

FCPS School Board 101



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fccpta.org

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Part I

FCPS School Board Roles, Structure and Members



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School Board Constitutional Powers

Virginia Constitution Article VIII, Section 7.

Constitution of Virginia

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Read Full Constitution

Article VIII. Education

Section 7. School boards

The supervision of schools in each school division shall be vested in a school board, to be composed of members selected in the manner, for the term, possessing the qualifications, and to the number provided by law.

<https://law.lis.virginia.gov/constitution/article8/section7/>

Virginia Code: Powers and Duties of School Boards

The VA Code is the collection of the laws of Virginia passed by the General Assembly.

Section on education: Title 22.1

School Boards: Chapter 7

In a very general sense, the school board sets policy and the superintendent and their staff set regulations for implementation.

The school board is ultimately responsible for all policies and regulations, written and unwritten, express and implied.

<https://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacode/title22.1/chapter7/>

The School Board....

Does:

- Set Policy
- Set budget
- Determine legal action
- Hire superintendent, clerks and division counsel
- Serve as final appeal body for personnel matters and student discipline matters
- Recognize communities and individuals
- Receive reports from Advisory Committees
- Set student discipline regulations

Does Not:

- Address school-level or program-level personnel matters
- Determine individual student schedules, accommodations, etc
- Be involved in discipline matters unless an appeal reaches the whole board as a final step
- Set syllabuses and materials at the level of the individual teacher

Advocacy best starts at the level of the school; moves to central office staff; and finally to the school board. But, the school board members are the people directly responsible to the voters of Fairfax County and FCPS stakeholders.

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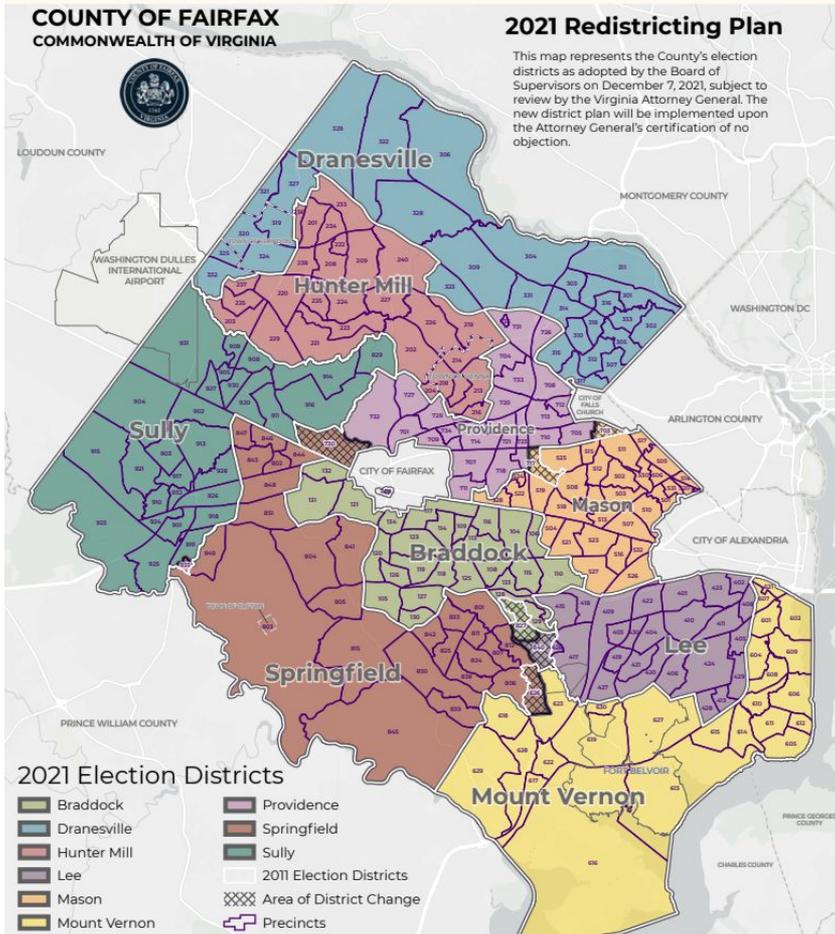
Who is Currently on the School Board?

