Welcome to the Dulles Schools Newsletter. In this edition, we welcome new staff; announce the Superintendent’s Statement on Equity; highlight Dulles South Secondary Schools Upcoming Boundary Changes; identify new and updated policies, and announce some recent awards to students and teachers in the Dulles Area Schools.

*To be added to the electronic distribution list, please contact me via email: [Jeff.Morse@lcps.org](mailto:Jeff.Morse@lcps.org)*

**Important Dates:**

- **Oct 17th:** Digital Innovation Promise (Liberty and Moorefield Station Elementary Schools, Academies of Loudoun)
- **Oct 23rd:** Little River 20th Anniversary Ceremony
- **Oct 28th:** Student Holiday
- **Nov 1st:** Waxpool Elementary School Dedication
- **Nov 4th** and **5th:** School Holidays
- **Nov 5th:** Election Day
- **Nov 8th:** Independence High School Dedication
- **Nov 11th:** Veterans Day/ Loudoun NJROTC Facility Naming Celebration- Loudoun High School
Dulles Area Schools Welcomes New Leaders

Dr. Mojisola Adejumo is excited to continue her work in education as motivator and Principal at Cardinal Ridge Elementary School. Prior to coming to Cardinal Ridge Elementary, she served as an Academic Principal, Assistant Principal, Title I Science Specialist, School Improvement Coach, and science teacher, primarily in Alexandria City Public Schools. She also served as a Medical Specialist in the United States Army. Dr. Adejumo is replacing Mrs. Lottie Spurlock, who has been promoted to Director of Equity for LCPS.

The Mercer Community welcomes new Principal Nikisha Diehl. Ms. Diehl started as an English teacher and curriculum developer for Nysmith School for the Gifted, and joined Loudoun County Public Schools as an English teacher at both Belmont Ridge Middle School and Smart’s Mill Middle School. After working for LCPS staff, she served as a Dean at Smart’s Mill Middle School, and then Assistant Principal at River Bend Middle School. Ms. Diehl will be replacing Mr. Bob Phillips, who was promoted to Director of Human Resources and Talent Development, Recruitment and Professional Learning.
The new principal of Briar Woods High School is a proud graduate of Loudoun Valley High School and a 2009 inductee into the Viking Athletic Hall of Fame. Ms. Sheila Alzate served as an assistant principal at Briar Woods last year, following six years as an assistant principal at Stone Bridge. Ms. Alzate is replacing Chris O’Rourke, who is now the Principal at Harper Park Middle School.)
Kirsten O’Hara, assistant principal of Round Hill Elementary School was selected to fill the position of principal of Legacy Elementary School at the end of the last school year. Ms. O’hara completed 15 years as the Assistant Principal at Round Hill following 5 years teaching at Sully Elementary School.

Dr. Ryan Hitchman, previous principal of Belmont Ridge Middle School, is the Principal for the new Lightridge High School currently under construction off of Braddock Road west of Northstar Blvd. Dr. Hitchman served for five years as principal at Belmont Ridge. Prior to his appointment at Belmont Ridge, Dr. Hitchman served as a middle school principal in Montgomery County, Virginia and St. Mary’s County, Maryland.
John Champe High School welcomes several new staff members, as the school continues its exponential growth. Despite the 9th graders attending Willard Intermediate School, John Champe’s enrollment has approach 1900 students, resulting in its athletic programs moving up to Class 6 status (at least until the opening of Lightridge High School). Principal Tyson has been busy building up a superb team to handle the unusual issues facing the Champe community.

Dr. Hamlett to Serve as LCPS Chief of Staff

Dr. Nyah Hamlett has been selected as the next LCPS Chief of Staff, relieve Dr. Michael Richards. Dr. Richards was selected to serve as Superintendent of Harrisonburg City Public Schools.

Dr. Hamlett served as assistant superintendent for instructional support in Henrico County Public Schools (HCPS) where she supervised a variety of instructional and support programs such as Exceptional Education, Family and Community Engagement, Federal Programs, Student Support and Disciplinary Review, Extended Learning, School Counseling, School Social Work, School Psychology and other professionals specializing in mental health and social-emotional learning.

Previously Dr. Hamlett was director of HCPS’ Department of Exceptional Education, as well as a departmental coordinator and specialist. She has also been a Title I reading specialist and instructional coach, as well as a special education teacher in Virginia Beach City Public Schools.
LCPS Adds Director of Communications to Staff

To address ongoing challenges with communications, The School Board funded some important changes in our 2019-2020 Operating Budget. First, LCPS hired a Director of Communications and Community Engagement, Mr. Rob Doolittle. Mr. Doolittle is an accomplished communications professional with demonstrated ability to develop and lead diverse teams in implementing strategic, impactful, and integrated public affairs and communications plans using multimedia resources. Mr. Doolittle’s experience includes:

- President, Fairlead Communications LLC · 2017 - 2019
- Director - Communications and Media Relations - CSX Transportation · 2014 - 2017
- Staff Vice President-Communications, General Dynamics Land Systems · 2006 - 2014
- Manager / Director - Public Affairs - General Dynamics Land Systems · 2000 - 2006
Additionally, the Board voted to add part time assistants to assist the School Board members in community outreach. The nine positions have an annual budget of $10,000 each, and are to be selected by each Board Member. It is anticipated that the job description and infrastructure for hiring will be in place by January 2020.

