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[00:11:42] Good morning, and welcome to the Virginia State Board of Education Business Meeting. Today is August 27th. With that, I will now call the meeting to order. As is customary for this board, we will begin our meeting with a moment of silence, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

[00:12:09] Please join me in the Pledge of Allegiance. Good morning again.

[00:12:43] I would first like to do a couple of introductions or actions. I would like to welcome our new board member, Dr. Leah Maxwell, who was appointed to the Board of Education by Governor Spenberger on July 2nd, 2026. Dr. Maxwell has over 25 years of experience shaping education, health, and workforce policy.

[00:13:05] Dr. Maxwell serves as a senior fellow at Harvard's Center on the Developing Child, where she works to elevate research, policies, and practices that supports children's learning and development. Dr. Maxwell has previously served as President and CEO of the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, the non-Protestant, non-profit organization leading the movement for evidence-based social and emotional learning. Dr. Maxwell began her career in education as a

[00:13:40] special education teacher, assistant principal, and principal. Maxwell's experience includes serving as the deputy assistant secretary, local, state, and national engagement at the United States

Department of Education, and executive vice president of government affairs and partnerships at NWA, and as a director of education for the National Governors Association.

[00:14:05] There's a whole extra page, but I'm going to just read a little bit more because it's very, very accomplished um dr maxwell is a first generation college graduate who holds an undergraduate degree from tuskegee university a master's from the university of south florida and a specialist and doctor degree from noda southeastern with that please welcome dr maxwell dr maxwell this is the one time you will get the mic if you would like to say anything i would just like to say this really is an honor to serve in this capacity

[00:14:45] particularly since I cut my teeth in education as a special education teacher 26 years ago this fall so it really is an honor to serve and not only that I have two children that are in public school in the commonwealth of Virginia so it really is a full circle moment and it is an honor to be here thank you Dr. Maxwell and with the departing of our previous vice chair

[00:15:18] bill henson at our last board meeting we now must take action for the election of a vice president of the board of education and so that is there a motion to nominate a board member as vice president of the board of education i motion to nominate dr kim bridges as a vice president of the board she brings excellent experience in research and policy and advocacy for students for decades and i'm excited for her to bring that expertise to help ensure the voices of all of our constituents and all members of the board can shape the best policies possible for

[00:15:58] virginia students great is there a second second great well we will do a roll call um miss reinhardt aye we're going to skip you dr bridges miss mcpherson mr robinson aye dr northern Dr. Wilson. Aye. Dr. Maxwell. Aye. Mrs. Kilgore. Aye. And chair votes aye. With that, congratulations, Dr. Bridges, for being selected as the vice chair. I was reading over your bio,

[00:16:31] and your bio is also very, very long. But I would also just love to share that Dr. Bridges has spent over 20 years in the world of k-12 uh education on adult adult learning as well as classroom and school board representative and senior policy with the virginia department of education so a wealth of knowledge from multiple perspectives and we couldn't be more happy to have you serve in this vice chair role and you'll also get a moment on the mic if you would like just thank you all so much colleagues for that nomination i'm eager to to do what i can for those of you

[00:17:10] who don't know me i'm a professor at vcu now i teach collaboration and sustainable change those are two of my core classes that i absolutely love teaching with grad students and i study and have and do continual training on structures and processes for governance that that achieves improvement and so being here to help with those skills is really important to me but i want to to call attention to the skills of everybody else at this table. You just heard a little bit about our newest colleague, but this is high level, y'all. Just from a 30,000-foot view, we've got experts in commerce, in law, in school turnaround, in federal policy, in workforce preparation,

[00:17:49] in research, in division level and school leadership, in classroom teaching, in workforce preparation for students, in early childhood education, in social-emotional learning, and in higher education partnership that is the the skill set again high level i missed a lot of things at this table but one of the first lessons we we talk about in my collaboration class is that none of that matters if you don't work together to collaborate that structures and processes for even for good governance fall apart if you don't think about the people at the heart of them

[00:18:24] and effective teams research shows build from relationships of trust and care in order to leverage those diverse strengths into better collective decision-making. And so I hope to help bring these skills and expertise together in the way that I'll show Virginia what two different administrations of appointments from diverse backgrounds can do when they unite around a belief in our Commonwealth's children and seeking to be a model for effective, deliberative, and inclusive decision-making. And so what we do here matters on this stage. How we do it matters because

[00:18:59] that's what leads to sustainable change and improvement so thank you all so much i look forward to being of service as i can absolutely thank you dr bridges and with that um is there a motion to approve the agenda as presented so moved is there a second okay miss reinhardt aye dr bridges aye mrs mcpherson mr robinson aye dr northern dr wilson aye dr maxwell mrs

[00:19:32] kilgore and chair words i thank you staff members have provided members of the board with draft minutes before the meeting is there a motion to approve the minutes as presented to the board miss reinhardt actually is there a motion first second second great miss reinhardt i'll abstain as i was not present great thank you dr bridges i mrs mcpherson mr robinson dr northern dr wilson

[00:20:09] aye dr maxwell abstain i was not at the meeting thank you mrs kilgore and chair votes aye thank you all right now to the best part of the day um the board always appreciates being able to feature the wonderful arts program across the commonwealth by having students perform at our meetings i will now ask dr bridges to provide us with an introduction for our guests thank you

[00:20:39] The band performing today that we welcome to have with us is the Blacksburg High School Select Wind Ensemble, directed by Daryl Pierman from Blacksburg, Virginia in Montgomery County Public School. This select small ensemble is representing the Blacksburg Band Program, which is a comprehensive grade 6 through 12 instrumental music education program serving over 350 students.

[00:21:05] That group at Blacksburg Middle and High Schools is directed by Daryl Pierman, Brian Quackenbush, and Shane Mercy. The Blacksburg High School Band has represented the Commonwealth of Virginia with performances at Carnegie Hall in New York City. This is going to feel like small potatoes, y'all. the Music for All National Concert Band Festival, and the Virginia Music Educators Association Conference.

[00:21:25] This ensemble is also a 31-time Virginia Honor Band. The performance today will include Ralph Vaughn Williams' Flourish for Wind Band and John Philip Sousa's The Thunderbird.

[00:27:01] Thank you. We are back in session.

[00:33:13] the scholars are not here but all I kept thinking was one band one sound isn't just a saying but for our young people to perform the way they did collaboration clearly hard work we just learned that they woke up at 5 a.m. to get here and then their third week of school just a true model for us to live up to as we work sit at this table and collaborate and work together so I just want to thanks to all the teachers and band leaders across the Commonwealth who bring joy and music to us

[00:33:49] and really live the one band, one sound. With that, Ms. Reinhardt, would you please introduce our honoree? Thank you, Madam Chair. Good morning, everyone. Today, we're honored to recognize an extraordinary collaboration that continues to celebrate Virginia's cultural heritage and enrich our Classrooms, Virginia Roots. This co-production of Blue Ridge PBS, PBS Appalachia Virginia, and the

Virginia Department of Education aims to help arts educators find a place for traditional arts, crafts, and music in the school curriculum, and to help everyone understand the role these

[00:34:27] traditions play in the broader culture. Season two of Virginia Roots showcases traditional crafts that have shaped Virginia's cultural identity. In Season 2, an episode highlighting traditional metalwork and engraving has been awarded the 2026 Emmy Award for informational and instructional long-form content by the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences, National Capital Chesapeake Bay Chapter.

[00:34:57] Metalwork and the colonies took on many forms, but one of the most fascinating is the art of engraving. Engraving served both practical and artistic purposes. It marked ownership on treasured items, supported intricate craftsmanship and silversmithing, and played a vital role in early printmaking, allowing for the mass production and distribution of images worldwide.

[00:35:21] In this award-winning episode, the series visits Colonial Williamsburg to explore colonial era silversmithing and engraving, then travels to Studio 23 in Richmond, where modern printmakers use a blend of historical and contemporary methods to continue this long-standing tradition. All materials are available on the VDOE website including episode descriptions, discussion prompts, and alignment to the 2020 Fine Arts Standards of Learning developed in collaboration with Virginia educators. This esteemed recognition reflects the episode's educational value,

[00:35:59] historical insight, and creative excellence. We would like to recognize the dedicated VDO staff, both current and former, who contributed to this project. Calypso Gilstrap, Executive Director, Office of Innovation. I'm going to get this right. Kelly Bisonio, is that correct? Did I say that?

[00:36:20] Wonderful. Fine Arts Coordinator, Office of Humanities. Sherry Hatton, Fine Arts Specialist, office of humanities dr angela bird wright former director office of humanities who also worked on this project and we would also like to recognize the creative blue ridge pbs staff who produced this project tom landon director of educational innovation and jay prater producer so we ask that mr landon and mr prater come forward and be recognized and please share your award with the

[00:36:53] board let's give them a huge round again i want to say thank you i'm sorry we don't have a red carpet

[00:37:26] and beautiful ball gowns and the paparazzi here um but you do have our just sincere appreciation for your work and your leadership and just spotlighting virginia virginia's history and telling the story so again thank you and congratulations oh great we will now uh shift to our public comment portion of our meeting as stated in the board bylaws it is the pleasure of the board to accept public comment on all matters related to public education in virginia before we

[00:38:04] begin public comment today i want to share a few comments about the manner in which public comment will be conducted i ask that you model professionalism dignity and respect for others as you share your thoughts today as adults it is important that we model respectful civil kind public discourse for our students and children who are either in attendance today or viewing the stream now or in the future when you begin please provide your name role or

[00:38:43] affiliation and where you live in Virginia. All remarks must be directed to the chair, not to any other individual. Speakers will have three minutes to share their remarks. You'll notice that there's a timer on the screen will begin when three minutes is in green. At one minute, the screen will turn yellow. The

screen will turn red when time is up. At that point, please close your remarks promptly speakers may provide copies of their comments to mr joe cook who's right here in the front the department's regulatory and board coordinator

[00:39:22] joe already raised his hand thank you all written comments received during public comment will be collected and provided to the board as soon as possible after public comment you may also email a copy of your remarks to the board at boe at doe.virginia.gov and currently i have i think a list of about 30 folks here and so i'll call just three at a time and if you would make your way to the front here we would appreciate that um i have first up scott braband emily volt said that right

[00:40:02] Amber Rhodes, those are our first three. Good morning, President Ashton, Superintendent Conway, and members of the Virginia Board of Education. My name is Scott Braebrand, and I'm Executive Director for the Virginia Association of School Superintendents. I live in Lynchburg, Virginia, and I want to thank all of you for your dedicated service to the Commonwealth of Virginia, and welcome Dr. Maxwell. On behalf of Virginia School Division Superintendents, we respectfully submit the following feedback around today's agenda. First, for the School Construction Assistance Program. We want to thank you for moving forward with the approval of the grant

[00:40:40] awards today for the School Construction Assistance Program. These additional grant dollars have been tremendous to support school construction and they've been a great benefit to our school divisions and are deeply appreciated. We also wish to express our gratitude for the modified SCAP grant rubric, which is afforded school divisions who have not previously been able to meet the threshold to achieve grant attainment so thank you very much for final review of school performance and support framework for 26 27 as we shared in june during

[00:41:15] first review we strongly support the change in the sps of school performance labels from off track to approaching expectations and from on track to meeting expectations which are in direct alignment with the JLARC recommendations around this issue. Additionally, in order to treat elementary and middle schools fairly, and in alignment with JLARC's recommendation as well, we support the reallocation of the EL progress indicator's weight proportionately across all other indicators when a school does not have a sufficient number of EL students to produce a valid score.

[00:41:54] Thank you for engaging with us, and we look forward to our continued partnership with you in this new school year ahead thank you very much thank you uh emily okay oh skipping right past thank you amber and then kathy you're up next and willie johnson thank you my name is amber rhodes i have three kids in chesterfield schools i taught in richmond and henrico i was a regional director for the virginia association of science teachers and i lead professional learning for teachers statewide i was first concerned about the use of technology in the classroom when i

[00:42:34] I managed it as an eighth grade teacher. But when I worked hard to be intentional with screens in my home just to find my six-year-old telling me about the unblocked games his classmates shared with him at school, I knew something had to change. Today I speak for over 3,000 families across 162 schools in Richmond, Henrico, and Chesterfield who signed our petitions for the intentional use of technology in schools. Thank you for conducting the listening tour. You asked Virginia what worried it, and in In six of your eight regions, no one asked about screens, yet it came up anyway.

[00:43:07] Region three called it digital saturation, taking a toll on focus and well-being. Region six asked for more physical textbooks and less screen time in class. Your report made recommendations on math,

literacy, assessment, and staffing. It made none on technology.

[00:43:22] This is not a separate priority. Intentional technology use supports every other thing on that list. That is your report. There is also a policy that I only found earlier this week. In July of last year, this board adopted a model policy on internet safety. It says elementary student screen time shall be managed with clear daily limits and regular breaks.

[00:43:43] It uses the word shall, meaning must. Then in that same document, you left it to the discretion of local education agencies. So nothing actually changed for our students and teachers, and many of them likely do not even know that this guidance exists.

[00:43:58] This year, artificial intelligence got the opposite treatment. school boards must enforce policies that match your guidance the difference is one word and a legislative bill if you ask for that bill in January around classroom technology there will be a coalition of us behind you that is the policy side and here's what it looks like in the classroom when working with teachers I often hear the same two sentences my kids can't do this this is too hard for my students good teachers describing children who have lost something. It's not ability, it's resilience. Screens are not the only reason, and I will not

[00:44:33] tell you that they are, because the pandemic is in there and so are phones, but the device the school hands a child is the one piece that you have complete control. Here's our ask. Require school boards to enforce screen time policies that match your guidance, exactly as the state did for AI. The summary I'm leaving with you all has the eight requests in every school that signed. Start with the youngest children, limits by grade band, and no devices at recess or lunch. None of this touches assistive technology. Students who need it keep what they have. Thank you for the work

[00:45:09] that you all do every day. Ms. Halverson? No? No. Alexander Halverson? Willie Johnson? Mary Kate Alward, Ariel Green, Madeline Adamiak, the folks moving, Amy Stevens, Angela Clinton, and then Lawanda

[00:45:46] Travis. That's the word. Okay, great. Thank you. Will you introduce yourself? Thank you. Good morning. My name is Mary-Kate Alward. I live in Richmond. I'm a parent of a kindergartner, second grader, and a fifth grader in Richmond City Public Schools. Used to be that when I asked my kids how their school day was, I would hear who won hide-and-seek at recess or what book their teacher had read aloud. Now when I ask the same question, I hear what YouTube videos they saw that day or how many points they've accumulated in an online game they play when they finish their work early or when it's an indoor recess day. When my children tell me they heard where the

[00:46:25] wild things are at school, it often turns out when I ask that what they did was the class watched a video of someone reading where the wild things are. I have the greatest admiration and respect for the teachers and administrators at my children's school. I know they are doing the very best that they can with the tools and the time given to them, and that they have been encouraged for years to put more tech in the classroom. Now that we can see that screen time harms children's attention spans, learning, and mental health, Virginia's educators need guidance and support from you to restore balance to the school day. So our children learn in a way that

[00:47:03] respects their dignity and meets their needs, side by side and face to face with a dedicated educator. It's real books and time and space to really focus. My request is that the board take every measure possible to reduce technology use in the classroom. First, by enforcing strict limits on how much

time children can spend on screens at school, beginning with zero minutes for K-2. A child not on a screen can be practicing his handwriting or working with math manipulatives or getting the physical activity that keeps bodies and minds healthy and

[00:47:39] ready to learn. I also ask that the policy block YouTube, Roblox, Minecraft, and AI chatbots for all grades. No social media company, no gaming company, no tech company has my children's best interests at heart, but I know that the teachers and administrators at my children's school do.

[00:47:58] When I drop my kids off at Linwood Halton Elementary, I'm proud to do it, and I want to be confident that while they're there, they are learning from the teachers and administrators and the staff who have chosen the important work of education, that they're learning from them, and that they're being with them during the day, that they're not learning from an app or video.

[00:48:15] Thank you for your time. Thank you. Ariel Green. Good morning. My name is Ariel Green, and I live in Midlothian.

[00:48:32] I have three children who have all gone to Virginia Public School since kindergarten and are now in second, sixth, and ninth grade. While my children have had many outstanding teachers, one of my greatest concerns about their educational experience has been the increasing over-reliance of technology in the classroom.

[00:48:48] First and foremost, laptops are incredibly distracting. Most parents I know are struggling to establish healthy limits on screen time at home. And now we also have to contend with battling screen time at school. This summer, when I spoke with State Senator Van Valkenburg, who is also a high school teacher, he said he just assumes that his students aren't paying attention if their laptops are out.

[00:49:09] I think that is a fair assumption. And my older kids report that their laptops were out for about 80 to 90 percent of the day last year. Even though YouTube and many games are supposed to be blocked by our county, kids can easily bypass the lackluster safeguards. I know there is monitoring software, but that creates an unrealistic burden on teachers.

[00:49:30] How can they simultaneously teach a lesson while policing dozens of laptops at the same time? There are also important educational concerns with replacing traditional learning methods with technology. Research has consistently shown that handwriting promotes stronger learning, retention, and comprehension than typing and clicking.

[00:49:48] Replacing traditional class time with click-based, gamified online programs to teach spelling is doing our kids a disservice. Having to show math work by drawing quadratic equations with a mouse on a screen is cumbersome and time-consuming.

[00:50:04] Replacing in-person interactions in class with complicated online processes for submitting homework and receiving assignment feedback is adding unnecessary frustration for students. My children have experienced all of these scenarios.

[00:50:20] I live in Chesterfield County and our superintendent and school board have said that stronger statewide guidance would be helpful in making changes to their technology policies. In particular, I would start with two. Number one, establish screen time limits by grade.

[00:50:36] Does anyone believe a fifth grader should have a laptop in front of them for 90% of the school day? Is that healthy or beneficial for middle or high school students? I find this incredibly alarming, and I

hope you all do as well. Henrico County recently established elementary screen time limits of 45 to 90 minutes per day, depending on grade level.

[00:50:56] That is a start, but we need statewide standards that establish reasonable limits at all levels of instruction from K to 12th grade. Number two, give parents meaningful opt-out options. Parents should be able to request paper-based materials and homework when appropriate.

[00:51:13] Writing by hand can improve learning and comprehension, and paper assignments would reduce frustrations with online submission systems and allow students and parents to see teacher feedback directly on their work. I'm not opposed to technology in education. My concern is that technology has increasingly become the default rather than a tool used selectively when it adds value.

[00:51:33] Thank you. - And for Madeline Adamiak, no, no Madeline. Okay, Amy Stevens.

[00:51:53] Good morning President Ashton and members of the board. My name is Amy Stevens. I grew up in the Commonwealth of Virginia in the Tidewater region and I'm here as a parent of a third grader and a sixth grader in York County Public Schools. I am asking you for three specific policy changes.

[00:52:11] One, allow paper and pencil SOL testing for third through fifth graders. Two, reduce educational technology and bring back paper in elementary schools. Three, create a formal typing curriculum. First, please offer a paper and pencil SOL option, mandating that third through fifth graders take the SOLs entirely on screens, pressures teachers to rely on Chromebooks for daily lessons.

[00:52:35] Currently, a student has to have an IEP, a 504, or a significant justification to be considered for a paper and pencil SOL. Removing this screen mandate frees teachers to focus on traditional instruction rather than digital test-taking mechanics. Second, please bring back paper.

[00:52:53] Educational technology does not inherently promote comprehension nor critical thinking. When my children attended an international school overseas, screen time was strictly limited. Students mastered core subjects using paper, pencils, physical whiteboards, and dry erase markers.

[00:53:10] Private schools in Silicon Valley executives prioritize low-tech hands-on learning for their own children. Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg and investor Peter Thiel strictly limit their own children's computer usage, favoring tactile, real-world teaching methods. the creators of these tech products choose low-tech schooling for their own children, our public schools should follow their lead. Furthermore, these devices act as major distractions. I volunteer as a rec soccer coach. I've seen a third grade boy miss practices in soccer games because he was grounded after using his school-issued Chromebook for video games instead of classwork. A

[00:53:46] tool meant for learning has become a tool for distraction. Third, please create a formal typing curriculum. Fifth graders are required to type an essay for the integrated reading and writing SOL, yet they receive no formal typing instruction. While volunteering, I saw students using an ed tech typing game with a race car that only incentivized them to hunt and peck with two fingers to move their race car quickly.

[00:54:11] We must explicitly teach proper typing skills before demanding typed assessments. Online technology is a powerful tool for the modern world, but elementary school must remain focused on building a strong, tangible foundation. Our children need physical books, handwritten classwork, and off-

screen homework. Please give our students the chance to learn without digital distractions. Provide a pencil and paper SOL testing option. Bring back paper.

[00:54:36] Develop a typing curriculum. Fund more teaching assistant positions who are human and less ed tech. To the board, our teachers, and staff, thank you for your invaluable work inspiring and instructing the next generation of Virginians. Thank you. Angela Clinton here. My name is Angela Clinton, and I'm a parent in Henrico County. This past March, I informed our school board and

[00:55:11] superintendent of a breach in security such that thousands of HCPS students, my child included, and across multiple schools were spending their days on a wide open internet with everything from TV to gambling to social media available to them throughout the school day for months on end. This was the second breach of which i am aware in a single school year my child reported other breaches the previous year all the while parents myself included were being sent securely emails

[00:55:45] reassuring them that their child was on task to date the school district has declined to disclose to parents that this ever even happened please take a moment to think of all the things thousands of teens can get up to on the web unsupervised for months. We're talking about COVID levels of learning loss, but by choice and hidden from families. I am telling you this not to call out a single district, but because you need to know the reality of what's happening in Virginia schools.

[00:56:21] When you read a news story about a kid who watched 10,000 YouTube videos at school and think That's awful, but it probably made the news because it's sensational or anomalous. I want you to remember my story. It's not just happening somewhere else to someone else's kids.

[00:56:41] It's happening all the time to tens of thousands of students right here in Virginia. So I want to focus on three asks. As an immediate step, set strict and enforced screen time limits at all grade levels. Vague and overly generous guidelines simply aren't sufficient.

[00:56:58] 2. Obtain clear consent and require disclosure. That means not only disclosing all of the apps and how our children's data is being used, but recognizing that true consent means always being able to say no. No, I do not consent to my child being exposed to harmful content and commercial data collection as a condition of their attendance at public school. So, a clearly and positively advertised opt-out option is a necessity. And since without transparency there can be no consent, please requires that schools disclose such security incidents to parents. My last recommendation won't happen in a week, but it's to eliminate one-to-one

[00:57:38] devices at all grades, all grades, and go back to books, paper, and a computer lab model. High school students want to learn Photoshop as part of their photography elective. Great, they'll have computer lab for that but that doesn't mean they need to read and discuss the grapes of wrath on a screen one-to-one laptops are not adding instructional value they are just distraction machines thank you for your time and please feel free to reach out for me if you have any follow-up

[00:58:10] questions about my experience thank you lawanda travis and then hannah robinson bruce after good Good morning, president and board. LaWanda Travis, King and Queen County Public School System.

[00:58:28] I am yet a graduate as well as a grandparent in this school system and an active duty service member. I have been to several of your listening sessions. Thank you, because we did get a lot out of that. But I come out again, as one of the parents say, not to call out of the district, but I'm calling them out.

[00:58:48] We've had a lot of things go on. It is at the detriment of our children. I was a early childhood educator, and will be returning to it after I retire in the next two years from the military service. And I've watched my own school system.

[00:59:06] Transparency and accountability are not there. I have spoken with several VDOE members who have assisted me, but it's now time for action. I've called, I've written senators and everything, to the detriment that we have misappropriation of funds, going from an instructional fund to a general fund.

[00:59:26] We have misappropriation of funds going from purchase services to frivolous travel and the children are suffering. The teachers are trying their best. My neighboring county, York County, New Kent, all have hired qualified teachers. I understand the Grow to Teach program and the other programs they allow for our college people to come out and give us what we need.

[00:59:52] But when you don't hire the individuals that have the qualifications and or lack of our students suffer and we're suffering real bad. I've watched Newport News. The Newport News I have to hire 127 teachers, yet I can't get two qualified teachers, even with the Grow Your Own program. I had one teacher for my grandson, who is now the third grader, served for 10 years in

[01:00:25] our county in the Grow Teach program and not get qualified. She was a very good teacher because she was esl she taught me a lot but in the process imagine a child in early childhood that is the foundation for which they can grow and learn we are doing this justice and i'm asking the vdoe to please come out and do a performance audit audit on our school as well as a forensic audit i've asked for it through all channels that the constituent board have asked me to do have been

[01:01:01] told no on every occasion. So now I come to the state entity asking for your assistance and help. Thank you. Thank you. This is Hannah Robbins-Bruce and then Justine Blinko and Jill Collins. You're up next. Good morning. My name is Hannah Robbins-Bruce, mom of a two-year-old in Henrico County. I'm here today to express concern for my son's future academic experience, but also on

[01:01:39] behalf of the more than 3,000 families who've signed petitions that were sent to Central Virginia school districts this summer regarding the desire for an intentional technology use policy in the classroom. My expertise is in public health, specifically in health promotion for children and young adults. I and you all know that raising a healthy child requires important social, emotional, and cognitive development, all things that are not adequately gained from a screen. The recent high-profile court cases against Google and Meta have outlined many of the primary health issues when it comes to introducing technology to children without

[01:02:18] parameters. Addictive features, psychological harms from being exposed to dangerous material, invasion of privacy, selling their data to unknown players, and the list goes on. This is why I'm trying as much as possible to ensure that my son's childhood isn't dominated by screen time.

[01:02:35] And it's also why it's disheartening for me to hear that the default experience that I can expect for his primary years in school is required screen time in order for him to receive his education. I was even surprised that this was the baseline experience for the youngest learners given the well-documented physical detriments associated with having to look at screens long term.

