

Loudoun County Public Schools

Loudoun, Virginia

LEADERSHIP PROFILE REPORT

February 25, 2021

Introduction

This report presents the findings of the Leadership Profile Assessment conducted by Hazard, Young, Attea & Associates (HYA) in February of 2021, for the new superintendent in the Loudoun County Public Schools (LCPS). The data contained herein were obtained from input the HYA consultants received when they met with individuals and groups in either individual interviews or focus group settings, and from the results of the online survey completed by stakeholders. The surveys, interviews, and focus group meetings were structured to gather input to assist the Board in determining the primary characteristics desired in the new superintendent. Additionally, the stakeholder interviews and focus groups collected information regarding the strengths of the District and some of the challenges that it will be facing in the coming years. The online survey data is very consistent with the input of the focus groups.

Participation

The numbers of participants and/or focus groups sessions, by stakeholder group, in the two methods of data gathering are listed below:

Group	Personal interviews or focus groups	Online Survey
School Board	9	NA
Administrators	55	287
Support Staff	4	445
Teachers	6	1,809
Community	32	74
Parents	34	4,595
Students	4	2,880
Total	144	10,090

The Board of Education members and several Board of Supervisors were individually interviewed. Many other central office administrators and other government officials received individual interviews. Various different community members and groups were invited and participated, including the County Executive, Public Safety officials, NAACP members, Chamber of Commerce and numerous others. Open invitation community forums for parents, staff and community were offered at various times and locations.

Draft

Parent groups such as MSAAC, GT parents, SEAC, and the PTA District Council. All group interviews were conducted virtually and there were open virtual meetings for students, and parents/community

The responses provided by the individuals and focus groups during the interviews are listed in two places; 1) “Consistent Themes,” which are listed beginning on page 7 of the report and 2) all responses from individual and group meetings, which begin on page 8. They are listed alphabetically with no attempt to prioritize them. A separate report will include all of the on-line survey information as well as comments made by survey respondents. Finally, a first draft of superintendent characteristics, to be discussed with the entire Board on December 10, can be found on page 35.

The 10,090 respondents on the on-line survey represent an outstanding cross sampling of the different groups engaged with LCPS. Although staff turnout was light at the focus groups, 1,809 teachers responded to the survey. Parents were also in small numbers at the focus groups, but 4,595 responded to the survey. The on-line survey statistical sections and the open- ended comments amplify the findings from the focus groups.

It should be emphasized that the data from the focus groups is not a scientific sampling, nor should they necessarily be viewed as representing the majority opinion of the respective groups to which they are attributed. Items are included if, in the consultants’ judgment, they warranted the Board’s attention.

Strengths of the District

When asked about the strengths of LCPS, both individuals and groups interviewed cited the deep resources of Loudoun County. Funding, facilities, and the commitment of the community and parents to the schools were particularly noted as strengths. Loudoun County’s status as a national technology center offers additional support. Loudoun’s use of technology for instruction was ahead of the curve, even pre-pandemic. School staff and central office staff were recognized for talent and dedication. Dr. Williams was appreciated by central office staff and others for providing leadership through some very challenging circumstances and for initiating programs to foster deeper thinking and problem-based learning.

Parents are recognized for being highly committed to the schools but also for having high expectations for their students’ success. Although Loudoun is seen as a premier county and school division in the United States, many respondents feel that LCPS, while currently high performing, has not reached its potential. The education and socio-economic status of the citizens demands that the school system achieve at the highest levels. These high expectations can be challenging, but are also viewed as a motivator for the school system’s continued improvement.

Overall student achievement has improved under Dr. Williams; all schools are accredited. The County continues to perform well in graduation rates and college matriculation. Increased efforts to provide more diversity in the workforce have made good progress but more needs to be done. The instructional staff of the schools were given frequent praise and admiration for their dedication to students, even through this pandemic.

Loudoun County and its schools are becoming increasingly diverse. This diversity includes its rural and more urban populations, and socio-economic differences. The rapidly growing numbers of English Learner students reflects increased racial and cultural diversity. These changes, while also challenges, are appreciated by many who see diversity as an asset to the community and to the experiences of students who will work and live in a more diverse country in the future.

Many Board members, and LCPS staff members spoke of the good working relationships and cooperation between the schools and County staff. Many times, in other school divisions, these relationships are cited as a challenge, but Loudoun can take great pride in having a County where the entire government workforce focuses on a great education system for all children.

Loudoun for many years had the fastest growing school population in the United States. It was not unusual for Loudoun to build and open more than five schools a year. The majority of the facilities are in new or in excellent shape. The student enrollment growth curve is slowing and many supported the idea of now focusing on renewal and renovations of LCPS older facilities.

New programs and facilities were started and completed under Dr. Williams, such as the Academies of Loudoun and the current construction of The North Star School, the new home for LCPS's Alternative Education and Adult Education program. Citizens and parents praised the cleanliness of the facilities as well as their use 24/7 by community groups for youth sport programs.

The geographic location of the County and the proximity to the nation's capital were listed by many as a strength. This praise included the geographic diversity of the County, including the rural west with vineyards and farmland to the technology centers in the East. The Metrorail expansion of the Silver Line will open soon and only enhances the County's economic engine as it provides workers and families with greater access to the Capital region. The schools, the lifestyle and the location of Loudoun have made it an ideal place for raising families. One parent said, "This is the greatest place to live, the greatest place to raise a family and a great place for children to attend a great school system."

