



2024 Legislative Program

INTRODUCTION

The Loudoun County School Board (LCSB) is committed to providing a welcome, safe and inclusive environment for all students and staff and a challenging and rigorous learning environment to create productive global citizens. Loudoun County Public Schools (LCPS) continues to take strategic actions to develop graduates who are critical thinkers, communicators, collaborators, creators and contributors.

Our students need the support of Virginia's lawmakers. The School Board's 2024 Legislative Program is aimed at precise sections of existing laws and at potential laws relating to teaching and learning, funding, assessment and accountability, staffing, developing new schools, replacing older schools and governance that are vital to the success of its mission.

LCSB PRIORITIES TO SUPPORT STUDENTS

• ACT ON THE JLARC REPORT: SUPPORTS ENACTING JLARC RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE THE STATE PUBLIC EDUCATION FUNDING MODEL

Per the General Assembly direction, the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC) studied education funding in Virginia and reported its finding and recommendations in the "Virginia's K-12 Funding Formula 2023" report. JLARC determined the Standards of Quality (SOQ) used to calculate the State's share of public education costs is inadequate. This is evidenced by the fact that EVERY school division in the Commonwealth exceeds most of the standards and has done so for many years. Other necessary costs associated with providing a quality public education are not even addressed in the SOQ and therefore not state-funded at all. As a result, the current state public education funding model does not reflect the true cost of the state's obligation to provide a public education. The Commonwealth has not fully funded its share of the

true cost of public education in decades. As a result, local governments increasingly bear an ever-growing proportion of public education costs. The General Assembly should enact JLARC's near-term and long-term recommendations.

Specific actions may include:

- Eliminate the support cap and re-instate non-personal staff categories removed in FY09.
- Eliminate federal fund deduction methodology used prior to FY09.
- Calculate salaries and other cost assumptions using the division average, rather than the linear weighted average.
- Calculate the LCI using a three-year average.
- Direct Virginia Department of Education to work with school division staff and experts as needed to develop new special education staffing needs estimates.
- Develop and adopt accurate fixed and prevailing staffing ratios that are based on actual staffing and are simpler, easier to apply and comprehensive.



• SCHOOL MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

Our children's emotional and psychological health should be treated with the same level of importance as their physical well-being. The current landscape of educational institutions demands a proactive and compassionate approach to mental health. Alarming, an increasing number of students struggle with stress, anxiety, depression and other mental health challenges, which can hinder their academic performance and overall development. LCPS calls on the General Assembly to build out funding and structures that supports the following: Increased accessibility to Mental Health Resources, Early Intervention and Prevention and Holistic and Inclusive Approaches. Greater access to child and adolescent psychiatrist services, individual and group counseling, partial hospitalization programs, substance use intensive outpatient programs, therapeutic day treatment programs

and crisis response services are needed. The approach of community and school partnerships and mobile mental health resources are viable options for increased accessibility for students and families.

• FREE SCHOOL MEALS FOR ALL STUDENTS

In FY23 Loudoun County Public Schools students accumulated more than \$130,000 in school meal debt. The Loudoun County School Board believes that no student should go hungry and supports legislation to ensure school meals are provided for free for all students. During the COVID-19 pandemic, federal waivers provided free school meals to every K-12 student, regardless of their families' income level. The School Board supports federal and/or Commonwealth action to provide funding so that all students have access to free school meals.

LCSB PRIORITIES TO SUPPORT TEACHERS

• COMMITMENTS TO THE TEACHING PROFESSION

Loudoun County Public Schools was proud, despite nationwide teaching shortages, to open the 23-24 school year with its teaching ranks at near full capacity. The Loudoun County School Board continues to support policies that advance its stated goal to "recruit, hire and retain a diverse, high-performing team of professionals".

Specific actions may include:

- Incentives for candidates entering the teaching profession such as waivers for college tuition and room and board.
- Expand state funding or oversight for teaching mentorship programs, like Reach Virginia.
- Promote paid internships or student-teaching practicums for college students in teacher preparation programs (similar to the Maryland Educator Shortage Reduction Act).

- Extend the RIPE grant funding to give all newly hired teachers a signing bonus, not only for those hired between 8/15 and 11/15.
- Routinely update the cost assumptions used for school division salaries during the rebenchmarking process (JLARC recommendation).
- Implement funding plan to achieve state goal for teacher salaries (JLARC recommendation).