[01:02:59] Again, just to name a few, increased eye strain, reduced attention spans, sleep disturbances, headaches. I know how valuable and hard-working our teachers and administrators are and I trust them to do what's right for our kids. I thank you all for your commitment to Virginia's children and want you to

know that I and the other parents here only want to support the education community in helping schools make a transition to a strategy that applies an intentional technology policy. Virginia already set the excellent standard with the bell-to-bell phone-free schools policy and July 1 of this year Virginia law now

[01:03:36] now lists computers, cell phones, and smart devices to the same section of code that requires schools to teach kids about the addictive nature of tobacco, alcohol, drugs, and gambling. This is great news, and I'm really encouraged by this official acknowledgement. However, I'd like to conclude my remarks by emphasizing a need for this board to consider a model policy for school divisions to follow that includes some of the following. Eliminate digital devices for the youngest students removing digital devices from kindergarten through fifth grade classrooms for secondary schools set specific enforceable screen time limits by grade level and then require

[01:04:16] transparent procedures for parents to opt out of screen-based curriculum and provide high quality alternative resources for teachers who have students who've opted out thank you very much thank you justine blink blinko or jill collins and then ross collin thank board members and thank you for the opportunity to speak my name is justine blinko i'm the policy director of greater

[01:04:52] richmond fit for kids we are a richmond-based non-profit that provides school-based programming around physical activity nutrition so school learning gardens teaching kids to ride bikes promoting physical activity in the classroom um that sort of thing so we would like to express our support for minimizing one-to-one screen time in classrooms, particularly for our youngest learners.

[01:05:14] I'm also a parent myself of Richmond Public Schools students. We recognize that technology plays an important role in education, but children also need opportunities to play, move, collaborate, interact with their teachers and peers, and learn through more hands-on experiences to counterbalance some of the sedentary time that they're getting.

[01:05:31] They spend a lot of their day sitting, and excessive individual screen time can add to that sedentary behavior. This is not really an instructional issue alone, it's more also a school wellness issue. So I just want to emphasize that. Healthy active students are better prepared to focus, learn, and succeed.

[01:05:48] So we encourage Virginia to promote developmentally appropriate technology use that supports, not replaces, teacher-led instruction through movement, hands-on exploration, outdoor play, and face-to-face connection. Screens can be a valuable tool, we know that, but they also should not become the default learning tool.

[01:06:07] students deserve classrooms that support the whole child so mind body and social development thanks thank you jill collins morning i'm jill collins i live in danville virginia and i'm an assistant principal at martinsville high school in martinsville virginia i am the president of the virginia association of science teachers thank you for the opportunity to comment this morning in regards to item n local alternative assessments guidance i have great respect for

[01:06:45] your work and the effort that has gone into developing the proposed approach. At the same time, a coalition of organizations has raised thoughtful questions about the pace and implementation of the process. I believe it would be valuable for the board to pause and consider these questions.

[01:07:05] These are intended as open-ended questions for the board's reflection. 1. Why the accelerated timeline? The first LAAs took approximately 18 months to develop, while the current timeline is roughly half that. Would it be beneficial to allow additional time to ensure we have high-quality, well-tested

product rather than moving implementation into the school year? Could tasks and rubrics be developed centrally? How might we ensure that the rigor of the task consistently reflects the standard, and avoid having dozens of

[01:07:45] substantially different, potentially AI-generated content being produced. Three, can stakeholder engagement be broadened? Many science educators are not yet aware that the work is underway. Would slowing the timeline provide an opportunity to engage more science educators gather meaningful feedback and strengthen the final product.

[01:08:12] Four, how will we protect students and ensure accountability? Before implementation, clarification regarding the potential pathway from eighth grade earth science to early verified credit and then to a student potentially bypassing the biology SOL.

[01:08:33] what would this mean for a student participation or sequencing and federal accountability five if local development remains the approach how will it be supported if schools or divisions are expected to develop their own tasks could professional learning be implemented six how will accommodations be handled including ieps 504s number seven can the implementation logistics be clarified as to when the onboarding the opt-in declaration needs to occur ultimately the request is not to stop

[01:09:11] progress but to ensure we get it right and we are here to help you thank you thank you ross collin and then next up is tyah shaw and sophia panetta good morning my name is ross collin and i live in henrico county where my son just started fourth grade at gayton elementary school like every parent I know I'm concerned about screen time in school. My fourth grader is a bright kid and he gets high scores on the screen-based reading he has to do, but I noticed that the days when he

[01:09:48] reads a lot on screens are the days he says he did nothing. What did she do in school today? Nothing. We just read on computers. What did you read about? I can't remember. Something's wrong when a student gets high marks on readings he can't remember three hours later and seem to him like nothing. Put more positively, my son remembers and has lots to say about face-to-face learning with teachers and friends. He learns and remembers learning when he talks and listens and argues and laughs face-to-face, person-to-person, with other people without a screen in the middle.

[01:10:24] Looking ahead to my son's future in Virginia's schools, I'm particularly concerned with the Instructional Materials or HQIM, the primary curricula in core subjects.

[01:10:45] Curricula identified as HQIM by the Virginia Department of Education are designed mainly as digital curricula. I'll repeat that. Curricula identified as HQIM by the Virginia Department of Education are designed mainly as digital curriculum.

[01:11:03] So in a school with HQIM in place as the primary curriculum across subjects, It is all too likely students will move from screen to screen to screen to screen across the school day. Yes, families can opt for print versions of these curricula, but classes will still be designed and paced to fit the digital schedule, putting students who use printed texts at a real disadvantage.

[01:11:29] So please act now while HB 2777 is still being interpreted across Virginia and districts are still working out how to respond. Please take steps necessary to make sure digital curricula do not become the default curricula across Virginia schools. Every parent I know from left to right on the political spectrum is strongly opposed to a mostly digital education for our children. Thank you.

[01:11:58] Thank you. Tia Shaw. I knew I was wrong. Tia Shaw. Thank you. Good morning, Madam Chair and members of the board. My name is Tia Shaw, and I'm speaking today regarding the work reflected in items L and N.

[01:12:17] As the president-elect of VSSLC, the Virginia Social Studies Leadership Consortium, I thank the department for providing guidance on mandatory and permissive local alternative assessments and for including VSSLC on the local alternative assessment committee.

[01:12:32] These guidelines will help divisions establish consistent expectations for assessment design administration, scoring, and communication with families. They will also help teachers use assessments as part of instruction, not simply as an event at the end of learning.

[01:12:49] When supported by clear rubrics, professional learning, and reliable scoring practices, these assessments can provide a more complete and equitable picture of student understanding. Performance assessments give students multiple ways to demonstrate what they know and can do.

[01:13:05] these assessments are rooted in claim evidence and reasoning they ask students to analyze sources apply content knowledge construct arguments and communicate defensible conclusions in my division I have seen how this approach promotes content rich literacy rich instruction while developing the critical thinking skills students need beyond the classroom this approach also aligns with the four question method or for QM the methods focus on asking what happened, why it happened, what the consequences were, and why it matters provides a coherent framework for helping students organize and apply

[01:13:44] historical knowledge. It dovetails with an assessment approach that asks students to demonstrate not only what they remember, but how they use content knowledge to analyze evidence, explain causation and significance, and construct defensible conclusions. That alignment reflects the science of learning. Students learn content more deeply when they encountered it repeatedly, retrieve, and apply it in meaningful context. They are able to connect new information to prior knowledge and receive feedback that helps them refine their understanding. Assessment should therefore

[01:14:19] be integrated with instruction. It should make student thinking visible while reinforcing the knowledge concepts and disciplinary practices students are expected to develop. Regarding item L, I appreciate the inclusion of African American history and AP African American studies among the board approved courses for graduation consistent with legislation. However, I respectfully request clear guidance about verified credit. What are the expectations for permissive local alternative assessment in African American history and how will AP African American studies be addressed? Approving a course is an important first step along with the fact that students and

[01:14:59] families also need a clear pathway for that course to contribute fully towards the graduation requirements. I urge the board and department to address this question sooner rather than later so divisions can plan responsibly and students can receive the full academic benefit of taking these courses. Thank you for your continued support. Thank you. Sophia Pineda and Jessica Romero. Good morning President Ashton, members of the board, and Superintendent

[01:15:36] Conway. My name is Sophia Pineda, and I live in Richmond, Virginia, and I am here currently serving as the Government Relations Specialist with the Virginia School Boards Association. I bring you

greetings on behalf of President Nichols, Executive Director Gina Patterson, and the entire VSBA Board of Directors. Thank you for the opportunity to address the board.

[01:15:55] Today, we would like to thank VDOE staff for incorporating a multi-step implementation process into the comprehensive plan and timeline for the proposed SPSF changes. This approach recognizes the importance of carefully considering each change, its potential impact, and the steps necessary before going into full implementation.

[01:16:16] Providing a clear and consistent path forward will help ensure that our school divisions have the information, time, and guidance necessary to prepare for and effectively implement these changes. On behalf of the SBA, we respectfully submit the following feedback around today's agenda.

[01:16:33] On the new school performance category terms, we support VideoE's recommendation to update the school performance category terminology to more clearly and accurately communicate how schools and students are performing. On the modification of the mastery index calculation in high schools, we support the proposed modifications of the high school mastery index calculation from a cohort-based measure to an annual measure.

[01:16:58] We believe that this calculation can provide a more timely and accurate picture of student performance and allow schools and divisions to better understand changes in achievement from year to year. On the modification of English learner progress indicators, we also support the proposed redistribution of weight for English learners progress indicators at the elementary and middle school levels.

[01:17:23] The proposed change provides greater consistency in how EL progress is incorporated into school performance measures, regardless of the number of English learners served by an individual school. We appreciate VDOE's effort to ensure that the accountability system appropriately recognizes the progress of English learners while providing a consistent and equitable approach across Virginia schools.

[01:17:48] And on the recently arrived English learners' first-year assessment exemptions, VSBA appreciates board's consideration of maintaining an existing state assessment exception for English learners during their first year in U.S. schools. Maintaining this exemption recognizes the unique circumstances of recently arrived students and allows schools to place appropriate emphasis on instruction and English language development during a critical time of transition. Lastly, we would like to add that our VSBA task force on students and schools and challenging environments remains committed to its working relationship with you the videoe and the school boards and divisions across the

[01:18:26] commonwealth the task board looks forward to an upcoming opportunity to share its findings and recommendations contained within its fourth report thank you thank you jessica romero good morning my name is jessica romero my family lives in midlothian virginia in chesterfield county i have a son in seventh grade at midlothian middle school and a daughter in ninth grade at midlothian high they were given chromebooks in kindergarten and second grade when covid sent them home from school

[01:19:04] and every year since i have been increasingly dismayed by the extent to which these devices have taken over our classrooms particularly since google and youtube knowingly create content that is addictive and harmful to our children as was detailed in a recent wall street journal investigation i shared this article with the board via the public comment form and hope you'll have the time to read it my kids

have never opened a textbook and they've never had to learn how to take notes or really study for a test because everything is on Google Slides or a video.

[01:19:31] Even the books they read for book reports are electronic versions on their Chromebook. And once they have the computer open, it's all too easy to open a new tab where they can access essentially any content they want, and it's not content their parents want them accessing. It's extremely frustrating as a parent to try to limit screen time at home, but then I send my kids off to school where they're spending multiple hours of the day staring at a computer, and then when they come home, they're still on a computer because their homework is completing an online game or dragging boxes around on a slide deck, not doing work that requires them to concentrate and engage with the material and learn how to actually absorb information.

[01:20:08] I'm not anti-technology. I realize that there are wonderful educational resources online and learning how to use technology is increasingly essential to success in the workforce. But our kids need a break, and so I urge you to require Virginia's school boards to take concrete research back action such as strictly limiting or eliminating screens for our youngest children placing caps on screen time for older students and effectively blocking social media and streaming and gaming platforms you have the opportunity to make Virginia a leader in the growing movement to restore balance to our classrooms and protect our children's emotional

[01:20:41] of well-being. Thank you. Thank you. Cameron Hardesty, Keena McAvoy, Ryland Potter. Cameron. Okay, thank you. It'll be Cameron, Keena, and then Ryland. Yeah, can you hear me? Madam Chair, members of the board, my name is Cameron Hardesty. I live in Crozet in Albemarle County,

[01:21:18] and I'm a mom of three. My oldest would be starting kindergarten next year, but I'm probably not going to enroll her in the public elementary school which she can walk to which is very rare in our county. That school is Brownsville Elementary. We moved to Crozet so all three of our children could go to great public schools. In fact, Brownsville was recently named the top performing elementary school in the Commonwealth. I toured Brownsville excited to send her and I saw so much to love. Caring staff, dedicated teachers, great facilities. Then I saw the smart boards dominating every classroom, and the rack of iPads, each with a kindergartner's name on it.

[01:21:55] And that's when I learned Albemarle County issues every child a device starting in kindergarten, and that their days are punctuated with something called buzz breaks, a short video where five-year-olds watch someone else dancing on an iPad. I think Orwell himself could not have written it better. I asked the principal if he or his teachers could keep kindergartners off devices, and he told me the central division makes that decision. Reading between the lines, I saw an experienced educator whose hands were tied by division and state policies he could not escape. I'm not here because I'm against technology. My own career is predicated on it. I'm here because of what young

[01:22:30] kids gain when school is hands-on, learning to read and do math on paper, a teacher who is the main event, not a screen, and a classroom built around other children, not devices. And I'm here because of what they lose when their day is littered with screens. They become more anxious, We're distracted, unable to sustain attention long enough to develop the critical thinking skills they need. And this isn't theoretical.

[01:22:54] A study published just last fall by researchers in Japan tracked 12,000 children aged 9 to 10 over two years. The more daily screen time a child had, the more ADHD symptoms she developed. An MRI

showed why. Smaller total brain volume and hindered growth in the regions responsible for language and cognitive function.

[01:23:13] Closer to home in our district's annual parent survey in January, 57% of the surveyed families reported that overuse of technology for learning was their number one concern, and that beat the next biggest concern by a margin of 20 points. Virginia has already led the country on bell-to-bell phone-free schools. Screen time on school-issued devices is the other half of your work now.

[01:23:34] The Senate has asked you for a model technology use policy, and this is your moment to fix what's broken in our schools. I'm calling on you to please protect our youngest learners by eliminating device use for pre-K to second grade. Eliminate one-to-one device policy in elementary school at least and encourage physical books, handwriting, and off-screen homework. School districts across the country here in Virginia, Maryland, D.C., they're already taking up these policies on their own and now you have the opportunity to ensure the commonwealth leads the nation in school tech

[01:24:03] policy again. Thank you. Thank you. Kena McEvoy. Good morning. My name is Kena McEvoy and I live in Fairfax Station, Virginia. My three children graduated from Fairfax County Public Schools and I was employed by FCPS as a physical therapist for eight years. I am now a digital wellness educator and the co-founder of DMV Unplugged, a non-profit organization whose mission is to educate schools and families about the harms of technology over use on a developing brain. I am also the co-lead

[01:24:40] of the smartphone-free childhood U.S., and I'm proud that Virginia ranks among the states that have mandated bell-to-bell phone-free policies in their schools. However, a phone-free school day removes just one of the products that has been expertly designed to maximize engagement and attention at the expense of relationship and learning.

[01:24:57] School-issued devices like iPads and Chromebooks are understood by students to be multitasking entertainment machines. And despite best efforts by tech departments to filter and block shopping, pornography, free social media and gaming sites, students get around these filters.

[01:25:12] As a result, educational experts and teachers are telling us that our students are experiencing shrinking attention and memory spans and diminished executive function and control. Thankfully, none of this is permanent yet. Young brains are malleable. We need to take what we have learned and change course.

[01:25:29] School leaders have the capacity to create cultures of attention in their school buildings through their professional development, policies and procedures. Policies should actively support the enhancement students' attention spans while promoting face-to-face relationship and community. Pedagogy, school culture, and routine should all be designed around a mission of enhancing students' capacity to focus, delay gratification, get along with others, and to do hard things. To support these goals, schools should complete a tech audit that outlines exactly how students are currently using school-issued devices in their buildings. Schools should eliminate one-to-one device

[01:26:05] policies for students and transition back to a computer lab model. Teachers should be given opportunities to learn about brain science and how overuse and misuse of technology can create a roadblock to learning and destroy attention and focus. Classroom routines and procedures should reflect this knowledge. The VDOE recommendations for digital wellness documents should more clearly communicate that the use of digital media by children can interfere with and replace the more essential

experiences of learning and childhood. As mandated by Senate Bill 568, the video we should provide schools with guidance and the expectation that students will be educated

[01:26:42] about technology's addictive potential and impact on learning please commit to discovering the reality of how school-issued devices are being used in virginia classrooms please pay attention to independent learning science and expect virginia schools to cultivate an environment of attention and focus that promotes true learning challenge and well-being thank you thank you rylan potter rylan potter and then jonathan marrying and then miss wendy little morning thank

[01:27:20] you for having me speak today hi my name is ryan potter i'm a parent of two students in henrico county public schools i find it hard to improve upon any of the things that the other folks who have come to speak about digital wellness have already said and with oftentimes a lot more documentation and evidence of that and i find it hard to speak to the the improvements that could happen within the classroom in terms of the education that can take place on technology or at tech devices because i'm not a professional i am you know a parent i'm a daughter of a teacher

[01:27:56] i came through the virginia public school system myself but i am not you know a person who has has trained or been educated in this field. And so I trust that you know the educators, the administrators, staff, and folks like you guys who have spent your careers doing this know what our students can do to learn best across other institutions. However, I would say that one of the things I think there's a gap in is the understanding of how the policies that VDOE has established are being carried out within the classrooms and whether those are being effectively audited within the

[01:28:33] classrooms parent after parent has spoken today about what they hear directly from their students and i am one of those parents as well i have two students who have talked about the nature of the distractions they face both from their own devices and trying to resist the urge to open another tab and do something when they're not being uh you know carefully scrutinized or watching their fellow students open those tabs and and you know watch videos or look up memes or use their approved ed tech to create gifts that they're sharing around the classroom or google docs to chat while

[01:29:07] their their teachers are teaching i hear my you know children talk about how device or you know ed tech programs that are meant to be adaptive and teach them instead restrict their learning because they are given questions and if they get it wrong the answer goes away no explanation provided about what they could have done differently they aren't engaging with the method that that particular ed tech platform is teaching no teacher to turn around and say actually if you think about it this way this can help you understand and get no scaffolding based on the education there you either get the adaptive question right or wrong and it goes away

[01:29:47] if you get them all right there's no next step you just get more of the same questions over so you know i i call upon edoe to think about how these devices are actually being used in the classroom how they are actually influencing and impacting the education that our students are receiving and as you guys consider how you can support districts going forward and developing a better balanced model for purposeful intentional technology use what that looks like in terms of supporting them with audit or other types of capacity in the classroom to to evaluate those

[01:30:21] Thank you. Jonathan Maywing and then Miss Wendy Little and then Troy Farmer. Good morning, President and members of the board. Thank you very much for your time today. I'm a father and

photographer and I'm not anti-tech. In fact, I rely on it daily. I'm here because I believe we should have greater structure with how tech is incorporated in schools. My son is a first grader in Chesterfield

[01:30:57] County and over the summer I asked him what he was looking forward to most about returning to school. Without missing a beat, he said, playing games on my Chromebook, not seeing friends or recess or his favorite subject, art class. And I asked him what games, he told me, well, the older kids play Roblox. And granted, the games that he will be playing this year are called Ed Tech.

[01:31:23] But studies have shown the gamification of computer learning leads not to better learning, but in fact increases the likelihood of addictive behavior later in life. Because of Ed Tech and declining test scores, we intend to place them in private school next year unless things change.

[01:31:42] The declining test scores of students nationwide has been well documented along with conspicuously timed introduction of ed tech. It's not only in the United States either. Schools in Sweden saw the same decline once ed tech was introduced. What did they do? They have gone back to pencil and paper learning as a matter of fact. If the resulting educational decline is so clear why would we not do the same thing there's a chinese proverb i once heard that says i hear and i forget i see and i remember i do and i learn studies have shown that writing each letter or

[01:32:18] number with a pencil on paper creates many more neural pathways in the brain all these different connections make the materials stick creating an outcome of long-term learning when you type on a keyboard or click with a mouse to choose your letters and numbers the motion is the same for each one as a result many fewer neural pathways are created so the learning outcome is not as strong i ask you how could profit motivated companies owned by billionaires have our kids best interest at heart their only goal is more more clicks more people on their platforms and more money for them their own kids are not allowed to use these products it's been proven that screens

[01:32:58] are addictive students need to learn about technology but we don't teach them about drugs and alcohol by giving them drugs and alcohol. Our children are the future. Let's invest in them, not the edtech billionaires. Let's please put our kids first. I am asking the board to remove all screens for K through second grade and limit its use only to the most necessary instruction thereafter. Also please give students meaningful opt-out opportunities so they can use pencil and paper to learn if parents wish them to. And also the pen and paper homework I think is a wonderful

[01:33:34] idea as well. Thanks again. Thank you. Wendy Little, Troy Farmer, and then Angela McDaniel.

[01:34:07] Okay. Being delivered to you are some critical documents, as is usual. My name is Wendy Little. My son's name is Aaron Little. Say it. Spell it. It's E-R-Y-N-L-I-T-T-L-E, natural-born boy.

[01:34:26] And we reside in Chesterfield County, Virginia. Residence is what dictates your obligation to ensure that he has a FAPE. So I am Wendy Little, mother, guardian of Erin Little. You got federal corrective actions, did you not? I believe so. Due to have been fulfilled by July 7, 2026.

[01:34:51] Important date. From the oversight bodies OSEP and OSERS of the U.S. Department of Education, courtesy of the infliction of expressly refusing a FAPE to Erin Little as required and protected by the federal laws and obligations of Individuals with Disabilities Act, IDEA, depriving him of FAPE by refusing to fully enforce corrective actions, including compensatory education as soon as possible, and by no later than July 16th, 2024, was your obligation, as Attorney General Jay Jones

[01:35:22] so eloquently pointed out. And under no circumstances, no circumstances past the date of July 2024, you cost Aaron, the Department of Education in collusion with Chesterfield county public schools cost aaron as you all know as the world knows as the united states is watching cost him may 21 2026 graduation corrective actions are required with compensatory education

[01:35:57] to get the child back on their graduation trajectory so on the date of july 17 2023 you determined that chesterfield county public schools violated fape for an entire prior year that is your timeline important date sans anderson attorney lorena owens wrote to order that aaron littles august 22 iep be implemented september 2022 no excuse for what had happened to result

[01:36:31] in the state complaint and the subsequent appeal with which nobody complied the litigation the it's in litigation excuse cl2300425900 was issued con was initialed contrary to supreme court rule 3.2 and in violation of virginia laws requiring school board vote authorization didn't happen board of supervisors vote authorization never happened and required advanced funding appropriations there were none significant will for participants samantha marsh holland's

[01:37:07] derelictions patricia haymes derelictions the next time i come i will name the rest you know who they are take care of your business aaron little deserves life still deserves his education and he deserves a future not to be deprived by actors who are more interested in billable hours at the county level at the state level to to create and sustain this atrocious dereliction

[01:37:47] of public education wendy little for aaron little thank you thank you miss little see troy farmer and then angela mcdaniel and then carson davis um hi uh with no disrespect to miss little i'm going to bring it back to screens if that's cool um my name is troy farmer i'm a small business owner who lives and works in Churchill, Richmond, Virginia. I'm the parent of an eight-year-old who I send to a public school nearby and a very active member of the PTA at that said school.

[01:38:25] I don't have anything prepared primarily because I'm a small business owner, parent of an eight-year-old and a very active member of the PTA at that school. But I have some thoughts on screens in schools obviously and I'm saying a lot of what's been said before me probably less eloquently but I'm hoping where my words fail, the quantity and sentiment is listened to from these parents and educators and experts. My kid came home earlier this year telling me about how he'd learned how

[01:38:59] to make a working airplane in Minecraft at school. And then another day, he came home and said that he had been watching Spider-Man cartoons. And even if these cartoons were educational, which they or not. It's Spider-Man. I mean, he's cool, but he's not a teacher. We know, as has been said, that the learning that happens on screens, which happens, is not as effective as the learning that happens, the analog learning, the paper and pencil learning. We know that that kind of learning now, you know, that that kind of learning leads to these neural pathways, this longer-term learning,

[01:39:38] this deeper learning, the learning that we all got as kids. And I get it. We were sold this, i don't know dream by the tech bros like 10 years ago but it turns out none of that was true and like has been said they were just trying to sell us a product and it worked but now we have this knowledge that this isn't what's best for our kids and we need to act on that and i know it's like putting the sort of weird genie back in the bottle but uh i think it's very important that we do the work

[01:40:15] to do so and i think that it's important to take a better look a closer look at what our schools are using this technology for how they're using it this one-to-one uh it's it's just a bad idea and we need to get

back to paper um these are things we know we didn't know these things 10 years ago but we can still act on this even if work is hard i think it's important that we do so and our kids are worth it. I've got 29 seconds. Any questions? Good. Thank you for listening. Thank you.

[01:40:52] Angela McDaniel. Morning, members of the board. My name is Angela McDaniel, and I'm here today as a parent. Fiously, I'm the parent of the two coolest little girls in the world. They're two and four years old. They have the best aptitude for learning and inspire me every day. Our family moved from out of state last year to give our kids the most well-rounded education possible. Since moving to Chesterfield County, we learned that technology is hardwired into almost every aspect of the day

[01:41:27] as young as the age of five in public school. I'm here tonight to learn how the board, or today, to learn how the board is planning on redesigning and standardizing the state's approach to technology. My daughter's learned by touching, building, drawing, hands-on manipulatives, asking a thousand questions, sounding out words beside me, getting frustrated, trying again and again and again and again, free play, and looking into another person's face for reassurance, even when it's really hard. At any age, those experiences are learning. And that's why I'm asking Virginia to seriously reconsider how much we allow technology to interrupt the learning

[01:42:03] process. Across hundreds of studies conducted around the world at this point, researchers have examined children's screen exposure, and all results have been concerning. These concerns are especially heightened in the earliest years, when children are still developing the ability to sustain attention, control impulses, hold information in working memory, read facial expressions, regulate emotions, develop handwriting, and learn to read. A five-year-old does not need to become proficient at navigating a Chromebook before becoming proficient at navigating childhood.