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Composition of the FCPS School Board



There are **twelve members** of our school board.

Nine are elected according to **Magisterial Districts** (the same as nine of the ten members of the Fairfax Board of Supervisors. They winner in a particular district is the one with the most votes among all of the candidates for that particular district.

The other **three** are elected “**at-large**” That is, the three highest vote-getters among all of the candidates for at-large are elected.

Thus, each voter in Fairfax County may **cast four votes**: one for their Magisterial District, and three for at-large candidates.

In many other states they are called a Board of Education. In Virginia the Board of Education is a separate, statewide board.

Who are My Representatives?

Go to this website, type in your address, and find out who your representatives are for all offices; school board is toward the bottom:

<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/myneighborhood/>

These do not correspond to schools, school pyramids or FCPS Regions; there is some overlap



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School Board Elections

- The elections are in “off-off-years” ” when there are no Federal or statewide offices on the ballot.
- The terms are for four years, so the current board will have served from 1/1/2020 to 12/31/2023.
- The next election for all twelve is **November 2023**.
- State senators and delegates November 23 as well



Current School Board

The **three** At-large Representatives :

- Karen Keys-Gamarra kakeysgamarr@fcps.edu
- Abrar Omeish aomeish@fcps.edu
- Rachna Sizemore Heizer (2022-23 Chair) rsizemorehei@fcps.edu

Student representative: Michele Togbe matogbe@fcps.edu

<https://www.fcps.edu/school-board/school-board-members>

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The 9 Magisterial District Members

- Mt. Vernon: Karen Corbett Sanders klcorbettsan@fcps.edu
 - Springfield: Laura Jane Cohen lhcohen@fcps.edu
 - Sully: Stella Pekarsky sgpekarsky@fcps.edu
 - Hunter Mill: Melanie K. Meren mkmeren@fcps.edu
 - Dranesville: Elaine Tholen evtholen@fcps.edu
 - Providence: Karl Frisch kvfrisch@fcps.edu
 - Mason: Ricardy Anderson rjanderson@fcps.edu
- Franconia (formerly Lee): Tamara Derenak Kaufax (Vice-Chair)
tderenakkauf@fcps.edu
 - Braddock: Megan McLaughlin momclaughlin@fcps.edu

School Board Structure

Each July, the Fairfax County School Board chooses a Chairman and a Vice-Chairman from among its own members; at that time they also set the calendar of meetings for the year, and assign themselves to committees.

The chair for 2022-2023 is **Rachna Sizemore Heizer**; the vice-chair is **Tammy Derenak Kaufax**.

Staff & Leadership:

- Clerk of the Board: Beverly Madeja Beverly.Madeja@fcps.edu 571-423-1075
- Deputy Clerk of the Board: Lora Cornell Lora.Cornell@fcps.edu 571-423-1062
- Division Counsel: John Foster
- Superintendent: Dr. Michelle Reid <https://www.fcps.edu/staff/dr-michelle-c-reid>

Get Info From the School Board-News You Choose



1. Enter your email address.
2. In the drop-down, click “school board.”
3. Then un-check the ones that you do not want.

https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/VAEDUFCPS/subscriber/new?qsp=VAEDUFCPS_1

School Board Meetings & Hearings



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22-23 School Year Calendar

In 2022, the meetings are **FIRST** and **THIRD** Thursdays;

Except that the second meeting in November is Monday 11/14/22

In 2023, the meetings are reliably **SECOND** and **FOURTH** Thursdays;