The resources and commitment to the schools in Loudoun County are to be admired by the rest of the country. As one commenter said, "Loudoun is already a great school system, but it has the potential to become the best in the nation."

Challenges/Concerns/Issues Facing the District

The Covid-19 pandemic of 2020-2021 has impacted every school district in the world. Parents and school staff throughout the United States seek a safe, expedient way to return students to in-person learning. Science and government officials have worked in a constantly changing model of what constitutes a safe return for schools. Loudoun is currently under a plan that returns some students to hybrid learning models in the near future. Parents and school staff want schools back in full time mode by the fall of 2021 if safety and protocols permit. Like many other districts nationwide, in Loudoun the pandemic has caused conflict and division as state and local leaders, school staff and parents try to determine how to reopen schools safely.

One of the challenges for Loudoun and all school divisions will be to assess learning loss of students during the pandemic and to provide resources and programs for remediation and/or advancement for lost instruction. At the same time, school systems will need to leverage the investment and experience with distance/virtual learning so that it can be used to enhance access and opportunity.

Extreme student growth had been a significant challenge over the last two decades. The growth had slowed but the effects of frequent boundary changes is still being used to address growth in certain areas of the County. Parents and some community members felt that the focus on growth distracted from the instructional focus of the School Board over the last decade. The pandemic has also impacted enrollment. Demographic projections will be very important for LCPS once full-time school returns. If the downturn in enrollment is precipitous, funding and facility adjustments may be needed.

Teacher engagement and input for instructional decisions was frequently seen as an area for growth. Many teachers feel that the central office decisions about programs, especially technology decisions do not have sufficient teacher input. Professional development to support new programs, especially technology enhancement is also needed.

ELL student population is growing at a rapid rate and overall diversity of the student population is also increasing. Staff members talk about the lack of resources for ESL children. Many respondents talked about the rural west that transforms into an urban east. Even though Loudoun has a high socio-economic status, there are many parents and families impacted by poverty. During the pandemic, Loudoun was very proud to be serving meals to students in poverty the day after the system closed for the pandemic

Dr. Williams and the Board began to address issues of racial disparity in the past few years. These issues remain and will need to be dealt with by the next superintendent. Concerns are driven by two competing views. One group believes that LCPS is not doing enough to address and eliminate racial inequality, while a second group believes LCPS is sacrificing valuable programs and resources to meet this goal. The admissions for the Academies of Loudoun were recently changed, and this decision is seen by some parents as a response too far for addressing racial disparity.

In 2015, the superintendent search recommended the need for a Strategic Plan. Loudoun has a strategic plan in 2021 but many do not feel it is widely known or understood. The lack of metrics was also a concern with the example that literacy scores are declining at the elementary level. If Loudoun had a metric driven strategic plan that was widely known and discussed those types of academic declines would be immediately identified and addressed.

Low morale of central office staff was also noted. The Central Office staff enjoy and celebrate their camaraderie and hard work for LCPS, but they feel that their value is not seen at the School Board level. Lack of trust and respect for the work of school leaders were cited, and there are now several key leadership vacancies that the new superintendent will need to fill immediately.

The LPCS welcomed seven new Board members in January 2020. In February the Board focused on the pandemic issues and switched to all virtual meetings in March. The focus has

remained on pandemic issues and reopening schools. Because of this virtual meeting format and the crisis focus, the LCPS Board members have had little time to participate in professional development as a highly functioning Board. The Board is perceived as a collection of individual agendas, frequently dipping into management issues, rather than as a decision-making board that focuses on governance. Board members also expressed a desire to define the roles of the Board and the roles of the superintendent and staff. The hiring of a new superintendent and a return to in person meetings will provide the Board with a chance to define Board governance. It is recommended that the Board develop policies and protocols around the roles of the superintendent and the role of the board.

A successful Strategic Plan would also allow increased transparency and communication with all constituents including the Board of Supervisors, parents and the community. It would also encompass all of the other concerns listed and allow the Board to have the metrics needed to focus discussion and decisions around high achievement for every student.

Desired Characteristics

The most often-mentioned response to this question was a visionary leader with outstanding communication and political skills.

The candidate should be a strong, seasoned and confident leader with an exceptional instructional background. Honesty, ethics and integrity were also frequently mentioned. A doctorate is preferred and many also preferred an experienced superintendent. A skill collaborator with the ability to work well with the School Board and the Board of Supervisors is also an essential desired characteristic.

The candidate should be a great listener, yet not be afraid to make decisions. He/she must and provide an unwavering vision that ensures academic success for all students. The superintendent must be prepared to deal openly and productively with the issues of racial disparity and to build trust within the community on these important issues. Many issues in LPCS have strong support and strong dissent and the new superintendent must be a leader who can manage the expectations of both sides while providing solutions for all students.

High visibility and engagement with school staff, especially with teachers was also important. Communicating with teachers and principals was extremely desired. Staff and parents also want much more transparency in the decision-making process. Parents need a communicator who can inform parents in a succinct message without using educational jargon.

The successful candidate should also be a great communicator who can reach out to many different types of groups, especially the business community. Many groups desire a leader that challenges the status quo and someone who does not rely on past practice. There is also a desire for increased transparency and input for decisions impacting the entire division.

In summary, the high level of survey responses, along with participation in the focus groups and community meetings, are strong indicators of a school division that is very proud of the past accomplishments, but seek a talented and innovative leader who can build on the excellence and move the division forward in providing a long-range strategic plan for Loudoun County Public Schools.