[01:42:34] I also just learned that Virginia Code section 22.1206 requires our public schools to provide instruction about time spent using electronic devices and their addictive potential. The title the law addresses things like drugs alcohol substance use and now screen time in the same subject if virginia believes the addictive potential of electronic devices is serious enough that our schools must warn children about it why are we simultaneously making the same devices a routine part of their school day i'm asking this board to work with the general assembly immediately to remove chromebooks at any part of the day for k through two keep early elementary

[01:43:10] assessment and testing off computers entirely it's a waste of everyone's time and it completely disrupts learning. I'm also asking you to establish a meaningful model policy and use guideline for instructional screen time for third grade through 12th while giving back analog learning as a first option. Additionally, our children's data, their performance behaviors, mistakes, interests, and learning patterns deserve extraordinary protection. Decisions about educational technology should be made because they demonstrably benefit children, not because of platforms convenient, scalable, profitable, or already embedded in the system. There are thousands of parents who already signed

[01:43:47] petitions across the state, wrote into, or spoke at their county meetings, have met with legislators, and now with you. We have an opportunity in Virginia to be leaders around the country. My daughters will have their entire lives to learn technology, but they only get one childhood. Please protect them. Carson Davis. Morning. My name is Carson Davis, and thank you for this opportunity to address the board. I live in Henrico County, and I'm here today as the parent of

[01:44:26] three elementary school students in Henrico County Public Schools. And I want to talk about educational technology in the classroom. Like many parents, I've read about the negative impacts of screen time on kids and teens, and I've been really encouraged by the conversations happening lately all over the country about how to limit this technology in the K-12 system. I'm especially interested in this topic because for the last few years, I've been teaching introductory English classes within the Virginia community college system. I've been surprised by what I've seen.

[01:44:59] Most of my students are recent high school graduates from Virginia public schools and most have had school-issued laptops for years. My students struggle to navigate programs like Microsoft Word. They struggle to search databases or even Google effectively. They lack basic typing skills. They complain about getting distracted when we read something longer than a few paragraphs.

[01:45:24] Many of my students have reading difficulties in terms of reading fluency skills and in terms of reading comprehension. When I dig into these challenges in one-on-one conferences with students, I hear stories about their high school experiences. Many students tell me how they spent much of their day on school-provided devices or cell phones watching YouTube or TikTok videos or scrolling the internet. Many report having not read a book for school or for fun in years. Our students do need technology skills to navigate the world beyond high school but more critically our

[01:46:03] graduates must be able to problem solve self-advocate collaborate and focus our students need to be good readers eliminating one-to-one devices and bringing back tech carts or computer labs in the k-12 system could help solve the screen time distraction problem and re-center the human connection at the heart of learning my own young children are not watching youtube videos for most of their day at school, but they have gotten distracted by digital games during the school day.

[01:46:35] In the past, indoor recess has included one-to-one device computer time, and I encourage you to stop this practice in favor of activities like board games, reading, or drawing, activities that strengthen peer interaction, imagination, and critical thinking. Elementary school-age children have plenty of time to learn how to use technology. I support focused technology classes in middle school and high school but i encourage you to make academic content delivery as low tech as possible

[01:47:07] thank you thank you and i've got lars douglas cara cara gates and kimberly fairs and then the last

[01:47:21] two laura john i think it's johnson and then daniel clow no lars okay lars the car thank you

[01:47:56] you for the opportunity to address you today and for the important work that you're doing for the students all across Virginia. My name is Kara Gates and I'm here as the parent of three children in Virginia Public Schools here in Henrico County. I've come today to ask for your thoughtful leadership in reducing the overall amount of time students are spending on screens in classrooms across the Commonwealth. To illustrate how prevalent and pervasive device use has become in schools, I'd like to share a couple examples from my family and my community. Last year, my

[01:48:33] third grader told me that she really prefers, quote, writing on a computer versus paper because it's so much easier. She doesn't have to think about how to spell because the computer fixes that for her. Once she starts typing, the computer finishes her words and in some cases, even her sentences. She's taking advantage of shortcuts before ever mastering the fundamental skills that will be so critical in her

later learning. My oldest child recently moved to middle school, and as part of that transition, I've learned that the expectations for overall screen use

[01:49:09] are much higher for our older grade students than they were in her elementary experience. Her school is taking steps to reduce the amount of time spent on screens, but even after they make that significant change from where they are now, it could still be many hours a day that she's spends looking at her device. I learned via a recent school board meeting that it's typical for an average high schooler in our district to spend six hours a day on a computer just for school purposes, and that might even be on

[01:49:44] the low end. I'm sure we can all agree that there are ways technology has changed education for the better, and there are groups of students who truly do benefit from regular device use, and I'm not suggesting that we take that away. I'm grateful that our district is taking steps toward reducing in-class screen use and focusing on purposeful use of technology, and I know many others across the Commonwealth are doing the same, but that cannot be the end.

[01:50:15] I'm asking for your leadership in ensuring that technology use in classrooms is balanced and purposeful, and that the default is for all students to have regular hands-on learning, meaningfully, meaningfully engage with their teachers and their peers in discussions, that they have regular engagement with books, pen and paper, and that they have the opportunity to thrive. Technology should enhance the education experience. It should not be the experience.

[01:50:49] Thank you. Thank you. Kimberly Fares. Hi, my name is Kimberly Fares, and I have a fifth grader and an eighth grader in Henrico Public Schools. It seems with the best intentions there was a general embrace of technology in schools nationwide, specifically after COVID, and accompanied by the need for take-home devices. What started out as a desire to stay on the cutting

[01:51:27] edge and prepare our children for a world full of technology has instead become an over-reliance on technology and to our children's detriment. Countless studies have come out from esteemed educators, journalists, and doctors about the effects of constant and unmonitored technology use, which is evident in the continuing decline in test scores and students' inability to focus, write, or socialize.

[01:51:49] In an effort to make learning fun, app usage is forced on students with limited oversight. The gamifying of learning gives children dopamine hits to keep them coming back for more. It rarely gives them feedback on how to work through the mistakes they've made or shown them patience or the ability to sit with getting something wrong and working to correct it.

[01:52:09] The use of YouTube and gaming is particularly rampant and is so clearly not being used for educational purposes, even being encouraged during downtime. The kids can't focus as they toggle from tab to tab, work, emails from friends, YouTube, game, back to work, back to another tab.

[01:52:24] And who could resist going to other sites rather than working? Even as adults, we struggle with staying on task even during our work hours, given the expansiveness of the internet. Anecdotally, I am fortunate to have fairly focused children, and often my eighth grader will get his work done and then have 30 minutes of downtime afterwards where he's allowed to play games. Many other children play the games and watch videos first without oversight and then catch up later while my son takes his turn gaming. My other son tells similar stories about his elementary school. Kids that seem to have the most trouble in class are finding ways to get on other sites rather than what the teacher has asked. If the computer wasn't an option, it stands to reason

[01:53:00] that the teacher would be able to see the child struggling or getting distracted and that's where interventions could happen. Technology belongs in classrooms, but only when it can enhance learning. Laptops should be taken out infrequently, leaving time for kids to wrestle with the work at hand, give teachers less to monitor, and space to actually teach. Taking the one-to-one technology away gives space for so much else. Time for kids to look at their teachers, at their classmates, time to think, to imagine, maybe get bored. They need time to be children. The tech companies will continue to say that they have found ways to fix schools' issues with more technology, with new oversight applications.

[01:53:38] It is in their interest to keep the contracts and to sell products that can't work magic on the inherent issue. Ultimately, the answer to the overuse of screens in the classroom is not the use of more technology. I pray that you will take these comments to heart. It is alarming as a parent to hear what is going on, the accumulating evidence around technology usage, and not be able to do anything about it.

[01:53:59] I stand before you today asking you to consider taking a bold step, even if it's hard, uncomfortable, time-consuming and scary. The state of Virginia could be a leader in this country, an example of taking to heart the data and studies that are so ubiquitous now. Thank you. Thank you. Laura Johnson and then Daniel Clough. Laura Johnson, I want to thank you for your service on this board and for

[01:54:32] bringing that incredible band in today. They're not here right now, but that level of talent in Virginia School blows me away. Their dedication and love of what they do is inspiring and literally brings tears to my eyes. And I've also been moved today by all the passion of the parents and the examples that they're giving of what their kids do in classrooms. And my husband and I experience the same at our house as well. We have two kids right now who are in high school

[01:55:11] in Henrico County and we are parents who do try really hard to limit screen time at home and it's just a constant battle and then we you know send them to school and you know like we have to manage that screen time as well it's pretty frustrating and it feels like an uphill battle so we applaud the new policy of no phones at all during the entire school day it's a huge step in the right direction in our opinion. And in Henrico, they've set other new rules around screens. Elementary schools have daily screen time limits and offline homework, but the recommendations

[01:55:49] for secondary schools is less concrete, just that it'd be purposeful and balanced. Our kids' teachers are giving more written homework in some classes, but in general, we are advocating for more physical books, handwritten note-taking, and off-screen homework as much as possible to benefit comprehension and retention.

[01:56:11] We've seen our daughters having success with that when we've encouraged them to make note cards, handwritten note cards. They've excitedly come home and say that they were able to recall some information because they can envision the color they wrote it in on their note cards.

[01:56:29] And on the other side of the coin, when our kids do homework on computers, there's a lot of clicking from tab to tab, screen to screen, going from an agenda to homework, notes to a graphing calculator seems very unfocused and I can practically feel how scattered their brains must be. Then there's that lore of checking other websites when homework should be the priority. And I appreciate the efforts that are made to reduce those types of non-educational websites. So I support continued work in that area. And if there's a way to also block TV and movies at school, that would be great. So they could use any downtime for studying, creativity,

[01:57:07] socialization or even letting their minds rest we understand that technology provides many educational benefits we're just advocating for nudging that pendulum back in the other direction thank you thank you daniel cloud thank thank the board for your time and allowing me my time my name is danny i'm a stay-at-home dad here in richmond city i have a first grader at bellevue elementary school in church hill they were in the news yesterday partial closing due to presence of mold in in the school i don't know if that's anything that falls under your guys's oversight

[01:57:47] but i do think it's something we can do better for our children so i just thought that's worth bringing up um also worth mentioning that tends to happen in underserved communities as with all the other schools that have experienced that but um yeah i do want to appeal to the uh the screen time as a stay-at-home dad my wife travels a lot for work screen time has a very practical use in in my household and it is to put my kids into a catatonic state while i try to get dinner ready for them um i don't think that's what we're sending our kids to school for

[01:58:22] however um you know it's really good for you know making sure the kids don't run into the kitchen while i have the stovetop going but um and even to get the kids to the dinner table like has anybody ever tried to turn off a tv while a kid is watching it and seeing their reaction i mean i don't have any studies to prove this i just have my own empirical observations it's very similar to when you withhold drugs from a drug addict like um so again i don't think we

[01:58:58] need studies to prove it i think all of us can see how scatterbrained screens and technology can the effect that that can have on our very young children. I think K through two banning screens in the classroom is like the absolute bare minimum. I don't think third through fifth graders should be spending time. I've heard of a lot of communities and counties restricting screen time to like 45 minutes for elementary school students. By contrast, my daughter gets 30 minutes for recess. So this progressive policy that's reducing screen time is actually reducing

[01:59:37] it to 15 minutes more than the outside time my daughter gets on a daily basis. And again, I think it's just something we can do better for our children. I think technology does have its place as far as advancing learning and advancing our children's mind. But I think technology is advancing much faster than we can even study the effects that it's having long term on our children. And I think abandoning a lot of screen time in the classroom is just a basic first step

[02:00:11] that common sense should lead to. But thank you for your time. I appreciate it. Thank you. If there's anyone else who would like to sign up for a public comment, if you would just come over here. And when you come up, if you would introduce yourself, your name, and where you are coming from, we would appreciate that. Hi, I'm sorry. One of my superpowers is ADHD, and I signed up in one spot and not in the other one. In case you are not aware hereditarily, ADHD, you can give it to your

[02:00:50] children. So they also have this special. My name is Gracie Herbert. I am the mom of two adorable boys, one in 10th grade and one in 7th grade in Henrico County Public Schools. Originally, I was going to do a bunch of research facts and figures, but we all have Google, and I'm sure that you can find this yourselves, because there are thousands of other people and researchers that have done this. So I'm going to talk ahead about the experiences my children have had in school without computer. My 10th grader, when he was in kindergarten, they had an outside garden,

[02:01:25] and in the fall, they all planted flower bulbs. And in the spring, they picked their flowers, and then they got to examine their flowers, talk about pollination. That school does not use the outside garden

anymore which I think is sad because he was so excited to pick a flower his own flower he grew his own flower he still talks about his flowers and he still helps me in my garden at home mostly he just eats my tomatoes before I can get them on the dinner table but I'll take what I can get our other son he in fifth grade after SO Wells his classroom spent two weeks

[02:02:00] building countries, building towers, and the classroom was separated into four different groups. They had to work together on geography, solve world problems, like financial problems. They used math, science. They tried to solve problems like what do you do when the volcano erupts and a village is in the way? How do you save everybody? It was absolute chaos. The teacher had to have volunteers come in to like help the classroom because it was two weeks of chaos. And it's not something that my anxiety can't handle. Those kids were crazy, but they loved it. He still talks

[02:02:37] about how much fun he had during that. And I feel like those two weeks, he learned more about how to work together collaboratively with his friends than any other program or SOL or screen time thing that he did. I know that technology is important, but I also think that as a college graduate myself and a graduate current graduate student myself that all of them can learn that later they can do labs they can go to the computer lab and take typing classes like the rest of us did we're all successful we're all able to take time off work to come to speak to you and i think

[02:03:14] that limiting technology to computer labs or going on field trips imagine the money that we could save by spending like henrico county spends 38 million dollars a year in technology we used half that so these kids can go in the public and see jamestown or see or like even public playgrounds i have never seen a tablet on a public playground like for public use so i really think that we should reconsider all the technologies for our students because i'd like for them to be kids

[02:03:48] and play on the playground without tablet technology that's all thanks thank you good morning uh my name is brian egger i'm a product of virginia beach city public school as a chesterfield county parent and my daughter's 12 year old and just started in seventh grade this week i'm asking the board to develop a statewide model policy for intentional technology use with meaningful age-appropriate limits on classroom screen time i'm not anti-technology i'm 47 i grew up with encyclopedias dot matrix printers chalkboards and i've adapted through dial-up internet smartphones autonomous vehicles, and now AI.

[02:04:27] Our children will adapt too, even faster than we have. I mean, they're going around your system being able to use their devices where they shouldn't. My concern is whether we are teaching them the fundamentals before technology starts doing those fundamentals for them. My concern is not that my daughter sometimes uses a Chromebook in school, she should. The issue is when reading, writing, research, worksheets, testing, and even activities that could be hands-on all migrate to the same screen simply because the device is available.

[02:04:49] Technology should not be chosen because it improves the lesson, not simply because the easiest way to deliver it. I understand that digital assignments make distributing, collecting, and grading work more efficient but the most efficient way to administer an assignment is not necessarily the most effective way for a child to learn it. We already understand this principle with calculators. We still teach children arithmetic before letting a calculator do the work, not because calculators are bad but because students need the fundamentals to know whether the answer even makes sense. Learning is not just consuming information, learning requires doing. Watching a science experiment is not the same as

measuring the materials, following the procedure, making mistakes, and performing it yourself. Watching a video about a book is not the same as reading the book. I run motorsport events and I see the

[02:05:28] same principle with drivers. Some of the best drivers learn in low horsepower cars because power cannot cover their mistakes. They have to learn the technique and car control. The advice we give them is simple. Seed time. You get better by doing. More horsepower later expands skills they already developed. Technology has horsepower. It should expand a student's abilities, not substitute for developing them. Our children will spend their entire lives surrounded by screens. Schools do not need to prepare them for the existence of technology. Schools need to prepare them to use technology without becoming dependent on it i'm asking virginia to establish meaningful grade level expectations for screen time preserve physical books uh handwriting and hands-on learning and use screens when they provide a genuine educational benefit that cannot be matched as

[02:06:05] effectively online i don't want virginia schools to prepare my daughter for yesterday's world i want them to prepare her for tomorrow's and we do that by giving her the fundamentals so that when she has access to ai and tools we haven't even invented yet she knows how to think how to learn and how to question and answer and how to solve a problem on her own technology is just a tool in terms of getting the kids working together and motivating them the teacher is the most important that's bill gates um sitting over here watching you guys for the last hour some of you were on your computers if you can't keep these people's attention for three minutes how do you expect

[02:06:35] teachers to do the same thing thank you thank you good morning superintendent conway and members of the board my name is todd truett and i'm here today as a parent of two arlington public school students first i was delighted to see in the recent sol results that virginia's bipartisan efforts to expand access to accelerated math in middle school are yielding positive outcomes.

[02:07:06] Congratulations are particularly due to the VDOE staff for their support to divisions on acceleration. Second, I was very pleased with yesterday's presentation on the plan for accountability changes. In particular, the VDOE has done substantial work since the June meeting to commit to higher cut scores and to develop a clear plan for their implementation. Third, I believe, though, that the high school rating should be adjusted for the 27-28 school year and not wait an additional year.

[02:07:35] Currently, 92% of high schools fall into the highest two of four categories. Thus, Virginia families and elected officials are not getting accurate information about high school performance. Fourth, I disagree with the approaching as the second lowest sum of the rating.

[02:07:52] Schools in this category need additional support, and the term approaching doesn't clearly communicate those needs. to families and elected officials. I prefer need support, as suggested in public comment by the Virginia Association of School Superintendents in 2024. Finally, I strongly agree with the comment made yesterday regarding a need for a robust communication plan for the upcoming changes. At the same time, experience here shows that some audiences may remain resistant to understanding these changes, regardless of how thoroughly they are explained. As noted

[02:08:28] in the listening sessions report, many divisions continue to advocate for excluding English learners from accountability for five and a half years after they begin school, despite more than two years of detailed explanation of this issue, and the strong endorsement of the two leading national English learners civil rights organizations.

[02:08:48] Similarly, public records from the Superintendents Association's April conference showed widespread and strong doubts there about why current 70% SOL proficiency rates are considered too high, despite years of explanations of how Virginia is a national outlier. Those same records include the inaccurate claim by some administrators that English and math content standards must perfectly align with NAEP content standards in order for a state to set NAEP level cut scores. And I've also heard the recent erroneous argument that because assessments will soon be more rigorous, higher cut

[02:09:25] scores are no longer necessary. Your communication plan needs to include debunking these types of lame arguments by those privately opposed to higher standards, which can easily undermine your hard work to properly inform Virginia families, educators, and elected officials.

[02:09:42] Thank you. Thank you. It's still morning. Thank you for hearing me. Wrapping it up. Thank you to all of you who have spoke. You speak exactly what I'm here today and have sat to support.

[02:10:06] A background on me, I have three children at Henrico County Schools, one in each. I have an elementary, a middle, and a high school. It's a little difficult for me to talk only because we found out my daughter was dyslexic upon coming back here, so we afforded her the opportunity to attend Riverside School. She learned the science of reading and she thrived. But fifth grade, she demanded to go to public schools. It's been an uphill battle with the IEP and subsequently

[02:10:43] my younger child having a 504. And I do believe that the product of COVID during reading was a huge huge um setback for her as a as a student when she slept with books as a baby in her crib and then when it was time to learn how to read she had to go under the table and hide from hide from me um so um the approach that i suggest that all of you take uh in my time since leaving my job i am a project product of public schools i had a i went to virginia tech i had a 16-year

[02:11:22] career as an embryologist in the ivf lab and i stopped working to make sure that my kids and the public school education is high quality because she wanted to go back to public schools so we all put the faith in you guys but uh appropriate funds in the right spots the science of reading is an obvious one with five one in five children having learning disabilities teaching the science of reading getting quality students the revolving door of math teachers in our district and the revolving door of english teachers as well

[02:12:04] it's been obscene my son's in 10th grade and claims he doesn't learn anything daily thank goodness for the elections on the paperwork where i could at least opt out of anything youtube um so i deplore you guys to appropriate the funds um are and ask that you guys use that to create hubs of learning for teachers and recruiting quality teachers so we don't continue to lose them to north carolina and the stronger states that surround us thank you for your time

[02:12:39] sorry ma'am could you state your name from record all right my name is julie venae julian collier in henrico county thank you thank you is there anyone else who would like to make public comment okay thank you that um ends our public comment session um i on behalf of the board want to thank everyone who took the time today um we have your remarks we appreciate uh you following the time limits, but also just sharing your passion and commitment for not just your kids, but all of

[02:13:14] Virginia's kids. So thank you for your comments. With that, the board, we're going to take a quick

[02:13:19] five-minute break, and then we'll come back into session. Thank you. It's still morning. Good

[02:25:35] morning. We're going to go back into session. Thank you. Board members, please remember to turn on your microphones when you are speaking and with that we are at uh the consent agenda items a b c and d is there a motion to waive first review and approve the items on the consent agenda second

[02:26:03] second reinhardt i miss mcpherson mr robinson dr northern dr wilson i dr maxwell i mrs kilgore ah and chair rose by uh now our action discussion items our first uh action item is oh do we have

[02:26:38] uh deputy superintendent i slept just take a quick moment we are waiting for our presenter

[02:27:33] why would do this she's in room um we there we did have a number of public comment related to a number of items if board members want to share anything that was resonating with them that kind of highlights i'm happy to take any general comments while superintendent high slip is up either the minute comments that we got technology in schools i'm just wondering you know where we

[02:28:08] where we stand on that issue in terms of maybe anything that we may be presenting in the near future or sometime after that thank you i'd like to just piggyback i really appreciated um the consistency and messaging and there are some very specific um issues where uh our constituents are wanting us to just pay a particular attention and so um that piece and also high quality

[02:28:42] instructional materials and that piece on digital alignment because i think that i think that just needs warrants and additional and further conversation. Thank you. So, Reinhard, are you reaching? No? Okay. Okay. Thank you. And we can have further discussion. But again, I want to just express appreciation for the public comment and the speeches that were presented for our review.

[02:29:10] And I always want to encourage great feedback for us to continue to be thoughtful as we make policy decisions, including a big one that we have right now, which is the final review of the school performance and support framework 2627 sometimes referred to as SPSF um presenter um deputy superintendent high slip bureau thank you president ashton and members of the board um we're going to start off i think with a little bit of repeat from some content we went over yesterday just again to

[02:29:43] ground us in where we are why we are doing this work um so really just want to be make clear kind of we're focused here on the school performance and support framework this orange component but that is one part of a larger measurement system and this measurement system you know i think of it as including our standards where we and this board have articulated clear high expectations for what students need to be able to know and do in key subject areas it includes our statewide assessments our sol and our vap data that measures how well students are meeting those expectations

[02:30:20] and this is really where we're setting out expectations for schools. The SPSF is helping us as a state, as division leaders, as members of the public, understand if our schools are supporting our students to meeting those high expectations, and it identifies our schools who need extra support and resources to lead to school improvement. And all of this is then feeds into a school improvement system that is a statewide agency priority not the priority of a one office within the virginia department of education where we are prioritizing our attention our resources

[02:30:57] and our professional development to those students and schools who need the furthest support who are the furthest from opportunity and when all of this is aligned and coherent and working together the hope is that is where we will see improved student outcomes and over the next three years we are really going to be working um i would say you know to see sort of some significant improvements to the school performance and support framework but there's going to be a number of decisions as we talked

about yesterday that are coming forward this year that are coming forward next year um so that by you know the summer of 2028 we will really have this piece of the puzzle

[02:31:34] in strong shape and ready to roll out for our school divisions so we're teeing up four decisions for today but those will just be the first four of many as we move forward and at the end of the day we showed this slide as well this is both in response to the jlark report to two bills from the state legislature that were passed this session and i think our hope is that there's going to be real meaningful difference and change and improvement for a whole bunch of key stakeholders so our adults who support our students whether they're division leaders principals or school

[02:32:11] leaders teachers parents and families and ultimately our students this is really giving them a clearer picture of how they are making progress and then ultimately attaining the high expectations we have set and if all of these things are working together and coherent they're going to receive the supports they need if they still have progress and growth to make and it's a really key amazing part of the reason why we have state policymakers here along the bottom is is that this whole measurement system, including the SPSF, is essential to inform the strategies of this board, as well as our other key stakeholders,

[02:32:47] like the legislature, the governor, our local leaders, to help continue strengthening our state education system over the coming years and ensure that all of our students are meeting the high aspirations that we have set for them. Because we know our students are, as Superintendent Conway has said many, many times, students are as capable as anyone in the country so it's our duty as adults that are overseeing this system to be sure that we're setting them up for success so we walked through this yesterday as well this sort of approach to some of these refinements to the spsf that we have been charged

[02:33:23] to consider over the next several years that we want to take time with this board to prepare to bring forward data and modeling whenever possible to help inform decisions that this board is making and then we want to have sort of an ability to use that to preview we talked a lot yesterday about communications and the importance that will be of really explaining this new system as well as any improvements or changes that we make to it over the next several years and then we will be implementing it including you know just as we are increasing our expectations for students through higher cut scores we are also going to be increasing our expectations for the schools that

[02:34:03] serve them at the same time so as we teed up yesterday we are considering four actions today there will be others that are coming forward in the coming weeks that will be implemented at different times but these um largely come from either directly from jlark or directly from the listing tour that we did over the first few months of the administration or both um but today we are talking about new performance category terms for schools we are talking about the redistribution of the english learner progress indicator when that indicator is not present where do you put

[02:34:39] the weight that would have gone to that indicator we are talking about our annual measurement of mastery in high school rather than waiting for our students to graduate to see if they've met our standards and we are talking about a potentially new option for the inclusion of recently arrived english learners so why we're talking about that today that's one that i'll explain on a later slide takes two years to implement that is why it is coming forward today for your consideration. So here's just again the summary of those four actions for final review. We talked through all four of these at the June board meeting. So diving into the first action here,

[02:35:19] fairly straightforward that I can't think of as we did all of that engagement, this is probably the number one topic that was brought forward to us whenever we were talking with any stakeholders was a real desire to update the off-track and on-track performance categories to be different as soon as possible. So this is a change that we would be implementing for the results that are coming out in October. This is sort of the last opportunity we have as a board to make this

[02:35:52] change in order for it to affect those October results. Approaching expectations meets expectations, this would address jlark's first recommendation um so while it was also the first thing we heard from many stakeholders also the first thing jlark talked about in their report um we can be as jlark noted this is a change we talked a lot in june we talked a lot yesterday about how so many things in this system are interconnected this is one piece as jlark notes here that could be done quickly and independently of other changes it doesn't sort of depend on the underlying data collections

[02:36:31] or specific you know weights it is a terminology change and it would not preclude the board i also want to note here from taking future action so we talked also about yesterday around like being flexible and adaptable as we move forward and if we see after we've made changes to other indicators that you know we need to come back and add a category you know let's have five categories we actually need that now that's something that the board could do in the future and that we would want to be hearing from you and from stakeholders but i think based on what we know today our

[02:37:06] recommendation would be moving from off-track to approaching expectations and from meets expectations on meets expectations instead of the on-track category this is aligned with other terminology that we use at the VDOE and other systems, including, you know, we have now approaching in our cut scores as well. And we think it will be more intuitive and just better, more clear for families, for the public. So that is the first change. I'm going to pause here.

