2022 Legislative Program

2022 Introduction

The Loudoun County School Board is committed to providing a welcome, safe and inclusive environment for all students and staff and provides a challenging and rigorous learning environment to create productive global citizens. Loudoun County Public Schools 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 2022 Legislative Program is aimed at precise sections of existing laws and at potential laws relating to instruction, funding, assessment and accountability, staffing, developing new schools, and governance that are vital to the success of its mission.

2022 Priority Items

- **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.’

- **LITERACY AND LEARNING LOSS**
  Supports initiatives to address improving literacy rates in the K-12 setting. The goal of literacy instruction in Virginia is to ensure that all children have the skills necessary to become successful readers, writers, speakers, and listeners with the critical thinking skills that are required to be successful as they progress and transition through the stages of their lives. In recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, literacy education is needed now more than ever to address the learning loss of students. In order to achieve this, LCPS supports initiatives to address improving literacy rates in the K-12 setting which may include, but not be limited to, developing literacy instruction standards, requesting that teacher preparation programs provide coursework that includes effective, evidence based instruction methods aligned to the science of reading and further financial investments into grant programs and funds.

- **HOLD HARMLESS ENROLLMENT FUNDING**
  Supports a funding model that does not penalize school divisions for reductions in enrollment due to the COVID-19 pandemic for the 21/22 fiscal year. School divisions all across Virginia experienced a decline in Average Daily Membership (ADM), which is what the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) uses to calculate School division funding.

- **CONTINUATION OF FREE SCHOOL MEALS**
  Supports a continuation of free school meals for all students. The United States Department of Agriculture in conjunction with state child nutrition agencies set a goal of providing safe and flexible meal service to children during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. Following the closure of schools in March 2020, USDA’s Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) extended a suite of nationwide waivers allowing school nutrition program operators to serve meals under the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) through June 30, 2022. These waivers included: 1) allowing meals to be served in all areas and at no cost, 2) permitting meals to be served outside of the typically-required group settings and meal times, 3) waiving meal pattern requirements as necessary; and 4) allowing parents and guardians to pick-up meals for their children. Collectively, these flexibilities have ensured meal options for children continue to be available so children can access meals under all circumstances. For Fiscal Year 21 (FY21), the federal government funded the total cost of the school nutrition program.

- **SCHOOL MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT**
  Supports continued funding to address student mental health needs. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated student needs related to trauma, anxiety, and loss. There is an increasing need for therapeutic services for students which are not currently accessible in school. LCPS desires to create a comprehensive plan that would engage school-based and community services. This plan should include therapeutic services which are not offered by school-based staff and are often difficult to schedule on an on-demand or emergency basis. Funding is needed to provide therapeutic services for students to complement the school-based counseling services that are currently available.

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COMMITMENTS TO THE TEACHING PROFESSION
Supports innovation and incentives to increase the number of students entering the teaching profession. Surrounded by two much larger school districts, Fairfax County Public Schools and Prince William County Schools, Loudoun County Public Schools has intense competition for recruiting its teaching staff. In addition, more colleges and universities see decreasing numbers in the teacher preparation programs. The combination has resulted in teacher shortages in critical needs areas (i.e. Special Education, Elementary Education, English Learners, Secondary Science) for LCPS as it strives to “recruit, hire, and retain a diverse, high-performing team of professionals.” Currently, vacancies for teaching positions are up over 70% when compared to the last two school years. LCPS supports incentives for candidates entering the teaching profession such as waivers for college tuition and room and board.

PRE-K FOR ALL
Supports local school divisions having the ability to offer all day pre-kindergarten without limitations. LCPS supports the Commonwealth providing funding for school divisions offering pre-kindergarten and for the Virginia Board of Education to adopt regulations for implementation.

LIFTING OF RESTRICTIONS OF E-RATE FUNDS
Supports a federal policy change to remove or amend the limitations on the E-rate program that restricts school divisions’ ability to expand their Wi-Fi footprint and deploy hot spots. LCPS requests funding to utilize to meet the needs of students with limited or no restrictions.

EXPANSION OF JROTC OFFERINGS
Supports increased JROTC access and opportunities for high school students in Loudoun County Public Schools. Junior Officers Training Corps (JROTC) is a program designed to instill in students in United States secondary schools the values of citizenship, service to the United States, and personal responsibility and a sense of accomplishment. Currently, one military branch (Navy) is represented in Loudoun County Public Schools (LCPS). LCPS serves over 20,000 students in 16 high schools and seeks access to additional JROTC programs to provide students exposure to all branches of military service.

TITLE IX REGULATIONS
Supports changes to Title IX that strengthen and restore protections against sexual harassment, sexual violence, and sex-based discrimination, and further supports restoration and modifications to Title IX that recognize the unique needs of students in the K-12 environment and that prescribe complaint grievance and resolution processes that are clear, understandable, and equitable. Lastly, supports changes to Title IX that allow local discretion and flexibility in providing supportive measures that include options to exclude respondents from school and school activities in order to provide greater protection for victims and the student body.

2022 Legislative Action Items
STATE AND FEDERAL

LCPS Student Facts

- 43% White
- 25% Asian
- 18% Hispanic
- 7% Black/African-American
- 1% American Indian
- Two or More

LCPS by the Numbers:
- 97 Schools
- 13,018 Employees
- 81,642* Students

*Enrollment figures as of 9/30/2021
2022 Policy Positions

- **SUPPORTS OVERHAULING THE STATE PUBLIC EDUCATION FUNDING MODEL**
  Support a review and overhaul of the current model to fund public schools in Virginia. 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 exceed 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 direct the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC) to review the true costs of public education, the State’s responsibility for funding those costs and the methodology used for distributing State public education funds.

- **PARTICIPATION IN CULTURALLY INCLUSIVE MEALS**
  Supports recommendations of the Virginia Task Force on Culturally Inclusive School Meals and Calendars including participation in a pilot program to incorporate culturally inclusive meals into the daily meal service provided in Loudoun County Public Schools. As noted by the Task Force, the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the critical role of school meals in alleviating childhood food insecurity and reinforced the value of offering school meals at no charge to students. However, if students are unable to eat school meals because of cultural or religious restrictions, they cannot reap those benefits. LCPS supports the recommendations as outlined in the Task Force’s report.

- **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.

- **BROADBAND**
  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.

- **SCHOOL DIVISIONS OF INNOVATION - ENHANCED ASSESSMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY**
  In 2020 Loudoun County, along with 14 other school divisions, received the School Divisions of Innovation designation. LCPS supports the Virginia Board of Education’s continued ability to designate School Divisions of Innovation.

- **FLEXIBILITY WITH THRU-YEAR ASSESSMENTS**
  Supports increased flexibility when implementing assessments in accordance with (HB2027 and SB1357, as effective July 1, 2021). The bills require the new assessments to be completed by students in the fall and spring of 2021-2022 in grades 3-8 reading and mathematics to measure growth during the school year. Full implementation of the legislation will occur in the 2022-2023 school year with assessments in these content areas and grade levels occurring three times during the year: fall, mid-year, and spring. The spring growth assessments will be the regularly occurring Standards of Learning tests. LCPS supports allowing school divisions to use alternative assessments that match or exceed the new standards. In addition, LCPS supports the Virginia Department of Education fully developing training for teachers and principals on how to interpret and use student growth data from such assessments.

- **SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICERS**
  Supports the General Assembly’s continued approach of ensuring SROs have consistent standards across the Commonwealth. Legislative efforts that work towards ensuring student safety should include a requirement for the use of motion detected body cameras.

- **DIPLOMA REQUIREMENTS 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.

- **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.