Except the second meeting in March is the 5th Thursday, 3/30/23

9/1/22	REGULAR MEETING	Closed 5 p.m. Regular – 7 p.m.	LJ	Announcements: Recognitions: Resolutions: VSBA Business Honor Roll Presentations: Action: FY22 Year End School Board Liaison and Committee Assignments (RSH/ET) Advisory Committee Appointments Consent: FLECAC Appointments AOC - Automatic Temperature Control System REplacement Mantua ES AOC - Ventilation System Upgrades at Quander Road School New Business:	8/25/22	8/26/22	
9/21	School Board Retreat	9 a.m. - 3 p.m.	TBD				
9/6/22	HOLD Closed Session	1 p.m. - 3 p.m.	TBD				
9/13/22	Forum	10 a.m.	GAC 1600			9/2/22	
9/13/22	ALL DAY WORK SESSION	11 a.m. - 4 p.m.	GAC	11 a.m. – 1 p.m. Family Engagement Survey Results 1p.m. - 1:30 p.m. Lunch 1:30 p.m. - 2:30 Family Engagement Survey Results 2:30 - 4 p.m. ERFC Annual Report	9/1/22	9/2/22	

The July meeting doesn't seem to be set yet.

Here is the work calendar for the year as it exists now:

[https://go.boarddocs.com/vsba/fairfax/Board.nsf/files/CGGCN231CD8F/\\$file/Annual%20Calendar%202022-23.pdf](https://go.boarddocs.com/vsba/fairfax/Board.nsf/files/CGGCN231CD8F/$file/Annual%20Calendar%202022-23.pdf)

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Types of School Board Meetings

REGULAR BUSINESS MEETINGS



- public input (limited, spoken or video)
- open to public
- recorded and on demand

CITIZEN ADVISORY COMMITTEES



- some have public input See fccpta.org
- open to public
- may be recorded and on demand

SCHOOL BOARD COMMITTEE MEETINGS

- no public input
- not open to the public
- not televised or recorded

PUBLIC HEARINGS



- public input (unlimited or limited, spoken)
- open to the public
- recorded and on demand

WORK SESSIONS



- no public input
- open to public
- recorded and on demand

FORUMS



- no public input
- open to public
- recorded and on demand

See work calendar

[https://go.boarddocs.com/vsba/fairfax/Board.nsf/files/CGGCN231CD8F/\\$file/Annual%20Calendar%202022-23.pdf](https://go.boarddocs.com/vsba/fairfax/Board.nsf/files/CGGCN231CD8F/$file/Annual%20Calendar%202022-23.pdf)

School Board Citizen Advisory Committees

The FCCPTA board of directors has representatives on several school board advisory committees: <https://www.fccpta.org/advocacy-advisorycommittees>

- Learn about when they meet
- How to contact the FCCPTA Representative

There are 10 total Citizen Advisory Committees:

<https://www.fcps.edu/school-board/school-board-committees>

Public Hearings—Different than Regular Meetings

- Public hearings are scheduled on specific topics by the Board at various times during the year. All speakers are allowed (2) minutes.
- Individuals may sign up in advance to speak at public hearings.
- Five (5) public hearing speaker slots are reserved for individuals, who have not registered in advance, to address the Board after registered speakers. Unregistered individuals may also use “no show” speaker slots to address the Board.

To reserve a space on the speakers list you can sign up online or call the School Board office at 571.423.1075 during normal business hours 8 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

The speaker list will open at least ten (10) days prior to the public hearing and will close at 4:40pm on the business day immediately preceding the day of the hearing for weekday hearings, or at 4:30 p.m. on the Thursday preceding a Saturday public hearing.

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Public Hearings Scheduled for 2022-2023

- Capital Improvement Program: January 5th, 2023
Speakers list opens December 20, 2022
- FY24 Advertised Budget- January 23, 2023
Speakers list opens January 10, 2023
- FY24 Approved Budget- May 4, 2023 and May 11, 2023 (if needed)
Speakers list opens April 20, 2023

**Public hearings are often scheduled at
6pm at Jackson Middle School
3020 Gallows Rd, Falls Church**



Part II

ADVOCATING TO THE SCHOOL BOARD

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What Can You Advocate to the School Board About?

