying to figure out how they're going to put Thanksgiving dinner on the table. So maybe gratitude is more than appreciating what we have. Maybe gratitude should also move us to look around and ask who needs us to show up.

[02:24:00] And in that spirit, I also want to say tonight that I'm grateful for my colleagues on this board. We don't always agree, and anybody who watches our meetings knows that. But I believe we continue to come back to the same North Star, what's best for our students and families.

[02:24:17] And we may approach this work differently, and sometimes we're going to disagree about how we get there, but I appreciate the commitment each of you bring to serving this community. To our students, families, educators, staff, and community partners, thank you for continuing to show up for one another.

[02:24:33] I hope you have a safe and restful Thanksgiving. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Blake. Ms. Williams. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I also attended quite a few events over the weekend. I was at Justice Like Me, as Mr. Blake just said. It was an outstanding program. I think we often forget that there is more to the law than police and judges.

[02:24:55] There's an opportunity for so much more and profession wise in a courtroom and I just want to say thank you to Judge Rollins and Judge Porter for putting that program together. It's just my first time attending and it was absolutely amazing. I think we had almost every high school represented which was also kudos to them for expanding the program like that.

[02:25:20] I also attended the robotics FLL opening season. I want to congratulate, congratulate, congratulate Leasylvania Elementary for making states. I was only going to stop by, but of course our wonderful robotics professionals just make it so much fun and end up staying for half the day, the other half of the day.

[02:25:42] Congratulations, Mr. Blake, to the Neabsco District Garfield High School for making the playoffs. As much as it hurts my heart to say that as a Viking alumni. I did attend both games, and one week we won as an alumni, and the next week I was congratulating Garfield on Woodbridge's home field, so that was interesting for me, but well deserved, both teams played well.

[02:26:06] And congratulations to all the players and coaches for all your hard work. In addition to that, I am also one of the board members who will be attending VSBA, our annual state conference. It's a time to get our continuing education credits, look and see what's ahead for the future, and especially good for getting current with all the new laws that are coming out constantly at the federal and state level.

[02:26:32] In addition to that, I want to say congratulations to Theresa Burnley. She was one of two recipients of VDOE's RISE award. She has, I think years ago, used to run the cafeteria here in this building.

[02:26:47] I know she's to help us with school board dinners. It's been a long time since I've seen her, and I just wanted to say personally congratulations. Also wanted to congratulate our former school board member, Chance Williams. He attends Alabama A&M and just recently became a member of Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity Incorporated, for which I am biased because I am a Zeta.

[02:27:09] We are the only two constitutionally bound fraternities and sororities, so congratulations, sir. And last but not least, almost last, our submissions for recognizing a Prince William County School employee are open. The deadline to submit is Friday.

[02:27:26] We have lots of staff who deserve recognition. So please, if you have the opportunity, go in and submit electronically and recognize one of your favorite PWCS employees. And as everyone has said, November is a month and a time for giving to be thankful currently in Prince William we have over 40% free and reduced lunch population so there are plenty of families that will be in need of not just food for the table for Thanksgiving personal hygiene supplies coats as we change the season we have plenty of our schools have pantry closets and also giveaway clothes especially at our elementary and our middle school level

[02:28:06] they often take personal hygiene products as well because we do have a a lot of students who are in need, so please be mindful. I am grateful for this month, for my tenure here, and for being able to serve. It is a huge privilege with not only this board, but for every one of our employees in the KLC and the school division.

[02:28:27] This has been an amazing opportunity, and I concur with Mr. Blake. We are all here for the same reason, for students, staff, and community, and it is truly a blessing to be a part of something that has now won Prince William. Thank you. - Thank you. - Good evening, everyone.

[02:28:42] Fall is fully upon us. First of all, good luck to Battlefield for Friday. They're playing Brook Point, and I hope they win. Over the past two weeks, I have had the opportunity to attend a number of events. As we recognize Veterans Day, I joined Sudley Elementary for their Veterans Day Flagpole Ceremony and Alvey Elementary School for their Veterans Breakfast.

[02:29:03] And these events were really meaningful opportunities for students to learn firsthand about service, sacrifice, and civic responsibility. There was a young student who shook every veteran's hand as they walked in to the breakfast at LV and said, "Thank you for your service." And it was, I could see in the faces of the veterans, they were really touched by the sincerity of this QL student doing that.

[02:29:23] I also had the pleasure of attending Tyler Elementary School Booster-Thon Run, where the students demonstrated tremendous enthusiasm, school spirit, and commitment to supporting their school community. And I want to give a special shout out to the PTO leadership at Tyler for their extraordinary commitment, not only to Booster-Thon, but also to the school.

