

Catoctin District Newsletter

June 2024



Kari's Corner

At recent board meetings, I spoke about the history of names from our local history, names that were given to two Loudoun County Public Schools- John Champe High School and Mercer Middle School. Both names are currently on the list of schools in consideration for continued review for the name change. The names of the schools on this list have been researched and examined by an outside company called History Matters, as well as local history organizations including Thomas Balch Library, to

see if they have any connections to the Confederacy, segregation, or places and individuals who lived in the 17th-19th centuries and supported slavery. I questioned why John Champe was on this list, and we were told that there was not enough information found up to that point. I was more than happy to give a history lesson on this American hero, Washington's spy who volunteered to capture Benedict Arnold. He was a small farm owner from Aldie, with no connection to any of the aforementioned concerns, so I was pleased to hear that John Champe was removed from the list of potential name changes.

I also shared some history about Margaret Mercer, an abolitionist and teacher who founded a Loudoun school and was a member of the American Colonization Society, who bought freedom for enslaved Americans and helped those who wished to return to Africa. Though Mercer Middle School was named after Charles Mercer, Margaret was a courageous woman and a part of local history. In 1998, Margaret's name was even considered when the School Board at the time was choosing a name for newly built Stone Bridge High School. Rededicating Mercer Middle School with Margaret Mercer's name would be a way to honor an important woman of Loudoun history who supported freedom for all and would not require changing the name of the school.

I am sharing all of this to show that incomplete or inaccurate information can shed a one-sided light on history, and there are other options besides simply removing the name from a school. There is much to be learned from the history of our area, and I don't think decisions about something as costly and formidable as changing school names should be considered without a full, accurate perspective.

To that end, I will be holding listening sessions at the Purcellville Library this Friday, June 21st and Sunday, June 23rd from 4-5 PM. I would love to hear feedback and input from Catoctin residents, especially since one of the schools in our district (Emerick) is up for review. Please come and share your thoughts about this and any other concerns you might have. We have one final School Board meeting before the July summer break, and I want Catoctin voices to be heard.

If you cannot attend the sessions this week but want to share your thoughts, I can always be reached through the contact button below, or via email at kari.label@lcps.org

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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School Board Meeting Updates

The School Board voted to approve the amended 2024-25 calendar with the additional staff development days built in. While I would have preferred to not take more instructional days off, the time constraints with the training created challenges that narrowed down our options. Thankfully, this will not be something we have to work around every year.

One of our action items this month was the potential formation of committees to continue review and consideration for the renaming of nine LCPS schools. There was a great deal of discussion, as well as several motions to amend the staff recommendations, which I shared in my Facebook update last week. Community input and open discussion and education about the meaning and history behind these names is imperative moving forward, and I hope that this helps us find common ground and understanding.

Discussion around the FY26 budget has begun, and School Board member feedback was given to help staff finalize the budget calendar, which will be brought to the School Board for approval in September. We were presented with a timeline for the process, and the Board was given the opportunity to share items that we wanted included in the upcoming budget. There was a quite expansive list that will of course have to be narrowed to fit into the budget, but I'm encouraged by the common ground the Board was able to find on many of the requests. The timeline for the process can be found [here](#).

Special Programs Update

LCPS has many programs available that give students the opportunity to challenge themselves further, and these are expanding with new options being launched or broadened over the next few years. In addition to the Academies of Loudoun and NJROTC, Dual Language Immersion is available at Potowmack and Sanders Corner Elementary schools, the Health and Medical Sciences Academy is being launched in the coming school year, and Loudoun Valley and Heritage High Schools are now offering the International Baccalaureate program. Click [here](#) you would like to learn more about these programs and what they have to offer!

Community News

Class of 2024

Sending out heartfelt congratulations to all of our Loudoun County Public Schools 2024 Graduates! I wish you all the best on the next chapter in your journey through life!

Instructional Employees of the Year

Congratulations to all the Instructional Employees of the Year Award winners! Categories for this award include Substitute of the Year for Elementary and Secondary school, Instructional Support Employee of the Year, Administrative Support Employee of the Year, Student Services Support Employee of the Year, and Professional Employee of the Year. [Recipients](#) were recognized at our May 28 School Board meeting, thank you for all your hard work and dedication!

Congratulations to Student Athletes

Congratulations to all of our LCPS athletes who took home the gold in the 2024 Virginia High School League Track and Field [Championships](#), and to the seven Loudoun varsity teams who claimed state championships during the 2024 Virginia High School League Spring [Jubilee](#)!

Calendar

The following are important events and holidays, and the dates and times for board meetings, as well as for the committees that I serve on. School Board meetings are every 2nd and 4th Tuesday of the month at the Administration Building, located at 21000 Education Ct. in Ashburn. All meetings are open to the public and are audio recorded. Meetings and events can be found on the LCPS calendar link below, and agenda and recordings can be found on [BoardDocs](#).

Juneteenth Holiday
June 19

[Student Behavior and Accountability Committee \(SBAC\) Meeting](#)

June 24 at 4:30 PM

[2nd Tuesday School Board Meeting](#)

June 25 at 4:30 PM

No meetings for the month of July

LCPS Calendar



Erin Dunbar

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