Summary of Consistently-Reported Themes

Strengths

- Academic performance
- Central office talent and expertise
- Comprehensive programming for different student needs
- Dedicated staff at all levels
- Diversity
- Facilities
- Geographic location and beauty
- Parents and business move to Loudoun due to the quality of the schools
- Resources of all types are supportive of LCPS
- Sense of family
- The entire community supports LCPS and wants it to be a premier national school system

Challenges/Concerns/Issues

- Changing demographics – slower growth but increases in ELL and poverty
- COVID response and aftermath; healing the divisions
- Diversity in all forms—especially addressing racial, geographic, and socio-economic issues
- Focus on innovation
- Initiative overload—prioritize and support initiatives that work and eliminate unproductive initiatives
- Instructional staff need participation in decision-making
- Numerous leadership vacancies need to be filled
- Political environment
- School board relations and governance practices
- Special education and ELL needs
- Technology needs a more cohesive vision, implementation and training support
- Vision and strategic planning with measurable outcomes

Desired Characteristics

- Committed to embracing diversity and promoting equity in all aspects of LCPS
- Decisive, clear, and strong enough to confront difficult issues and deal with dissent
- Demonstrates transparency, fairness, ethics and honesty
- Fosters open communication and trust
- Instructional leadership with extensive school experience
- Likable, personable, approachable and visible in schools
- Politically savvy with all aspects of a large school division
- Possesses the ability to work collaboratively and build relationships and trust with all constituencies in Loudoun; community, schools, central office, Board of Education and Board of Supervisors
- Strategic planner and implementer
- Student-centered
- Team builder—can assemble and delegates responsibilities to a highly skilled cabinet
- Visionary

Comments from Interviews and Focus Group Meetings

Listed in alphabetical order

“/” indicates multiple similar responses from different interviews

Board

Strengths

- Academies are highly coveted
- Area: fantastic, attractive, growing area—many opportunities; growing area; DC proximity; availability of cultural resources; federal government influence, jobs; great place to live—is there a better place—probably not; proximity to DC—very prominent and visible superintendency—the nation is watching /
- BOS and SB trust each other—good working relationship and this must be maintained; County and LCPS staff have an outstanding, communicative and supportive environment—it’s a model for Virginia—especially in supporting citizens and families in need
- Community: young, educated, thriving and growing; diverse; high performing; people willing to spend money on schools; a lot of opportunity to influence education; well-educated locale; willing to try new things; deep knowledge base with innovators—good balance of workforce //
- Culture, lifestyle; affluence; restaurants, parks; safe area to live; very desirable location /
- Desirable place for family living and raising children; good schools; affordable housing; job opportunities /
- Diversity: an incredible strength—all walks of life and all walks of the world are in Loudoun;
- diversity is more than race—students working in agriculture versus students pursuing high levels of technology; very diverse student population—ESOL, GT and Special Ed is growing faster than regular students //
- Economics; strong economic foundation; Loudoun did not get hit hard economically in any recession or pandemic downturn
- Expectations: advanced college degrees are expectations of staff and parents
- Higher education: NOVA has stepped up their program with dual enrollment and independent high school course offerings.
- LCPS, a great but challenging place to work
- Parents: lots of Type A personalities who will be honest, upfront if children not served well; engaged parents who want the best for their children and will make sure you know it; parents can be strong partners to educators; parental activism can lead to positive changes; high expectations from parents in both academics and sports; every parent wants high success for their children ///
- Resources: County is large and well-funded; good funding in place and budget process is working; resources are in place—geographical resources, funding resources, expertise resources—no limits—no ceiling; resources are plentiful and rich; well-funded; modern facilities; resource in place to deal with racial equity; have resources to improve STEM education; employee compensation is in very good shape—especially comparing to state and national averages; on the day of closure for pandemic there was food available for students in need the next day—over 3 million meals served since March, 2020 ////
- Response to racial issues: statement of systemic racism was a good first step
- Staff: Cabinet is very forward thinking—they are informed about all issues in education; amazing, talented, dedicated staff; HR department is trying to bring in a diverse staff; staff work long hours; innovative //
- Student achievement: graduation rates, college acceptances

- Technology rich area: people are open to experimentation and innovation; data center(s) of the world, 75% of all the world's web traffic goes through Loudoun; demographics are changing—agricultural and farming is now becoming very tech focused
- Vision for education that can be achieved with our resources; ability to provide an education well above the SOQ's; feels like infinite potential—there is blank slate; planning and looking ahead is outstanding

