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Fairfax County School Board Forum, Tuesday, April 7, 2026

Date Tuesday, April 7, 2026
Place Fairfax County School Board, Virginia
Length 1h 0m (video)

- Official meeting video (YouTube): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aKlsG1Yna04>
- Official School Board page (FCPS): <https://www.fcps.edu/about-fcps/leadership/school-board>

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Speech-to-text: whisper.cpp, model large-v3-turbo. Produced 2026-10-27. Each paragraph starts with its time [HH:MM:SS] in the meeting video.

[00:07:40] April 7, 2020, the discussion is called to order at 10:37 a.m. And I will call on Mr. McElveen for the first forum topic, "Wait Until Eighth" initiative. Thank you, Ms. Lady, and thank you to both you and the Chair for scheduling this item and the next item so expeditiously after they were submitted, it's much appreciated.

[00:08:06] So this forum topic deals with encouraging our families to wait until eighth grade to for smartphone adoption. It's a debate I don't think is a surprise to many at this table given the conversations we've had about cell phone use and cell phone policy after the past several years. And as I view it, this goes very much hand in hand with our cell phone policy. This is, for those who are not familiar with the initiative, an effort to get families to work

[00:08:42] together as a community to push back on earlier cell phone adoption for the reasons that we're all very familiar with. The fact that cell phone use and addiction leads to behavioral issues, issues with sleep, cyberbullying, mental health, and educational disruption in the classroom. These are all things that I know we we all feel feel strongly about and this is an effort to stand with the community members who believe in the importance of pushing back cell phone

[00:09:19] adoption until eighth grade so what I am proposing to do without reading through my forum topic submission is to have a conversation here and then bring forward a resolution at the board table to again support this initiative and again this is not pushing things on families it's just showing our

institutional support for what the Surgeon General has shown to be something that's been had very negative and deleterious impacts on our

[00:09:54] students so with that open it up for discussion Dr. Anderson thank you can you speak a little bit more and I may be asking you to reread what's on there I looked at it but I'm trying to get it open in terms of what do we intend on achieving with the resolution so the concern that's been brought to me from the community is that school principals and staff have not been empowered to

[00:10:28] express their support for this initiative. While I think that support exists in our community and among our employees, they've just not felt the ability to take an official stance on this. And I think our, you know, just given what science and what policy issues have shown is that this is an important step for us to take. By adopting this, it would show that we're a national leader on this topic and I think it also, you know, we've had heard a lot of

[00:11:02] concerns from the community about screen time in general and also AI policy and I think this is a way to show that this board is supportive of reducing screen time and particularly smartphone use. Thank you. So this is just a resolution that's not necessarily going to lead to particular action it's just to signal the position okay thank you for that I guess the question that I had is also regarding process because typically resolutions we just bring forward and not necessarily at the form at the at a forum would you

[00:11:37] at some point be looking for some action that is associated with this well just to take a step back I mean the reason I'm bringing it as a forum topic as opposed to just slapping on a board agenda as a resolution is because we haven't had a chance I see an opportunity to do so which we would not have to at the board table and also would allow me to take any input that is received from the board and include that okay thank you just two more things I think as someone who's brought resolutions before and have and I've had

[00:12:14] to fight for the resolution just to be recognized as a position not necessarily link to action. I do appreciate what you're attempting to do. My other question is if this, let's kind of run this through, if we have a resolution that is supportive of the language that you have here that says wait until eight, what do you anticipate this would mean for activities for our students? Would it be that teachers are making decisions about whether or not to put devices in front of kids.

[00:12:50] We're talking kindergarten, first, second grade at this point. What do you think is going to be the impact? So I think the main impact should be showing our support for community togetherness and embracing this topic of pushing smartphone use to a later age.

[00:13:12] I don't foresee any curriculum to come out of this. I don't foresee the school system to be doing anything more than supporting families in their decision to wait until a later age. Would this kind of be in support, I guess, inclusive?

[00:13:28] I have heard Ms. Lady say a number of times, you know, wait until, what was it that the thing that you've used? Don't put this in front of your kids until some age. You mentioned something about that, but you've said many times, and I can't believe I can't recall it. I think wait until 8th, I've said before.

[00:13:44] Oh, is that what you've said? Okay, I thought it was something else. But then I also tell parents that they need to charge them in their room in high school, because if not, you let your child go wherever they want to in the world without your supervision. Okay, thank you for re-raising that. Would those be the kinds of things you would envelop in this resolution?