[02:29:41] I also went to the Justice Like Me program at the Prince William County Courthouse last weekend, and I would have loved to attend something like that when I was in high school. It just blew my mind how accessible the lawyers and judges were to the students, and what a wonderful opportunity it was.

[02:29:56] So thank you to the legal community for your tremendous support of our students. I went to the first Lego League regional event also, as others have talked about, and congratulations to Tyler Tomcats and Mountain View Cougars for going to the state competition. Beyond student-centered events, participated in that school health advisory board meeting which I talked about earlier and the PSLN joint legislative breakfast where we had conversations about resources policies and funding for our students doing the best we can to advocate to our state legislators about our needs coming up tomorrow I'll be going to the VSBA the annual meeting in Williamsburg I look

[02:30:33] forward to that because I can learn from colleagues across the Commonwealth and I can bring back ideas to strengthen outcomes for our students right here in Prince William County Schools next week families will celebrate Thanksgiving holiday and as Thanksgiving approaches I find myself reflecting on how quickly our children grow up and how important it is to make every moment count and so in light of that I'm going to share a poem with you that I really love it's called nothing gold can stay it's by Robert Frost nature's first green is gold her hardest hue to hold her early leaves a flower but only but only so an hour then leaf subsides to leaf so Eden sank to grief so dawn goes down today

[02:31:13] nothing gold can stay well frost was writing about nature it also serves as a reminder that childhood is fleeting the time we have to support encourage and inspire our students passes quickly and that is why the work we do here matters so very much and I want to thank everybody who was involved in any way in that effort because kids truly do grow up quickly and their lives are so very important and thank you very much and have a great holiday evening or holiday weekend mr uh or miss lisa czar thank you dr latif um so miss wall that poem you just read i had my fifth

[02:31:49] graders analyze that in class and and i asked one of them what do they think the author's purpose was they looked at me and said you're golden and you're going to go one day i thought that was very fun anyway um i've been out visiting a lot of different um events i went to see just the justice like me i stayed started out at the beginning of that event and then uh went over to osborne park the metal jackets were hosting a round table with state legislators uh and bringing up i think it was five different legislative um asks uh the the students made sure that they put

[02:32:27] everything in the the governmental language that so it could be submitted and the delegates and the state senators who attended were very good about explaining what would make it more give it more efficacy when they should be putting these these ideas through everyone agreed that lunch school lunch should be free and when the one of the things that the students talked about was was getting credit for being on a robotics team.

[02:32:57] So I was wondering if one of the things we could do in Prince William County was to do micro-credentialing of things like robotics, because those teams work very hard all year long, and the students work in very specific roles, and they create basically a portfolio of their work through these things.

[02:33:16] And I thought that would be a great thing for us to be able to do as a county. I did talk to someone at VDOE about how they could make that work at a state level, but that's gonna take a lot more conversation. I went back on Sunday so I could watch more of the LEGO First Robotics competition.

[02:33:34] I took my four-year-old grandson with me. He was so excited to see Osborne Park's robots. There was one that was throwing the balls, that'll be for the competition, but they made a high-five robot, which was kind of fun. He was interested in the LEGOs and what the kids were doing, But he's four, so he wasn't quite sure all of the things that were going on.

[02:33:55] I met the Locke-Lowman team. They were awesome. There were a bunch of girls on that team, and they had won their round and were just kind of waiting around until lunch was getting served. So we had a great time playing Legos with my four-year-old grandson and talking about school and things like that.

[02:34:12] I also got to go to see the Colgan Boys volleyball game. They had several matches. They were not winners of that one, but it was really a lot of fun to watch them, watch the team spirit, watch how the boys were playing volleyball.

[02:34:27] For a first-year activity that we've just started, I was so impressed with how far they went. I also got to see Dear Evan Hansen at Colgan, and the song that the character Heidi sang at the end was just absolutely pulling my heart out.

[02:34:45] She did such a great job. previous week i went to see little shop of horrors at hilton with dr mcdade that was a that was a blast we had a good time um i'd forgotten that the dentist was so um interesting for a character but the kids they sang their roles so well and whoever was the one who played audrey too oh my gosh you were amazing they're just absolutely so much character in your voice i loved it i cannot wait to see what comes after the break.

[02:35:16] This being going into Thanksgiving in another week, I am thankful for this board and all of the experiences I've had, good, bad, and otherwise. We do work hard. We do have lots of things that we have to work through, but I'm grateful to do it with you guys.