Challenges

- Academies changing admissions policy controversial
- Accountability for programs and initiatives: what programs are essential to education and shed those programs that do not work; technology model—new team brought in—lots of change with no buy in—took away 4 computers in the back of the room and gave teachers laptops and Promethean Board; need to focus on outcome, not the processes; Dr. W's leadership made teaching much harder, 1 to the world as an example of a disconnect; literacy program does not serve students with any kind of learning issues, designed for bright kids and not evidence based /
- Achievement gaps: wide gaps that are not being addressed adequately; gap is not racial but more socio economic; not enough attention is paid to the achievement data
- Board-Superintendent relationship: Control factor—Board/superintendent supposed to be team of ten—couldn't be farther from the truth—it was a team of one; only some Board members got information and Board member questions were not answered; lack of trust—must have the trust of the Board; not all Board members had equal access to the prior superintendent; the community and everyone else need to hear a unified messaging from the Superintendent and Board //
- Board culture and behavior: divergent Board—no focus, needs some norming; new Board has been challenging—someone has to be skilled to work with a very diverse group of Board members; all must leave the pettiness behind and bring a very professional approach; but most of it is not understanding the process of governance //
- Budget: lack of understanding of the need to fund education as an investment; business model does not always work; long term economics need focus
- Communication: Board inquiries were mostly by email through the deputy—greater access needed; Board members were blocked in the past and communication shut down—disrespected; need to have a strategy to communicate with parents
- COVID issues and impact: loss of instructional time by linking laptop to Promethean Board was too great; need plan for replacing lost opportunity for the children in the pandemic
- Diversity challenges: ESOL is a huge challenge—children must be reading by third grade—last six years decline in reading and literacy scores; growing populations of ESOL and special Ed.—how do we keep serving them well; Loudoun is both affluent and economically challenged, but the poor don't get the attention and resources they need; Loudoun is rural and metro at the same time: has the division made the right educational adjustments to serve the changing demographics? ///
- Divisiveness present in many forms; people are focused on themselves—at the extremes
- Equity and racial issues: Asian and Latino representation in the workforce needs improvement
- Facilities: 80 schools are in decline
- Focus on racial issues: caused in part by previous Supt's response to problems; people in community are tired of this focus on race; felt backed into a corner in a time that was

inflamed by Black Lives Matter; community is split on racial disparity; report on racial issues hurt LCPS—people pulled singular quotes out of context and used them against LCPS; equity is a national issue—changes are being made without research /

- Growth and change: expected growth for the foreseeable future: growth curve is flattening and LCPS will need to adjust to lesser growth; growth is a positive but also a challenge
- Lack of trust: Trust must be repaired and built—teachers need to trust the superintendent—the community doesn't trust the superintendent--new superintendent has to build this trust back
- Leadership and management: top-down direction and decision-making, instead of empowering teachers: need to lead teachers and include them in determining policies and practice; too many admins making decisions are too far removed from classrooms, don't relate to current students and conditions
- Parent community: sense of entitlement, "it's mine, not ours"; vocal, active parents can be difficult at times; parents during COVID were both an asset and challenge; tenacious, public demands for services are the norm; parents in Loudoun are different — highly affluent with highest expectations and demands; community members will yell in public and use public force to get their way; can be vicious; middle of the road parents get left behind; high demand and expectations; spirited and engaged parent community—with the emphasis on spirited: vocal community challenges implementation of any type of large change //
- Staff: administrators are not utilizing data and input from teachers to make educational decisions; Cabinet positions were recent hires with large salaries—do they seek input from lower levels or is it an enclave that is out of touch; *Is the current cabinet structure set up for best production—only a few are pulling the big weight?* The heavy carriers are getting burned out; school-based administrators were worried about retribution; many cabinet member vacancies—replacement of the team is needed /
- Student achievement: schools are underperforming based on student ability: lack of vision and/or a reluctance to admit that we're not doing well in some areas is a limiting factor
- Technology: purpose for using tech as an instructional tool must be identified and understood; tech not just another learning tool; need to have a unified idea about how technology can be used to improve teaching and learning; cannot just follow trends, must have purpose

Characteristics

- Budget experience: does not waste money, but promotes programs worth putting money into; knows that public education is not a market service; educates SB, BOS and public that the programs and services that students need are expensive
- Builds relationships: great interpersonal skills; develops ways to connect to all constituents, including principals and teachers; talks to staff — connects with boots on the ground; must be able to work with School Board; availability is critical; seek a leader who has outreach beyond his Cabinet—teachers, parents, community //
- Calm
- Collaborative, empowering: bright—but also listens and takes input from stakeholders; staff should be empowered to recommend to the Board and recommend unpopular news to the Board—don't kowtow to the Board
- Communication and community relations skills: can sell the importance of public education and the need to invest in quality programs; can comfortably communicate with the community;

excellent effective, clear communicator with employees, staff and community; someone who understands the needs of special education parents //

- Committed to equity for all, including marginalized groups and dealing with issues around race: abolish racism and train for racial equity; equity needs to be the driver (including LBGTQ); must understand the meaning of equity and lead with that at the forefront /
- Data-driven, results oriented: has taken a school system that has some issues and developed strategies and initiatives that solve real problems; experience with closing achievement gaps and literacy programs; does not follow trends, but addresses achievement gaps and serious issues with Hispanic student achievement; will confront literacy issues and find solutions; candidate with focus and track record with a history of implementations and accomplishments with metrics //
- Delegates, uses key people well: does not micromanage
- Diversity (racial, gender) would be welcome
- Down to earth; approachable and trustworthy; humble, plain spoken—speaks without ambiguity; confident with less ego and more humility; genuine and trustworthy—not take things personally; like-able rather than “charismatic”; won’t go on TV or use issues to make a name //
- Experienced: teaching experience, the more recent, the better; even if a current superintendent must not be too removed from classrooms and teachers; educational background; school experience—is that critical? could Elon Musk run a school district? or do you need a very experienced leader; doctorate (preferred)
- Innovative, creative: will challenge the status quo
- Learns about Loudoun before deciding how to lead the district
- Passionate and ambitious
- Political skills: balance the Chamber of Commerce with the BOS and the parents in the community; can handle the politics of Board interaction; politically savvy--both prior superintendents had this
- Ready to move LCPS beyond issues of race: moves the district to pay attention to academics, real student needs; brings focus back on education—not 100% on equity issues
- Respected and respectful: respect teachers and earns the teachers’ respect
- Strategic: knows when to start new initiatives, how to get buy-in and support for implementation; will use pilots to test theory and practice; doesn’t promote impractical plans or follow trends; plans for the big picture
- Strong leader, grounded in clear principles and values: cannot waffle, must stick to principles, communicate vision and values; knows that if you try to please everyone, especially in a crisis, you end up pleasing no one; projects strength; thick skin; can weather the storm; willing to make some people unhappy; will not fold under pressure; fortitude—proper perspective; thick skin ///
- Student-centered: plan for every student—average, special ed, ESOL, etc.; every student deserves a year of growth; addresses how to we catch up the child not doing well including the average and high performing kid after the Pandemic
- Transparent, trustworthy: provide solutions or at least be transparent when solutions are not in place yet
- Unifier, bridge-builder: disparate voices must be brought together
- Visionary leader: vision and direction are needed: strategic plan needs to be developed; need vision based on data assessment of Loudoun; we don’t need a manager; someone who wants Loudoun to be the best in the nation and has a vision to achieve that metric //