[00:14:03] Just again, signal to parents that there are things that they can do. And I would love to add what I've put in my newsletters in years past, which is how parents can password protect their children's phones so that they're not able to access it during the school day. You can set up different things where only text messages work during the school day or only phone or nothing at all.

[00:14:25] I would love to let that be included as part of the language as well. If it's just going to be a signal to parents like, hey, there are things that you can do for your kids' mental health, et cetera. Thank you. Thank you. Mr. Dannon.

[00:14:41] Thank you very much. First, I'm really grateful that you brought this up and I've gotten a lot of emails about it, of them supportive I haven't heard any detractors from it has there been a precedent just I guess for my own edification is there been a precedent where the board has done similar things like this where we announce our support for something like this that maybe not is central to schools and education but is you know obviously it can have a big impact on what we see in our classroom yes I would say it's more of a historical practice I would say in recent years we haven't seen as much certainly during this board term but yes and then have you seen this at other I know you mentioned being a leader which

[00:15:20] is phenomenal have you seen other districts divisions do this at the state level regionally it's a good question and I think the answer is there's a movement to have other districts about this but it has not been a common thing so by doing this it would make us a national leader awesome well thanks for bringing it up thank you miss st. John Cunningham so first of all number one thank you for bringing this up I do agree with the substance of what the

[00:15:51] wait a theory is my questions go more to your statement that says support system leadership and staff in sharing this pledge and resources with families so how do you think that's gonna look who's gonna do the work you know I I don't have a clear answer to that very honestly I think that my main goal with this is to allow school staff and school principals to express their support for

[00:16:30] this not necessarily to be pushing it out but just to say you know if there's a counselor in a school that's being asked by a parent or a student about you know the best age for engaging in cell phone adoption social media use the later the better and they can point to the fact that the school board has adopted a resolution saying that there is community support for that so you mentioned that school staff has not been empowered to do this do you have specific examples where school staff has been prevented from doing this yes I've I've had anecdotes and obviously I'm not going to point to any specific

[00:17:07] individuals but there have been community members that have tried to partner with principals and staff in schools who have just said you know this seems like an external effort that we haven't been empowered to embrace so much of the movement has come from PTAs PTOs those kind of organizations who have tried to take a stance and have been told they can't really incorporate it into the school environment so I did look at the website for this organization and I I do have some concerns my concerns are that if a person decides to

[00:17:46] take the pledge, the pledge is not active until 10 people in that specific grade, in that specific school, take the pledge. And then they're asking for lists to send out to the broader community.

[00:18:02] And as we were talking about privacy and AI and all of that, my concern is the way that that's structured, the way the organization structures it. I do agree with the whole concept of what this is. And as I looked at the website and I looked at all of the things that they do, my concern is, one, we are, and I don't

know, again, I would be with Mr. Dannon, if we have supported a nonprofit organization like this as a board that is advocating something that we believe in, but we are specifically going to the wait until 8.

[00:18:36] So that is a concern when I went through it. My other point that I'm going to make is that the website clearly states this is a community-based effort. And I worked in a community school, and I've worked and partnered with community organizations and nonprofits.

[00:18:57] And so for me, I think that those are the models that we should look at to where it does rely on parents and the community to initiate this and to expand it. I just don't see where our role is in terms of supporting this specific nonprofit organization although I agree with everything that they're saying and I just want to make sure that we don't go into places that we shouldn't be and just based on my experience working as a community school coordinator and partnering with nonprofits it was done in a different way that's all that's all

[00:19:35] I have to say thanks mr. st. John Cunningham so I would say that you know But we don't have to incorporate that name or anything like that into the resolution. We certainly don't have to talk about community members signing on. This is to express the board's support for the concept of waiting until 8:00.

[00:19:56] And that, again, that doesn't have to be -- wait until 8:00 doesn't have to be part of the title. It doesn't have -- you know, we don't have to show that we're embracing any sort of external nonprofit organization. It is the sentiment that I'm concerned with. Thank you. And I share your concerns. My kids did not get it actually until the seventh grade, but that was more because mom having heart attacks, not being able to contact them when they were in middle school.

[00:20:20] Thank you. Ms. Marin. Thank you, Mr. McAleen, for bringing this up. And I have heard it's of great interest. So I have three thoughts to share. First of all, I want to say, again, not only thank you, but thank you for allowing us to have this conversation because we are not having enough conversations about technology in our children's hands, whether it's the classroom or the home.