[02:37:38] I can keep going. Keep going. Let's keep going. Wonderful. Yeah, do them all in turn. All right. So the second change, this is one that we would begin implementing now. We would be telling school divisions that this is how we are starting to calculate data this school year.

[02:37:57] But it would actually not impact the ratings that are coming out in October. It would impact next October's ratings. So currently, the mastery index, which is a large percentage of the weight in high school, is calculated based on the 12th grade cohort.

[02:38:14] So, we essentially wait until a student, if they took the Algebra 1 test in ninth grade, we don't count that result in the SPSF until they graduate. We are waiting for them to be in that senior cohort.

[02:38:32] This change would instead say we are going to look at all test data in reading, math, and science that was taken in a high school this year. Whether the student was in ninth grade, in 10th grade, in 11th grade, or 12th grade, we will use the data immediately, and that is how we will calculate mastery.

[02:38:50] This was something that JLARC did not discuss in their recommendations, but it's something that we heard pretty loudly from stakeholders about, that they felt, you know, these high school results, some of this data is years old. This is not giving us timely information about how my high school and my community did last year.

[02:39:07] And so by implementing this, we would move to a much more timely calculation, and I think it would help encourage schools to pay attention to all of the kids in their high school, not just those in the

12th grade. If you're thinking about the other indicators we use for high school, graduation rate focuses on those 12th grade students. 3E readiness also focuses on students at the 12th grade.

[02:39:30] This would be an indicator, but this shift would change it to be looking at all of the students in that high school. And we think it would just, again, help us at the VDOE, help local divisions have more timely resources, more timely supports going to students based on the most recent data available rather than waiting. And like I said, it's directly responsive to stakeholder feedback we heard. The third change, as well as the fourth that this board is being asked to vote on today, relate to English learners. This third action here is about what happens when there are not

[02:40:08] enough English learners in a school to include this important indicator. We use the WIDA assessment of English language proficiency and the WIDA alternate access test for our English learners with significant cognitive disabilities. But a school needs to have 15 students, 15 test results to be included. And many of our elementary and middle schools don't. And what JLARC found is that When we were, the way that we were previously calculating SPSF results meant that if the weight of growth just mattered more.

[02:40:42] There were some schools that simply because they didn't have English learners or many English learners in their school, growth, they got a lot of weight on growth. But in high schools, we had redistributed the weight more fairly because high schools don't have a growth calculation.

[02:40:58] So in high school, we were just saying, you don't have English language progress, let's redistribute that weight all across the board. In our elementary and middle schools, we didn't do that. We took all of the weight from that English language proficiency measure and just put it in reading and math growth.

[02:41:15] And there were many recommendations and just a robust discussion in JLARC about the relative weight of growth and proficiency, but the way to address that is to address it for all schools. It's not to sort of give a loophole just based on whether you have a significant English learner population or not.

[02:41:32] So we are proposing here today to modify how we are redistributing this weight to treat all of our elementary and middle schools fairly. And then in future conversation, we will discuss the rebalancing of growth and proficiency. That is a separate JLARC recommendation.

[02:41:49] But first, we want to be sure that we're at least treating our schools fairly in the system and not having it depend on the population of students that you serve. The final recommendation is the one that we've talked about that would take a couple years to potentially implement.

[02:42:06] So we want to start collecting some data right now. The U.S. Department of Education and federal law outline two very specific ways that recently arrived English learners can be included in accountability systems like the SPSF.

[02:42:23] Both of these options are quite similar. They also apply to the same population of students. We are not talking about every English learner in the Commonwealth of Virginia. We are talking about students who have been enrolled in our schools less than a year, and that is defined in federal law.

[02:42:38] Currently, we use what's the first option, which essentially allows these students, again, those are students who have been in the country in U.S. schools less than a year who are English learners. In

their first year in U.S. schools, they have to take math and science assessments if they're in a grade that gives a science test.

[02:42:58] But we currently do not require those students to take our reading test. So this is just about assessments in their first year. In the second year, we currently then require all of these students to take all of the tests. So a recently arrived English learner in the Commonwealth, the first time they are required to take our reading SOL is in their second year in U.S. schools.

[02:43:22] They are also required to be included in the accountability system in their second year. So because we only have one year of data, so first time taking the reading test, they're included in the mastery measure. The second option, exception B, has a few key differences. The first starts with what happens in that first year, the year where it's not about accountability, it's about what test you take.

[02:43:48] All recently arrived English learners would have to take reading tests in English in their first year in the country. That then sets up the second year where they would take the reading test again, as well as their math test and their science test if they were in a grade that tested science.

[02:44:03] But in that second year, instead of including the student in mastery, they would be included in growth. The two options are the exact same for the third year. So the only differences are sort of the test that you take in year one, and then what happens in accountability in year two.

[02:44:22] What we are proposing to do is rather than make this shift, you know, all in one go and say, let's test all of our recently arrived English learners this year in reading, we would like to give divisions an option to pilot it so that we could actually gather data on what's the impact of doing A versus B. Do stakeholders, do educators, do school leaders prefer an option?

[02:44:47] Like we could get qualitative feedback as well. So we've already talked to the U.S. Department of Education about this, so we're trying to get some clear parameters from them about how we could sort of run this experiment per se. But what we are proposing for you is to sort of continue forward with what we currently do which is exception a is the default but explore this pilot so that then you know when we have that second year of data we could come back and use that data that we've gathered to inform a decision of this board so with that i think we are ready for conversation

[02:45:23] and discussions great superintendent um if you know off the top of your head a deputy superintendent high slot just the the universe ballpark how many students are we talking about when we look at recently arrived i do not know but it is a fraction it's very small yeah i mean you think about most of our english learners actually are students who have you know they're born in this country they've gone to early childhood settings in this country they are not um you know coming from a foreign country and enrolling in u.s school so it's a fraction and that i think is a really big distinction and we've gotten a lot of had a lot of conversation about this i think

[02:46:01] is some of the public commenters noted is that we used to exclude all english learners in virginia all for five years which is very very different than federal what the federal requirement is and so we are now this spsf system is is compliant with the practice in other states and so we are talking about a limited number of students here that would even qualify for this exception because it is only those um but i would be happy to get the exact number superintendent i'm sure we have it right so board members what i'd like to do is actually start in reverse order

[02:46:40] so that we can prioritize and just be really clear around discussion so let's start with number four are there number are there any specific questions or feedback or comments related to the supporting recently alive english language learners yes dr wilson thank you deputy superintendent just a question for clarity the pilot that you are exploring uh would the idea be to pilot in the 26 27 year as well yes so it would take two years what would happen in the 26 27 year is that

[02:47:17] any division that you know raise their hand and we'd have to you know lay out some parameters for opting in but um they would be required for all of their recently arrived el's to take the reading test this year. So the real change for this year would be that more students would be tested.

[02:47:35] Next year, we would then consider what would happen for accountability. And that's where we're talking with the U.S. Department of Education about options that we would have to sort of figure out what the path forward would look like. But for this coming school year, the biggest change would just be, we would say, if you want to be part of this pilot, that you have to assess all of your English learners, whether they are recently arrived or not, in reading in English.

[02:48:03] - Thank you. Yes, Ms. McPherson. - With the palette for the English learners, recently arrived English learners, would that mean that when you do school performance data, you will pull out all of the data on the recently arrived English learners so that it does not skew the numbers once school.

[02:48:29] So for the reading performance measure, I believe we would not be permitted to do that. You have to include all kids who are assessed. So that is, I think, something that a division would have to think about if they wanted to be part of this pilot.

[02:48:46] You know, there might be some benefits. There might be some—we could not say all students who take tests have to be included in the assessment, I should say, you know, but the reading—I think that we likely could either pull out or we could talk to the department about it. I mean, this is where they essentially said for us to do this this year, they are comfortable with it, but I would want to be sure that we could, you know, either understand the exact parameters. That was something they wanted to talk with us about. In particular, I think about the divisions and pieces. So, you know, if we were required to include these students in the accountability system next year,

[02:49:24] that might be a deterrent for some division. So there are a lot of questions we have talking with them about this, but I think there is a, we wanted to be sure that we had, we're able to make an informed choice here. Like I said, this is a pretty, it's a small population of students, admittedly, not so small in some divisions. There are some divisions that have many recently arrived English learners. So I think we wanted to be sure that we had the complete information about what this change would feel like before making a statewide change. It felt like it was something

[02:50:00] we're doing this sort of smaller scale evaluation with a handful of divisions would help us bring you all as a board the best possible information about what the best choice is moving forward. We have used exception A ever since the Every Student Succeeds Act passed. So exception A has been our path forward for the last 10 years.

[02:50:26] Is the request to the board today just that we allow you to engage in college and then you will report back to us what the U.S. Department of Education says as it relates to how you're going to count it in accountability and school performance?

[02:50:47] That's correct. The thing that we are asking today is that we are not making the switch from A to B statewide. that instead we would like to explore a small pilot of exception B before making an ultimate decision, which we do need to make. That is part of what the legislature has required us to consider at some point. But we are saying, let's do the pilot, let's gather the data, let's look at that, and then make the decision once we have that data about are we staying with A or are we going to B

[02:51:24] statewide which is something that the legislature has explicitly said we have to do as a board so on agenda item e i just want to make sure that what we would do is update the document that we are voting on reflect that the board is only authorized in a pilot program and that the staff will report back to us on U.S. Department of Education's ruling regarding how we count it and school performance. Yeah, I think if there's ever a conversation of, you know, in order for us

[02:52:03] to do this, it requires a waiver of federal law. That are things that we will report back because we certainly would want to be sure that we are making clear to not just the board, but also the public. I mean, public has to comment on waivers and things like that. Thank you. Mr. Robinson. Just a point of clarification, the slide, point two, says, in exception B, recently arrived students test results using the growth component in their second year, but not mastery. So I take that to my understanding, which could be wrong, means that even if for federal reporting requirements,

[02:52:38] to your point, we have to report everything. For the school performance framework scores, they would not be counted towards the mastery? Yes. So under exception B, for our pilot divisions, once you have that two years of data, you're allowed to be included in the growth component.

[02:53:02] So that's why you have to take the test in year one because you wouldn't have growth data otherwise. But in that second year, yes, they're not in mastery. And I'm fairly confident, I mean, this is where we've had some conversations with the department as a former Department of Education employee. I believe that in this first year, so in this coming school year, no recently arrived EL students would need to be included in reading, even if they did take the test.

[02:53:31] I just want to double check that with our friends up in D.C. to be sure that is the case. but you were right in the second year, so for our 27-28 school year, you would essentially have some pilot divisions where their recently arrived English learners would be set up to have a growth measure, while our non-pilot divisions would not be able to have that growth data because they had not tested their students this coming school year in reading. Well, thank you for that clarification

[02:54:02] And thank you for the proposal that I think does a great job of honoring the legislature's push for us to learn about these options, consider them, while also honoring the board's push to amplify attention to ELs. Ms. McPherson, Ms. McPherson?

[02:54:21] I was going to ask, has the staff considered when you would anticipate incorporating English learners into accountability for mastery, or are you considering that for the five-year period they would do it?

[02:54:39] Yeah, for mastery, yes. mastery yes so currently recently arrived english learners under exception a they are included in mastery in their second year of u.s school enrollment under exception b the one that we would be piloting with a few divisions they are included in mastery in year three so it's a one year difference so that's where i say year three under both exception a and b is the same in year three all recently arrived English learners are included in the accountability system the same as

[02:55:19] any other student. The exception only applies to what happens with regard to testing and what happens with regard to accountability during their first two years in U.S. schools and it is only these recently arrived English learners. It is not all English learners. It is a very small subset who are new to this country. Bridges. Okay now to build on my colleague's question But because we would just be doing the pilot of exception B, we would still be under the exception A division, correct?

[02:55:58] So we would still be seeing the year two mastery from the population. Yes. So I think that is kind of the best part of this pilot a little way. It really actually is an experiment is that in our pilot school divisions in year two, we would have mastery data and growth data in year two.

[02:56:18] to examine. While our non-pilot divisions, we would only have mastery. We wouldn't be able to have growth because we only have that one year of data. So we truly could say with these pilot divisions, like, what are the SPSF scores if they're included in growth? What are the SPSF scores if they're included in mastery? Because we would have for those divisions, both sets of data available to us. So it really would help us bring the most data-informed decision back to this board at that time but we just have to be sure we're telling division part of the reason why it's coming forward now is because the test calendars have already been published schools have already

[02:56:57] started so if divisions are interested in this option they those educators those communities need to know now if they are going to be assessing these students in reading this spring great thank you is there any more questions about item number four not we can move on to item number three related to english language learners in elementary and middle are there any specific

[02:57:28] questions here or comments okay great so we'll move on to item two around the mastery index for high school all right when you get the adjustment when you right now it says redistribute across all categories when you redistribute and you come up with that number we're voting

[02:58:02] on a concept now and allowing you to redistribute but you will act and let us know what the new proportions are also i think we could give you that math now i don't have it in my head but essentially it assures for every school this would mean that the relative weight of mastery and growth is always the same so you know let's do a simple this is actually not the case but say mastery and growth. Mastery is twice as much as growth. That's not the case here in Virginia. But

[02:58:37] if it were twice as much, it would be twice as much for every school. That is not our current system. Our current system, again, these are hypotheticals. But right now, it might be growth is, you know, half the weight of mastery in schools that have English learners. But growth and mastery are equal. Again, made up in our schools that don't have enough English learners.

[02:59:03] That's why we're saying this is fundamentally unfair. What this change would mean is that the relative importance of growth is the same for all elementary and middle schools because we redistribute the weight in the way we already do for high schools. This is the practice. What we're voting on today is what already occurs for high schools. It just was not applied last year to elementary and middle schools.

[02:59:30] But I'd be happy to give you the specific ways. I mean, it's complicated, and you end up with some messy fractions, but, yeah. What I was telling you is that we're voting on the concept to allow you to deal with the schools that don't have the sufficient implementation terms that you track that data out and redistribute back and let us know what the redistribution is.

[02:59:55] Superintendent? Yeah, so I think that's right. As we discussed yesterday, Ms. McPherson, we do the deep dive on the results of this year we can make sure to kind of walk you through what you know sort of what that would look like i think that was the kind of question yesterday what these things would look like so you have an understanding of when it's implemented for 26 27 kind of what it would mean on the same page okay thank you so let's move on to number two around the mastery index for high school board members do you have questions dr northern so i'm not

[03:00:33] telling you anything you don't already know and but there's a trade-off between a cohort model and an annual model and this gets a little bit technical but the cohort model smooths out a lot of the volatility that you get in an annual measure because the annual measure is very much dependent on the kids who walk in the door that year so it means it's going to be more volatile than this three or four year smooth out the data kind of measure that we've been using So I would, I totally understand the impulse of the school leaders to want to be measuring the kids they have this year, because the cohort model is saying, what did the high

[03:01:12] school accomplish with students over the last four years, right? It's a different question. It is. So I would just say that because it's so dependent on whether a school has high mobility, like if you're changing out kids so much every year, your score is going to be doing this, You know, whether if you're doing the cohort model, it gets all smoothed out in the trend line.

[03:01:35] So we've got a tech panel, you know, I think that if you could run both models for us and come back and say, OK, this is too volatile. It's not trustworthy data if we do the annual measure, because a any statistician worth his salt could tell you quickly whether it's too volatile to trust or it's too noisy is the word.

[03:01:57] right we use it's too noisy it's why a lot of districts have moved away from the annual because it's so noisy and volatile and had to move towards the cohort model but i don't want us to just do that because you know but i definitely would say just like we said in the last one report back to us let's run it both ways let's run the you know the cohort model and the annual model you guys look at the data talk to your you know your stats folks and let them say we trust the annual model we don't or we can sometimes you can do a two-year model it works a little bit better than the one

[03:02:30] year in terms of the volatility and the reliability of the data just kind of again it's a common theme where we're just we're still tweaking and figuring out things yeah no i mean i think that's a very both measures both the annual pass rate and the cohort pass rate provide useful information and i think many of our divisions do look at both numbers they want to know how did our kids do in high school last year whether they were 9th 10th 11th or 12th grade and then they look at their graduates and they say how many eventually at some point you know pass the reading test or

[03:03:05] pass the algebra 1 test both numbers are useful i think our divisions frequently look at both and what we heard from them is that for accountability purposes which is really again about driving resources driving actions the preference would be not to wait on that cohort model and also also recognizing that virtually every other measure in the high school system is only looking at the cohort. So it was to try and get balanced. But as with, I think, all of these changes, I mean, that was sort of the theme of yesterday, is we have to start making decisions and then we have to keep evaluating and researching and being sure that we made the right call, that

[03:03:45] things aren't worth revisiting. But I think this is one where, when we have talked about this with our stakeholders and especially those that are in our schools they they want us to do an annual

calculation i'll just add they may change their mind last year this year and it was wildly different because they lost a third of their kids because they're in a highly mobile school district so again right yeah just keep talking to them and see yeah that's right yeah feedback is a gift as superintendent calmly says dr northern i um appreciate your point and i also appreciate we

[03:04:21] want to provide clarity to the field and saying you know we're gonna look at this annual measure and any school leader is going to be consistently analyzing the cohort data to figure out well how do we impact mobility how do we keep our kids how do we make sure kids show up every day so all the data will be incredibly helpful and we want to provide clarity around that annual metric towards accountability um and i again appreciate um deputy superintendent highslip's commitment to clarity around what is required but also consistency in giving us the data so we can make

[03:05:00] foreign decisions as well as the field so i echo your point are there yep uh miss mcpherson quick comment so in in that regard item this item only what is only approving the annual data for one year period so that if we find later that we need to adjust it and suggest that we want to come back and do the cohort as the measurement right now for this action item we are only voting regarding mastery in high schools for fall of 2027 based on the 26-27 data so if that needs to be changed

[03:05:38] the staff would have to come back to us and put it back on for an agenda item that's all we're doing right now on the official document that we're voting on not on the slides but on the official document they've only asked for the one year so our intention was that we are making this change moving forward and it would not come back unless our data shows us that we need to bring it back to dr northern's point about continuing to get feedback this is a change that we would implement we would start collecting the data be sure that our data systems at the department are set up to like we have to we have to instruct divisions how to upload the data and all of that

[03:06:17] so we would tell them we are looking at this is how we're doing it for this year it would apply to the ratings next fall it would apply to the ratings in fall 28 and fall 29 again barring like with any other thing we are talking about here if we start to get feedback from stakeholders if we do our own evaluation and we see like this is not working we got it wrong we want to bring it back we will but our intention is not that we are coming forward every year to ask this board to say it's annual it's annual it's annual fortunately though we didn't advertise that to

[03:06:52] the public we what we sent out was this document which said that you were only going to do it for one year so i would think then that you can't have final action today you'd have to re-advertise and tell the public that you were trying to do this as a measurement year after year so i'm just saying from a practical standpoint you have a document where you said that you were going to use more on the annual data for fall 2027 but for the fall of 2027 so that i don't think it gets you

[03:07:27] where you really wanted to be superintendent yeah i think if you look at the language in in the official boilerplate, it does reflect a specific one-time use for fall of 2027. So I think in terms of next steps, I think we would seek approval today on this. I think we would add this item to the deep dive that we would do with you all following the results of this year. We could potentially look at--we could sort of see whether at the capacity to look at two years of data. And then we would then make the call whether we would come back to you with a sort of another

[03:08:04] one-time ask or whether we do as we did sort of in the language for number three like sort of beginning with in which case it suggests in perpetuity so yes i think that's correct okay any other questions

around the high school okay then let's move on to item one around updating the spsf school performance category labels replacing the off-track on-track and then

[03:08:30] approaching and meets based on the fall 26 data. Dr. Northern. All right, I'm going to try to be very fair-minded about this, because I think in the last day and a half, I have really been encouraged by how we're all trying to approach this, because we're all just trying to figure out and do our best. When I read the JLARC report, the reason they didn't like off-track

[03:09:05] and on track was they said it implied a trajectory, meaning it sounded like you were either improving or declining. That was their specific reason for not liking those words. So approaching, to me, also has the same problem that the JLARC report has already pointed out, is that it implies that they're improving if they're approaching the milestone that we've set. So I would just ask us consider whether we might not want the first two sort of designations to be about performance, because that's really what, and Jay Lark also said that, it's

[03:09:44] really about performance is what we want these words to be signaling in an objective way, that it's not tinged with any kind of, you know, intent, because approaching, again, to me implies intent, and it's not an objective word, and I totally understand we use it with cut scores and I will like plead the fifth because I was here then and approaching came back to us when we were in the middle of a fight about like are we gonna phase in are we gonna jump up and it kind of got lost in the mix if you just ask me I don't particularly care

[03:10:21] personally whether they match perfectly on the cut scores and on this but other people may actually prefer that because it is more elegant and so let's just I will concede that point. But I wonder whether we can't have exceeds and meets as one option and then partially meets instead of approaching, because I think that's a little bit more objective, and then needs support. Or we could think about having our first two being about performance and our last two being about support. So it could be exceeds and meets and then needs

[03:10:58] support and then need significant support. So I'm just trying to figure out, like, to me, the problem I'm trying to solve is I think that approaches still has the problem that J. Lark pointed out, which is that it implies a trajectory, and it implies improving or declining. And in this case, it implies improving, because you can be approaching the negative way, right? But approaching sort of signals that you're approaching the right direction, and that could be inaccurate.

[03:11:27] And that actually circles back to the point that we've been trying to solve all along, which is being honest with parents. And I feel like partially meets or needs support is a little bit more objective word for a parent who doesn't follow this stuff than is the word approaching.

[03:11:44] But again, I understand that this is, you know, people get very riled up about this. And I understand I'm trying to just kind of say, OK, let's just revisit this. What do we want this particular word in the middle to convey? I mean, I think we had many conversations.

[03:12:05] I mean, you can debate these terms probably for months. And so I think it is a, from in terms of not trying to have perfect be the enemy of the good and also trying really much to honor the fact of how, because it's Jayler's first recommendation, it was often the first thing that stakeholders brought up for us to consider around accountability.

[03:12:28] We did want to try and make a decision where we could move forward with a modification of the category names as soon as possible. And that is why we are here. I think knowing that there are many other things that we need to consider over the next several years.

[03:12:45] And by and whole, in the conversations we've had since June, we've generally heard a lot of positive reaction to what was presented in June. Ms. McPherson, and then Dr. Bridges. Ms. McPherson. I recognize that we have a lot of features, principles, superintendents that are working really hard to get to a point of mastery but what we've heard throughout the whole time is that they want us to tell them the absolute truth about where they are

[03:13:23] and students know when we're not giving them that I just think that approaching sends the wrong signal so are you approaching dropout are you approaching how close are you to the goal and we're talking about rating school performance and we're doing it school by school. So I want the schools to be motivated, but I went back and I looked at House Bill 643. So here's what the General Assembly said, that when we develop new school performance label terminology,

[03:14:01] that the boys should consider labels such as exceeds the standard, meets the standard, partially meets the standard, and does not meet the standard. And I think those terms are very clear. I'm open to suggestion because I understand that we do want to motivate schools to do absolutely everything they can, but I'm not removing telling the public where a school actually stands. I can agree with Dr. Northern about needing support and needing intensive

[03:14:39] support as measures because we could align funding related to those categories. But I think as a baseline, I just don't know how we define approach. So I appreciate all the effort that went into that. I just don't know. I mean, how close are you to the goalposts? Are you at 25%?

[03:15:02] Because I think we're going to end up needing levels in approach. You know, are you A, B, C, D? Because you could be closely approaching, but you could be a long ways away from the goal.

[03:15:18] That's my only concern. But I do want to motivate everybody that you're getting close, Go for it. You're doing really great. And I think we can celebrate all the success. But the baseline is telling people the truth. Students know and parents know that we're not. And I think you make a really good point, Ms. McPherson. And just, I think that's also helpful to consider. This is one piece of information about schools that this system produces. Every school gets a performance category. But we also say, here's how you did on mastery. Here's how you did on growth.

[03:15:55] here's how you did on readiness and that is very clear we say you got you know you got 15 points out of 20 points you got 20 points out of 20 points and we want to also be sure that this is you know a multi-measure system that we're not forgetting those other pieces of information another really critical piece of information that is summative that does sort of talk about the overall performance of the school is our federal identification for support and improvement

[03:16:25] So every school, in addition to having their distinguished or currently, you know, they're on track, we say you're in targeted support and improvement because of a particular student group that has challenges. Those two pieces of information are equally important.

[03:16:43] And I think we want to be sure in our communications that we are telling the full picture and focusing on all the rich information that the school performance and support framework gets us. Because

every school essentially has their rating that we're talking about here. But we also say you're in comprehensive support because you're in the bottom 5% of Title I schools statewide.

[03:17:04] Or we say you're not identified for support federally. Both pieces of information are needed to really understand fully a school's overall success and performance. So that's, I think, I just don't want us to lose sight of all the other information, too, that we are giving from this system.