• ADDRESSING THE TEACHER AND SUBSTITUTE SHORTAGE

Supports flexibility with the federal tax code and IRS regulations regarding in-service distributions of a 401(a). Specifically, LCPS supports amendments to the Virginia Retirement System (VRS) to allow recently retired employees to immediately return to support the previous employer on a temporary or substitute basis or to fill a critical need.



(1) Temporary/Substitute Basis: The retiree is eligible to return to employment with their previous employer after 30 calendar days from their date of retirement. No arrangement can be made prior to the retirement or separation from the current employer; and (2) Critical Needs: After the person has received the retirement allowance for at least 2 calendar months, the retiree is eligible to return to employment in a critical needs position as identified by the Superintendent of Public Instruction pursuant to subdivision 4 of 22.1-23, by the relevant division superintendent, pursuant to 22.1-70.3 or by the relevant local school board, pursuant to subdivision 9 of 22.1-79. No arrangement can be made prior to the retirement or separation from the current employer.

Specific actions may include:

- Approve long-term substitutes exceeding 90 days when they are serving in a vacancy/absence for a 'hard to fill' teacher position as identified by the VDOE.
- Update VDOE technology so that applying for licensure is electronic, not paper submission.

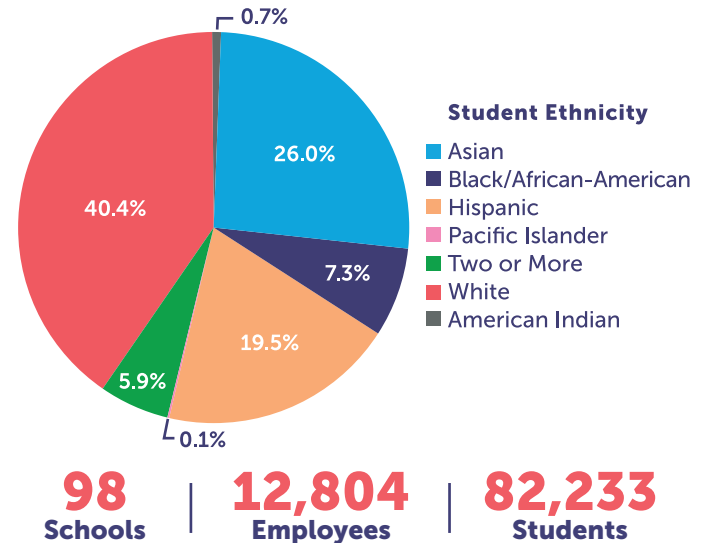
• AUDIT OF HIGHER EDUCATION TEACHER PREP PROGRAMS

The Loudoun County School Board has emphasized and supported the transformational nature of the Virginia Literacy Act and will be in compliance by the 2023-24 school year. As we work to recruit reading specialists and reading teachers, it is important that preservice teachers demonstrate mastery in science-based reading research and are prepared to deliver evidence-based literacy

instruction in the classroom. The LCSB supports legislation and regulations that require universities to offer programs in alignment with the requirements of the Virginia Literacy Act and expedite scheduling audits of the program to limit the need for initial training in evidence-based literacy instruction by local school divisions.

LCPS BY THE NUMBERS

STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS



LCSB EDUCATION FUNDING PRIORITIES

• COST OF COMPETING FUNDING

Supports the continued use of the Cost of Competing factor, including the full restoration of funds for the inclusion of all support staff, in the reimbursement formula for Planning District Eight. The Cost of Competing Adjustment (COCA) is a funding adjustment to recognize Northern Virginia's more competitive market and the higher salaries that divisions must pay to hire and retain teachers and staff. The current state funding formula provides funding based on average salaries across Virginia, and the COCA helps offset the 'shortfall' that divisions incur who are on the higher side of that average. Restoring the COCA to its prior rate would benefit LCPS in funding this 'shortfall.'

Specific actions may include:

- Replace the cost of competing adjustment with a Virginia-based labor cost index (JLARC recommendation).

• SUPPORT REMOVAL OF SUPPORT CAP

The Loudoun County School Board applauds the General Assembly for beginning this year to remove the Support Cap, an arbitrary cap implemented during the Great Recession that disproportionately limits local capacity to serve students with special needs, at-risk students and English learners. Positions such as mental health specialists, instructional assistants and other classroom support staff are a cost-effective way to put caring adults in the lives of our most needy students, but the Support Cap arbitrarily excludes the actual cost of educating challenged populations.