[00:20:41] which we cannot control, but we can certainly inform. So, you know, what I see here is that confirmation that our school division is a trusted resource to families. Stating our position on a topic, when we state it on our values, families know that this is reliable and important.

[00:20:58] For instance, we send communications out about the importance of locking up firearms, and also keeping them out of reach of children. We communicate the importance of reading to children early in life. so families look to us i think though it's premature for this board to issue a resolution when the superintendent hasn't yet given a distinction about how devices are used in school i think it's i'm hard-pressed to say to parents keep devices out of your kids hands until eight when we literally give every child age eight and younger a device so i'd rather see us spend our

[00:21:33] time discussing that um otherwise it's kind of like the emperor has no clothes like how can we possibly expect parents to do what we are say to do and we're not doing it I also think that again our time is better spent on policy we don't have the clarity and you know in fact today I'm actually headed over this evening to Arlington to hear their school board and superintendent talk about the role of devices and they just had a meeting before spring break saying very clearly they will not be giving devices to preschool children and they're working implement that and other changes next year including their middle school

[00:22:13] students currently do not have laptops they are piloting having laptops in middle school they have touch pads they're also piloting classroom sets of devices so I applaud all the parents who are raising this up and I just want to do more than say some words at the dais I want there to be action so the parents see that we really hear them.

[00:22:39] I also want to say that it's tough to be a parent advocate. And I, as a board member, always want to support our parents. But you have to have some hard conversations sometimes in your schools. And our PTAs, one of the three pillars of a PTA is advocacy. It's advocacy, extra enrichment opportunities, and community building.

[00:22:58] So I do encourage parents to continue speaking up. But I also think-- and this will be my last point-- is that the school division does not have clarity on what happens when parents want to do something different. Maybe I could see staff being very cautious about saying, sure, you can raise this thing.

[00:23:18] I mean, I've heard the principals are very cautious about sending out events sponsored by sometimes other parent groups. So really what's needed is clarity to principals about their parameters for supporting parent engagement.

[00:23:34] - Thank you, Ms. Mehran. - Mr. Moon. - Thank you, Madam Vice Chair. Thank you for bringing this to the board for a board discussion and consideration. I have a couple of questions for you.

[00:23:49] If this is gonna end product is going to be a resolution to be considered by the board, you have, as a board member, prerogative to bring a resolution using one of your two annual resolution. Is that the way you are trying to exercise?

[00:24:08] Those are proclamations, and I don't see this as an individual effort. I see this as a board effort. So I understand about Ms. Marron's concern related to this particular initiative linked to a certain organization.

[00:24:29] I don't know much about that organization, but do you know why it is 8th, not 7th, or 9th, or 6th, or 10th? I think it's based on what's been expressed by the Surgeon General and other scientific studies that, you know, that there's a balance between practicality and safety.

[00:24:54] And I think, you know, just generally students have more need for a smartphone when they're in high school. When they're in high school. And with a bell-to-bell prohibition, they're not going to be able to use it on school ground even if they had it.

[00:25:09] Anyway, so, you know, Dr. Reed, if we take a disposition, is this going to impact on school systems operations in any way? I don't believe so at all, Mr. Moon, and I think it's a solid statement that we should wait until 8th grade to have our children have cell phones in their hand.

[00:25:31] I think that we likely all agree with the concept. So I don't think it would impact school operations since kindergarten through eighth graders currently are not able to have cell phones at all. Anyhow, right, and obviously in the coming year, that'll affect 9th through 12th as well, but it will not affect operations per se.

[00:25:54] The concept won't. Listening to Ms. St. John Cuning about the sign-ups and the maybe sharing of lists, I'm not as familiar with what those pieces may or may not entail, But I think Mr. McElveen is saying that's not really a part of what he's bringing.

[00:26:11] It's more just the idea. So I think the concept is sound. It's solid. I think our staff would agree in general with that. And it won't affect operations. Okay, thank you. Thank you. Mr. McElveen, I thank you for bringing this up for the board's discussion.

[00:26:26] I generally am in support of discouraging use of digital devices as much as possible, even including not just for, you know, those under eighth grade, but including someone above age 60, if you could limit that.