[03:17:23] that help I think explain and provide that context and last year it was the first year of the school performance and support framework so we couldn't go back and say here's how you did last year because there wasn't a last year to compare to this is year two next year we'll have year three and then year four and also that's going to be even more information that we can help and that we can sort of in our communications think about how do we start talking about that story of where schools have been where they're going um overall but also on key components so

[03:17:58] that's again like how did you do on 3e readiness last year versus this year how did you do on growth last year versus this year how did you do on mastery last year versus this year we need to be we will be in a position to start telling those types of stories in a way that we simply weren't last december because it was the first year because i have a question how many years would you be allowed to be in a category of approaching before you need to meet standards so there's a that is a decision that is every year and it's based on the number of points you earn it's not

[03:18:34] based on the number of years as you know right now we say 90 points and above is distinguished you know that is you could be distinguished multiple years you can be meets expectations multiple years you can be needs intensive support multiple years it is all based on how many points the school earns real quick dr uh superintendent conway absolutely to the point then um the way that you all have approved the framework as deputy superintendent high slop notes is it's about a one-year score right at this point in time right so that it's like how did

[03:19:13] you do in the last year obviously some indicators as mentioned in the prior conversation reflect multiple years. But I do think that to Dr. Northern's point, one of the concerns about implying a trajectory sort of also implies that you look at this kind of, you know, over multiple years versus as it relates to the way your framework is set up right now is for one year. I do think as we reflect on conversations from June and yesterday, and some of the key point around kind of some of the bills that were passed in addition to

[03:19:52] House Bill 643, that this idea of sort of identifying schools that need additional resources and support, right, and kind of creating this idea of need support and needs intensive support is a clearer potentially call to action than some of the other pieces. Each of these represent a trade-off, right, between what is the message we're sending to parents, to educators, to stakeholders, while also wanting to strike between, and you've heard me talk about this before in our work around VQB5, this idea of measurement and improvement.

[03:20:30] And so you could see where there's sort of distinguishing these expectations, and there's a really clear indication that there's not an ambiguous question of what direction is this moving in or Ms. McPherson, to your point about how far off are you from it, but there is a sort of a clearing call to the field that additional resources, attention, support are needed to these sites. And then the sort of, and it's also then kind of on that, the other point that they made was this idea of continuous, right? And there's a distinction

[03:21:01] between that and needs intensives. Dr. Burgess? Bear with me, please. I have a question for dr northern because i just missed in my note taking this that partially you had suggested partially meets or the fourth tier would be need significant improvement i just missed that one oh sorry i was suggesting that um you know we could either have need exceeds expectations

[03:21:36] meets expectations partially meets expectations and needs support needs support okay i just missed the final that final word thank you or as the superintendent just explained we could have two support categories and two performance categories okay so um a few comments with some possible questions embedded in those um uh just fyi in teaching graduate students i do use the exceeds meets approaching does not meet just so i sort of lean that way instructionally and i have found

[03:22:11] that it is more of a motivator for students. I've played with that rubric for seven years. However, that's anecdotal. So I am thinking about the alternatives that have been presented from a couple of vantage points. And also, like lots of members, I'm sure, went back to the JLARC report to see what the reason for the original suggestion was, too. And they do spend a lot of time talking about how complex this is and how there is no right wrong uh descriptive label um i'm actually if i had my druthers there would be no labels um there would just be the individual

[03:22:49] rating that the criteria that the doctor that assistant superintendent i slept talked about um but the goal is to get more clear in our communication the goal is to meaningfully differentiate performance and to give those descriptors that that flag to schools as you you noted, superintendent, that might need more support. Where I get concerned about that option, about needs support and needs significant support, is then we're getting wonky on the clarity because, oh wait, I'm a school that's got targeted support federally and I need support

[03:23:29] statewide. We're on comprehensive support federally and we need support, but not significant support with state, I worry that those, because of the terminology, those would get confused with stakeholders between our federal and our state designations. So that leads me back to the first consideration that Dr. Northam had proposed, which is that partially meets and then needs support.

[03:23:57] And so, you know, I'm amenable to that one. Then with that one, my worry becomes much like my colleague Ms. McPherson pointed out, we've spent two months talking about a recommendation that we then change today. And we have gotten positive feedback about approaching from lots of people. I mean, I haven't heard anything but positive on that one. And so that's where I'm wrestling with the change today and wondering if we just move ahead with the motion as we've had it out there in the field for all this time. And once again, we'll have a lot

[03:24:36] more info this time next year to see if perhaps what we've been trying to do with our descriptive labels isn't working for folks. So that's where I'm currently at. Thank you. Thank you. Dr. Wilson. Thank you. So this idea of clarity and communication and clear definition, whatever the labeling happens to be, there will be a need for clarity and clear descriptions for those in the field.

[03:25:13] And I trust that the department is prepared to do that as it has in other scenarios. To Dr. Bridges' point about the feedback that we've heard, I do worry about making a shift today after having had terminology out there in the ether for some time.

[03:25:41] and appreciate the commitment or all four of these recommendations that we're taking up today that we will come that the board the department rather will provide information and feedback and if

I recall in the motion or in the materials for on this particular item there is a notation that we will determine whether or not the labeling we'll have the opportunity to assess whether or the labeling really does get where we not just where we need to be but where our divisions need

[03:26:19] to be in terms of moving the needle forward for our students so that's my my observation yes superintendent conway yes no i appreciate that dr wilson i should also note just for to the point made by miss mcpherson earlier just so that we are uh being very clear uh with the the public in this idea of transparency is that similar to the way that the second motion is described or second action is described the first action is also time limited as currently written so this talks about this is for fall 2026 based on the 2025-26 data so that then would enable us to

[03:27:00] that does not imply an assumption that this is for all years going forward this would be for this year um with the opportunity for additional uh review for for out years mr robinson so one uh point that where i think we're mostly swimming in the same direction is there's there's two proposals here one is to move the on track to meets expectation and i i've i've not yet heard any comment you know there are having comments about the possibility of even further alignment

[03:27:35] across the four categories. But in general, I'm hearing a directional meets expectations is better than on track and more aligned to our goals and the JLARC report. I also would suggest that we not put on the table rethinking the labels that JLARC report did not push us to rethink in terms of the top category for distinguished and the first category for needs intensive support. So I think

[03:28:04] where there's discernment is specifically around the off-track movement to either what has been put out to the field, to Dr. Ridge's point, on approaching expectations, or another option, of which if we were to another option, I am also partial to partially meets expectations. And so I say all that to name that I think what's most important for the field and getting the field behind SPSF and getting our supports moving, et cetera, is to not go another year with off track.

[03:28:42] I don't think anyone wants off track. And so if put to a vote, I would vote for either the approaching expectations. And I think there's a compelling argument that that's what's been put to the field. I would also vote for partially meets expectations, because I think not only of the directionality argument, but I also think there's an urgency argument about attention that comes with that one that I'm, again, partial to.

[03:29:14] But my number one goal is to not move forward off track and not, I mean, to help the department move to something that in the field supports more so we can get people behind where this is going. And so if we were to vote for approaching expectations today, I would request that not only we revisit it in a year, but also we study the term partially expectations so that it's more seriously.

[03:29:42] Yes. I just want to double click on a point that I think has been surfaced, but I think from my lens coming in and this being my first opportunity to engage in the discussion to highlight, you know, we are at the onset of making some of these changes and we do have some time and there's some words that we have said, building trust, transparency, public will, the importance of stakeholder engagement.

[03:30:08] And I would just caution if we do want to have continued support to make sure there's not a perception that there's either a bait and switch or we did all of this stakeholder engagement as almost a performative activity.

[03:30:21] And then when, you know, just made the decision at a time, all the while I do recognize the purview of the board to make certain decisions, I think really taking a step back and thinking about the level of engagement that we have and recognizing that we do have an opportunity in the next year to make whatever revisions based off of the data that's coming in, the ongoing feedback, just to be able to really honor the stakeholder, the numerous amount of stakeholder engagement that I've read just in preparation for this meeting to be able to continue to build the trust public will and trust as we move forward.

[03:30:58] And then to double click on Dr. Wilson's point of there's an opportunity through continued communication to be able to articulate clearly not only what we're learning, but then also to gather, continue to gather more feedback. Thank you, Dr. Wilcox.

[03:31:15] Ms. Reinhart? I think we've spent a lot of time talking about this for good reason. these are important categories to be labeling, we use that word. I've heard a lot of consensus latter part of this conversation that I think, I don't feel so strongly about a specific word, but I think that the consensus on where we are for staying, I hate to say that, stay on track

[03:31:52] with the conversation, but not using that verbiage. So I'm good with where we are. So, Mr. Robinson, y'all have to raise y'all the same, so, Mr. Robinson. The other thing I want to name is if this does come back, I'd like to not only get stakeholder feedback, which I think are incredibly important, but also like to look at the data in terms of are schools in this category what's happening to them?

[03:32:25] So, I just wanted to name when we're thinking about this in the future. Let's see if our, there's a lot of, my own bias, maybe some others towards what the best label might be, is like where are we going to balance that stakeholder investment in this framework with, so that they can better improve education for students with whether we're actually improving education.

[03:32:57] Dr. Northern. Just say, and I obviously respect my colleagues' views, but I will just say that if we care about the public will and the trust, to me, the word approaching is disingenuous.

[03:33:16] I do think that approaching, again, implies positive forward movement. It does not surprise me that our folks on the ground would like the word approaching because it clearly is more positive than an objective word such as partially meets or needs support or something like that.

[03:33:33] So as a board, we can't always do what the field wants us to do, because we've definitely had some issues where Virginia, I'll just remind us that Virginia is the last state when we look at the 2019-2021 progress.

[03:33:52] We're below Mississippi. So I'll just remind you for us to continue to say that schools are approaching, conveying that they are actually moving in the right direction. And that's the message we're giving parents, to me, only continues to allow us to be accused of having an honesty gap and not being honest with stakeholders.

[03:34:15] And when you tell them their kids are approaching, they say, or their schools are approaching, they say, oh, okay, we're on the right track, okay, which is ironically why we wanted to get rid of off track, right? So because now we're implying that they're not off track, but they're on track because they're approaching. So, again, I understand that, you know, it requires us to get stakeholder feedback, but stakeholder feedback in no way implies that it's doing the best for kids and families.

[03:34:42] Yep. Thanks, Dr. Northern. You know, Deputy Superintendent Hyslip, could you just, from my clarity and the public's clarity, read through what are the categories? And we are not having numbers, correct? Is it just a category name?

[03:35:00] What do you mean not having numbers? It's like, is it exceed a five and then need significant support a one? Yeah, there's no number. It's just a name. yes okay the the four categories um starting at the sort of lowest performing is needs intensive support the next category currently is off track which we are spending a lot of time talking about approaching sorry no just give me the what is the proposed the proposed would be needs intensive

[03:35:29] support approaching expectations meets expectations distinguished great and that has that is what has been put out to the field that's what we are commenting on i think dr northern has raised some some raise the bar questions i think are appropriate you know what i'd like to share is i i agree with dr northern that um in the last four years of going through this this was an item

[03:36:03] that we did discuss but there were so many other items that it did not get its full attention that we are now giving it now and i would argue that the proposal you've made yeah i do think is clear and raises the expectations that being said i don't think any school division leader person wants to be approaching or partially anything i believe that everyone wants to be meeting or exceeding or distinguished and that where we are now we are in change management and i think that

[03:36:41] we have set a very high bar for accountability on cut scores this is part of the process around coming up with categories that assess overall performance and what i appreciate about what's on the table is that this is for this next year and that we can come back with more data to modify it if we think that it's going to provide more clarity but i i am partial i i do prefer partially meeting expectations for the record i do think that that is a clear message to the field

[03:37:19] and i don't want to be partial and no one else wants to be partial so let's let's keep the expectations high um if distinguished is where we are everyone wants to be distinguished i think everyone wants to be meeting expectations and what's on the table has gotten support and i think it would behoove us to continue the goodwill and the momentum with a clarity around opportunity to come back and modify as appropriate with that are there any additional yes

[03:37:55] I just want to join you and Dr. Northam and stand firm with the fact that I just don't believe that the word approaching is consistent with all the work that we've done regarding transparency and accountability.

[03:38:11] I think it's going to come back to harness, but if we're voting only for a one-year resolution to allow you to say approaching and we look at all of the data, then I will be consistent in my position as it relates to what we sent to the bill.

[03:38:29] But from a professional opinion, I can't agree that that word will accurately describe where a school is. And this is about school performance. And I just think we should hold schools to the same high standard that we are holding students to that are going to have to master the new cut scores coming up.

[03:38:52] As relates to two bottom categories and the federal designations, the U.S. Department education says that those that need intensive support and those that need even greater comprehensive support they're not be in the highest two categories anyway so they limit the state from putting those schools into those categories because they already recognize that those schools need intensive support

and need the funding so we'll just have to look at that a year from now but as long as we are very clear that we use an approach and only because we submitted that to the public

[03:39:30] and we don't think that the public's had enough time to weigh in on everything else. But I think that we're not being honest with ourselves as we say that that fairly characterizes what this board's position has been for the past four years about making sure that Virginia's in the top when it comes to performance.

[03:39:47] So as long as you bring all the data where these schools rank, you know, with the NAEP scores, where these schools rank on where they were last year versus this year in terms of approaching, 'cause what we see is that kids are approaching dropout, they're approaching the prison system, they're approaching doom and failure because we are not teaching them basic fundamentals and showing them how to climb the ladder.

[03:40:12] I just hold the schools and everybody else to the same standard. I give a shout out to all the people that are doing intensive tutoring, especially for the college campuses that are allowing the students to come over and especially with the HBCUs that are doing tremendous work.

[03:40:28] which I think reflects, and I can say this, reflects on the fact that we're having this tremendous increase in growth in the African-American community because everybody's just reaching out. We're trying to get beyond all these labels and get kids to a point of success.

[03:40:44] I just want all the students, the English learners, English learners, and everybody else to take the same position because we're at a point in America where if we don't do this, Students are gonna be replaced with robots and AI technology that is gonna make public school systems almost obsolete.

[03:41:07] So I think we gotta be realistic about where we're going. And the fact that time is not with us anymore, we gotta speed up the track. - Superintendent Conway, and then... - Yeah, I just wanna add a point of clarification.

[03:41:24] If I take what I've heard from a few of you, I think as Ms. McPherson just noted, and as I heard from Mr. Robinson as well, I just want to clarify that we would, if this body were, whatever this body decides on, noting the very temporal nature of that decision, that it'd be for one year, that we would come back to you before a year's time had passed on this discussion, as I reflect on both Dr. Wilson's point about the clarity and the description and then Dr. Maxwell's point around sort of deep engagement I think if anything you can take away from this conversation is that there is sort of

[03:42:01] additional time need to be spent with a broad set of stakeholders to your point Dr. Northern so that we can come back and say this might be the bridge term for right now but as we reflect on you know where we're going sort of making sure that we have a broadly distributed set of stakeholders from families to educators, practitioners, business, as you've referred to, Dr. McPherson, that we would bring this to you sooner than next summer so that there were sufficient time for that engagement.

[03:42:35] Great. Dr. Maxwell. Yes. I think I'd like to emphasize that I recognize the approaching or partially meets, and they do land different. And as somebody who's been assessed as a principal, I know firsthand when you hear that and your school's tied to it, both the emotions of it, but then also going back to your community. And I think the point that I really want to make sure I'm clear on is that whatever the decision of the board is with the term that we change to make sure that we use

[03:43:11] communication at the onset as the vehicle to not only talk about the change and the importance to the field but then also acknowledging the depth of engagement that we have so that there's that both and in the communication so that because we are at the onset of rolling this out it's just a continued way to build the momentum that has been an intentional part i know of the discussions during my onboarding of how important it is to try to bring the community along to the magnitude of the types of changes that we're trying to make. And so, and I do appreciate Ms. McPherson's

[03:43:46] comments about, we've got to move now. And as a parent of two kids in the system, like, I see it. I have one, I have a sophomore, like, we got to go. And so not to bring down the expectations or even signal that we, the expectations don't need to be modified, but just ensuring that we are moving on a parallel track. Yes, Ms. Kilgore. I could just say ditto to everything that's been said, and I've sat here and listened, and I feel like I come, I've been on this board for three years as a, not a layman, but as someone who came straight from the classroom. I didn't deal with

[03:44:22] policy, didn't even deal with administration because I chose to stay in the classroom, but whatever words we use, and everybody said this in different levels, perception of those words will be different based on the person, because that's, that's, we're humans. So I think I agree with the one year, you know, let's get, you know, to come back to us, see how this works. I think it's a fluid situation and it should be a fluid situation. It's not, it should not be written in stone to see how this works. And whatever terms we use, I have, I came with an open mind to this meeting

[03:44:59] about it because, because of what I just said, I think, I think any term you use is going to be perceived differently based on who's reading it. But whatever we choose today, whatever terminology we choose to use. Underneath it, you know, like when it's being described in detail to the field, to the community, to parents, there could be another description underneath it to further clarify what we mean by those words. Maybe that's, you know, some people may say that's too much explanation, but if it helps someone understand what we really mean by what our goal is, then that's what we should be doing with this terminology. So whatever word we use,

[03:45:38] whatever terms we use, there can be a further clarification, and I'm sure that our Department of Education will do a great job with doing that. Thank you for your hard work thus far. Great. Mr. Robinson? It's exciting that we seem to be swimming in the same direction, and I'm wondering if we should have a motion or movement. I'm not proposing one now, but I'm asking in terms of wanting to bring this back in less than a year to consider both the description

[03:46:14] to the point that's been making a broad stakeholder feedback the point that's been made and consideration of other options um versus only feedback on um so i'm uh not i've not made that motion but it seems like a motion to that direction may be used well let's let's see where we are right now so we um we have a motion that is on the table uh there has been discussion about

[03:46:47] all four items i think item number one there has been uh some discussion around possible changes but then there has been an overarching i would say clarity around that this is in this next year this is next year's proposal and the expectation is that superintendent and staff would come back to us in a timely way with real data with possible updates on language but also opportunities to engage the public i do think it is important that we go with the community while keeping expectations

[03:47:26] high i feel confident that we have done that that being said mr robinson i think you are you Are you suggesting that there is a motion around those actions, around timeline and coming back? Or do we

feel like the superintendent staff have clarity or superintendent, would you like clarity around timeline, data and expectations?

[03:47:47] I think this is clear in terms of I hear three things as we inevitably by if whatever this body describes, if it is time limited to just this fall, then it means that we must then come back to this body with a decision for either a future year or future years, and we will be very circumspect on how we make sure that we write these recommendations to account for that, that you would want what the label was, the description, so that we're not just having a kind of conversation about that one or two words,

[03:48:26] but the broader, how we would describe, to use Ms. Kilgore's terms, of what we mean by those words. And then that is part of the process, building on Dr. Maxwell and Mr. Robinson's point, that we would solicit deep feedback to Dr. Northern's point with a broad set of stakeholders, including families, you know, as the best proxy for the student experience, and that we would make sure that we included multiple options.

[03:48:54] so it was less of like are you positive about this particular term but a broader set of um of options that suffice mr robinson yes i'd be excited about for the current proposal great um i also want to just name that because of the work of the sport around raising cut scores we should anticipate that the data may be tougher coming back and that um not everyone's going to be distinguished and that that is our commitment to I think transparency and having an honest

[03:49:32] conversation and so again why I am I do not personally like the approaching I am on board with supporting what has been proposed because of what has been said but again as this board I think we do better when we are collaborative and move together while keeping standards high while also continue to engage in rigorous conversation and debate and Dr.

[03:50:00] Northern, I am very appreciative. You have been a stalwart advocate around this and have raised this question. And I hope that you will continue to do that because it holds us accountable to clarity, to communication and to high standards.

[03:50:15] So I wanted to say that with that being said, there is a motion to approve for final review. the four proposals in the VDO's plan and timeline to strengthen the SPSF. So is there a motion?

[03:50:34] I'll make that motion. Is there a second? Second. We'll do a roll call. Ms. Reinhardt? Dr. Bridges? Aye. Mrs. McPherson? Aye. Mr. Robinson? Aye. Dr. Northern? Dr. Wilson? Aye. Dr. Maxwell?

[03:50:55] Mrs. Kilgore? And chair votes aye. Thank you. Okay. And the record should reflect, Madam President said all of the action was for one year period and the second the motion that was made by Mr. Robinson that we would bring back the data related to approaching feedback has to go out to the field for comments. Great. Ms. McPherson do you want that to do you want a motion for that? I mean I think I think the superintendent has taken yeah I don't think we have to make a

[03:51:33] separate motion. I think that the way the item is worded, it only applies to one year, and I think it is going to ask that certain items come back to us for review and that they send it out to the field. We just want to make sure the minutes are consistent in reflection of the intent of the discussion. Absolutely. I want to thank the superintendent, too, for being flexible enough to understand that, you know, there are differing opinions and we all are in this together and

[03:52:10] great minds, you know, as we deliberate together, I think we come up with good results. Great. Thank you. There's also a line, Ms. McPherson, that even reasonable people see things differently. Great. And reasonable people need lunch as well. So with that, we are going to adjourn for a brief lunch and we'll reconvene in a half hour.

[03:52:34] So let's do it at 1:15.

[03:52:39] Thank you.

[04:35:37] Thank you for that brief lunch break. We are now ready to reconvene back in session. We have item F for final review of the final stage of standards for licensed daycare centers.

[04:35:53] Ms. Carol, you are? Excellent. Good afternoon to the board. I'm happy to be here today. I am joined today by Jessica Silva. She is one of our associate directors of the Office of Child Care, Health and Safety, and expert and dedicated worker for the regulations we are looking at today, has been involved with these for the whole process, which, as I will remind you, has been quite a long one thus far.

[04:36:26] So we are here today to look at the final revised regulations for Virginia's Child Day Centers for final review. These final regulations reflect a multi-year review process with extensive stakeholder input over the multiple stages.

[04:36:45] This has included over 750 collective public comments and endorsements at multiple steps from both our Early Childhood Advisory Committee and the Board of Education. Once finalized, this regulatory action will repeal the existing regulation and replace it with this new comprehensive document that is restructured and formatted and organized by different subject matter.

[04:37:14] As a reminder, these regulations will set forth the health and safety expectations for over 2,600 child day centers located across the Commonwealth. So really, a big impact on a large number of centers that are operated in various different sizes, structures, and locations across the Commonwealth.

[04:37:35] Throughout this process, which is approaching five years of work at this point, we have held true to several goals. The primary goal has been to strengthen child safety, so make sure that we are developing regulations and requirements that reduce the largest risks to children.

[04:37:57] We have worked to align these standards with the federal mandates and national safety standards, referring to the expertise and national best practice as we can. We have sought to streamline requirements to make a document that is easier to use and one that reduces regulatory burdens.

[04:38:19] We have sought to enhance flexibility to meet the needs of the field. And ultimately, the goal is that we are improving compliance and creating standards that are easier to implement and cover the most critical components of child safety.

[04:38:36] So as I mentioned, we began this process way back in December 2021, feels like a very long time ago. This was when we kicked off the work working with the Early Childhood Advisory Committee as well as a specifically formed stakeholder workgroup which together met for about 20 hours or over 20 hours to draft the initial recommendations. This informed the Nora which

[04:39:05] was published in June 2023. We then did a public comment period and then took that back to the ECAC and have been I think this is the third time we have gone through the cycle of bringing these regulations to the board so we brought them for the Nora in 2023 we brought the proposed standards in 2024 and then here we are today in June and August of 2026 with the final stage draft so

[04:39:41] Jeff Williams was here last right here in June presenting these standards to you Since then, we have continued to develop our plan for implementation and rollout. Again, these are used by 2,600 sites, and so having an intentional and thoughtful set of training and resources for those sites will be critical as we move into the final stages of implementation.

[04:40:10] We have also continued to review and work on a set of guidance that details the best practices for screens and digital use for young children. And so this is a topic that we have discussed with the board before it actually came up when we were here at the board in 2024.

[04:40:32] And in response to the conversation related to digital media at that time, the department began developing a set of guidelines or guidance document that would be available as a technical assistance tool for sites once these standards are implemented.

[04:40:53] The benefits of a guidance document like this is that it can really provide technical assistance that goes a little bit more in-depth than what is typically included in the regulations before you. It can provide tips, strategies, and it is also something that we can adjust as more information or research comes out to make sure that we are staying in alignment with this rapidly evolving, and as we saw today, very hot topic for educators.

[04:41:27] And again, following approval, the VDOE will continue to prepare for implementation of this work, doing a further assessment of the supports providers will need. So following board approval, the regulation would proceed to executive review, followed by a 30-day adoption period.

[04:41:48] We plan to seek a delayed effective date, so no fewer than 60 days from when it is fully signed off on, again, to make sure that we can give plenty of notice and support to the field in making sure folks are aware of what is included in the regulations.

[04:42:07] So we are very excited to be at this stage today. Again, this has been a huge undertaking to do a full revision and repeal of a set of regulations of this size and substance is no small task.

[04:42:23] We have worked hard to incorporate the views of many and to really strike a balance between incorporating something that meets everybody's needs and finding really what the key messages the key themes are that we need to bring forward and making sure that ultimately we are creating a set of regulations that are again establishing the health and safety expectations that we need in our early learning environments to enable learning fundamentally a healthy and safe environment is the baseline without health and safety no learning is happening parents cannot

[04:43:02] trust and feel comfortable that their children is getting the best experience possible and so we really see these as the most fundamental and critical function of our early childhood birth of five team and with that we are seeking approval of the final regulations standards for licensed child day centers which would enable it to move forward for executive review and final adoption thank you miss carroll superintendent conway wonderful um thank you deputy superintendent

[04:43:36] carol and uh uh miss silva for your your work on this as we go into this um and i just want to make sure that we're all on the same page with some of our our newer board members um it's important to delineate when we think about our work around quality measurement and improvement or vqb5 that higher bar is one that we set and that's when we think about the learning or the quality expectation for programs that take public dollars, right? So the idea is, you know, unlike our K-12 system or sort of in some ways similar, that there's a higher bar than when you take public

[04:44:16] dollars. These health and safety regulations and the kind of the requirement around being set, you know, to be licensed by a state is for a much broader set of programs, right, including certain programs that have no interest in taking any public funds at any point and so this is intended to be more of a baseline as a sort of a minimum expectation in sharp contrast to vqb5 which you know arguably is is more aspirational in nature as a part of that

[04:44:54] you'll see quite an emphasis there's two things that are really to note number one is we're incredibly sensitive to cost impact right because this is you know we have to kind of recognize that we as the state are not paying for these services and so striking that right balance and this was a very much a priority for the prior administration in terms of how do you strike this balance between seeking to keep young learners including our youngest learners healthy and safe but also recognizing that you need to operate in all of our different jurisdictions and you have to

[04:45:29] to be very sensitive to cost and this has been kind of an emerging issue as you think about why is child care so expensive some of that is because so much of it is personnel but there also have a time certain states have put additional requirements on and every dollar in requirement often translates into a dollar that parents have to pay right because the vast majority of the system is not subsidized you know by the state um and then i think the second piece is with that sensitivity in mind you know then being very thoughtful around if what we are providing as a minimum for instance so I'll give the example of you know this

[04:46:07] or whether it's teacher-child ratios whether it's sort of activities being very thoughtful about the requirement to inform families most of our programs have you know lower teacher-child ratios than is set forth here largely because they want to they want to sort of they recognize how hard it is to hire and keep staff with those ratios so folks often go above and beyond and where the department always wants to be very clear is making sure for instance that it's not only enough to set out expectations around daily activities right but in the case of infants who are nonverbal children that there's also a daily

[04:46:45] reporting requirement right because that is um how we help make sure that families are aware um of what their of what their children are experiencing um and so i just want to kind of make sure as you think about as we as we move across topics when it's our public k-12 system where we are making an investment right and we sort of are sort of we are kind of thoughtful around we've got at least in concept a funding formula then kind of addresses the cost of what require versus places where we set regulations, where it is not the state but is in fact private

[04:47:20] payers who are responsible for the impact of those regulations and trying to strike this balance between health and safety as a minimum but also some recognition that this is a largely private market.