Comments from Interviews and Focus Group Meetings

Listed in alphabetical order

“/” indicates multiple similar responses from different interviews

Board of Supervisors and other County Officials

Strengths

- African American History library
- Area, lifestyle: Leesburg east great growing area/western area is beautiful; good transportation system/data center; blend of rural and suburban; bedroom community is becoming more sophisticated and self—sustaining; County is one of the most exciting and dynamic in the US ///
- Board of Supervisors: supports teachers and other educators and the fiscal needs of schools; BOS wants to support the school budget; pro-schools; wants to fix what happened in last two Boards (under-funding schools); Dr. W. was very open to working with County, didn't play politics, budget development was a tremendous improvement /
- Diversity of community and students; robust heterogeneous parent and student population; cosmopolitan, diverse //
- Educated and informed community: magnet for best and brightest around the country; parents are gov workers, business leaders; Incredible variety of businesses; talent is plentiful—continuing to build and grow into a powerhouse /
- Parents: engaged, highly visible, involved /
- Rapid growth
- Schools: great reputation high achievement of students: attracts families to live in Loudoun; high test scores, sharp kids; legacy and reputation of the schools is very good; Loudoun has not chased fad issues in education; kind and caring teachers /
- Technology available to students

Challenges

- Academy admission decisions hit the Indian community especially hard
- Attorney General's Ruling on race and discrimination in LCPS must be addressed; Civil War issues /
- Autonomy of the schools: kind of run themselves—too much autonomy
- Change: Growing LGBTQ; Latino community; growing activism
- COVID issues and aftermath; tension between BOS and School Board re COVID response, need for full-time learning; frustration with Hybrid model; need to determine post pandemic needs and make a plan; SB and superintendent have not risen to this challenge; COVID-19—divide in the community—brought to the forefront many issues and wounds that will need to be healed ///
- Diversity and equity: need for teachers and administrators of color, lack of diversity in staffing; attention to these important issues; need to educate all children equally, break system of racial inequities; disconnect between majority and minority populations regardless of income; a culture of low expectations for some; minority students not included in AP courses and Advanced Degree tract ; need to ensure student placements consistent with grades and ability ; South Asians (Indians) are not being included in these equity issues; racial reckoning—nationwide—but Loudoun has been clunky with addressing this issue /////
- Facilities: older schools are in need of systematic investment for renovations

- Financial, budgetary challenges and constraints, underfunding; gap in pandemic funding; disparity in resources, inequity; economic development is important and schools need to understand their role in economic development long-term effect of state deficits on school budget and services //
- Growth: keeping up with the needs, not just buildings but services; building 1 to 2 new schools a year; ability to grow without compromising quality /
- Mental health concerns: youth population at risk, under stress; pressure for academic achievement
- Parental involvement and pressure
- Resistance to change: acceptance and understanding that Loudoun is changing
- School Board: turnover; challenging Board; meetings lack structure and decorum; speakers' time is not controlled at meetings; expectations and protocols for meetings not established (look at BOS meetings in contrast to School Board Meetings); weak School Board; cannot deal with irate public, parents; parents report that SB is not responsive; apt to hire the kind of person who will agree with them; there has been a natural push and pull between LCPS and BOS ; Board doesn't function well and that will be a challenge for new superintendent /////
- School Board-Superintendent Relationship: poor communication, SB not informed of critical information; SB and school leaders need to work together as a team, learn to communicate productively; roles of the School Board and Superintendent need to be defined ///

Characteristics

- Collaborative: creates alliance in the community with non-profits and others who can enhance programs; utilizes key players in decision making
- Commitment to addressing equity and racial issues: strong advocate for equity; ability to work with diverse populations; makes changes needed to ensure equity, opportunity ///
- Communicator
- Educational leadership experience in a division like Loudoun, has dealt with growth and diversity; not from a small system; urban experience /
- Engineer not a scientist; someone who can make trains run on-time more than top academic credentials and theory; can get the busses and schools to run; organizational management; executive experience, not an educator; has run a business; has long-term executive experience; managing the budget and operations more important than instruction; doesn't hurt to have deep background in education, but not essential /
- Experience in school leadership at a high level: subject matter expert; confident in advice to the Board; educationally astute
- Forward-thinking: aware of educational trends; can go "outside the box"
- Fiscally cognizant, aware of spending and taxpayer's money: looks to save the County money
- Keen and listening ear to what parents and families have to say; acknowledges that parents know their children's educational needs better than professionals
- Persons of color, female candidates sought /
- Respects, honors and is sympathetic toward parent involvement and choice in education; supports choice in education — public, private, home school; respects options of parents regarding their choices for their children
- Strong: ability to say no—many constituencies and some need to hear "no"
- Transparent: straightforward, there should not be too many surprises