[00:26:47] And so I'm hoping that, I'm hoping that if there's a board's consensus, I'm envisioning Mr. McElroy, you drafting a resolution for further consideration by the board. And if he could make it a little more expensive, that this is not just applicable to those under 8th grade, but all of us, you might be able to get more support on the resolution, thank you.

[00:27:19] - Thank you, Ms. Dixit. - So thank you, Mr. McLevine. This is a really great initiative, but I would even say wait until 9th, because I have seen that change in my own family, when one of my children said they don't want phone until 9th grade.

[00:27:40] Yeah, they said that. And it was a very smart decision, I felt, a very responsible one because it just kept him on the task and away from all the, you know, craziness on social media. And even now, one of my young adult and just turned an adult kid, they don't like going on social media that much.

[00:28:02] Kids are actually getting away from a little bit on, you know, maybe TikTok, the kids are still attached to it. But overall, they don't want to be on Facebook, I guess. Those old people place. So, but I'm on Facebook.

[00:28:19] So I wanted to just say another thing that it is a great initiative, but I think it's a parent's initiative more than the school. And I would support it as a parent, as a voice for the community, as a past PTA, you know, leader.

[00:28:36] But I don't know if we taking a stand from school board will do anything at all. But I was seeing it as a community, we do need to do this. Because I think that these devices are getting out of control. And I would like to push this as not only an initiative, maybe worded differently.

[00:28:56] But maybe give them flip phones to the kids earlier. Because some kids do, you know, parents do want to know. They can pick them up and all that. The smartphones are the ones which I feel really, really, you know, scared about the overusage of that and kids, you know, playing on them all the time.

[00:29:16] I would say we can advocate those flip phones. And I think there's a reverse kind of interest now for even adults to go back to those phones where we didn't have our, like, a mini computer, you know, with us all the time.

[00:29:34] So I don't know about adults right now, but at least for the kids, we can say that, you know, maybe they can use just flip phones for now. And that's what we did for one of our kids, is like, just got the fifth flip phone. They can do it, text and call. That's all they can do then.

[00:29:50] So that would be just my, but it's a good initiative in the right spirit and right direction. Thank you. Thank you, Ms. Dixit. I'm going to take a turn before some go-backs. Again, absolutely 100% support this initiative. A couple concerns for mine, and my colleague raised this.

[00:30:09] This is sort of a proprietary term. And one of my district directors or staff aides did some diving into the website and a couple things. One, apparently you get to some point where there's a link and

you pay for things. So this is a money-making thing.

[00:30:25] I don't see any multi-language learner materials anywhere on their website. And so when you talk about a workload, if we formally support something, we must provide that. and I don't know who's going to do the lion's share of that work. I'm not saying that's a reason to back away, but there have to be materials for multi-language learners.

[00:30:44] And I'll say this, like the whole, what I heard was staff resistance to a formal partnership. You know, I want to empower staff, because I certainly, my whole career, I told parents how to parent. It's my job as a counselor, and some didn't like it.

[00:31:01] And I did it in presentations. I did it in curriculum nights. I did it in college sessions. I did it on sessions on suicidal ideation and social emotional health. I held these up all the time and said, stop, stop.

[00:31:16] If you haven't done it, don't do it. Don't give it and take it at night. I just traveled for spring break. I didn't see one child old enough to hold a tablet in their hand who didn't have a tablet in their hand to entertain them on a bus ride from the airport to another location or in the airport waiting for a plane or on the plane.

[00:31:37] And I 100% do not want children having cell phones. And even on the website for wait till 8th, the dialogue is around the fact they're not in playgrounds, they're not outside, they're not doing all these other things because they've become addicted to the social aspects of the phone.

[00:31:52] I also want to clarify that I do want to have the conversation about devices in our children's hands and whether we should wait and not put a device in a child's hand till third grade, fourth grade, and then how that's being monitored. But I also need the public to understand that when we put something in a child's hand, it's for an educational purpose, okay?

[00:32:13] They're not on social media. They're gaining, and technology is helping with universal design of learning, and it's helping a lot of our children access learning that without that technology tool, they would not access it. It's creating some equal playing fields in the learning environment.