[04:47:36] Thanks Superintendent. Daniel, are there follow-up questions related to the standards of child daycare centers? Mr. Robinson? First of all, incredible work across almost five years, it sounds like, to both ensure these child care centers are promoting health and safety more strongly while also streamlining and simplifying the document and the requirements to make it more likely providers can do that.

[04:48:10] And I was heartened to hear about the technical assistance guidance that the team's working on on virtual media and am still curious about the possibility after I support approving these today, given a four year process and all the community engagement.

[04:48:28] But this process started before a lot of the research and public opinion and knowledge has shifted about the importance of digital screen use for health and safety. And my understanding, knowing that, again, these institutions are not taking public dollars, and so therefore the bar is different, It still says after, as I understand it, toddlers' media use up to two hours per day is permitted if the center operates more than six hours a day.

[04:49:04] And my understanding is our definition of toddler is something like 16 months. And I find that, again, I trust most centers aren't actually doing that. But I find it still deeply troubling to imagine a 17-month-old child on screen use.

[04:49:27] And then even beyond that, it talks about for children two years and older, no more than a total of two hours per day when content is not based on curriculum and educational, which seems to place no limit on the amount of time that someone can be on screen.

[04:49:46] So I saw there was a lot of public comment in the document shared here on this topic, and in our response, we cite the American Academy of Pediatrics guidance, which, you know, as I understand it, is no screen usage until at least an older age.

[04:50:06] I think I was confused on if it's 18 months or two years in their guidance. But then even then, it's up to one hour per day for educational use only. And again, maybe that is, I could see, I would just like it studied more.

[04:50:23] And it sounds like there's a plan to study that more. And I just wanted more amplification of what that plan is so that the board can support it going forward. Yeah, absolutely. And that's a great question. And so this absolutely has been a topic of discussion going back to the initial work group.

[04:50:42] And you're right. this is a rapidly evolving topic um i think the the recommendations have been revised in recent years um and and very well could be going forward um i think you know again the benefit of a guidance and technical assistance document is that we can commit to reviewing that without you know a five year regulation timeline um the way that this has been and that's that is what we would like to do and we are happy to engage the board and the advisory committee in that process going forward

[04:51:17] we have a draft of a guidelines or guidance document for that and we can engage the advisory committee in that the advisory committee does have a pediatric representative as part of the membership who was also involved in the work group in the initial discussions and so i think i think through those bodies and again we could absolutely bring that here for for uh you know as a education and discussion item um if that were helpful um going forward that's great and again i don't think we need clarity today but i'd be interested in that discussion not just on what the guidance is

[04:51:55] but what are our options for at least considering um more restrictions thank you superintendent yeah so i think um and i appreciate that mr robinson i think part of the challenge i know we've heard this um as we think through uh the kind of idea of episodic how to sort of set the right parameters around around timelines i mean one thing i just want to sort of acknowledge up front is that there's sort of multiple sections here right that talk about daily activities and

[04:52:32] this is again as as you think about it right just taking a big step back you know our inspectors led by jeff and jessica amy and the team are out there at least twice a year right but this is not this is we're not there every day right and so they're sort of trying to kind of balance between where the things that are have to be bright lines because our folks cannot enforce in virginia uh you know a license is a property

right and so like we've been criticized when things are directional in nature or sort of you know values based because that then puts across our

[04:53:08] 100 staff on the health and safety team that then means there's 100 different 100 different interpretations of that and so you as you look at you know sort of that as being kind of an absolute you know black and white no more than that um you know and any because you could say let's do it within a month but then on that day the question then comes down to okay if you're watching a movie Like, have you watched a movie in the past month, right, and we have no ability to enforce on that, right.

[04:53:34] So that's kind of just so you understand the per day, which not like because we want 200 days of this, it has a lot to do with kind of, you know, the necessity around how enforcement works. Similarly, you see we talk later in daily activities about this sort of the minimum number of outdoor activities, right, and that it has to be an hour a day was still the idea, but most places have more right morning and afternoon but we even get into detail on how to do on our rainy days with the gut again the idea that jeff and jessica have staff who have to go out and on one particular day kind of hold folks accountable for that so there's this balance between what is our signaling to the

[04:54:11] field around kind of what these limits are and then what is enforceable in a you're only there for one day you know we do not you know we nor do we have the capacity to sort of you know evaluate your daily schedule every day so i think you know each of these items on under section c were uh you know sort of between the pediatrician and the and the providers kind of negotiated um you know that said i think as as noted that that was you know in 2022 and 2023 and this just is moving so rapidly

[04:54:49] And so really sort of thinking through the guidelines, being willing to kind of bring those back and share those with this group, and then ultimately, you know, sort of, you remain open to, you know, potentially surgically going in and sort of making some adjustments to this section as we need over time.

[04:55:09] The other just real challenge I want to name is that and part of our reason for getting these regs done, in addition to it having already been five years, is we have to then roll these out, get new technology in place and be able to give you the data.

[04:55:25] Right now, because we are using old regs and an old technology system, if Mr. Robinson were to ask, well, how much are we being cited on this? We do not have the ability to give you, you know, the data that you would need to inform a decision.

[04:55:41] So I think there's this balancing act between we recognize this is very much a bare minimum. I do want you to know that the pediatrician was in the room and we've always had pediatrician representation from AAP on your early child advisory committee meeting a group brother and that we've already begun producing guidelines on that, which we can bring back to you and that can evolve more rapidly and that we anticipate we need to come back to this, you know, in large part.

[04:56:08] I mean, there also might be a consideration around whether or not this would be covered by any potential legislation as well, if there is a direction to come from the General Assembly around setting minimums. Dr. Northern? Yeah, no, I totally appreciate and agree with all those comments.

[04:56:29] I would suggest, in looking, we're about to release a report on this, I'm not a day job, and in looking at a lot of these regulations, some of them are making the distinction between those that don't require direct supervision and those that are used for instructional purposes versus not. And so we may, as you think about this in the future, try to put some guidelines around there needs to be direct supervision

so we're not leaving a two-year-old to stare at a screen by himself. And there's some type of instructional purpose where they're not just

[04:57:05] watching cars because, you know, and so that will let, that's a little bit of tightening up some of loopholes and also just that I think the research around toddlers is increasingly stronger and stronger so as you continue to look into that I know that LAUSD just passed a policy that's getting a lot of attention and they have I think prohibited visual media for toddlers period yeah so anyway just I and as you continue to do your research there's lots of more of these bands and guidelines is so out coming coming for these smallest learners and so that should be helpful for us

[04:57:45] yeah absolutely um and i i saw that also come out recently and that's absolutely the the type of thing that we want to be able to take back reference understand how it's working and again if that means revising these regulations going forward if that means responding to a legislation a legislative action that comes out in response to that research or in the interim providing technical assistance that relays that research and those recommendations. All of those seem like

[04:58:16] possible paths forward to me. Great. If there are no further questions or comments, is there a motion to approve the final revisions to the standards of licensed day centers? So moved. Is there a second?

[04:58:34] Thank you. Ms. Reinhart? Aye. Dr. Bridges? Aye. Mrs. McPherson? Aye. Mr. Robinson? Dr. Northern Dr. Wilson Dr. Maxwell and chair votes aye thank you thank you okay or for final review of the updates to the guidelines of the academic and career plans we think we have

[04:59:06] Deputy Superintendent McClary there you go good afternoon Madam Chair Superintendent Conway members of the board I'm Dwayne McClary Deputy Superintendent of Student Pathways and Technology have along with me Dr. Michelle Wallace she's assistant superintendent for instruction for VDOE we are pleased to join you again to bring forth for final review the updates for the academic and career path guidelines these guidelines originally adopted in 2009 and mostly recently

[04:59:44] updated in 2024 remain a critical part of how we support students in developing their interests understanding and strengthening and planning meaningful pathways uh going forward uh through trajectory through k-12 i the only thing we've added since we've been here recently is we've added some data from divisions so the departments surveyed school divisions in the summer of 2026 this was to gather information on the current acpp and acp platforms used for the 25-26

[05:00:20] school year and plan used through the 27-28 and a total of 83 of our divisions responded to the survey and the respondents were asked to select all platforms currently used in each of their schools at different school levels as a result counts reflect the number of divisions reporting for use of these platforms and should not be seen as exclusive choices most divisions were have multiple platforms simultaneously. Dr. Wallace, anything you want to share?

[05:00:54] So just in looking at that data, it starts on your board packet for this item on page four. You can see the different platforms. Major Clarity is a platform that a lot of school divisions use.

[05:01:10] Some start using it even in elementary school for those academic and career planning portfolios. some for our elementary schools are doing more of a google kind of drive where they're using a local process so you can see it varies it probably varies because of the size of the school division the financial resources they have some of these products are paid products some products are not you know

they're free for the school to use such as Virginia wizards so we just wanted to provide a little bit more information for you on what school divisions are doing as far as elementary middle and high schools and how they are already implementing this. I do want to reiterate that we

[05:01:48] will be offering training after following the approval of the guidelines so that we can give divisions some more direct and specific support, and that will be done jointly between the Office of Advanced Learning and the, sorry, sorry Tim, the Office of Advanced Learning and the Office of CTE.

[05:02:10] so it's a it's it's a joint effort which is why we're co-presenting this together doing a lot of breaking down those silos and making sure that we are collaboratively working at our agency showing our divisions how they can do the same upon your approval this guidance will be submitted to town hall for a 30-day public comment period in accordance to our administrative process and any technical edits will be made by our staff thank you superintendent Conway absolutely thank

[05:02:43] you deputy superintendent McClary and assistant superintendent Wallace um we uh upon kind of hearing questions from this group again did this survey and continue to want to bring data to you all to inform your decisions i also just want to note as we reflect on and the conversation earlier today on what parents care about and what we heard loud and clear from stakeholders across the Commonwealth was this idea of starting early when we think about opening, in particular, children's minds about the many things that they could do after high school

[05:03:23] and that, you know, starting, you know, starting that process in high school was too late. And so really thinking about how do we support guidance that makes sure that that is happening across our 1800 schools, that we are thinking about those opportunities in elementary, middle, and high school, and really helping students track progress about this.

[05:03:48] Sometimes in the past, this has been a kind of nice-to-have activity, but is not core to really thinking through how do you think about the relationship between what might interest you and where you could have a potential profession and what coursework you're taking.

[05:04:05] And so as you look at these materials, the most successful or effective implementation of this is really connecting those dots, so that ultimately comes back to what we heard when we had the opportunity to hear from middle and high school students on the Commonwealth Listening Tour is that they want school to be relevant, right, and they are most engaged.

[05:04:25] Obviously, they understand that there are requirements around reading and writing and math, but that they are most engaged when they can see in their day-to-day work a connection to what they are passionate about and what inspires them.

[05:04:40] So I just want to recognize that this is a joint effort across the department in partnership with the field around something that's not only about requirement around career planning, but ultimately is how we continue to sort of more deeply engage students, reduce distraction, decrease absenteeism, increase attendance because our students can see the relevance of coming to school. Great, thank you. Are there any questions? Okay, Dr. Norton. There's just one thing that I

[05:05:18] think we could do more clearly. We talk about career pathways quite a bit, but if we could connect those to Virginia's CTE clusters, right, we're not making that connection for folks and a CTE completion, right, program completion. I think another thing, I mean, CTE state conferencing thing, is that we could ask divisions explicitly to align to their regional labor market as they're encouraging

students. We've got great data on what regional labor market demand looks like across our divisions. And we know, like Campton Roads, for instance, it's maritime and defense,

[05:05:54] you know, it's agriculture in other parts of our state. So the more we can, you know, include that language. And also, what was my last one? Oh, just define career pathways. It felt like kind of abstract. And I think one way to do that is to tie it to the ACP pathways to the career clusters.

[05:06:13] And we may even have a link to the high demand credentials list that some of our partners are maintaining. That would be another way to kind of tighten these various pieces of work that we have going on. Thank you, Dr. Northam. With that, is there a motion to approve the proposed revisions to the ACP guidelines? Oops, sorry, there's one more question.

[05:06:39] Relative to students' decision to direction between CEs or whatever, so where do they make that change? I mean, is there going to be another? I guess that's a little difficult. I mean, we just rolling it out, it's just implementing it. But if a student in eighth grade says, guess what, dig it out, don't want to be thinking about these other things, because you're trying to mirror

[05:07:13] the academic course, what's where they want to go to. So I'm just wondering, how do they shift? I think it's important to definitely look at understanding, helping students understand what the clusters are, but also ensuring that we're preparing students with durable skills that can across multiple careers. And so I think it's important for us to ensure that when we look at enrollment, enlistment, and employment, like there are some durable skills that align with some high wage, high occupancy careers that we need to ensure that our students have so that they can move back and forth between the two. If they want to go between veterinarian or agriculture, like they

[05:07:51] have that ability to do that. But I think being entrenched and allowed to be able to have experiences with those opportunities are important for our students and we're looking to develop those those pathways and just making sure that the principals and the guidance counselors know that when they're helping the parents and the students shape their you know ideas on these forms that there's an opportunity to change making sure that's clear yeah so that's that'll be part of the training but that's something that already happens in divisions as they're going through this is an annual plan so this plan is looked at annually kids can change their minds certainly

[05:08:27] over from one year to the next and as they're looking at these plans their parents are also involved in looking at the plans and so um you know if they do make a choice um that hey i don't i don't want to go you know they're not when they write these plans they're not committing to do employment enrollment or enlistment that's kind of on the back end of our data analysis of what their pathways have been and where the schools will get credits. This planning process, which has been in place for quite some time, is more of an annual look to make sure that students

[05:09:04] are taking the right courses in alignment with what their interests are, knowing that those interests could change, or there are even life situations. I mean, I've experienced with kids where things in life have impacted their career choices, and they no longer want to do that path, and they want to do this path. And so that's certainly at the school level, but we will encourage that through our training and just re-emphasize that it's okay for kids to change their mind. I think we all probably changed our minds. I know I did even in college a couple of times. Yes, I think the data says that even in college, kids change their majors six times.

[05:09:40] Exactly. Which is perfectly fine for kids to explore their options. Doctor? yes yeah absolutely so i think the the the the kind of difference here is uh mr mcpherson is that you what this is a forcing mechanism right that kind of you know makes sure that guidance counselors parents educators students are having this conversation on an annual basis they are asked to write out multiple years right so again the way i can think of it again as a parent of two middle schoolers right now is in the spring i'm often asked to just pick classes for next year

[05:10:18] but they're without this there's not a mechanism that says okay we'll have the classes that we choose next year relate to you know high school and beyond but just because you know you write down you expect to take this class in 10th grade there's no requirement that you actually have to take that class in 10th grade it's just a forcing mechanism and a a means to get folks to lay out a couple of years, rather than just make the decision on the schedule for next year.

[05:10:47] First of all, I love this again. I said this last time. I was surprised when I learned about these plans starting in elementary school. It is aligned to what I see as research and best practices. We need a forcing mechanism to Superintendent Conway's point. So first of all, I just applaud the great work. And secondly, when I have forcing mechanisms placed upon me, sometimes I have a tendency when I'm busy to just complete it out of compliance and you know this is a pretty massive forcing mechanism for every single student across in every single school

[05:11:25] across the entire commonwealth and uh and again that that's always going to be imperfect and we only have so many many resources to monitor but I I would wonder you know what does wild success look like you know three to five years from now and how do we know not just the input that every you know what percentage of students are completing these and in what um domain are they completing them but how will we know if if we're seeing to uh dr wallace's point about what we want to see uh courses more relevant or uh motivation higher or you again i don't know what the

[05:12:02] measurement would be or is reasonable uh uh but i i would wonder uh what uh how we'll know if we get an update three years from now on how this is going whether it's successful more than just input depth great thank you is there a motion to approve the proposed revisions to the acp guidelines so moved is there a second okay dr bridges hi miss mcpherson

[05:12:34] mr robinson hi dr northern dr wilson dr maxwell hi and chair votes aye thank you very much thank you we are at um letter h to final review of the 2325 biennial approval of the education endorsement programs still work director of teacher education good afternoon president ashton board members and

[05:13:08] superintendent conway i come to you today for final review of the 2023 2025 biennial approval education endorsement programs as required by the regulations governing the review and approval of education programs in Virginia. Last board meeting, I came to present it for first review and stated that the regulations require each institution of higher education to demonstrate that as education endorsement programs meet the standards of biennial approval.

[05:13:37] All educator preparation programs met every required standing during the biennial review. The Advisory Board on Teacher Education and Licensure has reviewed and approved this report. The Superintendent of Prevalent Instruction recommends that the Board approve Aptel's recommendation to grant approved status to all Virginia Edge College and University Education Preparation Endorsement Programs listed in the 2023-2025 Biennial Report.

[05:14:07] Thank you. Superintendent Conway, any comments, questions? Dr. Bridges? Just a statement similar to last time when we had this under first review. I'm just stating for the record acknowledging my employment with Virginia Commonwealth University, and therefore I do have a personal interest in the item, although my department is not a teacher prep department, noting that Virginia Commonwealth University is one of the many institutions of higher ed addressed in this item and affirming my ability to participate fairly objectively and in the public

[05:14:43] issues. Thank you. That was a dodo. That was the same. Yes, but I will acknowledge my employment at the University of Richmond. I do have a personal interest in that university, but noting that the university is one of the many institutions addressed in this item, I affirm that I am able to participate fairly objectively and in the public. Thank you. Dr. Northern? So I do not work at a university which which may um may be uh revealed as i give this comment um there are 481

[05:15:22] programs they have met all every single indicator like if you go through this pro there's not one not met so i understand this is a compliance document like i we all understand what compliance documentation is but i would submit that it means very little when we have you know multiple standards and and we are allowing programs to self-certify and then the department unfortunately and i get it it takes time but they don't have a measure by which to actually verify that these criteria have been met so i'm not going to hold up any vote today but i would just submit in the

[05:16:02] future. If we could begin to try to make this, I understand we have a cooperative relationship with these universities, we want that cooperative relationship to continue, but we also, there's an element of consumer protection here as well, you could argue it from that angle, and I would just say let's try to look a little bit more in depth at measure five, which is contribution to student achievement, which is I think the measure we care most about, and trying to put a little bit more meat on the bones relative to that particular measure. I know this would be a big reach for Virginia, but there are several states, Tennessee and Louisiana are a couple that actually do track

[05:16:42] their graduates' effectiveness after they leave these programs and try to, you know, have some measure of accountability in that way. Again, not going to hold anything up, but I would like us in the future to try to move towards something that differentiates a little bit more between universities instead of having 481 meet all the indicators throughout.

[05:17:03] I appreciate that and I will also say that it um and additional information I presented maybe I think in December of last year about uh process as far as reviewing our programs there is another intense project um process that we go through which is CAPE and it's done every seven years and it actually has five different standards that go in more depth for each program and so we have outside volunteers and state representatives that serve on those teams that review the data and they talk about and they review teacher effectiveness and they follow their graduates.

[05:17:40] And so that is done regularly throughout the year in addition to one of these reports. When I was looking back at the creation of the biennial report, the biennial report I think was rather I know was created before the regulations stipulated that we had to be a member of CAPE and go through the CAPE process. And so I think this might have been a report that was put in place in the meanwhile before we go into CAPE. So they are being reviewed rigorously and that is something I've spoken to currently recently with our deputy about possibly bringing CAPE reports when we do them to the board so that we can highlight all the wonderful things that they're doing.

[05:18:21] thank you okay just to clarify question in the different numbers the attachment indicates 36 institutions what are the 400 you're referencing programs programs within the 36 okay thank you for the clarification okay is there a motion to approve abtel's recommendation to grant approved status to all virginia college and university education endorsement programs listed in the

[05:18:51] attached 2325 by annual report is there a second okay dr bridges aye mrs mcpherson aye mr robertson aye dr northern dr wilson aye dr maxwell aye and chair votes aye thank you okay moving on to item i miss berta the chief operating officer first and final review of the

[05:19:27] recommendations regarding the literary fund loan applications approved is that right are we on the same page yes okay literary fund loan applications approved for release of loan funds thank you thank you good afternoon madam president members of the board and superintendent conway today's item before you is a first and final review request for the literary fund loan release to allow school divisions to move forward with the completion of their identified school construction project as a reminder the literary fund provides low interest loans for new school construction for additions or permanent improvements to existing schools to help provide students with

[05:20:07] a safe and secure learning environment school divisions repay these loans over a period of determined time in their application with interest today's literary loan release request is for norfolk city public schools they applied for the loan in the 2024 open application period and have now submitted all of the required documentation needed for the request requested loan to be released by the board norfolk city public schools is requesting a loan for the purpose of construction of a replacement maury high school with a programming operated capacity of 1900 students

[05:20:42] which will consist of a four-story building totaling 331 000 square feet one story will include an auditorium three art classrooms a digital lab three music classrooms a gymnasium with lockers, health classrooms and a cafeteria slash kitchen and an administrative suite and a secure entrance. The second floor will contain two special education classrooms, a culinary arts classroom and lab, a guidance suite media center with makerspace and four collaboration rooms and a JROTC classroom. Two health classrooms, weight room, wrestling room and fitness room

[05:21:19] And the third and fourth floors of each house, each will house two 24 regular classrooms, eight science labs and classrooms, and a teacher planning room arranged around three learning commons, as well as six resource rooms, a staff dining room, one drama classroom, work rooms, conference rooms, storage, restroom facilities, and security offices also will be found on the third and fourth levels.

[05:21:47] This new building is being designed to meet LEED certified sustainable design standards. Norfolk Public Schools is requesting a literary fund loan for the project in the amount of \$25 million, payable over 20 years, with an eligible 3% annual loan rate.

[05:22:04] The superintendent of public instruction recommends that the board waive first review and approve the release of the literary fund loan as requested by Norfolk Public Schools based on the loan amounts, term, and eligible annual interest rates requested in their loan application.

[05:22:20] Thank you. Board members, Dr. Wilson. Thank you. Thanks for this information. Just a quick question. Do we, it's 1,900 students. Yes. 30 some. 331.

[05:22:36] Yeah, square feet. What is the average size of a high school these days in terms of both enrollment and square footage? Do we have a general sense? It drastically varies by school division.

Certainly, recognizing that, yeah. Yeah, I think in your larger school divisions such as Norfolk, they generally are between 1,900 to 2,100 students. They're pretty large as compared to your rural school divisions, which would have a much smaller population in their high school.

[05:23:03] or that geography or that that part of the or the type of locality yes that's an average urban that would be big school it is a big school and i also know three four different stories it is four stories yeah up and out got it thank you thank you miss mcpherson do we know what the decline in enrollment is a lot of discussion about they were having significant decline in enrollment and And they also closed a significant number of schools.

[05:23:40] Do we know how that played into them now building this one gigantic? I do not know. I know Morey High School has been in existence for quite some time. And so this is certainly a replacement school. What I will say is noted in their application, it also is a project that is costing \$177 million.

[05:24:00] And so the portion that they are requesting from the literary loan is small in comparison. i i don't know how it played out in their decision i do know they closed a large number of schools over the last several years okay if there are no other questions is there a motion to waive first review and approve the release of the leary fund loan requested by the school division based on their amounts and terms in the report as presented to the board so moved is there a second

[05:24:34] second uh dr bridges hi mrs mcpherson okay thank you mr robinson dr northern dr wilson hi dr maxwell and chair votes i thank you thank you there's one more for you right yep okay let's go on to item j so this is a different mechanism to give school divisions funding to support school

[05:25:09] construction today's item before you is a first and final review of the recommended grant awards for the School Construction Assistance Program, also referred as SCAP for fiscal year 2026. During this award cycle, there was \$209,251,437 available for distribution to school divisions.

[05:25:29] A minimum of 65 points on a 100-point scale must be achieved through the application process to qualify. School projects and regional CTE programs are eligible to apply, and the Board of Education adopted criteria in the June meeting were used for this application period. Under this program, public schools and regional CTE programs, construction, addition, or major renovation projects meeting the following three criterias qualified to be submitted to VDOE for funding.

[05:25:59] Those projects are either in local planning phases or already planned, documenting and currently approved capital improvement plans, or regional CTE program and capital improvement plans. The projects have to lack sufficient funding or financing to cover the cost of the project, and those projects for which construction are considered are not yet started. The board's guidelines allow for the school division or CTE regional program to submit applications for grant funding that construction began on or after July 1st of 2025. During the open application period

[05:26:36] from July 3rd to July 27th, we received 53 grant applications from 35 independent school divisions. There were no applications received for regional CTE programs. Grants are awarded based on 10, 20, or 30 percent of the approved project cost. Project cost cannot exceed \$100 million, with the percentage being determined by the local school division's local composite index and the financial stress category as designated by the Virginia Commission on Local Government for localities containing the school division.

[05:27:11] After the submitted grant applications are reviewed and scored against the approved board guidelines, BDOE recommends funding awards to the board. The board is required by the Appropriation Act to approve the grant awards to school divisions.

