

# Little River District Newsletter

February 2024

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*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.*

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## A Big Winter in Little River

While we've had our share of snow, ice, and even sunshine, remember that true winter weather can continue all the way through March in our area! So be sure to watch for texts, emails, and/or phone call notifications. You can also check LCPS social media for delayed opening and school closure alerts.

Get more information about alerts and the delay/closure decision-making process at <https://www.lcps.org/InclementWeather>.

In spite of the weather, I was pleased to join my fellow LCPS School Board Members at the Virginia School Board Capital Conference in January.

This was our opportunity to learn more about the ways that local School Boards communicate with and advocate to our state-level elected officials. It was an invigorating way to kick off both this new year and the new School Board term!





I also attended my first [Superintendent Community Listening Session](#) at the Academies of Loudoun on January 31. As a new School Board Member, I learned that Listening Sessions provide different ways for constituents to voice their opinions. In addition to the [messages you can send](#) to your School Board Members, the [Committee Meetings](#) you can attend, and the [School Board Meetings](#) you can attend, at Community Listening Sessions with Dr. Spence, you can provide electronic feedback via a QR code, or you can write suggestions on paper. Constituents then are grouped together to identify the main ideas of their concerns.

I plan to attend more Listening Sessions within our District, and I hope that this overview gives you a sense of how each evening might run. If you have not yet attended a Session, now that you know what to expect, I encourage you to take advantage of these opportunities as they run through April! However, please know that you can provide feedback at any time at the [Listening Tour Feedback page](#), as feedback from community, students, and staff is welcome any time as part of the listening session effort.



Earlier this month, I was able to visit Hillsboro Charter Academy. As the Chair of the [Specialized Programs and Centers Committee](#), I wanted to learn more about this unique charter school within LCPS.

During my tour of the school, I got a first-hand look at the flexible learning environment, the tight-knit community of students, and the devoted teachers and staff. I found out a bit about the huge applicant pool, along with the sense of great parent involvement.

The February information session at Hovatter Elementary School helped provide clarity for the community, particularly to the families of rising second graders who would move as a cohort between Hovatter and the new Henrietta Lacks Elementary School. The data revealed how this move could help prevent overcrowding and large class sizes, which would benefit both students and teachers.



We will continue to hear from the Hovatter and Henrietta Lacks community as we come to a decision about the new elementary school opening.

Finally, I was treated to a visit to Lightridge High School this month to watch rehearsals for music programs including chorus, band, and strings. I was both impressed and entertained!

Students in each program talked to me about the ways that music brings them harmony -- literally and figuratively. Students told me how being a part of the chorus has helped them make new friends, gain more confidence, and become more motivated in pursuing their education. The violin players informed me that playing violin in their band has helped them to bring the community together, especially when they come to watch them play. Upon watching the band play, it was amazing seeing how in sync they were and how important it was to be in unison in order to have a harmonic play of sound.

Educators also shared some "behind-the-scenes" information about how these programs actually run. The Choral Director, Helai Rutan, and the Band Director/Fine Arts Department Chair, Jonathan Phillips, gave me a wonderful tour of the area where the student musicians play and practice. I spoke with Principal Ryan Hitchman, who also participates in many of the events that these future musicians promote. He even did the voice of Vincent Price for one piece!



Weather aside, this winter has been exciting and productive for me as your Little River District School Board Member, and I'm looking forward to what lies ahead! As always, please feel free to [contact me](#) if I can be of any assistance.

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

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## Important Dates

**Tuesday, February 27:** [Fourth Tuesday School Board Meeting](#), LCPS Administration Building  
**Wednesday, February 21:** [Superintendent Community Listening Session](#), Lightridge High School  
**Thursday, February 29:** [Superintendent Community Listening Session](#), Loudoun Valley High School  
**Tuesday, March 5:** [Student Holiday](#)  
**Tuesday, March 12:** [Second Tuesday School Board Meeting](#), LCPS Administration Building  
**Monday, March 25 through Friday, March 29:** [Student Holidays](#) (Spring Break)

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## Black History Month Proclamations

I am honored to serve with [Dr. Linda Deans](#), the First African American female elected to the Loudoun County Public Schools Board of Education!

So I am proud to share the proclamations adopted at the February 13, 2024 School Board Meeting. Please join me in celebrating "Dr. Linda Deans for her trailblazing accomplishments and commitment to educational excellence"!