[00:32:29] So I want to make sure we have different buckets, you know, and I 100% want people to wait. I just don't think that we can use the term, wait till 8th, and I don't necessarily, I'm not anti this organization, because it's fantastic, and I wish I'd come up with it, because I've been saying it for 20 years, but anyhow, that's my main thing, and then I do think that the principle clarity is an interesting comment, because they do need clarity, but if our leaders are not empowered to state what they know is educationally sound, I get that they don't

[00:33:04] want to align it or stand behind us a private organization they need to be empowered to state how they feel and what they believe and if they're not doing that then please you've got one school board member that's telling you to take advantage of those opportunities so I see a couple go-backs I'll start with Dr. Anderson and let's we're gonna have to limit this I think to a minute because we have another forum topic this is a little loud okay okay thank you um I just want to make sure we're not losing the focus here because I think because we also suffered from

[00:33:44] this from the last board which is kind of perhaps conflating things that are not necessarily related I'm hearing that this is just a signal and the board and I'm not necessarily saying this board but I could think of about 15 other things we've done since I've been on the board that is just a signal to the

community about opposition when nothing else happens with it absolutely nothing else happens with it it's just a signal of our position it's a support for a particular thing that's it and this is what I believe this resolution will

[00:34:20] accomplish what I'm also hearing is you know the superintendent says this is a concept that is sound it is solid it will have no effect on operations we're not asking anybody to go forward to do anything it's just signaling what we think which we hope will help parents to be thinking about what they can be doing and I also heard very clearly the website doesn't have to be mentioned we have to just take the nuggets that we want and leave the things that don't work we're not trying to have anybody be spend money give data in any of that so those parameters make me very comfortable to support this and I also

[00:34:59] appreciate the opportunity that we have to give input to the resolution at this stage. Thank you. Ms. St. John-Cunning. First of all, I think you were in my head. And I do agree. I think that most of us have indicated that we agree with the theory and concept of not having these in people's hands, you know, in children's hands till they're older. I too, and the point that I wanted to make is at the end of the day, it is about saying this is what we believe and I too have sat and spoken with parents at the elementary

[00:35:39] level saying would you let this and this and this in your door because once you give a kid this you're letting them in the door and and this is really something that is the parent's responsibility and that comes down to us telling that telling the parents that this is what we believe and like I told parents you cannot be sitting there telling your kid smoking as bad as you're smoking and so And so that is the piece that, you know, we as a school system can do certain things.

[00:36:09] And I agree with Mr. McElveen's concept and idea. At the end of the day, we have no control of what the parents are doing. And they can say they signed the pledge, but if they're sitting there in front of a screen, they're modeling bad behavior. So I just wanted to put that out there.

[00:36:26] But I think all of us agree with the concept. I think that this is a good discussion. And I do agree that we can pick and choose how we see this moving forward. Okay. Thank you, Ms. St. John-Cunning. Ms. Marin for go back. Yeah, thanks, Dr. Anderson, for framing it that way. I think, and Ms. St. John-Cunning for also saying, I think we can pick and choose.

[00:36:44] We could use our own language. It doesn't have to be wait till 8:00. We could say delayed devices, delayed device use. And I actually think that would be such a welcome step, just like, again, like we do with the firearms. Please lock your guns up. Please know, like, this is the research, right? right? So I would be in favor of that. And I really think we need to continue this discussion very regularly on our agendas to talk about, then what do we do? How do we support parents?

[00:37:10] Because if we're giving a kid a device every single day, and then we send that kid home, we're not doing parents any favors. So we need to uphold our end of the bargain. So we do this, and then April 14th, we're working on our AI policy, which has also raised tons of discussions about device use and we need that clear directive from our superintendent with our input in policy so we can support parents how they really need it um with a fulsome approach thank you thank you um and not seeing any others i'll just echo i think what i've heard which is uh support for um a

[00:37:47] resolution regarding personal devices and from cell phone devices in in children's hands so um thank you for bringing the topic uh at this point we're going to move on to the second oh miss lady it would be helpful to have a consensus on whether the board supports moving forward with the resolution since

that's the request of mr mckelveen yeah so just to kind of conclude i mean um miss lady i agree with your sentiment i think that um there's been a lot of good good

[00:38:22] discussion here um particularly on the on the concept of kind of decoupling the language from or with developing a resolution, I will share it for feedback with the hope it doesn't devolve into a lot of wordsmithing, but certainly we'll take into account everything I've heard.

[00:38:43] All right, thank you. So we're good to move on to the next topic. So again, I'll call on Mr. McElveen on the forum discussion. Do I have to say this? No. Pandemic preparedness, Mr. McElveen.