[02:35:31] So have a great week. - Mr. Dent. - Thank you. I had the privilege of getting invited again to Cedar Point's Veterans Day celebration. Ms. Riley, Ms. Grace Riley, always does a great job, and this year she actually asked me if I could bring my husband with me, and he was thrilled and said seven words at least.

[02:35:56] Poor guy. He's like, this is a lot, but they do such a great job, and each student goes up and says the name of their veteran, and it is the cutest thing ever to watch. They just put on a great performance, and the entire school sings together, so it's wonderful, and it was a privilege to witness service and sacrifice of so many in my district and that was exciting to see I hope everybody has a safe and happy Thanksgiving and safe travels to all of our alumni that are coming back and we can't wait to see you and we're

[02:36:32] stocking the fridge Mr. I have been extra loquacious tonight so I will pass my time mr. Jesse yeah I just want to thank everybody I have missed quite a a few things this year, and we'll probably continue to miss some more, but I do try to keep up my emails and respond to stuff, but I'm even behind on that.

[02:36:59] But anyway, let's have a good Thanksgiving, and I'll see you in what, December? Yeah, I guess right, yeah, okay. Thank you all for being here. My apologies to Mr. Wilk, I should say this publicly, I didn't mean to, and if it's perceived that I jumped on them in that discussion on the calendar.

[02:37:20] I did not mean to do that, and my deepest apologies. If it was perceived that way, actually we agree more on what we think about it than frankly less, and I think I should sort of, because I spoke about the calendar earlier, I should also mention that early on when we did vote for the holidays, we were one of the first counties to do it statewide.

[02:37:42] Many other counties followed. It wasn't something I pushed, frankly. It was something other board members wanted to bring to the forefront. And I said I would support it if there was a majority and there was, and we changed the policy. And that's why I opened tonight's discussion with the idea that I'm also open to revisiting the policy and to look at it.

[02:38:02] On all the issues and merits that Mr. Denik and Mr. Wilk brought up as well, I think it is important every few years to relook at why we do what we do and does it make sense anymore. I'm perfectly happy to do that. so I don't want anyone to leave here thinking tonight that I was jumping on them for an unfair reason.

[02:38:23] My apologies if that's where it came to. Grateful that we have Thanksgiving coming up. This is no school November, as now we're talking about all the days off that the kids have had.

[02:38:38] But we've had a strong first quarter with many of our students. And I wanna just leave with sort of, you know, a couple of the high points in Elevate 2030 that I'm really particularly proud of in the work that this division is doing that I think, you know, bears repetition.

[02:38:56] You know, we just saw an election where, you know, affordability was a top, top sort of issue. Two years ago, the election of the president was also based on the fact that, you know, people were talking about affordability, and that hasn't changed. So regardless of what side of the political aisle you are on, affordability is an issue.

[02:39:15] Prince William County is committed to bringing universal pre-K to all four-year-olds by the end of 2030 and each year we're gonna be ramping that up and that is a tremendous savings for family. I can't emphasize that enough and we are the only county who's doing it and we're doing it because this board prioritizes this desire because the community also believes this is very important.

[02:39:37] But I also wanna point out the commitment and drive as you saw in the last school board meeting on expanding dual enrollment and opportunities for students to generate college credit. Dr. McDade, the school board takes that goal extremely seriously.

[02:39:53] And while I really, and part of that goal is to get as many students as we can on the track to getting college credit, associate degree completion or credit towards getting associate degree, I think as we look at schools in America and the way we've done high schools, and we haven't changed it in over a hundred years.

[02:40:14] I do think 12th grade requires some sort of aggressive new thinking and innovations. And part of that is what Dr. McDade has launched is our commitment to sort of expanding dual enrollment. If we can get more of our kids out of schools with more credentials and more credit, that just gets them savings, less years in college, faster the workforce, faster to make money.

[02:40:37] It is an affordability issue. And I think if you take a look at the two ends of our strategic plan at universal pre-K and a commitment to post-secondary success, you're looking at a real formula and strategy to address family affordability. On top of that, the commitment and push to getting more of our students each year, we have succeeded in the five years Dr. McDade's been here, more scholarship dollars for families.

[02:41:02] And it's not just for the kids, it's for families, it's the parents who are paying that outlay. So I'm very proud of the work this board has done and committed to and I really think it bears remembering on the commitment that this board has on affordability. Thank you all, have a wonderful Thanksgiving.

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