### Loudoun County Public Schools Proclamation

**Dr. Linda Deans**

#### **The First African American Female Elected to the Loudoun County Public Schools Board of Education**

**WHEREAS**, The Loudoun County Public School Board acknowledges and celebrates the historic achievement of Dr. Linda Deans, who has been duly elected as the first African American female member of the Loudoun County Public Schools Board of Education; and

**WHEREAS**, Dr. Linda Deans' unwavering passion, dedication, and commitment to the education of all youth are evident throughout her distinguished career, spanning three decades, during which she served as Director of Education, Dean of Girls, Secondary School Counselor, Secondary School Principal, Deputy Superintendent, Director of Alternative Programs, and Adjunct Professor; and

**WHEREAS**, Dr. Linda Deans has nurtured, supported, directed, and mentored numerous prospective leaders during her tenure at the prestigious and well-respected George Washington University; and

**WHEREAS**, in her role as a member of the Loudoun County Public Schools Board of Education, Dr. Linda Deans will continue to champion equitable education for each and every student in the Loudoun County Public Schools. She will serve in the capacity of School Board member, Chair of the Loudoun County Public Schools **Equity Committee**, **Church Elder**, and as a **Staff Mentor**; and





## Loudoun County Public Schools Proclamation

**WHEREAS**, Dr. Linda Deans exemplifies leadership aligned with the core values of Loudoun County Public Schools, advocating for an enriched division comprised of individuals dedicated to maintaining an inclusive, safe, caring, and rigorous learning environment, which forms the foundation for student growth; and

**BE IT RESOLVED**, that Dr. Linda Deans' appointment to the Loudoun County Public School Board of Education shall be duly recorded as a historic "first," marking her as the inaugural African American female elected to the Loudoun County School Board.

**IN WITNESS WHEREOF**, the Loudoun County Public School Board issues this proclamation to honor and recognize Dr. Linda Deans for her trailblazing accomplishments and commitment to educational excellence, by beating the odds by achieving beyond expectations.

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Additionally, we recognize "the critical role of education in the history of Black Americans," and have "adopted a Commitment to Equity, to ensure student growth and success for every child, to create student responsive environments where all students can see representation of themselves and identity, to have a sense of belonging, to eliminate opportunity gaps; and to increase division-wide efforts in diverse recruitment, hiring and retention" in our proclamation to celebrate Black History Month.

Also at that meeting, we welcomed Madison Ruff, a Student School Board Representative from Loudoun County High School. Miss Ruff noted her school's growth from desegregation in 1968 to the present day, when she helped found the LCHS Black Student Union.

We celebrate historical significance and look toward the promise of the future -- this month, and always.

You can read the full proclamations in the included images, part of the [documents from the February 13, 2024 School Board Meeting](#).



**Loudoun County Public Schools  
Proclamation**

**Proclaiming The Celebration of Black  
History Month In February 2024**

**WHEREAS**, Dr. Carter G. Woodson, noted Black scholar born in Virginia and son of enslaved parents, initiated Negro History Week on February 12, 1926; and

**WHEREAS**, the celebration of Black History expanded from one week in February to Black History Month in 1976; and

**WHEREAS**, during Black History Month, we recognize and celebrate the contributions, influence, and spirit that Black Americans have shown since our country's inception; and

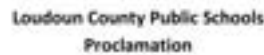
**WHEREAS**, especially during Black History Month, we acknowledge and highlight the many achievements and profound contributions made by Black Americans to the economic, cultural, spiritual, educational, and political development of the Commonwealth of Virginia and the entire United States; and

**WHEREAS**, 7.4 percent of enrolled LCPS students are Black and 6.4 percent of Loudoun County Public Schools' workforce has self-identified as African American; and

**WHEREAS**, 97.8 percent of Black students graduated on-time in 2023, compared to 97.6 percent of all students in LCPS in 2023; and

**WHEREAS**, Loudoun County Public Schools has adopted a Commitment to Equity, to ensure student growth and success for every child, to create student responsive environments where all students can see representation of themselves and identity, to have a sense of belonging, to eliminate opportunity gaps; and to increase division-wide efforts in diverse recruitment, hiring and retention; and

**WHEREAS**, the school division continues to collaborate and partner with various community-based individuals and organizations to further its efforts of forming strong relationships in a culturally sensitive, responsive, and appropriate way; and



IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the Loudoun County School Board issues this proclamation to honor and recognize the contributions of Black Americans. The aforementioned impact is evidenced, both nationally and globally.