[00:38:59] Thank you. Okay, thank you so much, Ms. Lady. So this next topic is something I've been thinking about for a very long time, but I wanted to give us a chance to move away from the politicization of this issue, not bring it up at the beginning of our term, not deal with this when we were dealing with the boundary discussion or other issues.

[00:39:22] But I thought the time had come to take a step back and have an opportunity to look back on the system's actions during the pandemic and see the best steps we can take going forward in terms of pandemic preparedness.

[00:39:41] This is something I've shared with Dr. Reid for a very long time now that I was interested in doing. And I think the good thing is that we are far enough removed from the pandemic that we can be collective, but also we're in a unique time where we still have a lot of individuals in the system who are intimately involved in the decision-making at the time and probably have their own thoughts about what we could do better next time.

[00:40:12] Secondly, we still have folks in the county, our director of health, who is all at that time, so it gives us kind of a unique opportunity now to look at this. I know there's been some effort at the state level to push for this kind of review as well.

[00:40:31] Other districts have done this. I know Dr. Reed's previous district as well. But I think this is another example, just like the previous one, where our district can be a national leader and looking at best practices going forward.

[00:40:51] Because, you know, while I wasn't in the room when those decisions were being made, I can recall at the time that we were using plans that were more than recent experience first time.

[00:41:13] And then I would ultimately defer to the superintendent on how this would be structured. I would envision staff-led with the goal that this would be findings of this working group have listed fall as a bring it back, but good for discussion.

[00:41:48] Thank you, Ms. Marin. Yeah, thank you, Mr. McElveen, for bringing this. I appreciate it. I am just looking at the executive limitation topics. And so we just had our safety and security EL presentation on March 12th. This could be something that is rolled into that set of criteria that the superintendent maintains, you know, a clear plan to communicate with, you know, county and state and federal officials.

[00:42:17] So it could be in the EL 13. It could also be in this Thursday's asset protection, although I think safety and security is really most accurate. So I like the idea of putting it in an EL, which we can do at any time.

[00:42:34] I also remember so clearly, Dr. Reed, when you arrived, being really amazed at the information you brought, having been from Washington, the first division in the nation to go through the pandemic,

and just how differently, in such an amazing way, you approached what you could not knowing what to expect even down to do we have reserves of water of potable water i don't know where we are with that but i do think that um being more focused on it is definitely welcome and you know i don't now even thinking about it i'm not sure we ever really

[00:43:09] debriefed as a county on what could have gone better you know we did the best we could but yeah so i would love to see this get more attention uh thank you thank you miss st john cunning mr mckelveen thank you for bringing this as some um so uh i dr reed has leadership done any kind of debrief um you know cursory or in-depth pandemic

[00:43:47] so i arrived in the summer of 22 and that would have been a full year after i believe fairfax returned to the classroom so i i don't know that there was a lot prior to that we haven't done an after action since i've been here to my knowledge about the pandemic we've certainly i've we've certainly done other emergency preparedness conversations and i know our county is uniquely positioned fairfax county and our schools in terms of our joint response

[00:44:24] teams in large part because of our proximity to the nation's capital and so um but i don't think we've delivered any type of formal report that i'm aware of unless the prior board had commissioned one that the prior superintendent maybe was a part of okay thank you um i i just have a couple of questions in terms of moving forward and i i do think this is important um because i was there as we were building the plane like down in the trenches and it was amazing what was done but it was also at the same time bringing us all hard palpitations at the

[00:45:01] time so my concerns are about this is just to make sure that we can bring the diverse perspectives of the particularly of specific communities that were impacted very differently when this happened and how will we ensure that that happens the other thing is how will student voice be incorporated into the recommendations and and so those are the things that I have you thought about that mr. McElveen you know ultimately I want this to be as depilitarized as

[00:45:38] possible so I think having it be staff led is the appropriate way to manage it and I would defer to the superintendent on who should be in the room and what the best formation of this group would look like.

[00:45:54] But I 100% agree that we should have different perspectives represented. You know, I've had some outreach in particular from special education community who in many ways went back before many people did and had their own issues. So I would hope that they would be represented as one example.

