

# Little River District Newsletter

April 2024

---

*The views contained herein reflect the views of the individual School Board member who is the publisher of this newsletter and may not reflect the views of the Loudoun County School Board and/or Loudoun County Public Schools.*

---

## Staying Focused Through Spring Fever

We are now in the last quarter of the school year! Spring Fever might be in full effect, whether you're a student, teacher, custodian, librarian, parent...anyone and everyone!

In the excitement and busy-ness of this last quarter, I hope that you are able to stay organized and accomplish your goals for the school year. If I can be of any assistance as your Little River District School Board Member, please feel free to [contact me!](#)

***Dr. Sumera Rashid***  
***School Board Member, Little River District***



---

## Important Dates

**Thursday, April 18:** [Superintendent Community Listening Session](#), Loudoun County High School (this is the final planned Listening Session for the school year!)

**Tuesday, April 23:** [Fourth Tuesday School Board Meeting](#), LCPS Administration Building

## Proclamations for April 2024

I'm pleased to share some very important proclamations for April in Loudoun County Public Schools!

- The Month of the Military Child recognizes military families and their children for their commitment, courage, and support of our Armed Forces.

### Loudoun County Public Schools



### PROCLAMATION

#### Month of the Military Child – April 2024

**WHEREAS**, April is the Month of the Military Child, a special month to recognize and pay tribute to military families and their children for the daily sacrifices made, and for their commitment, courage, and unconditional support of our Armed Forces; and

**WHEREAS**, the Commonwealth of Virginia is home to more than 77,000 children whose parents serve in the military stationed in Virginia with 1,524 self-reported military connected students attending Loudoun County Public Schools; and

**WHEREAS**, military families and employees in Loudoun include active duty service members in the Air Force, Army, Coast Guard, Marine Corps, Navy, and Space Force and as members of the reserves and the National Guard; and

**WHEREAS**, LCPS has 801 students who have a parent or guardian who is Active Duty, 363 students who have a parent or guardian who is in the Reserves, 312 students who have a parent or guardian who is in the National Guard, and 223 employees who have self-reported as Military Veterans; and

**WHEREAS**, the children of our service members continue to make significant contributions to schools, communities, the nation, and our Commonwealth despite prolonged and repeated absences of one or both parents; and

**WHEREAS**, military-connected children often demonstrate resilience, perseverance, maturity, and cultural competence in the face of frequent moves, family separations through deployments, and reintegration following deployments; and

**WHEREAS**, the Month of the Military Child provides an opportunity to salute our military children and acknowledge the contributions they bring to their families, our schools, our communities, and our Commonwealth; and

**WHEREAS**, Virginia is a proud member of the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children, which addresses key transition issues encountered by military students including enrollment, placement, attendance, eligibility, and graduation; and

**WHEREAS**, across the nation, individuals are encouraged to wear purple on April 17, 2024, in celebration of "Purple Up for Military Kids," to show support for military-connected children and to thank them for their strength and sacrifices.

**NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, that we, as the Loudoun County School Board, recognize April 2024 as the Month of the Military Child and encourage Loudoun County Public Schools and communities to celebrate this recognition with activities to honor the contributions of our students from military families; and

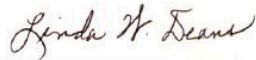
**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that Loudoun County Public Schools expresses its sincere gratitude to military-connected students throughout Loudoun County for their service to our great nation.



April Chandler



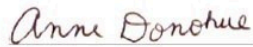
Kari LaBell




Linda Deans



Sumera Rashid



Anne Donohue



Lauren Shernoff



Arben Istrefi



Melinda Mansfield

**Loudoun County School Board, March 12, 2024**

- Autism Acceptance Month recognizes school-based efforts to promote acceptance and empower students through inclusivity and meaningful learning opportunities.





PROCLAMATION

Autism Acceptance Month - April - 2024

**WHEREAS**, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention note that 1 in 36 children have been identified with autism spectrum disorder (ASD); and

**WHEREAS**, most recent statistics from the Virginia Department of Education in December 2022 reported 27,711 students with autism as their primary disability in the Commonwealth, and in December of 2023 Loudoun County Public Schools reported that 2,080 students with the primary disability category of autism are served in LCPS; and

**WHEREAS**, the increase in the number of students with ASD in Virginia mirrors national statistics and is the subject of research to better understand the causes of autism and factors contributing to the rise in the number of children diagnosed; and

**WHEREAS**, Loudoun County Public Schools celebrates autism acceptance by wearing RED to support LCPS students with autism and their families (#LCPSAutism24) on April 2, 2024, World Autism Day, and supports school-based efforts to provide special events promoting autism acceptance; and

**WHEREAS**, Loudoun County Public Schools empowers all students through inclusive and meaningful learning opportunities with exemplary staff. An engaged community including families and caregivers are part of valuable collaboration with LCPS staff that supports open communication and respectful relationships resulting in positive outcomes for all involved; and

**WHEREAS**, Loudoun County Public Schools supports these efforts and will continue to provide support and training to students, staff, and their families.

**NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Loudoun County School Board proclaims that April 2024 is declared as Autism Acceptance Month.

April Chandler

Linda Deans

Anne Donohue

Arben Istrefi

Kari LaBell

Sumera Rashid

Lauren Shernoff

Melinda Mansfield

Loudoun County School Board, March 12, 2024

- National Student Leadership Week, April 22–26, 2024, serves as an ideal time to bring attention to the important and integral contributions that student leaders and all student activities make in our nation's schools.

## Loudoun County Public Schools



### PROCLAMATION

#### National Student Leadership Week 2024

WHEREAS, schools sponsor student leadership opportunities to provide students with vital experience in exercising a voice in matters of common concern, reconciling diverse interests, and selecting leaders;

WHEREAS, student leaders are a positive influence on their peers, modeling good character and scholarship in and out of the classroom, and serve as change agents to improve the overall climate and academic performance levels of their schools;

WHEREAS, student leaders do not automatically develop sound leadership skills and require trained, dedicated faculty advisers to help them develop the essential traits and characteristics of a leader and to provide the positive experiences necessary to expand their skills and foster their paths to becoming effective leaders;

WHEREAS, the support of school administrators and faculty, parents, and community members is necessary to help ensure the successful education of all emerging student leaders;

WHEREAS, **National Student Leadership Week**, April 22–26, 2024, serves as an ideal time to bring attention to the important and integral contributions that student leaders and all student activities make in our nation's schools;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Loudoun County School Board hereby proclaims April 22–26, 2024, as **National Student Leadership Week** in Loudoun County, Virginia, and urges members of our community to seek opportunities to recognize and provide encouragement to student leaders in our schools and to support their training and activities as they prepare themselves for their future stations as leaders of our city, state, and nation.

Please join me in spreading awareness, understanding, and support throughout April!

*Photo credits: LCPS Official April Proclamations*

## Virtual Distance Learning Updates

[Virtual Distance Learning \(VDL\)](#) is a program that offers synchronous, daily instruction via Google Meet and Schoology. Students enrolled in Virtual Distance Learning will take all of their classes online without attending a brick-and-mortar school in person. VDL students commit to distance learning for the entire school year.

**Rising 6th through 12th Graders must apply through the web application for enrollment consideration BY FRIDAY, MAY 3.**



## VDL Info & Applications for Rising 6th - 12th Graders

For [Virtual Distance Elementary \(VDE\)](#), rising 1st through 5th Graders must apply **BY FRIDAY, MAY 10**.

Note that you can reach out to your zoned LCPS elementary school Registrar for help obtaining a Student ID and for other assistance.

## VDE Info & Applications for Rising 1st - 5th Graders

I am so pleased that we can offer this virtual option for our LCPS students!

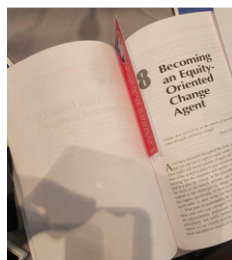
.....

## Minority Student Achievement Advisory Committee March Meeting

The March 20, 2024 [Minority Student Achievement Advisory Committee](#) meeting focused on self-reflection, integrity, persistence, and preparation. In other words: hard work!

Dr. Ryan Tyler, Director of Research and Dr. Latisha Ellis-Williams, Assistant Superintendent, [DEIA](#) led us through small and large group discussions regarding how we communicate with and in the presence of LCPS students so that we can model respectful discourse and create constructive learning environments.

All of that in just one MSAAC meeting!



While we didn't solve all problematic discourse in the world last month, we did consider some key concepts for reducing hate speech and fostering true communication in schools.

Don't:

- Demonize
- Purposefully create conflict

Do:

- Empathize
- Remain courteous
- Maintain authenticity

Think carefully about whether you're conversing just to be heard or truly conversing to listen! Modeling "courageous conversation" can help our students be willing to participate in good discourse. They'll see that the adults in their lives value integrity in communication, which can help them develop good communication skills in turn.