Broadly speaking, these are the recommended types of topics issues or situations in which you should approach the School Board and/or your School Board Member:

Matters affecting a whole or part of your school stakeholders—budget matters related to a school or multiple schools; boundaries and transportation, etc.

Policies that impact students, staff and family in and beyond your school (e.g. lunch, cell phone, etc.)

Broad curriculum, courses offered at all levels, students with disabilities, gifted students, 2E, speakers of other languages, accommodations for specific groups of students/families or multiple such, etc.

Relations with other governmental bodies (governmental cooperation, services, police MOU, etc.)

Legislative program (laws that we would like Virginia and the Federal government to enact)

Anything that affects students, employees and families beyond the personnel and individual student matters in classrooms

Advocacy With or Lobbying of the School Board

There are several ways of advocating:

1. By email
2. In personal meetings
3. By public address at a school board meeting

Note: the school board sets broad policy. It rarely intervenes with regulations, but it can.

1. Advocating By Email

Two Options:

1) email the board members directly

(see later slide for email addresses)

2) use the “ask a question” portal on the <https://www.fcps.edu/school-board/school-board-members> page

One advantage of the “Ask a question” portal is that it tells whether you are a county resident or not. When there are topics that reach outside advocacy, there are often many out-of-county messages. School board members are more likely to attend to stakeholder messages, and in particular their own constituents.

Best Practices:

- School board members are more likely to respond to an email sent to them individually rather than a mass email.
- Brevity is key.
- Linking outside articles is not always the best approach. Summaries from primary sources are often the best approach.

2. In-Person Meetings

- 1) Attend office hours (sign up for your School Board members newsletter to learn more about when these are held)
- 2) Call or email their office to request an individual or group meeting (*this is harder*).

Tips:

- Keep in mind that Magisterial District members represent 100,000+ people, 60,000+ voters; or, to look at it another way, 20,000 students, 40,000 parents, and 5,000 staff members.
- Clarity, brevity, patience and grace are important to getting folks attention.

3. Speak at a School Board Meeting

Speakers must be **stakeholders** in one of the following categories:

- 1) **residents** of the city or county of Fairfax (this doesn't mean simply owning property in the county or city—it means actually living here)
- 2) **current employees** of FCPS
- 3) **current students** in FCPS (this includes tuition students and students at Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology who are residents of other counties or cities)
- 4) **parents/guardians of current students** (including non-custodial parents who may live outside of Fairfax, and parents/guardians of TJ students)
- 5) **business partners** of FCPS (this basically means contractors, donors, and elected officials who vote on money that comes to FCPS—state delegates and senators).

There are NOT detailed requirements as there are in Loudoun. It is done basically on an honor system.

About School Board Testimony

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Purpose of School Board Testimony

What testimony CAN do:

- 1) Bring attention to your advocacy priorities; this can take place over a period of time and with a number and variety of speakers.
- 2) Punctuate, emphasize and show interest in more detailed information on complex issues that is given by email.
- 3) Emphasize the importance to your organization and the community of a policy proposal in the run-up to and the night of a vote.

What testimony usually can NOT do:

- 1) Affect new topics or change many votes on the night of a vote.
- 2) Provide detailed information and education to the school board on complex topics.

About Speaking at a School Board Meeting

- You do NOT have to address a topic that is on the agenda. Anything FCPS-related is allowed, any time.
- A given speaker may address the board at most once in every three meetings. If you speak or make a video, you have to skip two meetings to be eligible again.
- You should give a true name and address to the clerk, but your address will not be made public (it may be open to Freedom of Information Act requests—not sure).
- You do NOT have to be up at 6 a.m. and type quickly to get a spot anymore—there is a four-business-day window in which to sign up for the lottery.