[00:46:13] The reason I'm really concerned about that diverse perspective is that sometimes without even realizing that we make assumptions and we did offer free internet to a lot of families and i can specifically speak to one family that i had to deal with that the assumption was that if you didn't have internet they could just come in and turn it on and hook it up but there was this one family that their their house had never been wired for internet so the time that it was going to take for that to happen was a lot longer than for you're already wired for internet and you can come hook it up. And so some communities were impacted a lot more. So it's like my kid can't get

[00:46:49] this and was sitting outside of the school trying to do homework. So I think looking at that to me is really important in terms of how that's impacted. And in my community very early on, we lost a lot of family members because of intergenerational housing and the impact that had on the families. And it

was just different than in other parts of the county. And I just think that that's something that we have to take into consideration as we do this this work and that's why I brought up those questions. Thank you. Dr. Anderson. Thank you. Ms. Merritt and I had the

[00:47:29] distinct pleasure to be the two that are in the room currently that lived through the pandemic when it started in March 2020 right after we started two months earlier and even to make things even more fun I had the opportunity to that July to become chair and just to continue to find our way to do things. And I could not stress enough how unprepared we were because no one thought we had to be prepared for something of this magnitude. The emergency preparedness plan that was available couldn't be any thinner and was woefully insufficient to address what we needed

[00:48:06] to address. And so we made it up as we went along a lot, which led to literally 10, 12, 14, 16 hour meetings because we didn't know what we didn't know and it wasn't until it hit this particular portion of the community or this thing that we're trying to figure out how to make it happen and Mr. Smith was there he knows he sat in all those meetings as well it was how do we do food how do we keep us drivers employed in a meaningful way how do we do VC it was all of the things even as

[00:48:43] simple as when we had a plan that talked about how to get devices to middle school students the language well was always how to get devices to students in grades seven and eight well what happened what happened to the sixth graders that were at the middle school completely lost in the sauce and this is with everybody dealing with all of their own trauma around this so whatever it is personally that you were involved with you had to come here professionally and try to make decisions that would impact hundreds of thousands of students that is not the best recipe at all for

[00:49:16] us to be thoughtful so while we may not think we might need something that is very in-depth very broad very comprehensive I think we all know better we're hoping we don't need it but it's great to have it so I appreciate the fact that you're bringing this forward while we are calm while we do have had we've had some lessons learned and I'm sure Miss Merritt myself Mr. Smith and all of the people who sat in this building for hours and hours and hours can lend to to this to the development of this plan and just to really identify all of the things

[00:49:53] all of the places where we would need to have a measured response we have not had an after action But we've had a lot of information that could support that after action. So I could not be more supportive of developing such a plan because it was not great to build the plane as we were flying it for a very long time.

[00:50:24] Thank you. I'm going to take a turn and I'm going to confess that I'm having some PTSD. And I'm going to be honest. As a director of student services, we were not in the conversation. Can't tell you how many times I heard in all the meetings and briefings I sat through because it was principals and DSS's to a DSS that's a really good question Robin that's a really good question Renee that's a really good question Brandon the followed by we hadn't thought of that we hadn't thought of that I begged the holy put someone in the room we one year we built three

[00:51:00] master schedules I mean I to this day believe I have to live at a chiropractor's office because of 60 hour weeks and and there were the people working the hardest were our school-based technology specialists our T-specs and our DSS's and our teachers and no disrespect to everyone else but there was no even acknowledgement of the number of hours that other people were putting in there was no discipline

for APs there was no dipping into I mean you could go in and watch a class there should have been some compensation to the people whose

[00:51:38] lives were incredibly impacted by ours and I mean building three masters at a school and and changing the rules on us because you did make it up as you went along I was not a fan I think I took most of my aggravation out on staff at the central office level for just not talking to the schools and from my perspective and i think principals learned they had no idea how much a director did um so i'm also going to i don't know that it belongs just in safety and security because it's instruction this is an instructional thing it kind of lives in two places right and um i do

[00:52:17] know the impact on the community was different from from space to space and i'll also say while i understood um some of the sensitivities around cameras not being on that can never happen again cameras must be on and we'll teach kids how to blur their background but at the end of the day there are people who logged in and went to never got out of bed so we can't have that and we also need to do a better job and I do commend the people who were working on the virtual high school that we sort of had the following year because of people who had different medical vulnerabilities

[00:52:54] to returning and I think we have to be sensitive to those health issues but anyways I do appreciate the conversation I do think we never did debrief but if we debrief we need to go back and we need to pull some of the people that are most impacted and and like I said I'm I'm shaking talking about this because it was just it was it was the worst I loved being home with my wife but I hated the reality that I was standing or sitting at a computer all day long it