[05:27:26] The item requests the board approve the recommended grant awards for the school projects that need 65 points in minimum and on the competitive criteria until the funds run out. Attachment 2 provides you the details of the projects, what their criteria point scores were, and the recommended grant award.

[05:27:47] Overall, today there is a recommended grant award totaling \$132,134,223 for 34 approved school projects in 22 school divisions. As a reminder, the remaining \$77,117,214 will be carried over to the next application period and available to school divisions to apply.

[05:28:10] The superintendent of public instruction recommends that the board waive first review and approved the recommended grants, grant awards for school projects as shown on attachment to, excuse me. I'm happy to answer any questions you may have. Thank you. Board members, any questions? Mr. Robinson. Thank you also for updating the criteria. I think based on prior conversations to take into account, increased student enrollment and prior updates on fiscal stress designation. It's like a very thoughtful process. My question is, in public comment

[05:28:47] earlier today, we heard a comment about molding in a building. And it just leads me to curiosity about, I know that this is just one of many mechanisms school divisions have to fund capital projects and there's other ways the legislature can prioritize underserved environments it's not this is just one mechanism but i'm curious if there's any consideration on how to uh identify

[05:29:21] divisions that would most benefit from this and encourage them to use this mechanism because it sounds like it's it's voluntary for for people to apply and then there's a very objective process But is there, it may not be wise to use this mechanism, but I'm just curious, is there a process and would it be wise for there to be a process to encourage divisions to have more, you know, building condition problems and underserved environments to use this mechanism?

[05:29:52] Yeah, great question. I think as a result of the past General Assembly session, there has been a movement to reconvene the school commission or the commission on school construction and modernization. It has not been an active committee for the last four years. There is a first meeting that is going to be held in early September.

[05:30:12] I think the work of that commission is very important towards this. That's how this funding actually got established four years ago. And so I think there's an opportunity there with the legislative body, Superintendent Conway, I keep trying to call her Dr. Conway.

[05:30:27] Superintendent Conway, it does sit on that commission and I will be helping to support that commission as well. So we can relay information that we know, but that's also an opportunity for them to hear from our local school divisions and inform how this money can be distributed. I know this is a priority of the General Assembly and we are gratefully appreciative of this money.

[05:30:47] It has drastically helped school divisions over the last four years. But to your point, there is other opportunity. We just need that to be codified in the language so that we can support school divisions with those distinct needs. - Great, Superintendent Conway.

[05:31:02] - Thank you, Chief Berta. I would also note, and it might be useful to come back later to this body, whether in a work session or other format, but this landscape might be changing again with the 1% ability. And so across your communities, as we get into election season, you will see that being on the ballot in a way that was not legally possible before July 1st.

[05:31:27] And so, you know, as we monitor that very live situation, to your question, Mr. Robinson, about how do you think about both communicating this to school divisions and supporting the multiple options out there?

[05:31:44] we are also monitoring that situation, which is changing the landscape around the potential resources for communities when it comes to capital. - Thank you, Dr. Wilson. - I was only going to make the observation that the funding that's available through the grant or the literary fund may only be a portion of the full cost of maintenance or capital development.

[05:32:11] And so thinking about what are all of the variables available in terms of divisions being able to support either remediation of problems, maintenance, full construction, etc. is something that to also keep in mind. Thank you. Dr. Bridges.

[05:32:32] And I realize we're taking this a little bit broader topic, but I want to affirm all of the previous statements, including previous agenda item statement from my colleague to my right the the issue of um nationally declining enrollments um aging facilities and and the need for consolidation uh as well as new construction is um is going to only become greater over these next few years and so thinking about both the state role and incentivizing what is i can speak

[05:33:04] from experience one of the two hardest things that a local school board will do um there's just every incentive not to do it and that's how you end up with so many so much excess space in and really aging problematic buildings and so hearing back from the superintendent and and videoe on ways that the state can actually incentivize consolidations that yes improve conditions for kids actually you know reduce school segregation and some of the things that that are common when these things aren't done well, I think would be a really welcome discussion,

[05:33:43] bigger picture. Thank you. Dr. Northern. Just quickly, I love that we were able to add the CTE programs in here. I'm just wondering if next time you might be able to report out just like a pie charter even, like the amount that went to either CT program at the division level or regional CTE program. As I'm scanning the long list here, obviously when I see CTE, I realize it's going towards that. But I mean, when we have such a focus on pathways in the state, and as I travel and talk to different people, they keep talking about we don't have the machinery, we don't have

[05:34:20] the this, whatever, that, we can't do a strong pathway because blah, blah, blah. And so I just want to make sure that as folks, because that CTE is a fairly new addition there, that we are able to report on that in particular and continue to incentivize folks to um if we're going to have strong pathways we need to invest in them make sure that they know that money's going to be used in that way thank you thank you okay is there a motion to wait first review and approve the recommended grant awards for the school projects as shown in attachment 12. second second

[05:35:02] we got it thank you all right dr bridges mrs mcpherson mr robinson dr northern dr wilson dr maxwell hi and chair roads i thank you we have mr chapman up item k thank you thank you so much president ashton vice president bridges members of the board and superintendent conway

[05:35:37] this item is a request for the board to approve some exempt actions and to just to back up a little bit the virginia administrative process act outlines three typical ways that regulatory changes can be made the first is the normal three-stage process so the child day day center regulations the board just approved went through this very long process five plus years that included lots of stakeholder feedback and things of that nature when the board is really getting into the weeds and exercising its discretion authority, that is the process that the board is going to use.

[05:36:12] The Administrative Process Act also allows for fast-track regulatory actions, at which the standard is that the action is perceived to be non-controversial, even though there's not a clear definition, we have a lot of bases that we'll talk about for this sort of thing for regulatory actions. These are all being requested as exempt actions, at which the legal standard is that the board is not exercising any discretion.

[05:36:34] the board is being told what to do by a body that has more authority than itself. And so this package of regulatory changes is enacting six acts of the assembly from the most recent term, as well as one other action that the board, that the department has become aware of in the process. And so I'll give you the briefest of overview of these. Chapter 794 of the acts of the assembly has made a little bit of a tweak to one of the definitions of a license type in the

[05:37:08] board's regulations governing school personnel. Chapter 802 is doing another slight modification on the definition of teaching experience in the board's regulations governing licensure. Chapter 1091 is making a series of changes to the board's requirements for a division superintendent's license um where again you know the board is the general assembly and the the governor have been very prescriptive about the changes that need to be made chapters 182 and chapter 789 make some

[05:37:43] adjustments to the requirements for training regarding external defibrillators as well as IB requirements and some allow allowances for substitutions regarding the AFAM history course and advanced placement, African-American studies. Chapter 917 is largely a technical change that takes a statutory term of family day systems and family day homes and changes those to home-based child care systems and home-based child care. And so we have a series

[05:38:16] of really just switching out terminology throughout the the board's regulations and then finally we have one change that can come is coming from a federal uh change there was a an oag opinion an opinion from the attorney general's office um that the uh the federal uh department of education had a slight correction to our regs where we need we have a permissive may that needs to be changed to a shall because these are exempt actions and because these are non-discretion into the board there really hasn't been any stakeholder engagement because the stakeholder

[05:38:52] engagement has largely taken place through other processes either through the legislative process or through the federal process but we have consulted with the office of the attorney general very extensively on these changes they will be required to certify that these changes all do not involve any discretion on the board and so we are we're asking the board to approve this on first and final review because for the state changes we have a limited 90-day window from when they become the law becomes effective to make these changes thank you mr chatman are there questions okay then is there a motion to wait first review and approve and approve the regulatory

[05:39:32] changes as presented so moved is there a second right dr bridges hi miss mcpherson mr robinson aye Dr. Northern aye Dr. Wilson aye Dr. Maxwell and chair votes aye thank you thank you very much oh that's it you're only one Jim today oh okay all right we are now moving on

[05:40:04] to item L is Dr. Wallace up there you go well officially good afternoon madam chair and members of the board. Today, I have before you, for first and final review, revisions to the Board of Education approved courses to satisfy graduation requirements for the standard and advanced studies diplomas in Virginia public schools. That is a lengthy title, but I want to just kind of briefly go over with you what that is and what that means. We have graduation requirements

[05:40:44] of which you are aware for standard and advanced diplomas, they are outlined within the administrative code. And within that, there are provisions that this board may allow substitutions for certain courses based on field recommendations, based on trends in education, and even in some cases based on legislation that conflicts with the current listing of graduation requirements within that administrative code. So this is a document. You will see me multiple times. Hopefully I'm getting

[05:41:21] this down to like once a year because in the past it's been like every couple of months or every six months there have been some other revisions that need to be made. But we're trying to get this down to like a once a year which is why there are so many changes that you see here. Again this is a collaborative document across multiple offices, not just the Office of Instruction, but also CTE and Advanced Learning, as we, so not just the core content, but also those other areas.

[05:41:52] Some changes are very minor, so I'll be brief in going over those changes outlined for you on page one of the boilerplate. So we do have what's called SCED codes, and SCED codes are those things that direct us and know what the courses are, whether you're in Virginia or in another state, basically.

[05:42:11] And we just had a minor correction to one of those. On page seven, we added the African American History and AP African American Studies courses to allow for substitution of World History I and/or World Geography for the purpose of satisfying the History and Social Studies credit requirements to align with the passing of the recent House Bill 182 Senate Bill 427. Additionally, we added Cambridge International English General Paper, English 10,

[05:42:46] as a course substitution, footnotes to revise clarity and technical edits, removal of a paragraph to align with the passing of House Bill 595, which removes the provisions that certain courses must be completed for the completion of advanced studies diploma. That is one of the items that you just voted on with Jim and so you can see that we're working in tandem to make sure that documents reflect that legislation as well. Clarification on SCED codes on page 10 with certain AP and IB

[05:43:23] courses. Language to clarify the sequencing and proficiency progressions for world language courses this was a it looks like a significant update but it's really just some semantics and changes to wording so that it aligns better with the field practices of some of these courses and then finally a course title correction for economics and personal finance course for students with disabilities and so this you know this this is specific to that particular class

[05:43:57] and so we are requesting first and final review today as changes do go into effect certain changes for the 26-27 school year and we know that school has already started from for most school divisions or quite a lot of school divisions or we'll be getting ready to start in just a couple of weeks additionally we do have to place this on town hall and it goes through the administrative process act and so this first and final allows for that act to take place for that process to take place so that we can then get this posted on our websites and divisions can begin using this as they advise

[05:44:36] students for the upcoming school year when we make changes to this divisions then make changes to their local programs of study that they use they typically do revisions to those in the fall they print or maybe they don't print maybe it's electronic now and make updates to those catalogs for students to use when they're signing up for their courses and that usually takes place even as early as january or february so that is why the reasoning for the first and final review

[05:45:05] anything else no thank you dr wallace are there questions dr northern um just a quick suggestion the course requirements for our standard diploma consume 22 of the 24 credits kids have to graduate with. And so this is going to be my common refrain. So we, our General Assembly, passed a law last year for seat time flexibility. We're putting a lot of money into seat time pathways. Our kids

[05:45:43] have no time to take a CTE apprenticeship, to do work-based learning, to all the stuff that we're doing when our course requirements consume 22 of our 24 credits. So I, and we're hearing already that our divisions are not adopting the seat time flexibility because they don't know how it works and what what we can do with it we've given important flexibility in other areas for instance our unified pe our rotc can count as pe so i'd love it if in a future meeting um if if if you guys could come back to us because other states are having to do the same thing and say okay

[05:46:23] here is what a cte based um a pathway would look like relative to our credit requirements this will substitute for this this will substitute this requirement because if we if we don't do that i really think they're gonna have a hard time because kids are just out of time and so um i think they're and i'm happy to send you there are other states like colorado is a big one that just completed their same thing where they took their graduation requirements and plugged in what could substitute to meet the ct pathway goals um but if i think we do a real service to our divisions if we

[05:46:59] could um supplement our graduation requirements with here's how you can use the flexibility that you've been given thank you dr northern okay that would mean creating a guidance document that shows um well what we could do i mean we you know cte is a little bit out of my wheelhouse and so i'll talk with Deputy McCleary about this as well. But, you know, I'm thinking, you know, we have some, I believe they have some student pathway things going on already and looking at those things.

[05:47:37] What we possibly could do is, you know, wouldn't be a guidance document per se that this board would have to approve, but we could do some examples of pathways or even an addendum, you know, that could be done at the back of this document and bring it next time, but in the meantime we can still provide some examples of pathways to divisions. Is there a contact individual in the department, say for instance, that if an industry partner is looking to, you know, set up a program,

[05:48:17] obviously they got to work through secrecy with the school and tell you what they're offering and availability. So how is that coordinated between department staff, the external partner, whether it's the university tutoring program or whatever? So typically we would kind of facilitate some conversations between the division that would be most suited for, like if an industry called either myself or the CTE department, Anthony Williams, Dr. Williams, who's been up here many times you know we would have conversations with with those businesses or universities that want

[05:48:56] to establish those partnerships put them in touch with the superintendents in those divisions that they want to work with i mean they typically work out those details because it's going to be very specific to locality and and even you know to dr northern's request um what graduation looks like in in

certain parts of the state is going to look very different than what it looks like in other parts of the state based on the availability of some of those courses.

[05:49:25] As you stated, there are some of our rural school divisions where their CTE programs focus more on the agricultural field and even how that's changing with technologies. And then there are others that are going to be really focused on data centers because that might be something that's happening in their locality and they might have partnerships.

[05:49:46] for example mecklenburg has partnerships with microsoft because they're right there in their community and they offer options for students and so they work that out between the community college and and the industry itself and the division superintendent conway yes and absolutely mr pearson uh deputy superintendent mcclary would be the right point of contact to to uh make sure that we were able to support whomever the the business partner would is you know i want to kind of acknowledge as we think about Dr. Northern's point around how do we, you know, there's really

[05:50:22] two things that need to be done to sort of truly open up pathways and opportunity for students. I think first is to look at the kind of barriers and the very real barrier of time and the effort around the seat time flexibility and then use of substitutions which then, or kind of acceleration as a way to free up more time for pursuing both CTE opportunities as well as work-based learning experiences i also just want to tie this back to the necessity of really looking up that employment indicator because i think there's both a need to make sure that we are

[05:50:59] streamlining or minimizing barriers but also be very clear with high schools around the incentives because sometimes we hear of folks reaching out and recognizing the very busy day-to-day right of high school practices if sometimes if the incentive is not necessarily to follow through um that that might not you know be the top priority right in the way that we're so clear about coursework responsibilities and so that's where you know high schools focus a lot of their attention and so from my perspective as i look at the kind of you know even if it's only

[05:51:36] a quarter of of the indicator being so clear about how you have an equivalent reward right for schools that then aligns up with what you want to open up for students when it comes to that employment um indicator is just is imperative because that then becomes the reason that that's how you sort of get the alignment we talked a little bit about this as it related with community colleges yesterday but i think this is a place too where um you know the business incentive is very clear right they're looking at their future industry they might actually have the the capacity

[05:52:11] the machinery right to do the training um but if we've said you know historically not anybody on this body we've said what we really really care about is the you know this is the course work and while we might have added flexibility but we didn't necessarily you know get that incentive quite right then you're not going to see that behavior at scale so um you know i think that's a really important point and that's our contact internally but i do think um ultimately getting that indicator right and then being very clear is who that contact is at each of our high schools will be imperative to having this happen at scale rather than just being on paper

[05:52:47] thank you mr robinson um thank you for letting this conversation go much broader um i i really appreciate superintendent conway's point about the real barriers and the indicator building on the prior points and I this is you know I hear in the field you know when we talk about what are those barriers um you know there's uh there's a licensure issues for teachers to teach the CTE courses there's not only a

not only do I hear people aren't using the seat time flexibility I hear people aren't using the data on credentials of value that our economic offices are producing

[05:53:27] we talked about the rich regional data that's available earlier so i i just wonder in terms of our board um i worry to dr northern's point that we can help people within a constrained constrained environment how to figure out how to move the deck chairs around a little bit better but then the what's to prevent the legislature from passing something in the next session now there's 23 out of 24 of the codes that are taken so i i just really feel a need given how big and weighty and complex and fast-moving these topics are and the urgency of it with AI disrupting the

[05:54:06] workforce and what the credentials and skills of value are for us to tighten this conversation in coordination with higher education and workforce agencies. And I know Superintendent Conway and Secretary Smith and your team are already working on that, and I'm just eager for the board to contribute to those broader conversations with the stakeholders across the Commonwealth to help support the legislature and not just doing piecemeal legislation that may result in something like this that we're reviewing, but instead to think more comprehensively about a

[05:54:43] policy environment that truly creates the conditions for a meaningful post-secondary path. thank you mr. Robinson with that is there a motion to wait first review and approve the updates to the board at Board of Education approved courses to satisfy graduation requirements as presented so is there a second second great okay miss Reinhardt I dr. Bridges I mrs. McPherson mr. Robinson

[05:55:22] aye Dr. Northern Dr. Wilson Dr. Maxwell aye and chair votes aye great thank you thank you we'll take one more and then we'll go for a break if that's okay uh skill strap presented on this okay there's Brian there you go good way afternoon uh we're on item M thank you thank you good afternoon president Ashton superintendent Conway members of the board I am Brian Jackson director of licensure and I'm here to present to you to receive first and final review of the ABTEL

[05:56:00] board's approval of a motion to replace the middle school social studies 5089 assessment with praxis 5589 middle school social studies. The superintendent of public instruction recommends you receive this item from ABTEL to approve the ETS praxis assessment 5589 middle school social studies with a cut score of 149 to replace the previously approved praxis 5089 middle school social studies this item is proposed as first and final due to pending sunset of the current

[05:56:33] praxis 5089 middle school social studies assessment in the fall of 2026 do you have any questions thank you board members are there questions yes just a quick question thank you mr datson um Is it typical for Praxis to make such a quick change in terms of sunseting tests?

[05:56:57] And we found ourselves in a position of having to make the change now. It's not typical. They've been working on this change for a while. And I wanted to mention, I'm glad you asked that question. I met with the ETS representative today and during the ABTEL meeting, and they confirmed that because several states were still in the process of approving this new update to the assessment that they've actually extended the previous assessment all the way through the fall and so even they recognized that they needed more time to replace the prior assessment with the new one so the assessment if I could ask a follow-up so the assessment will actually the current

[05:57:36] assessment will be in place through this fall yes and so then will applicants have the opportunity to take either one in the interim if approved by the board and once it's formalized through ets

and becomes available in virginia the updated assessment then yes for example if anybody had previously registered for the former test they'd still be able to take it and they will even be able to register for that test until it is officially sunsetted by ets later in the fall but then the new assessment will also be available and i wanted to note the i did a check of cut

[05:58:13] scores from nearby states in six nearby states, including New Jersey, Maryland, North Carolina, Tennessee, West Virginia, and DC all share the same cut score of 149. Thank you. That's very helpful.

[05:58:29] Is there a motion to waive first review and approve the recommendation of ABTEL for the middle school social studies as presented? No moved. Second. Great. Ms. Reinhart? Aye. Dr. Bridges? Aye.

[05:58:44] Mrs. McPherson? Aye. Mr. Robinson? Dr. Northern Dr. Wilson Dr. Maxwell and chair votes I thank you thank you thank you would everyone appreciate a quick break yes briefly thank you so when it comes to I wasn't sure I heard everything that Mr. Chapman stated I want to be clear and I think that I am Mr. Chapman talked

[05:59:19] about the Jay Jones determination that is previously long existing federal law and obligations that have been on the books for years likewise the oseb and osers corrective action memorandum

[05:59:32] for uh getting right back we are now on item n uh first review the guidelines for

[06:06:38] local alternative assessment debbie high slip bureau thank you so much president ashton and members of the board so we are bringing forward this item for first review um it is updated guidelines for local alternative assessments so I think we first just wanted to start with some grounding especially knowing that this may be the first time some of you have it's heard item array related to local alternative assessments and sort of what are they what's changing why are we bringing this forward then deputy superintendent profit is going to go a little bit more

[06:07:15] in-depth on some of the updates that we are making in response to recent legislation and bringing forward today for first review to get some feedback from y'all and then some of the next steps for implementation so we are doing this as a joint project because both of our teams play a critical role in implementing these local alternative assessments so to kick us off I think just some grounding and what our local alternative assessments here in the Commonwealth these are assessments that are developed administered and scored by a local school division.

[06:07:50] So the SOLs that I have been spending a lot of time talking about the last two days are not developed, administered, and scored by a local division. We have a statewide contract with a vendor to develop the test questions to administer them and to help score them. Divisions have to use under the law state approved and developed rubrics for how they score them.

[06:08:13] So it's a rubric, but it's not like the SOLs scored by our vendor this is we provide a rubric for them the performance is reported locally we can and we have conducted desk reviews in the past as an agency to ensure compliance with those guidelines but it's you know a different than our statewide SOL tests like we've been talking about local alternative assessments must be aligned with our standards of learning the content standards our assessments and performance standards and have typically typically, as they've been implemented over the last several years, are kind of a form of what's

[06:08:51] called a performance-based assessment, which just means that students typically are demonstrating their knowledge and learning by performing a task or creating a project that's evaluated

with this set of rubric or criteria. Under Virginia law, and this is a change that we'll walk through a little bit, they are now clearly classified as mandatory or permissive. Mandatory means that they are required for divisions to use. And that's because they were developed in subgroup areas that lacked a statewide SOL test. Typically, these are all in grades three through eight. Permissive local

[06:09:26] alternative assessments, on the other hand, are not required to be used, but they can, can, they don't have to, replace certain statewide SOL tests. These have typically and historically mostly been high school tests that we administer above and beyond the federal requirements. So, LAA's local alternative assessments have been around over 10 years. They were first established in 2014, and this was when the General Assembly eliminated several statewide SOL tests that Virginia was

[06:10:02] giving above and beyond federal law. The board at that time adopted and updated guidelines based on that legislation. Over time, however, there has been additional guidelines that have been developed because the law has changed or there's been budget language. So these guidelines have been updated in 2014, 2016, 2019, 2021, and most recently in 2023. And a few examples of why key updates were made are here on the slide. So 2018, the standards of accreditation enabled local alternative assessments to be used to award locally awarded verified credit, which just means credit for high school

[06:10:42] graduation in writing. So that's our high school writing assessment. And then 2021, the updates were to clarify specifically around how local alternative assessments could be awarded for awarding verified credit in history and social sciences. So, you know, over time, this has changed.

[06:11:00] In 2014, there weren't local alternative assessments in high school writing, but there are now. So just wanted to give a little bit of that background and that it is all rooted in action by the General Assembly. So why we are here today is that there was a very significant, you might call it like an omnibus assessment bill that passed this General Assembly session. It was passed with bipartisan support and signed by the governor. So this is SB 200 and HB 299. You might have heard of it because it did a lot of other things like eliminate the Virginia growth assessments that

[06:11:35] were given in the fall and the winter. So this bill included many things but one of the things that it requires is some new clarifications and revised requirements and expectations around the use of local alternative assessments. Part of the law also requires us and the board by extension to develop new guidelines aligned to the legislative update by September 1st, 2026 which is why we are here today presenting this for first review. The biggest single changes, there's many changes

[06:12:07] in SB 200, but I think one of the most consequential is that we are expanding the use of local alternative assessments to new subjects. Those are the ones I'm bold on the slide with an asterisk, and notably, these are not high school assessments. Some of them are high school, EOC, Earth Science and chemistry are two high school tests that we give above federal law. That's why they're on the list. The legislation says that any assessment that we give statewide as part of the SOL program that is not required by federal law, there has to be a local option. It's permissive. A division

[06:12:47] can always say, hey, we want to keep giving the SOL in chemistry, but they don't have to anymore. So chemistry and earth science have been added to the list, as well as Virginia studies and civics and economics. These are two history assessments that we give in grades three through eight. Federal law does not require any history assessment. Therefore, all of our social studies assessments are part of our local alternative assessment list because they are all above and beyond the federal requirements. The

assessments, if you're wondering why are some mandatory, these were the assessments, the original assessments that were eliminated in 2014,

[06:13:25] And that is why they are mandatory. So if you're just trying to understand. So part of the reason why we are here today is to really think about how we can support our divisions in implementing these changes in the law, particularly around local alternative assessments. So in addition to just this expansion to new potential courses and subjects that haven't been under the local alternative assessment provisions previously, there are also some particular legislative updates related to the guidelines themselves the requirements for a local alternative assessment

[06:14:02] and so the updated guidance that we're presenting today for first review is trying to reflect those updated expectations that includes ensuring that there is consistent development administration and scoring notably prior to this version of the guidelines we had separate guidelines for writing and for social studies. This is one uniform set of guidelines for all subject areas in which there are permissive and mandatory local alternative assessments. We also want to be sure that the guidelines, again, are reflecting other key parts of the law that was just signed that, you know,

[06:14:39] we're clarifying and making very crystal clear that these local alternative assessments need to be based on work that is their student's own. It's not a draft. It's not a, you know, work in progress. It is a final work product if you're using a kind of performance-based assessment, and that has to need to be administered and completed in a secure setting. So that, you know, that includes digital security measures if needed, and that includes, if necessary, over multiple sessions. You know, sometimes these are not assessments that occur on a single day, but rather are assessments that occur over time. And there's also a clear requirement that for any local alternative

[06:15:17] assessment in high school that's used for verified credit, the teacher cannot grade or evaluate their own students' work. So all of those, these are new requirements in the legislation that we just wanted to be sure were transferred over into the draft guidelines that you have today. We also want to be really clear about, again, the big change around the new subject areas in which permissive local alternative assessments are now going to be allowable. You know, I think we wanted to make clear that these again consistent with the law these new alternative assessments are available

[06:15:51] starting this school year um as the law requires and that i think another important point too is you know knowing that there are some changes that are happening this year we want to be sure that we're continuing to monitor this guideline monitor implementation and update it as needed moving forward with the board i'm going to let deputy superintendent prophet go from here great so um in particular wanted to highlight a few things that are changing and kind of how we went about changing the actual guidelines that will be upon your approval disseminated and and work through with divisions so first this guidance was developed through a collaborative process with

[06:16:30] a variety of stakeholder groups first we engaged the local alternative assessment committee which includes a variety of teachers across content areas that are impacted by local alternative assessments. This committee convened in the spring and has met six times already. They provided input into the development of performance tasks, rubrics, the best practices that you see outlined in that draft guidance, and they are poised to continue to provide feedback as these are utilized. So these are teachers that would very likely be utilizing these materials and be able to continue to provide feedback as it relates to the quality and

[06:17:07] the rigor of those assessments. Additionally, we were able to engage with the Innovative Assessment Workgroup, which had a little bit of a larger scope, but in part of their work, they were also looking at local alternative assessments. This also includes Virginia educators, but also widens the stakeholder group to also include school administrators, superintendents, parents, professional organizations, and national experts in assessment. This group convened in fall of 2025 they've met seven times and they specifically provided feedback on best practices

[06:17:41] and resources for the design and administration of local alternative assessments so some key changes you'll see reflected in these guidelines the goal here is that we are providing divisions with greater clarity and consistency while also really maintaining rigorous expectations for student learning we do we do not want these assessments to substitute in any way for the rigor that the sol tests are able to provide so some key things we did were to align those guidelines with the tenants of the new legislation and really clarify both the expectations and where

[06:18:17] the law does permit allowable flexibility for school divisions we aligned all of the guidelines to the latest standards so these are you know different depending on the year of most recent revision but in science we had new standards in 2018 in english in 2024 which reflects all of the the work that went into revising those standards to align with the science of reading and history and social science standards from 2023.