Speaking and Video Slots

- 3 spots reserved for current students;
- 10 spots for others (who may be students) for real-time testimony (it can be in-person or virtual).
- 3 spots for pre-recorded videos turned in at least a day and a half in advance (they have to check them for Federal Communications Commission regulations).
- 10 extra “waiting list” spots if not all of the 13 real-time speakers show up.

To claim a waiting list spot, you must be there in person. If not all spots are claimed, they take walk-ins who come to the clerk a half-hour before the meeting, first-come, first-served.

- The lotteries for adults for real-time in-person and virtual are combined. That testimony is given on the spot. Those ten spots are the most competitive.
- The three spots reserved for students are in a separate pool; the three pre-recorded video spots are a third pool. They are generally less competitive.

You may not exchange your spot. You may not share a spot. You can't give your slot away or change your mind about in person/video.

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How to Sign up to Speak at a School Board Meeting

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How to Navigate to the Speaker's Page:

Go to fcps.edu

Click “School Board” in the top list:



Scroll down to “Speak at a School Board Meeting”

Three content cards from the FCPS website. The first card, titled "School Board Members", shows a group of 12 women standing in front of a blue backdrop with the FCPS School Board logo. The second card, titled "School Board Meetings", features a graphic of an open book with a blue flame rising from it and three yellow stars. The third card, titled "Speak at a Board Meeting", shows a wooden gavel resting on a desk next to a yellow pencil and some papers.

School Board Members
Meet the 12 Fairfax County School Board representatives who are elected by county residents. Send a question to a school board member.

School Board Meetings
Learn about the types of School Board Meetings, review meeting minutes and videos.

Speak at a Board Meeting
The School Board welcomes comments from Fairfax County residents and believes that strong community engagement and outreach are important components of a successful school system.

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When to Register for the Lottery

The lottery is drawn precisely at 7 p.m. two days business days before the meeting.

→ You must register before 7 p.m. on Tuesday night. *(The one exception is the second meeting in November ; you must register for that meeting by the previous Thursday 11/10/23 by 7 p.m.)*

2022 Registration Deadlines:

8/30/22 (tomorrow)	11/1/22
9/13/22	11/10/22 <i>this is a Thursday registration for the Monday meeting</i>
10/4/22	
10/18/22	11/29/22
	12/13/22

2023 Registration Deadlines:

1/10/23	4/11/23
1/24/23	4/25/23
2/7/23	5/9/23
2/21/23	5/23/23
3/7/23	6/13/23
3/28/23** <i>this is for a meeting during the fifth week</i>	6/27/23

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The Google Form

September 1, 2022 - Community Participation

* Required

Email *

Your email _____

First and Last Name *

Your answer _____

Are you a current FCPS Student? *

Yes

No

If you are a student, which school do you attend?

Your answer _____

I choose to address the Board *

In-Person

Virtually

Video Testimony (A link to your video must be submitted 36 hours prior to the meeting)

Please provide a link to your video testimony

Your answer _____

Name of group or association you are representing (e.g. PTA president, Fairfax Education Association, etc.). If you are not representing a group association, type "individual". *

Your answer _____

Street Address, City, Zip *

Your answer

Phone Number *

Your answer

List the topic that you plan to address *

Your answer

I am requesting translation services for the following language:

Your answer

Please indicate your magisterial district *

Please indicate your magisterial district *

- Braddock District
- Dranesville District
- Hunter Mill District
- Lee District
- Mason District
- Mount Vernon District
- Providence District
- Springfield District
- Sully District
- Fairfax City

Submit

Clear form

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Don't forget to click submit!

Making a Video

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Making a Video

- If you choose and are selected to turn in video, you will have less than twelve hours to turn it in.
- I recommend preparing in advance, but you don't have to. Making and the turning in the video link is not too hard.
- They really do not want a professional, snazzy video. It should be you giving your testimony into a recording device such as your phone or computer.
- You need to give them a link, not an mp4, so you can upload it to YouTube or a cloud based file service to get a link.