I encourage students, families, educators, and staff to review the [LCPS Commitment to Equity](#), which includes the following statement about goals related to student success:

"Equity is the vehicle that leads to greater access, opportunity, and equality, so that each student is empowered to make meaningful contributions to the world."

I look forward to being a bigger voice for MSAAC's equity goals and bringing them to fruition. I lived in a diverse area growing up, but I wish I had something like this committee as a resource. I am so glad that we in LCPS have it now to bring about awareness and change!

---

## Specialized Programs and Centers Committee April Meeting

In this month's [Specialized Programs and Centers Committee \(SPC\)](#) meeting, we learned about the potential future for two enrichment offerings within LCPS: the Hillsboro Charter Academy and the Dual Language Immersion Program.

Hillsboro Charter Academy (HCA) is currently in the process of its renewal application, which is on a five-year cycle. Representatives from HCA explained some of the challenges they face as they work to grow within their existing facility. The building is an aging structure, which was leased "as-is" to HCA when it would have otherwise been phased out of use and upkeep by LCPS. HCA would like to renovate their facilities, much like aging traditional LCPS schools, and now begins the work to find funding solutions that are appropriate for a charter school that operates in some ways within, yet in some ways entirely separate from, Loudoun County Public Schools.

Potential expansion or renovation would support a student population that has more than doubled in size over the past decade, including more classroom space, a teacher's lounge, a separate conference room, and/or a dedicated STEM space. Additionally, HCA would like to begin researching and planning how they might become a K through 8 program.

The Dual-Language Immersion (DLI) Program has also seen post-pilot success, such that the LCPS Department of Teaching and Learning presented a timeline for expansion at this month's SPC meeting. Currently offered as a Spanish-English experience at Potomack Elementary School and Sanders Corner Elementary School, DLI welcomes students in either their Kindergarten or 1st Grade years, and will add grade levels up to 5th over the next few years.

# Dual Language Immersion

## Timeline of Expansion for Current Programs



FY25	FY26	FY27	FY28	FY29
KG - 1st at PMK & SAN	KG - 2nd at PMK & SAN	KG - 3rd at PMK & SAN	KG - 4th at PMK & SAN	KG - 5th at PMK & SAN
Add 1st Grade	Add 2nd Grade	Add 3rd Grade	Add 4th Grade	Add 5th Grade
PD & Curriculum Development, Spanish Teachers - 2.0 FTEs Language Ambassadors - 2.0 FTEs	PD & Curriculum Development, Spanish Teachers - 2.0 FTEs Language Ambassadors - 2.0 FTEs	PD & Curriculum Development, Spanish Teachers - 2.0 FTEs Language Ambassadors - 2.0 FTEs	PD & Curriculum Development, Spanish Teachers - 2.0 FTEs Language Ambassadors - 2.0 FTEs	PD & Curriculum Development, Spanish Teachers - 2.0 FTEs Language Ambassadors - 2.0 FTEs



©2024 All Rights Reserved. Loudoun County Public Schools

*Photo Credit: 4/2/24 Specialized Programs and Centers Committee Meeting documents*  
[Dual Language Immersion Program](#)

This is another program that is exploring options to move forward to middle schools, considering how it could complement high school World Language credits, other programs such as the International Baccalaureate offerings, and more. I asked about considering other languages for future DLI expansion, and staffers from the Department of Teaching and Learning and World Languages and Cultures let us know that they're always assessing what our students, families, and schools are interested in, as well as our schools' capacities to include specialized programs.

Also important to note: DLI focuses on sustainability and student success. There are current "off-ramp" options for students who cannot or do not want to continue in DLI. These students would return to their zoned elementary schools. However, the overall goal is to provide the supports to maintain the existing cohorts throughout all grade levels within the Dual Language Immersion Program.

**Learn More About DLI in LCPS**

## Upcoming from the Special Education Advisory Committee

This May, LCPS will see a revamped [Special Education Advisory Committee \(SEAC\)](#) survey. SEAC uses survey results to prioritize initiatives and focus the work of their [subcommittees](#). Please be on



the lookout for this survey next month and be sure to provide your feedback.

Also this May, the SEAC Awards winners will be notified that they were selected – from 176 nominations – to be honored this year! The SEAC Awards will take place on June 5th at 6:30PM at Rock Ridge High School. Again, be on the lookout for more information from this committee.