[06:18:44] Across those guidelines, you'll also see that we incorporated best practices and common scoring rubrics for all assessments to help ensure both the rigor and integrity of those materials and to help ensure that divisions had access to resources as they're thinking through if this is a good option for them.

[06:18:59] Do they have the capacity to implement these local alternative assessments, particularly new ones which are permissive, they're not required to do those. And so part of those guidelines is really helping them think through are they positioned to be able to do this in the rigorous manner that is expected. And lastly, as Deputy Superintendent Hyslop referenced, all of the guidelines are in one place so that we can really ensure that these are getting to the right person, that they're not having to search for those guidelines, and that there is consistency and and coherence across all subject areas to maintain the rigor and quality of those assessments.

[06:19:37] Upon adoption of these guidelines, which again, they're here for first review today, when we come back and bring them for final review, following that adoption, we will disseminate those guidelines. Our department will host webinars and office hours, as well as providing technical assistance to support implementation of these local alternative assessments in this school year.

[06:20:00] know that the guidelines are just the starting point there is going to need to be targeted support and development across divisions to ensure that these are being implemented in the way that that maintains that rigor of assessment divisions that are implementing local alternative assessments will be directed to use the new rubrics and to use the sample tasks aligned to the updated guidance the guidelines will be posted on town hall so that we can continue to receive public comment in accordance with the Administrative Process Act.

[06:20:31] The VDOE will continue to gather feedback on these rubrics and new processes throughout the year. Even though we are looking to publish these guidelines, we know that we will learn things along the

way, and so we want to make sure that we are leaving room for that continued revision and updating as needed.

[06:20:49] And we will also prepare for desk reviews to support implementation with fidelity. I do also want to take a moment to thank our teams at VDOE, both the assessment team and the office of instruction um for all of the work that they did prior from the time that this bill was passed to now to really work hard on um including all of these guidelines into one place and make sure that we're maintaining the high standards of learning across these across these assessments and and within this guidance thank you superintendent

[06:21:24] conway absolutely i want to thank the the the teams at the department of education as demonstrated by the combined contributions of Deputy Superintendent Hyslop and Deputy Superintendent Proffitt and I know Assistant Superintendent Jennings and Assistant Superintendent Wallace and the teams that support them. This is truly an inter-departmental effort.

[06:21:51] Although we are as noted by Deputy Superintendent Hyslop under a legislative timeline here and that is the reason that we continue to move with expedience here of needing to get this sort of, you know, this permissiveness, this flexibility is, you know, kind of in effect at the time of the law went into effect and these guidelines are expected to follow shortly thereafter.

[06:22:18] And so we know we are working with kind of all speed there, but we still wanted to bring this for first review to hear feedback, both as we hear initial questions, concerns, feedback from this body, as well as from the field.

[06:22:36] As you've seen, we have met extensively with two different subsets of stakeholders but know that this has a broader set of implications and we even received some public comment earlier today which we paid attention to. I think there are kind of three general buckets for which we want to, you know, consider refinements.

[06:22:54] I think, you know, one is the what, as you review these guidelines, if there are sort of insights or things you would like to see changed in these guidelines. We have, you know, as Deputy Superintendent Proffitt noted, we have consolidated, we have updated, and we have made sure that what was in the law is reflected here.

[06:23:13] but we know that there might be more that this body or the field would want to see. I think the second bucket is the how, and particularly when you look at this implementation and communication, we understand that this flexibility has to go into effect upon enactment of the law, but thinking about how do we ensure success and implementation through training and technical assistance, and we welcome feedback there.

[06:23:38] And then I think, importantly, our understanding of the department and sort of by extension the board's authority here is that this is sort of a process and I think Deputy Superintendent Hyslop sort of has described it previously as something sort of similar to what happens at the federal level where we can provide expectations and then we can evaluate to extent to which those expectations are being implemented.

[06:24:08] There is not necessarily authority for a pre-approval. And so oftentimes they set forth expectations for the states about assessments and then there's something I believe, and she's more of an expert than I am, that there's peer review and a set of processes to do that. And I want to be clear as noted

here, as you think through what's articulated here around desk reviews and follow up from the department with the expectation that two things would be happening. One, we would be out there monitoring to make sure that these local assessments were used and, you know, there's still sort of for the permissive ones, there's still a question mark nobody is required to um to opt out of the sol the state continues to continue to pay for

[06:24:48] you know the sols in these areas if if school divisions would choose that um but as you think about the processes that we would use to monitor intervene and ultimately hold school divisions accountable for ensuring that the local alternatives meet the rigor of the standards and the statewide assessments is a very clear criteria that we have more authority to enforce on in action than we have the ability to pre-approve prior to implementation.

[06:25:23] Thank you, Superintendent Conway. Board members, Dr. Bridges. Can I just start with a couple of broad questions? Do you have any idea of the extent to which these are being used, number, level, frequency, and then a couple of examples of any exemplars y'all have seen what this kind of looks like out in the field? Sure. So I think we do have some data. Keep in mind, this is, of course, prior to this law passing. So, you know, there haven't been local alternatives in certain subjects. So currently, 18% of school divisions are using permissive local alternative assessments in

[06:25:59] writing. We have 48% who are doing so in history and social science. So for the current subjects, again, not, but doesn't include the new ones that have been added to the list, but currently, and they range in every region of the state. It's not isolated just to Northern Virginia or just to Southwest Virginia or just to Central Virginia. It is across every single region. We also will just say too on that the writing, in addition to those 24, 18% of school divisions, there's one regional center that uses the writing local alternative assessment option. And on history and social

[06:26:34] studies one of our lab schools is also doing local alternative assessments there have names of divisions as well if helpful and I think we do have some information just particularly again to date many of the permissive local alternative assessments have been given in high school so we also do have data on how many locally awarded verified credits have been awarded there was a spike especially around the COVID-19 pandemic which makes sense when you think about like We didn't have the same type of schooling structures.

[06:27:07] We had many virtual and hybrid school. So in the 2022-2023 school year, 140,000 roughly locally awarded verified credits were given. That translates to 56,500 students.

[06:27:22] But in the 2024-25 year, which is the last year for which we have data available, so not the most recent school year, that was 53,000 locally awarded verified credits for 38,900 students. So you could see we sort of had maybe a spike there in 21, 22, and 22, 23. It's gone down since then, and whether that trend continues or not is a question to be considered. And I know I've only been with the department since May, and Deputy Superintendent Proffitt's even newer than me, but I will say as part of commonwealth listing tour we did visit all the regions of the state and at one of the regions

[06:28:01] that we went to i believe it was out in roanoke county we actually were there to see something similar to a locally awarded verified credit happening it was sort of a senior performance based assessment and i think believe that roanoke county this was maybe not for verified credit but it was a similar process and you could tell that the students there had really demonstrated they're they were giving a presentation to their educators and community leaders about what they had learned interest in them

you know there was um and it was you know i think a really meaningful experience for them as part of their graduation requirements so one of the things that you know i think we have

[06:28:40] to to keep in mind is like these are for our assessments that are in subjects above and beyond what's federally required and it does enable a community to think about how we want to assess our students in these subjects and maybe the best way for them is to do a standardized test like the SOL or maybe they want to create something that's more interdisciplinary where it's an assessment that's weaving in concepts from history and writing and other subjects and getting the local community involved or local businesses involved so it is I think helping for the communities that have really

[06:29:17] embraced it I think they've done so in a way that feels like it's reflecting their local stakeholders and communities as well so I think it's been and it's something I think that the students got a lot of meaning out of in terms of being able to present their work and defend it and show what they had learned throughout the the process if you have anything to add Dr. Bridges are you okay Ms. McPherson any patterns of schools in terms of whether there are any schools or where it stands out that they

[06:29:49] have a higher percentage you know did you kind of like look at patterns of who's using so the often than others and i know you said every region every region um we the data that we have is um specific at the division level not sort of like this school but it is a really good point though i think with the updated legislation one of the things that has now been clarified in law is that this permissive option is a division-wide option it's not oh we want this to be in this high school but not in this high school if henrico county wants to do this it's for all their high

[06:30:28] schools or all their middle schools they could say we want to do it in writing but we don't want to do it in social studies you could pick by choice but you can't have it be different by schools so if a division opposite it's for the whole division for the whole subject thank you are there any questions down here mr robinson um thank you yet another issue that we've had to move incredibly fast on uh to get ready for this year and a really comprehensive plan i want to check my understanding on a couple things one it's the guidance it's mandatory that local alternative

[06:31:05] assessments cover or content subject matter in our as covered in the sols that's correct it must assess the same standards that an sol test would assess and then to my understanding again check my understanding now is that in the um in the permissive la local assessments at the high school level um we are uh requiring a verified credit plan so there's some mechanism to ensure that in addition to this performance task or assessment that there's some way of a of assessing like

[06:31:44] whether the knowledge and essential skills in our sols are also being tested if they're not fully covered by the performance task part of our part of the guidelines are to um for the divisions to submit a balanced assessment plan and for this to be part of their balanced assessment plan so we would encourage divisions to consider the breadth of their assessment system and to think about where this fits and where it is a good match for the you know the type of instruction that they're looking to see um so yes the the idea would be that it does it does assess the breadth

[06:32:19] of the sol standards um that could happen not all in one sitting but but yes the idea is that it it would assess the grade level standards. - And I would just add, keep in mind, all of our students are required to take EOC biology, and you only need one verified credit in science.

[06:32:39] So like, and the same is true for our social studies. You only need one verified credit and we don't specify in which course. So it is possible here that, you know, a student does a local alternative assessment in earth science, but they don't need that for their graduation requirements because they pass biology.

[06:32:57] and we also have other alternative ways beyond local alternative assessment or sol test by which students can get verified credits there are multiple pathways that exist for um for most things so even if you don't pass the eoc reading you know there are alternative ways that you can demonstrate your reading knowledge so i think that's just a good point here of it's it varies by subject area and i think that's maybe when you're giving the information on how many locally awarded verified credits had been awarded it's different and that's something that we can monitor

[06:33:30] going forward now that we have some new EOC exams that are in the permissive category um starting this year and then one more point of clarification then uh the as I read um I understand that those type of mechanisms either the balance assessment or the verified credit or the common rubrics i saw that in a lot of the guidance i i didn't see it and i may have misread it it for the virginia studies and the civics economics the new elementary level permissive

[06:34:02] laas um i didn't see uh and again i can misread as strong of a mechanism for ensuring you know a balanced assessment plan and i wanted to check my understanding i think that's something we can certainly look back at more closely, and we were happy to do that between now and then.

[06:34:23] And so, yeah, the broader curiosity for public comment and ahead of final review is that I'm just in general curious, you know, we see across the country about 13 percent of students proficient in U.S. history. And if we take those type of statistics and think about how Virginia compares across the country and other assessments. We can assume that we're probably not too far off from that metric in history as well. And then when I think about the, you know, I know there's a lot

[06:35:01] of controversy getting there, but ultimately there was a bipartisan board that passed unanimously our social science and history SOLs four years ago. And I'm, you know, clearly we need to move to these permissive LAAs per the push of the legislature.

[06:35:19] I'm just curious if there's ways to strengthen the mechanism of ensuring that those high standards are being met in a way that balances innovation with rigor, balances wanting this kind of inquiry, community-based excitement assessments like the one that you just, the story you provided that I think is compelling with rigorous ways, even if we can't pre-approve the assessments of incentivizing and pushing towards whatever we as a board at USV,

[06:35:54] the UAE, define as the most essential knowledge to help you do the inquiry base, to give you the foundation for the inquiry base. And I just, it wasn't clear to me in the current guidelines what those mechanisms would be. And I'd be really curious personally to explore stronger mechanisms.

[06:36:12] I think there's two things I would say there, and then I know you want to add something too. I think we share the desire to ensure that these assessments are rigorous and are capturing the most essential knowledge and skills. And I think that's gonna require some ongoing support from our teams to make sure that divisions have the capacity to design assessments and facilitate assessments that do that.

[06:36:33] I think the other thing I would say is that, yes, we have really strong social science standards, history and social science standards. And I would just echo the point that building background knowledge

through history and social science is critical to our literacy efforts as well.

[06:36:50] So to the extent that we can have students doing that work consistently, I think that we would not only see gains in our history and social science understandings across student groups, but also potentially be able to impact our literacy outcomes as well, because we know that that knowledge is such a big factor in students' ability to read and understand complex text.

[06:37:12] - Beautiful. - Thank you, Dr. Northern. so um in many ways it's sort of like what we talked about before you know we've got a compliance document that we have no leverage over right like they could just say yes we did all this and the state doesn't have anything they can do like it's a guidance document so if we can't pre-approve programs at the front end i think we need to tighten screws on the back end or lest our whole rigor for kids that we're working for is compromised because now unfortunately in my opinion the general assembly has done us a real disservice by allowing all of these um verified

[06:37:49] eoc mandatory courses to now be taken through a local assessment like like we just opened a huge door where kids don't have to take the sols anymore on most of the required courses in virginia like this should have never like i'm on my soapbox here but this should have never gotten through the general assembly somebody didn't explain to them what they were actually doing because I don't believe they meant to undercut rigor in this way that said my suggestions on the back end are much more around reporting which I think is in your purview you could require them to you know report passage rates require them to do a comparability

[06:38:27] requirement so in other words you have to demonstrate comparability to the rigor of the SOLs you have to report SOL rate passes rates on the same courses in the same district and those compare those sol pass rates statewide so if you're saying that you're meeting the rigor and the comparability of the sols which is what we expect then we want to see the comparable sol pass rates in that same course and then we want you to then have a um you know we want you to report the the verified credits which is what they're already doing um through you know and

[06:39:04] then then they need to flag themselves right where they're seeing big discrepancies between the sol passage rates and the locally verified credits are supposed to be measuring the same competencies at the same level and then i think you guys could do a desk review on the back end right because your desk review now is at the front end but okay so they've you've now done some kind of um you know random audit desk review whatever um on the back end and then you can flag suspicious patterns based on the data that they have to report and then you can then say okay

[06:39:38] we're going to do both desk reviews and random audits and then if you continue to have these uneven you know passage rates relative to these two different ways of assessing the same standards then you know I would say that we could temporarily suspend their ability to give these until they actually demonstrate that the rigor is comparable across the court so and I don't know if I saw security in here but like given all the ai cheating going on and honestly kids are self-reporting that they and their peers are using ai to cheat uh we need some kind of browser lockdown we need

[06:40:18] some kind of you know uh you know strategy by which we can um we can make sure that the security is there um and i like we've got to do a lot more on the back end now too thank you superintendent Thank you, Dr. Northern. I just want to note, I think similar to the conversation in a different way that we had about advanced math yesterday and that we then heard, you know, was heard and reiterated in public comment today that, you know, there are two important things that

[06:40:55] Dr. Northern names. I think first is the reporting, right? Because as you think about something where, again, I don't have the specific numbers in front of me. I only have the anecdotal example of having to two students who went through fourth grade right I think the Virginia Studies is a near-universal requirement right and so we've got a strong baseline of sort of both how many students have taken that assessment and how they've done right at the state and local level in a way it's fairly apples to apples over time but I think really thinking through that reporting and how do you look at you know for the areas which is less so for the places where

[06:41:31] things were changed 12 years ago, and more so for this kind of permissive and the new areas, how do we track that and look at that, not only when we're thinking about accountability for local alternative assessments, but even on statewide results, right, and even on, I think, to the point around being clear with families, as we think about even next year's SOL results roll out, we need to be very clear about, you know, the sort of changes that ultimately would change the comparability of the data year over year.

[06:42:01] And then I think, I know we've had conversations with the accreditation team around thinking about the attestation that superintendents make around these areas and that, yes, a desk review evidence, you know, this ability to intervene if there were suspicious patterns, if they needed to take corrective action because, you know, our evidence did not align with what they attested to that we believe is the vehicle, that we have authority to take action.

[06:42:30] And then I think we can certainly talk with Deb and the AGs around, okay, what if they continue to not do that? What is our authority there? But I think that's exactly the mechanism that this compels based on where we do and do not have authority.

[06:42:48] I take that feedback. Great. Well, thank you. We will accept this item for first review and see you in September. Thank you. Thank you. All right. Mr. Chapman is up for item O and item O and P. Yes. Okay.

[06:43:16] Thank you so much, President Ashton, members of the board, Superintendent Conway. Item O is a continuation of a fairly long process that the board began last year through a periodic review of the chapter 740, which is the regulations governing nutritional standards for competitive foods available for the sale in the public school. So this item has actually already been before the board. The result of the periodic review to kind of consolidate, I suppose, is that this chapter basically doesn't need to be an independent chapter. We talked earlier in the last item I presented about the three different types of normal regulatory actions. This action is being

[06:43:54] presented as a fast track, which we take to be the standards that the item is non-controversial. The department takes this to be a non-controversial change because this is essentially a zero-sum policy game. The same policy is going to be remain in place as just since this is enacting federal regulations, it doesn't need to be its own chapter. We think we can consolidate this under the board's regulations governing local school boards. The most interesting feature of this is that the state law for competitive foods is a little bit over nuanced, so to speak, because it doesn't include beverages, but the federal definition does include beverages. So in order to

[06:44:30] make sure, again, that the policy that's getting enforced at the state level is compliant with the federal definition. We've added a mirror definition of competitive beverage, just so it's a little bit more clear for school divisions. Just so that you know, when DOE staff goes and enacts this particular chapter,

they don't cite to the board's regulations. They're actually citing directly to the code of federal regulations. So this is really just an enactment vehicle for federal regulations.

[06:44:59] So, again, we think that this will make it a little bit more streamlined. It's in a more intuitive place for school divisions to find common sets of regs that apply to them. And really, this just is a little bit more expedient for the board because it's one fewer chapter that's subject to periodic reviews in the future.

[06:45:17] And so we can continue on a regular cycle. Thank you, board members. Are there any questions? Okay. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. will accept this item for first review and see you in September. Thank you. And the next item, P. Yes. Item P is a first review of the Board of Education's policy on all virtual public meetings of committees established by law. Again, the Virginia Freedom of Information Act requires that

[06:45:50] this type of policy be adopted by the board yearly. Just to be a little bit clear on this, the Virginia Freedom of Information Act specifically states that all virtual public meetings cannot be held by bodies that have the ability to revoke a professional license. So that means that this policy does not apply to the board itself, but OAG has written a policy that can apply to the board's subcommittees, those committees that are, one, required by law, but two, also do not have the ability independently to revoke a professional license. This policy actually remains unchanged. It's just required to be adopted yearly in order to be effective for

[06:46:30] those required committees, which includes the Advisory Board on Teacher Education and Licensure, the Early Childhood Advisory Committee, and I believe the State Special Education Advisory Committee are those that are required by law. So we're presenting this for first review in hopes that the board will adopt that to be effective for those public bodies.

[06:46:50] board members in English. Is there no policy in place for committees that are not required by law, but this board has established? That's correct. The advice from the Office of the Attorney General is that this policy should only apply to those that are required by law. I believe that's because then the public body has been created independently by the legislature. Otherwise, if I remember the logic correctly, correct me if I'm wrong, please, Deb, is that because the board is not

[06:47:25] subject to that, then committees that are not required by some other requirement than just that the board has created them, that they kind of end up inheriting the board's inability to have the all virtual public meetings. Okay. I just want to make sure there was some mechanism for accountability if they did have public meetings, but it sounds like they can't. Yes, correct.

[06:47:47] Any virtual meetings, but it sounds like they can't. Thank you. Okay. If there are no other questions, thank you, Mr. Chapman. We will accept this item for first review at CU in September. Thank you. And then our last item, Q, the Hollands.

[06:48:06] Good afternoon, State Superintendent Conway, President Ashton, and board members. I'm Sam Hollands, Deputy Superintendent for Special Education in Specialized Populations, and it's my pleasure to present the final item for today. You guys have obviously spent time around State Superintendent Conway, and you've undoubtedly heard her describe education as a lifelong journey.

[06:48:27] Today's item gives us the opportunity to put that phrase into practice. While much of our work centers on early childhood learners and school-age students, we will focus today on adult learners who

remind us that it's never too late to build skills, earn new credentials, and create new opportunities.

[06:48:43] Adult education and literacy are vital to expanding opportunity across the Commonwealth. The DOE Office of Adult Education, led by Dr. Silver-Perquilla, here with me today, and her incredible team within the Division special education specialized populations supports and resources programs that play a key role in strengthening the workforce by providing pathways to careers industry recognized credentials and english language proficiency pathways all while meeting significant statewide needs for foundational literacy and high school completion these efforts align with the commonwealth's broader commitment to educational excellence and access reflected in the statewide listening tour and executive order

[06:49:22] four priorities. Community input gathered through the listening tour underscored the importance of strengthening literacy, supporting workforce readiness, and responding to local needs, all of which are advanced through adult education services across Virginia. All of this informs the item today for your consideration. For first review, please find the re-establishment of the Adult Education and Literacy Advisory Committee to help elevate these priorities, guide continuous this improvement and ensure that the programs remain responsive, high quality, and aligned with the Commonwealth's goals for a strong, educated, and economically thriving Virginia.

[06:49:59] Additional details and background are available in the item that's been provided to you. And the recommendation from the State Superintendent of Public Instruction is for you all to accept this item for first review today. Thank you. Dr. Hollins, Superintendent. I just want to thank Dr. Hollins for bringing this item forth to reestablish this Adult Education and Literacy Advisory Committee.

[06:50:26] As you've heard me talk often in the past about the importance of the Early Childhood Advisory Committee, as many of you now, including in particular Dr. Maxwell, there are many, many stakeholders in Early Childhood, and there's no way for this board, with its constitutionally set nine members, to kind of reflect all of those different perspectives.

[06:50:44] And so the key role of the ECAC is to make sure that we solicit that broad feedback, feedback, whether it's BQB5 or the Child Day Center regulations before coming to you. I think ABTEL plays a similar role when you're thinking about everything from the praxis to some of the other elements affecting our educator prep programs and licensure.

[06:51:05] This is a small but mighty team, and I think as you see in the one-pager that was attached to this item, the broad scope of the VDOE means that we can't always have all those folks represented here on the board and so we welcome re-establishing this committee to think through how do we make sure that these students are having access to sort of you know equal rigor it looks different with adult education but we ultimately want to make the most of every dollar and we want to make the dollars go as far as possible when we think about opportunities for adult learners and whether it's you know the interest that we've talked about today

[06:51:42] today in CTE, or you sort of recognize in 2026 that many folks will probably have multiple careers over the course of their lifetime, being intentional about adult education and literacy is really key. So thank you to Heidi and Sam and the teams, and we welcome the opportunity to establish this committee and to make sure that this body is continuing to push the needle on adult education and literacy in the way that we're doing across the other topics we've today discussed today and yesterday.

[06:52:13] Great, thank you. Board members, are there any questions? Great, Dr. Hollands, we will accept this for first review and see you in September. Thank you all very much. Hey, board members, we have gotten through our agenda all the way through Q. I'm going in.

[06:52:35] Early is always on time. But with that, Superintendent Conway, I'll leave it to you for any final comments or reflections. Oh, welcome, Dr. Maxwell. We gave you a full round today and yesterday, But I just want to echo the deep, I know, again, we've gone from sort of fairly light agendas in the spring to a much heavier one since the summer and fall.

[06:52:59] And just appreciate the cooperation and the collaboration across everyone here present. And appreciate, as always, as noted, everybody's commitment to all of our students as they return back to school. Secretary Smith and myself, along with the governor, are very excited to engage in our back-to-school tour and to see all those excited youngsters and high school students to visit their classrooms, visit their CTE programs, in partnership with our school division partners.

[06:53:31] I should note to the points made earlier in the spirit of improvement, we are prioritizing for this back to school tour, our schools that are federally identified as comprehensive support and improvement. And so really trying to kind of walk the walk in addition to talk to talk of sort of understanding, I think, as Ms. McPherson noted earlier, you know, where are these schools in greatest need of support? What do those supports look like? Where are their strengths? And how do we bring that that real life perspective?

[06:54:01] and make sure often when we go to school divisions we of course want to see um some of your your high flyers and that is an important part of the process but recognizing those schools that are the priority of this body are the priority of the department of education and getting into those classrooms those halls and meeting with those students and educators is our top priority for this back to school tour this year so thank you thank you miss mcpherson thanks again the i think exciting as well as um very in-depth meeting that we had today but as a point of privilege i just

[06:54:38] wanted to give a thanks on behalf of the board to the dolly parton foundation for the imagination library and the number of books that they have provided to virginia students and let them know that we're we will always be indebted to them for the fact that they were thinking about our kids you know with um these cute little books that have made a difference in the lives of many children thank you miss mcpherson anybody else and with that i want to um have this meeting come to a close but also uh say uh good luck for a great school year to all of our teachers it's just

[06:55:16] september in leaders we have a long way to go but looking forward to the progress the bright spots and the learning and thank you for all that you do with that may i have a motion to adjourn second great all in favor signify by saying aye right meeting adjourned thank you



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