[00:53:30] seemed like forever so anyways I don't see any other placards I'm gonna give people one more chance mystics it so thank you again mr. McLevine for bringing this I think we do need to have an action plan for future and lesson learned but I think the failure was on the part of a lot of different organization school was left alone to kind of navigate everything their own school board members were not our health officials but were basically asked to make a call for thousands thousands of students and families and so it was a

[00:54:10] hard task for them to I'm sure they you know I've heard about their 12 hours long meetings and you know not able to take a break for all day sometimes but yeah but I just say that we need to have the right stakeholder like you said we need to have the right people. So we need county, we need state, we need CDC. We need all the people who need to be in that room to make a plan forward. Again, if this happens again, we cannot be like, oh, we don't have a direction from CDC or we don't have it from the county. The plan is to be, should be there to act on it. So obviously parents grow special

[00:54:48] needs groups. We need a lot of stakeholders there. So, but I think mostly our county and state has to give us very clear clear directions on that so if something like to happen maybe I want to hear from Dr. Reed as well your thoughts on this well I think you're absolutely correct and I think listening to Miss Lady too it's it was a time I it's ironically in a conversation last evening I was at a girls soccer game at Lake Braddock and visiting with one of the assistant

[00:55:22] principals who was talking about just having started paternity leave when the pandemic happened he came back for four days and or I think he had been out for four days and then the pandemic hit right so in many ways it feels like it was yesterday and other ways it feels like it was 100 years ago again so I think it's we can learn a lot when we reflect on history if we learn from it and and I do for sure agree that it should be a combined effort because

[00:55:55] schools can't do it alone and the future of our next generations will count on us doing this even better as we move forward there's a it's the Navajo that talk about every decision they make is made with the people seven generations from now in mind and I think that as we think about the work we do as a board and leadership team, how important it is to remember those that follow us and what are the paths that we're setting for them.

[00:56:31] So I appreciate the topic, and I look forward to the task. Oh, Mr. Moon has not had a turn. Go ahead. Thank you. I just wanted to thank Mr. McClendon again for bringing this. As a someone who was not on the board at the time, watching from outside, I mean this is going to be very helpful in case something as all for us this happens God forbid to us again thank you and finally miss st. John coming for a go back so I just want to piggyback and say that it is critical for the right

[00:57:10] stakeholders to be in the room and I will include people that are actually in the schools that had to implement all of these plans which my colleagues so eloquently spoke to you and the amount of hours and the other really hard working people that did all of this work too were family liaisons they were going out they were bringing food to families they were making sure all of that was taken care of and I think that's where schools really recognize the value of our family liaisons so I think having those people in the room as you're developing the plan is going to be critical because it's not just what you say up here but how it actually gets operationalized and what it looks like

[00:57:46] and who does the work that is really important and critical and i wouldn't go so far as to say that it was a failure i think that this was something that never happened at all and that we did the best that we could with what we had and i and so i i i don't want to say that it was a failure because we had never done this and i remember very clearly at the beginning of the pandemic we had we had no clue how this thing was spread we were scared to death so as time progressed then you know we reflected and said well we should have done this but we didn't know to do that because because we didn't know.

[00:58:21] - All right, thank you. So the forum topic discussion is adjourned at 10:28. We will take a 10 minute break to allow staff to solve some technical issues before we continue. - Ms. Lady, I think this forum topic, since it's a direction to the board, would that not require a consensus vote?

[00:58:38] I'm sorry, it's a direction to the superintendent. - Excellent point. Consensus on Mr. McAveney's request for establishing a staff level working group on pandemic preparedness. All in favor, that's all board members present. So no nays or abstentions. Now we are adjourned.

[00:58:54] Oh, Dr. Reed. I just, quick clarification on the timing that you would expect me to return with this report. I just, I heard summer-ish, but I want to make sure that fall-ish. Fall, but flexible. We can have a conversation about what you think you need to do and what time you need to do.

[00:59:13] Okay, I appreciate that. I just want to make sure we hit the target, so knowing the date. Right, so for clarification, that we don't have a hard timeline on this, but because we want to be done with fidelity. So if it takes a full year or a little longer, it's fine. Okay, we got consensus on that.

[00:59:28] All right, now the topic, we are adjourned at 11:29, and we're gonna take a 10 minute break for staff to resolve some technical issues. Thank you.



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