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See the LEF FY23 Annual Report - Jan. 30 SB Meeting

Learn More About LEF

## Specialized Programs and Centers Offers Out in March

Attention, students who entered the winter application cycles for:

- [International Baccalaureate \(IB\) Program](#)
- [Health and Medical Sciences Academy \(HAMSci\)](#)
- [Academies of Loudoun \(ACL\)](#)

**First round offers will be sent out in March. The waitlists will remain active, so waitlisted applicants will be notified when/if seats become available.**

## Dual Language Immersion Program Application and Waitlist

In the [Dual Language Immersion \(DLI\) Program](#), students develop proficiency in Spanish and English through content-matter instruction. This program is currently offered at Potowmack Elementary School in Sterling and Sanders Corner Elementary School in Ashburn.

Loudoun families with rising Kindergartners can [express their interest in the program at registration](#).

If a space in the program becomes available because a current Kindergarten student will not continue on in DLI during 1st Grade, vacancies will be filled from the 1st Grade Waitlist.

**From March 1 to April 19, rising 1st Grader families (current LCPS students) can complete the [DLI Interest Form](#).**

**Notifications will begin from the end of April to early May, and parent responses will be due during May.**

Learn More About the LCPS Dual Language Immersion Program



# Facility Innovations at J.L. Simpson Middle School and Woodgrove High School

J.L. Simpson Middle School has been undergoing some important innovations, as detailed in the February 13, 2024 "One LCPS Spotlight: Digital Innovations Student Internships and J.L. Simpson Solar Array Project" presentation to the School Board. This includes upgrades and solar installations to improve sustainability – both environmental and fiscal. In Phase 1, this project has not only saved energy, but it has also saved nearly \$400,000 over 3 years.

The included image, from the February 13, 2024 School Board Meeting presentation, reflects the projected savings against the actual savings, which exceeded initial expectations. See the full presentation within the [documents for that School Board Meeting](#).

## EPC Phase 1 Actual Savings

Actual savings based on pre vs post utility bill analysis

Year	Guaranteed Annual Savings				Actual Savings				Excess Savings
	Energy	O&M	Rebates	Total Savings	Energy	O&M	Rebates	Total Savings	
Const.	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$34,804	\$0	\$0	\$34,804	\$34,804
2021	\$104,420	\$3,786	\$0	\$108,206	\$115,147	\$3,786	\$2,270	\$121,203	\$12,997
2022	\$106,396	\$3,861	\$0	\$110,257	\$114,287	\$3,861	\$811	\$118,959	\$8,702
2023	\$108,410	\$3,939	\$0	\$112,349	\$118,358	\$3,939	\$555	\$122,852	\$10,503
Total	\$319,226	\$11,586	\$0	\$330,812	\$382,595	\$11,586	\$3,636	\$397,817	\$67,005

Actual savings average 10% above guaranteed savings in the first 3 years. See Year 1 – 3 M&V report for additional information.



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Additionally, I visited Woodgrove High School in Purcellville this month, specifically for a construction tour. The Woodgrove Principal, Dr. Sam Shipp, showed me the progress on the new school restrooms, including fully-private stalls. The sinks will be an open-bay concept; the plywood wall that you see in one of the included photos will be taken down to open the area.

Dr. Shipp provided great information about how the new restrooms will ultimately look upon completion. I was glad to learn about this initiative and project, first-hand.





## 2024 Health and Wellness Fair

Dozens of mental health professionals and local businesses came together with more than 550 attendees at the January 27 LCPS Mental Health and Wellness Conference and Resource Fair!

Jennifer Evans, LCPS' Director of Student Mental Health Services and lead coordinator of the event, said that the conference has grown in scope and attendance since it started in 2019. "At the end of the day, this type of information-sharing and support of one another is what makes a difference to our community. This event truly shows that together we can tackle the big issues in our communities and work toward improved outcomes."

### Event Details & More Resources



## Little River Schools Band and Sports Accomplishments

Several students were honored at the January 30, 2024 School Board Meeting for capturing the VHSL State Championship in their sport or activity during the fall. Additionally, the Independence High School Marching Band was awarded the Commonwealth Cup, honoring them as the best marching band in the state of Virginia. This is the first time that the Commonwealth Cup has been awarded to an LCPS band program!

See the Student/Staff Recognitions in the [documents](#) and [presentations](#) from the January 30, 2024 School Board Meeting for photos and specific teams/events.



Please join me in congratulating the students recognized across LCPS, including from Little River District's own:

- Independence High School
- Briar Woods High School
- Loudoun County High School
- Loudoun Valley High School
- Heritage High School

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## 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/Twitter](#).

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

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**Dr. Sumera Rashid**

Little River District School Board Member