Recording a Video and Uploading to Youtube

On your phone, you can use the camera function, turn the lens around to face you, and put in on video. Then press the red dot, record, and press the red dot again. You can record over again until you like it, and it is less than two minutes. It really does have to less than two minutes. It does not have to fancy or perfect. Your words are important, not the professionalism of the video.

On a computer, you can use the camera application, Zoom, or such to record.

How to upload to YouTube? If you have a gmail account, you have a YouTube account.

Tips for Writing & Giving Your Comments

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Tips for Writing Your Comments

- ★ Nowadays, I would not spend much time on introducing yourself and pleasantries. Your title or affiliations can take up a good chunk of your 120 seconds as well so be careful. I have no idea how the current chair likes to be addressed. I just start with a “Good evening, glad to be here” and plunge into my main point.
- ★ Put your main point first. Put your main point first. In two minutes you don’t have time for a crescendo and denouement.
- ★ Remember that the board members are people, and the audience are people, including students and younger.
- ★ Use primary sources—refer to actual and proposed policies and regulations, rather than news articles about them.
- ★ A wise person said “The people whom the school board most needs to hear from don’t sign up to speak to or email the school board.” We can think about how we can use our own sense of safety to represent folks who for whatever reason may be reluctant to go.
- ★ It is almost always advised to send your testimony (or a summary of it) to the clerk and the board several days in advance, if possible. There is little advantage to “surprising” the board with testimony in real time—things are too easily missed or misheard. SchoolBoardMembersAndClerks@fcps.edu

Tips for Speaking at a School Board Meeting

- ★ You have no more than two minutes to speak. Two minutes goes by fast! Be sure to practice and time yourself several times.
- ★ It's really a good idea to end before the buzzer goes off and the mic stops, when you practice allow an extra ten to fifteen seconds at the end to avoid the buzzer going off over your remarks.
- ★ Your time begins when you actually begin to speak, not when you approach the podium; that means you can shuffle your papers, adjust your glasses, take a deep breath, etc. before you begin.
- ★ There is no need to be a tremendous orator. I do not speak well off-the-cuff, so I write my speeches and read them carefully. The first time I spoke to the school board in 2000, I sat down and my legs were unwilling to lift me back up. It gets better and easier, but a fluttering heart and nervousness are normal.

Keep in Mind Regarding the Content of Your Remarks

- Be sure to distinguish whether you are speaking for yourself or an organization, and to get the OK of the organization. For PTA, we need to follow the “positions and resolutions of the Fairfax County Council PTA, the Virginia PTA, and the National PTA.” Your president is your official spokesperson; they can designate you to speak, but they should OK your speech. When in doubt check with the FCCPTA president; but I can help you find VAPTA.org and PTA.org position statements and resolutions.
- For FCPS, as public employees we have extensive speech rights, but I always advise letting your principal or program manager see what you are going to say. No one likes a surprise phone call. For private employees, your employer really can tell you what and what not to say.
- The FCPS lawyers really believe strongly in free speech. As an individual speaker you can say virtually anything, but keep in mind civility and respect for the community, including children who may be in attendance or watching at home. As for videos, they have to pass FCC in terms of violence and curse words, etc.
- I always run my speeches past multiple people. The advice that I receive most often is to use shorter and less complex sentences. I also have a tendency to show how erudite I am. One friend said “Use less Latin; no one has any idea what you are talking about.”

How to Find School Board Agendas, policies and regs

> BoardDocs

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Go to fcps.edu



Choose “School Board”

Scroll down to “School Board Meetings and Agendas” and click the “BoardDocs” button



This will give you access to:

1) future meetings

2) the updated “work calendar” of all SB meetings for the upcoming year

3) the agendas and often videos of all meetings going back to 2004

4) access to all current Policies, Regulations and The Notices; and much more



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There are some helpful search functions.

“Boarddocs” is provided through the Virginia School Board Association.

Questions?

Hints, input and tips from others

Thank you for coming!

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