Comments from Interviews and Focus Group Meetings

Listed in alphabetical order

“/” indicates multiple similar responses from different interviews

Cabinet Members

Strengths

- Area, lifestyle: strengths; proximity to Washington, D.C metro area; most affluent area in the country; great facilities and resources; something for everybody; variety of opportunities, employment; amazing workforce; beautiful area; diversity; healthy tourist area /
- Accreditation challenges largely met
- Begun to do the hard work around equity that needs to be done, LCPS is making strides: working to diversify the workforce; to diversify panels that select new employees; building a diverse workplace—but more work is needed /
- Belief that kids are more than test scores
- Collaborative nature of work, valuing different opinions, feedback asked for and appreciated; team-based approach to solving problems; cohesive Senior Staff; silos have been broken down in recent years ///
- Communication: within division, with community
- Community partners support schools
- County Government is also attuned to the diversity and the needs of that community
- COVID response: LCPS is weathering the storm because of strong leadership at the top and in schools
- Differentiated staffing based on student need
- Dynamic area in education—resources, variety of talent, very diverse
- Focus on project-based learning, personalized learning, deep thinking for all students
- High-achieving students /
- Innovation and change embraced; willing to do things differently
- Leadership at the district and school levels: embrace the mission of LCPS, Portrait of a Graduate; strong emphasis on teaching and learning from central leadership; “hands-on” work with principals and teachers: student-centered district vision and practice happening in schools /
- Progressive, growing division; open to new people and ideas; values people /
- Reputation of Loudoun County Schools: top notch educational programs; strong reputation for academic excellence
- Well rounded, solid parent-student base; informed parent community; most students come to school ready to learn; families with high expectations but supportive; many post graduate goals /

Challenges

- Administrators and teachers are leaving because of the current morale and toxicity; educators have choices—and many are making Loudoun not their choice

- Charismatic leader
- Collaborative leadership: empowers staff; strong team builder
- Comfortable with change and challenge: understands the impact of growth and change; can adjust to the unknown, future-orientated; embraces change //
- Communicator: strong written and verbal communicator; listens /
- Committed to dealing with equity issues; understands what has happened in Loudoun; strong and courageous enough to confront these issues and make needed changes; strong background in equity; able to relate to all people equally ///
- Committed to Loudoun County Public Schools
- Courageous, resilient leader: can take the heat
- Experience: Experience in superintendent role; urban experience helpful; principal experience definitely an advantage; new to superintendent position will not work in Loudoun; sitting superintendent needs deep experience /
- Political savvy and skills: seasoned administrator
- Relationship-builder: with SB, BOS, community leaders; genuine outreach to people
- Respected, innovative instructional leader; ensures that student achievement is not only measured in test scores; well-rounded instructional leader /
- Strong, results oriented: good credentials, but stronger in practice-great track record; can develop the infrastructure to accomplish vision; proven leader; can focus and get things done //
- Strong enough to deal with the School Board: ability to drive innovation, drive instruction and bring the Board along without it inappropriately getting into school system operations and areas outside the Board's direct responsibility ///
- Student-centered focus: supports personal learning, Portrait of a Graduate
- Strategic thinker, system thinker: can see how things fit together; knows what is needed for continuous improvement; critical to get a handle on initiatives, moving parts; understands goal setting, planning & assessment; not coming in just to "fix" the district, but understands why things are as they are ///
- Visible and open in community and in schools, with school leaders; listens to school leaders; makes connections to schools and classrooms; knows what policy looks like in practice

Comments from Interviews and Focus Group Meetings

Listed in alphabetical order

"/" indicates multiple similar responses from different interviews

Central Office Administrators

Strengths

- Advancements in technology: in recent years, LCPS has gone from being behind the curve to leading the way
- Awesome school system: high quality education—our kids get excellent academic education—project-based learning, enrichment activities
- Area: Desirable place to live; people move for the beauty; opportunities; excellent schools; growth; people move here in part for the schools; partial urban setting to suburban and rural; wealthy County; rich history; recreation, outdoor activities; four seasons //
- Community: highly educated
- Diversity: student diversity, cultural and economically diverse
- Equity Office: should help make needed changes
- Facilities: well-maintained and well built
- Opportunities for growth
- Pride in and support for schools: residents, parents, staff support LCPS; pride in having attended Loudoun schools, having children in them; schools are like community centers, principals like mayors; well-funded school district; community invested in schools /
- Programs: Computer Science—LCPS is one of the few and the first in Virginia; diverse programs; something for everyone
- Staff: flexible and adaptable — had to be in COVID; communication among of senior staff has been a positive; broken down divides and silos LCPS hires experts—we are able to recruit and retain some of the best in Virginia; central office talent - subject matter experts; Transportation, Safety and Security - all aspect of LCPS have outstanding leaders
- Students: motivated to achieve/contribute
- Vision and mission: previous Supt had a vision, took the district in a good direction;
- Loudoun is moving beyond the test-taking environment to higher level teaching and learning
- Workplace development is strong, keeps adapting to changing needs