**Security Upgrades at LCPS includes new Director of Security**

In response to concerns voiced by the community over the last few years, the School Board has significantly increased resource, both in personnel and in infrastructure, to address the security needs of our schools and other facilities. On August, 1st, Mr. John Clark joined LCPS as Director of Safety and Security. A former senior executive with the United States Secret Service, Clark also led its Criminal Investigative Division and Dignity Protective Division, and served in its Presidential Protective Division. He is a graduate of James Madison University and the Key Executive Leadership Program at American University.

![Mr. John Clark](image)

**Mr. John Clark**  
LCPS Director of Security

**New Director of Special Education Appointed**

Dr. Patricia Nelson has been selected as Director of Special Education for LCPS. Dr. Nelson comes to us following her five years as the Director of Special Education for Montgomery County Public Schools, Virginia; two years as Director of Special Education for Shenandoah County Public Schools; and seven years as Coordinator of Special Education for Winchester County Public Schools. She will work closely with staff as they look to act on the recommendations of the School Board’s Ad Hoc Committee on Special Education.
Superintendent Deliver Forceful Equity Statement for LCPS

This spring, LCPS contracted with the Equity Collaborative to conduct a Systemic Equity Assessment, surveying community stakeholders in order to determine how well LCPS was addressing equity and diversity issues. The results, far from flattering, indicated that Loudoun and LCPS have some room for improvement in achieving equity and supporting diversity. The Superintendent’s statement was an important indication of our support, and goes hand in hand with the School Board’s addition of an Ad-Hoc Committee on Diversity and Equity. The School Board echoed the Superintendent’s Equity Statement with a Resolution regarding equity as well.

**Superintendent’s Equity Statement**

LCPS is committed to providing a safe, empathetic, respectful and supportive learning environment in order to empower every student to make meaningful contributions to the world. When students and staff experience racial insults, slurs, and/or other hate speech, we lack the positive culture and climate that supports students’ growth.

LCPS calls for all students, staff, families, and other members of our community to engage in the disruption and dismantling of white supremacy, systemic racism, and hateful language and actions based on race, religion, country of origin, gender identity, sexual orientation, and/or ability. LCPS rejects racist and other hateful behavior and language, recognizing that it encourages discrimination, hatred, oppression, and violence.

Every individual is valued in Loudoun County Public Schools. Let’s celebrate the diversity that helps define us as a school division.

Dr. Patricia Nelson
LCPS Director of Special Education
2020-2021 School Calendar To Be Selected

This month the School Board will select the calendar for the 2020-2021. Staff provided three options for consideration. The highlights of the three choices are:

- Option B: Early start, early finish, two week winter break;
- Option C: Late start, late finish, two week winter break; and
- Option D: Late start, moderately early finish, shorter winter break

See the proposed options at:
https://go.boarddocs.com/vsba/loudoun/Board.nsf/files/BG7HUk47290C/$file/Calendar%20Options%20B-D%20with%20chart%20for%20information%20item.pdf

LCPS Eliminates Credit Card Processing Fees

Processing fees have been eliminated for three expenses that parents regularly pay online with credit cards: meal charges, athletic fees and student parking.

As of July 1, Loudoun County Public Schools (LCPS) is picking up the processing fee so that parents pay only for their students’ expenses. In the past online credit-card transactions carried a 4 percent processing fee or a $3 per transaction fee.

The no-fee policy involves credit-card transactions made through the My School Bucks, where parents place money in students’ meal accounts, and the Online School Payments portal, which allows credit-card payments of athletic and parking fees.

Besides improving convenience and decreasing expense for parents, eliminating the fees will streamline transactions, improve accuracy and reduce the amount of time devoted by school staff accepting and processing payments as part of LCPS’ commitment to continuous improvement.

In addition, all LCPS schools and departments will be accepting payments for school activities online. The types of payments parents can make online will vary from school to school.

Credit-card readers are now available at all middle and high schools for parents who wish to make their payments in person rather than online.
Noteworthy Accomplishments for Class of 2019:

Facts about the Class of 2019:

- The class had 5,754 graduates;
- The largest graduating classes were Rock Ridge (492), Freedom (457) and John Champe (456) high schools;
- Class of 2019 earned $63,186,640 in scholarships; a total of 2,075 students earned some type of scholarship or grant to further their education.
- 3,872 (67.30 percent) plan on attending a four-year college;
- 1,232 (21.41 percent) are going to a two-year college;
- 144 (2.50 percent) are enrolling in other continuing education opportunities;
- 90 (1.56 percent) have enlisted in the military;
- 337 (5.86 percent) are going directly into the work force;
- 79 (1.37 percent) marked “gap year” on the Senior Survey.