.....

## Transportation and Early Elementary Start Times

We continue to consider how to address both our bus transportation challenges and the earlier start times at some of our elementary schools. In the [April 9, 2024 School Board Meeting Transportation Presentation](#), we saw data related to number of bus runs vs. number of current drivers, standardized testing for schools with 7:30 am and 8:00 am start times, and on-time performance for bus routes for the previous two school years.

We know that families of children at schools with earlier start times have wide-ranging concerns, including:

- Impact of evening activities and early wakeup times
- Waiting at bus stops in the dark
- Rushing through fatigue in the mornings
- Weakened academic performance

While I’m relieved to see that any potential impacts on attendance and academic performance for students with earlier start times may be minimal, I of course would like to see an ideal scenario where all bus driver positions are filled so that we can eliminate the current morning time difference among elementary schools.

The prevailing theme from my fellow Board members was seeking creative solutions unless and until we can fill all open bus driver positions. I am happy to continue receiving [your feedback](#) about transportation and start time challenges, and I will, in turn, work to keep you informed of developments. This is a complex problem of physical/geographical and staffing logistics, but it is certainly worth our persistent attention.

.....

## Student and Staff Calendar Update

This Spring, LCPS Human Resources and Talent Development (HRTD) collected survey input about three possible options for updated calendars for the 2024-2025 and 2025-2026 School Years. As background, recent legislation resulted in changes to the Virginia June Primary Election Day, such that the planned last days of school for School Years 2024-2025 and 2025-2026 coincide with Election Days. Because many of our schools are used as polling places, those schools would need to be closed to allow for voter access. Additionally, HRTD is recommending that the student calendar for SY2024-2025 reflect the observance of Rosh Hashanah in lieu of the observance of Yom Kippur.

Among the three proposed updated calendars, there were changes to the number of school days, first and last days of school, and/or number of Teacher Work Days at the beginning and end of the school years.

After [review of the calendar options and survey results](#), the School Board voted to honor the most preferred option according to the survey. The adjustments for this option are highlighted in the presentation slide below. Notably, there are 179 school days, rather than 180, and the last day of school will fall on a Monday in both years.

# Option 1: 2024-25 and 2025-26 SY

## Student and Teacher Calendar

OPTION #1: 2024-25SY

**Students**

- 179 school days (from 180 school days)
- Last day moved from Tuesday, June 17, 2025 to Monday, June 16, 2025
- No additional adjustments

**Teachers**

- \*No change to last contract day for Teacher Calendar

\*Options for the 2024-25SY include an exchange for the observance of Rosh Hashanah, in lieu of the observance of Yom Kippur.

OPTION #1: 2025-26SY

**Students**

- 179 school days (from 180 school days)
- Last day moved from Tuesday, June 16, 2026 to Monday, June 15, 2026
- No additional adjustments

**Teachers**

- \*No change to last contract day for Teacher Calendar

\* Last day of school will become a working day to close out school year or complete any other items as directed by the Department of School Leadership.

Human Resources and Talent Development



*Photo Credit: 4/9/24 School Board Meeting documents*  
[Human Resources & Talent Development \(HRTD\): Student School Calendar and Staff Calendar Update](#)

## From Public Education to Higher Education

Last month, I was invited to be a guest speaker at a Northern Virginia Community College State and Local Politics class, which is offered at the Loudoun Campus. The professor, Dr. Jack Lechelt, is from the Little River District!

I had a great time talking about what the School Board is about, how each of the student's voices helps uplift the community, and how their reflection on experiences in grade school and high school helps to improve public schools for future students.



## Superintendent Community Listening Session at Briar Woods High School

I attended the April 4 Superintendent Community Listening Session with Dr. Spence at Briar Woods High School. Turnout was actually quite low, though I was pleased to see all of those in attendance, including educators.



The final planned [Listening Session is TONIGHT \(APRIL 18\) at Loudoun County High School!](#)

I am grateful for these sessions – and for all opportunities to receive important feedback from our communities. Even if you could not attend an in-person session, or if you have new input to share, you can visit the [Listening Tour Feedback page](#) to submit a written message.

---

## Stay in Touch

For up-to-date information on Board activities, Little River District news, and notable school accomplishments, please follow me on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Threads](#), and [X](#).

Have a question or comment? [Send me an email](#).





**Dr. Sumera Rashid**

Little River District School Board Member