Challenges

- Accountability: hold schools accountable
- Change: credibility will be lost if everything Dr W started is abandoned; need for sustainability and commitment; Continue the initiatives of Dr. Williams
- Communications are not always clear, within and outside the organization; need to have avenues to bridge misunderstandings
- Community relations: certain diverse groups have never felt connected to the schools; LCPS needs to model how to feel connected; community feels divided—new superintendent needs to unite the community; western children would not want to be in Eastern Loudoun—and vice versa
- COVID-19: need post-pandemic plan
- Demanding clientele: both elected officials, parents; people have high and often differing expectations

- Diversity: need to increase staff diversity
- Equity and racial, cultural issues: need to confront the hard truths about equity; to redefine our standards of excellence; to examine policies and address issues; to continue equity emphasis; to live our stated values of trust and transparency; to address our low “equity IQ”; equity lens for all decisions—there is much left to be done //
- Engagement with parents and businesses can improve, and be more inclusive
- Giving a sense of control to all stakeholders
- Growth continues as a challenge
- Internal structure of LCPS is a strong hierarchy; hard to “move the needle” — structures can get in the way of systemic change
- Management: management is needed—visionary leaders are great, but management is very important
- Political divisiveness: relationship with SB and BOS fractured over the past few years: political leaders do not respect staff and they feel it; SB that is divisive, not responsive, but reactive; Board struggles with role of governance versus the responsibilities of the superintendent
- Program access not uniform
- Staff morale: positives of Loudoun are not highlighted enough; people leaving LCPS; staff cannot do its best work when constantly reacting to political and community pressure; Division is in need of healing
- Support services personnel: instructional staff is very visible and very vocal—support employees need the superintendent to be an advocate for ALL employees; replaceable versus disposable—sometimes employees don’t feel valued; reduce the attrition rate in support employees; value support services employees and recognition for those employees is important
- Vacancies: high-level vacancies make it hard to continue equity and other initiatives

Characteristics

- Advocate for students and staff
- Approachable; builds relationships; connects with staff
- Builds upon the strengths that are in place—no dramatic change needed
- Builds trust, improves negative culture: understands and respects the work of staff; builds capacity of leaders; not a micromanager; trusts staff; will build on what is good in Loudoun
- Collaborative: can move Loudoun forward by creating partnership; not one person, but a team
- Committed to LCPS: longevity is important in Loudoun
- Communication, listening skills: need to adapt to audiences; constantly listens to parents and students; willing to come in with big eyes and ears; can address all stakeholders (students, parents, community members, teachers, staff) with consistent, concise and transparent messaging; good communicator that can make the community feel valued, but a strong vision that helps us improve; strong spokesperson who can explain the what and the why ///
- Courageous: willing to challenge the status quo; questions what needs to be examined; needs to confront and repair political divides; ready to do the hard work needed to deal with equity issues and divisiveness; comfortable with discomfort, especially with LCPS Board; can wrestle the School Board and lead; isn’t reactive to Board /
- Experience: skills to run a large district of 90,000 students; multiple experiences; urban experience not a negative, but must be broader than just urban; experience in a large district, dealing with rapid growth
- Flexibility, adaptability: flexible decision making so that student experiences are amplified; need to hear from students; one size does not fit all — customize leadership styles and delivery of instruction to students’ and schools’ needs; need to prepare students for an unknown future
- Innovative: in instructional practices and especially with infrastructure and technology; embraces change /
- Promotes “soft skills” in instruction: diplomacy, collaboration, respect, ability to work as team-skills students need to be successful

- Strategic, knows how to get things done: systems and processes need to be examined /
- Strong, respected, decisive leader: clear about vision and path, especially about equity; decisiveness, confidence — knows the strength of Loudoun; does not just look to Fairfax and other divisions to decide what to do; LCPS need leadership, not management; avoid flip-flopping decisions //
- Technology experience: will be able to keep current with technology and leverage pandemic experience for improved learning; understands technology and needs to keep moving forward
- Transparent
- Visible, “out there,” engaged: seen in schools and community; gets to know the variance in different schools; attend numerous community events; comfortable with media; uses walk around management; experiences the many different cultures in Loudoun /

