



FEBRUARY 2024 LEESBURG DISTRICT NEWSLETTER

SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER
LAUREN SHERNOFF



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For more in-depth updates - I provide detailed weekly summaries on my Facebook page.

No account is needed and it's all open to the public!

[Lauren Shernoff - Leesburg District - Loudoun County School Board Facebook Page](#)

The Latest from Lauren!

Hello Leesburg! My name is Lauren Shernoff and I am humbled and honored to be your new Leesburg Representative for the Loudoun County School Board.

For the past 16 years I have been a teacher in public schools. The past seven I have worked here in LCPS. Before that I taught kindergarten for many of those years.



The thing I loved most about teaching kindergarten is that every year is a fresh start and a new beginning, the beginning of their educational journey, the beginning of navigating a shared space with their peers and adults, and a beginning to finding out who they will one day become. It's incredible to watch these little ones grow up across the year. The work in the trenches can be messy and hard at times but no matter what the students always change and grow right in front of you. Day by day, letter by letter, book by book, number by number, friendship by friendship, they transform and it is work that is worth doing because you know that no matter how it begins, the end result will blow you away, each and every time.

Children have a way of seeing things that we often miss and they anchor us in what is good and true and innocent. Teaching children has been a love and a passion of mine for that very reason. It is a gift. The journey yields so much beauty and that is precious and we must protect it. It's the reason I worked so hard and persisted to be on this school board. There is important and necessary work to do to move us forward and like every new beginning, there is the hope of where we can go together. As I begin this journey, I'm holding on to that hope. When we put in the work, and yes it will be messy and hard at times, I believe it will also yield that same growth and beauty. We have a unique opportunity to capitalize on this fresh start. Let us take stock of this moment and lean into it. Let us commit to coming together for the one thing we all treasure most, our kids. I pledge to lead and learn with them in mind always.

Thank you for again this opportunity to be a voice for you all, I do not take it for granted.

School Spotlight

This month I'd like to highlight Catoctin Elementary School. Catoctin has a unique layout of pods. These pods help build community between grade levels with a communal space set up connecting classrooms. The setup alone lends itself to community building and I loved seeing that. Ms. Platenburg and Ms. Spencer (Principal and Assistant Principal) sat down with me and we talked about how supporting EL learners in an inclusive environment has been a commitment from their staff and they are seeing great strides from those students. Another AWESOME thing they are doing is intentionally planning fun and engaging activities and spirit days on typically higher absentee days to help reduce chronic absenteeism. They have already seen a significant increase in attendance due to these efforts. I love creative approaches like this that make learning more engaging and help to solve challenges!



Board Happenings

Since our swearing-in, the biggest lift has been working towards budget adoption. This initial phase of this budget cycle was a fast learning curve and the process is complex. I want you to know that my team and I worked around the clock to examine the budget, submit questions, and seek a clear understanding of the budget and the process. I also sought feedback from the community as well as school administrators and educators. There are many wonderful initiatives like staff pay increases, new school-based support positions, and bonuses incorporated in the proposed budget that I am proud to support. We are also opening two new schools which has a big impact on the percentage and dollar increase of both the operating and CIP/CAPP budget. While my personal philosophy of budgeting would have wanted us to look at more streamlining of the base budget before an increase I do understand that many of these supports are necessary given the varying needs of our division. I am grateful I had the opportunity to submit many questions to help guide

the process. As a result of one of my questions, a document was created by staff with line items aligned to Strategic Goals and I am hopeful this will become best practice in the future. I will ask for this type of line item breakdown alignment in conjunction with the SEON every year. I also pledge to take the learning I did this cycle and work to ensure a smoother process next year which includes more input and transparency as we work together throughout the year.

Thursday, Feb. 22 there was the LCPS Budget Request Presentation to the Board of Supervisors. Dr. Spence gave his presentation for the School Board Approved FY25 Budget and then the BOS asked questions. In general, the questions centered around the rationale for a 9.4% increase, the alternative school, admin level staff in proportion to school-based staff, enrollment, and achievement data. We will find out in the coming months if they grant us the full increase or if we have to reconcile. As it stands now, there appears to be a potential 10 million dollar shortfall. Stay tuned.

For our committee work, I serve on the Legislation, Audit and Policy Committee and the Joint Board of Supervisors Committee. I am Chairing the Curriculum and Instruction Committee and supporting as Liaison to the Loudoun Education Alliance of Families Advisory Committee (LEAF).

In the Legislative, Audit and Policy Committee, we have worked over the past two months to establish a Joint Committee for Collective Bargaining. This committee will be facilitated by a third party for no additional cost and will allow for dialogue around the eight items that the Loudoun Education Association presented in a letter to the School Board on December 7, 2023. Members of this committee were appointed by Dr. Spence, the Chair of LAP, April Chandler, and LEA President Sandy Sullivan. The list of members can be found here: [Loudoun Now - Loudoun School Board Establishes Collective Bargaining Committee](#)

In the Curriculum and Instruction Committee, I wanted to take a minute to highlight two items recently discussed. Per my request as an information item, I reopened the discussion around information regarding the Assessment and Grading Policy 5030. A presentation was made about the history of the policy and the timeline of its rollout. You can go on Board Docs and find all the documents. This was a significant moment for me as a school board member. I was able to put action to something I pledged I would address once elected. We are just at the beginning of the conversation; however, the conversation is back on the table.

This policy is not up for its cyclical review until 2026. As I stated in the meeting, I do not believe we can wait that long to begin the conversation. A 2026 review would likely result in implementation in the 2028 school year as it would take time to get the appropriate feedback and research to do it well. I have enough feedback from teachers, parents, and students to more than warrant a revisit of this policy. I want to be clear that 5030 was developed with many stakeholders and went through a long and thorough process. It was well-intentioned. Something I learned was that the pandemic happened right as schools were receiving the professional development around its rollout. Sometimes, for various reasons, intention does not always meet impact, and that can provide opportunity for reflection and revision. In light of that sentiment, as a school board member, I felt obligated to address this policy. Staff is going to work on a way to solicit current feedback from stakeholders so we can determine next steps. If you have feedback to share with me, I welcome it.

In addition, as New Business, I brought up the feedback I am receiving about Elementary Master Schedule minutes that were implemented this 23-24 School Year. I asked that it be an information

item on March 7 so we can hear the latest plan in response to the feedback.

I have also been busy with school visits. I was able to visit 15 of our schools this month! I look forward to continuing the work in partnership with our schools and communities!

Every week I do a detailed recap of everything I do on Facebook. It offers a far more expansive picture of the work I am doing and I encourage you to follow me there! The icon is below. Or you can click here: [Lauren Shernoff - Leesburg District - Loudoun County School Board Facebook Page](#)

Pictures & People 😊



Budget Working Session

Photo credit: Times-Mirror/Coy Ferrell



Heritage High School Senior Government Presentations

Amazing briefs about what could be improved in our schools!



Tolbert Elementary House Day!

Go Thunder!!



Frederick Douglass Elementary Hugs!!

I love being in classrooms



First Town Hall at Rust Library

I want to engage with you too!
Please reach out!



Lauren Shernoff

<https://www.lcps.org/Page/253691>

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