Loudoun Division-Wide Success Includes Five Schools of Distinction

The 2018-2019 School Year marked another milestone for LCPS, with 100% of our schools fully accredited by the Virginia Department of Education. The state Board of Education also recognized 235 schools for high student achievement or continuous improvement: 52 schools that earned the Board of Education Highest Achievement Award and 183 schools that earned the Board of Education Continuous Improvement Award.
2019 Board of Education Highest Achievement Award

LCPS schools earning the Board of Education Highest Achievement Award are Hillsboro Charter Academy, Legacy Elementary and Waterford Elementary. Congratulations to these three top performers!

2019 Board of Education Continuous Improvement Award

LCPS schools earning the Board of Education Continuous Improvement Award are Briar Woods High School and Stone Hill Middle School. Congratulations to both Dulles Schools!

Student School Board Members Ready for Tour of Duty

The 2019-2020 School Board Student Representatives completed their training to serve for the upcoming school year on June 12th. I joined Vice Chair Brenda Sheridan (Sterling District) to conduct the Student School Board Orientation. Together we took the students on a tour of the Loudoun County Public Schools Administrative Offices in Ashburn, reviewed protocol for participating in public meetings and allowed the students to sit on the dais and practice using the microphones. Student School Board Members are expected to participate in all Board functions except voting, and when we are required to go into closed session.

Dulles Schools Student Representatives for 2019-2020 are:
- Sunya Qamar, Briar Woods High School
- Kaylie Halsey, John Champe High School
- Austin Roberts, Freedom High School
- Ainsley Hathaway, Independence High School
- Jacob Conway, Rock Ridge High School

Stone Hill Middle School Teams Excel in Math and Cyber Competitions

Students at Stone Hill continue to dominate state competition in both Math and Cyber Events. In math:

- The school’s eighth-grade team won first place in Virginia for the fourth consecutive year. Team members are Nikhil Pesaladinne, Shashwat Rao, Abhineet Repala, Sameer Gabbita and Vishal Kotha. Nikhil Pesaladinne earned a perfect score on the test.
- The school’s seventh-grade team won first place in Virginia for the third consecutive year. Team members are Arun Jannupreddy, Akhil Gogineni, Krish Kanwar, Naisha Patel and Sathvik Redrouthu.
- The sixth-grade team finished second in the state after winning first place in the region. Team members are Rohan Matta, Avni Garg, Soham Jain, Dhruv Vemuri and Samvrit Rao. Rohan Matta won the individual first-place award.
- All three teams are coached by Richard Wurst.
In the E-Cybermission competition, two teams from Stone Hill also earned top honors. The competition is a web-based program designed to cultivate student interest in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) and in solving real-world problems in their local communities.

- Stone Hill’s first place team won at both the state and region levels and competed at the national level. Team members are Sam Rao, Amulya Gottipati, Yug Kolla and Ajay Penugonda.
- A second team of Stone Hill sixth-graders won honorable mention in the state contest. Team members are Aryan Yelisetti, Kaustav Guttikonda and Curran Kasireddy.
- Both teams are coached by Spectrum teacher Heather Jackson.

School Board Chairman Comments

There is so much going on in LCPS, it is hard for anyone to track. I know how challenging it is to tailor the content as to keep the newsletter to a manageable size, so I capture the issues that most directly affect Dulles families.

Several issues will be on the docket this month. Grading and assessment is a comprehensive policy that has been worked in the Curriculum and Instruction Committee for almost a year. [https://go.boarddocs.com/vsba/loudoun/Board.nsf/files/BGRHY24AB343/$file/Policy%205030_100819%20Action%20Item%20Staff%20Edits-Rev.pdf](https://go.boarddocs.com/vsba/loudoun/Board.nsf/files/BGRHY24AB343/$file/Policy%205030_100819%20Action%20Item%20Staff%20Edits-Rev.pdf)

Several options are being considered: a 50% floor on testing; a cap on homework; and the proposed elimination of extra credit are three of the more contentious issues. There was significant research and discussion on the proposals, and I am still discussing this policy with teachers, families, and staff. The feedback I’ve received so far is that the 50% floor should only be applied to students who are making the effort. I also believe that homework should be capped, and that 10% is an appropriate amount (can exclude projects and group collaboration). I do not support the elimination of extra credit, if it is directly attributable to the learning.

If you would like to submit comments, please review both the research provided and the draft policy. The media is providing two sentence snippets that are simply misleading. I would strongly request you contact me at your earliest convenience so that I can hear your thoughts.

The makeup of the School Board will be very different in January: six of the nine members are not running for re-election this November. This guarantees that a majority of the board will be new members, with fresh ideas and different perspectives. I will work closely with them as together we will continue to grow Loudoun’s enrollment and its reputation, and to provide our students a world class public education.

In the near future, I hope to employ my assistant (to be interviewed and selected in 2020) to help increase the periodicity (and decrease the size) of these newsletters in order to make them more consumable. I also plan to hold office hours in the New Year, offering one more option for
direct dialogue to every member of the Dulles District. If you have recommendations on how to improve the communications, either within the Dulles area or across the entire division, please contact me at your convenience.

Yours in Public Service,

**Jeff Morse**  
Jeff Morse  
Chairman &  
Dulles District Representative  
Loudoun County School Board  
[Jeff.Morse@lcps.org](mailto:Jeff.Morse@lcps.org)