• RETAIN UNSPENT APPROPRIATIONS

Supports legislative changes allowing local school boards to retain any unspent appropriations in a school board's operating budget from one fiscal year to the operating budget of the following fiscal year.

• PRE-K FOR ALL

LCPS supports the Commonwealth providing funding for school divisions offering all-day pre-kindergarten and for the Virginia Board of Education to adopt regulations for implementation.

• UNFUNDED STATE MANDATES

Supports that the General Assembly develop a formal process to determine the fiscal impacts of legislation mandating local school division actions and require that the impact be fully funded before the legislation can go into effect. When the Commonwealth considers a program important enough to mandate, it should consider the mandate important enough to fund.

• DIPLOMAS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Supports changes to Virginia law and regulations to allow for students with disabilities or medical conditions who cannot access regular or adaptive Physical Education to receive the same Standard or Advanced Studies Diploma as students who can fulfill the Physical Education requirements.



• **HAZING EDUCATION/CURRICULUM**

Loudoun County Public Schools seeks funding for a pilot to provide instruction about hazing and its potential impact on others. As a part of the pilot, each high school would provide students with hazing prevention training that includes

current, extensive, and engaging education about hazing, the dangers of hazing, including alcohol intoxication, bystander intervention and Virginia hazing laws. This will also include the school division policies and information explaining that the school division's disciplinary process is not to be considered a substitute for the criminal legal process.

• **REGIONAL GOVERNING BOARD FOR TJHSST**

Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology (TJHSST) is one of 19 Governor's Schools in the Commonwealth and remains as the only Governor's school without a Regional Governing Board. A regional governing board would allow participating school divisions to oversee policy and administration of TJHSST admissions practices and operations. The regional governing board would include School Board members from each of the participating school divisions in proportion to the student population of the divisions.

• **ELECTRIC BUSES AND INFRASTRUCTURE**

Supports state funding for electric buses and related infrastructure throughout the state. LCPS requests additional funding/rebates to further expand its electric bus fleet, as well as increased charging platforms throughout the state to allow buses to travel on long-range runs for various extra-curricular activities.

LCSB STATE POLICY POSITIONS

• **PROPER REPORTING OF STUDENT ARRESTS**

Supports changes to state code to clarify that law enforcement agencies are required to verifiably communicate via email and certified mail a report on any arrest of a school division student within 24 hours or the next business day.

• **ATTENDANCE REQUIREMENTS FOR ACCREDITATION**

Supports a review and overhaul of the attendance requirements for accreditation by adding an attendance withdrawal code that can be used for the circumstance where a school has been notified of a planned absence of more than 15 days that will result in a mandated withdrawal.

• **BROADBAND ACCESS**

Supports continued funding for affordable universal access to high speed broadband to ensure equal access for all students, regardless of location or ability to pay. Every student must have equitable online access to remote learning platforms through additional local, state, and/or federal funding. Supports Loudoun County applying for VATI grants and pursuing other initiatives related to expanding broadband access. Additionally, supports tools for localities to finance, build and operate open-access networks in partnership with commercial Internet Service Providers.

• **SUPPORTS DUAL ENROLLMENT**

Opposes any legislation or regulatory actions that makes dual enrollment courses less accessible to students through the implementation of a statewide uniform tuition rate and any other tuition proposal that does not appropriately factor the significant indirect costs borne by

school divisions (facilities, teachers, materials, professional development, etc.) to offer dual enrollment opportunities for their students.

Specific actions may include:

- Greater flexibility in assigning staff to teach dual enrollment courses at the local high school.
- Dedicated funding from the state to the community college system to allow those colleges to provide dual enrollment at no cost to the student or school division.

• **RECOGNIZE AND SUPPORT A BALANCED ASSESSMENT MODEL**

Loudoun County Public Schools seeks to implement a balanced assessment model that will support the LCPS mission to prepare students to be knowledgeable critical thinkers, communicators, collaborators, creators and contributors. LCPS supports the use of (1) summative assessments (e.g. the SOLs) to determine when students are proficient in their content knowledge, (2) growth assessments (e.g. MAP and the Virginia Growth Assessment) to determine when students are achieving sufficient progress, and (3) performance assessments to determine when students are developing as critical thinkers, communicators, collaborators, creators and contributors. LCPS supports the ongoing development of the SOLs and Virginia Growth Assessments to provide standards-level data on proficiency and growth for teachers to use for (1) providing feedback to students and families and (2) personalizing instruction.