Comments from Interviews and Focus Group Meetings

Listed in alphabetical order

“/” indicates multiple similar responses from different interviews

Administrators

Strengths

- Awareness of equity, getting past denial, and starting to get to work looking for ways to be equitable, inclusive, to ensure that students are receiving best education
- Community: largely affluent, educated, families and parents who care about education and work hard to achieve; Loudoun loves its schools, maybe not the “system” but the individual schools are supported; wonderful families and students: people stay in Loudoun because of the community and benefits for children ///
- Collaborative practices: collaboration in instruction among building leaders and between schools; principal-to-principal, teacher-to-teacher, deep relationships; central office has accepted more input into the decision-making process in last few years
- Diversity: varied characteristics, geography and demographics of Loudoun; diversity adds strength; Superintendent’s ethic statement moved the staff to tears—LCPS is on the right path //
- Dr. Williams: had a vision, and we all knew the vision: was a strong instructional leader—he knew the principals and always wanted their input; tried to inform us of communication before the Board or the community so we could help work with staff and community; went to schools and would highlight the strengths of the schools;
- Family atmosphere
- Forward looking, innovative: empowering all kids to make meaningful contributes to the world — support students to that end; mindset that does not leave any student behind, prepares students not just for college but other career pathways; primed to do new things instructionally; deeper learning emphasis is a good direction; future oriented, beyond test scores: One to the World - expand the horizons of traditional learning, 21st Century Skills, contacting to real world applications; personalized learning; project based learning ///
- LCPS one of the best school systems in the nation — so much opportunity; students can rise to high levels; accreditation rates, overall student achievement
- Middle schools focus on students holistically
- Programs: many different choices to meet students’ needs
- Staff: building leaders with student focus; Loudoun attracts positive, capable people to work here; staff feels proud to work in LCPS; some exceptional schools leaders; a very strong level of professionalism; school staffs constantly work to improve practices; doesn’t settle, not stagnant, looks to improve; professional, seeks what is best for students; staff comes here for growth and learning — lots of opportunity; lots of good things started, and staff wants to go to a deeper level ///
- Students: motivated, achieve well
- Support: building level administrators feel empowered and supported at their schools; staff training to implement new initiatives
- Tried to maintain smaller schools even as Loudoun grew

Challenges

- Community relations: need to communicate our goals around equity; bring more people into the discussion

- Equity: a real issue; an urgent problem, but the LCPS rollout of response was problematic; weak leadership has led to the current situation with NAACP; achievement gap goals and efforts are long standing Growth and change — we were a small district, now medium district — and growing — the administrative level and structures have not adjusted to change so that schools are supported; supported; more socio-economically depressed areas, more families with economic issues; equity issues and what they means to our schools and community; equity is an issue in instructional practices, hiring practices; lack of staff diversity; minority groups clustered into geographic areas; unequal access to some programs; access to AP course not always equitable ////
- Facilities: older buildings need attention
- Gang activity
- Growth: causes stress and instability
- Lack of coherence and communications — between and among central offices and schools; siloed departments that operate within their own area; principal input is often degraded; most decisions come down on schools from above; programs added to repertoire that are not adding to excellence, only more work for teachers; need fewer initiative but do what is most important well; divide between central administration and school-based administrators; many new central leaders have no history here
- Lack of decisiveness is a perception in the community
- Leadership: Dr. Williams surrounded himself with outstanding leaders—they need to be retained and valued; fill the team with new great leadership
- Mental health issues
- Pandemic: present and future challenges: plan needed for students who need help to catch up
- Parent pressure: few aggressive largely affluent parents/groups demand changes; parents of EL and other marginalized groups are not able to advocate for children; parents (and kids) who don't have as much are not seen or heard; students with needs (immigrant, low socio economic) may not be as visible; people say they aren't heard, but sometimes not being heard means they weren't getting their way; parents vs teachers; lack of transparency and trust //
- Political climate has shifted in Loudoun, exacerbated by decisions around COVID: over the last one-two years SB members using social media as a platform to post opinions, not facts; SB actually causing divides in the community
- Special populations: gifted ed — are we doing the right things? EL students growing at fastest rate without parallel growth in support for them
- School Board: currently running the district, but members don't have knowledge to make good decisions for all students; staff did not push back in the many areas where the Board is not as proficient as the staff; oversteps into the day-to-day operations; SB did not support innovation and change brought in by Dr. W; Board needs education about how complex decisions need research—don't say from the dais “Oh, let's start school after the holiday” without understanding the complexity of that decision; bad relationship with previous superintendent, lots of angst; School Board perceptions of roles of superintendent; employees are watching SB meetings and wondering about the roles and relationships of Board and staff ////
- Span of control of Directors and Supervisors who support and evaluate schools is way too big; “triage” rather than thoughtful planning and needed resources
- Special Ed department — so much turn over, lack of responsiveness from central staff; not able to keep up with demands; Special Ed not providing what highly impacted students need; a crisis waiting to happen; address Special Ed issues, improve services /
- Staffing and other support to meet student needs: need for more avenues for CTE throughout the County; middle school staffing patterns are inadequate, compared to ES and HS; need vocational programs available for all students
- Stress: new School Board, Superintendent leaving in midst of pandemic; rapid growth; LCPS is under a lot of stress
- Systemic and structural issues: need systems to communicate up and down the organization, to move the systems forward toward innovation and change; LCPS has outgrown current structure;

totally centralized structure needs to adapt to specific needs at different schools in different regions; communities need different types of support and have different areas of concern //

Characteristics

- Ability to navigate the lack of civility and kindness currently in Loudoun
- Advocate, cheerleader for Loudoun: celebrates the positives
- Balance: a blend of Dr H's command and confidence with Dr W's approachability
- Bi (or more) lingual
- Comfortable with change and diversity
- Committed to Loudoun so that there is stability — someone needs to stay
- Communicator, collaborator: provides clear understanding at the school level of the what and why of decisions and policies; welcomes feedback from staff, especially school staff; creates feedback loops — doesn't have all the answers ///
- Courageous in the face of School Board and community pressure: not risk averse; can make a decision and stand with it if it is good for students (the message now is that every decision can be changed with enough public pressure); strong, ready to make decisions based on student needs, not politics; cannot be frightened to deal with SB and politics
- Equity at the core of work: not just regarding culture but practices in fiscal allocations, /hiring, etc.; strong belief system around fairness, justice, worth of every student; serves ALL students and makes changes to address opportunity gap; honors the diversity in the community; conducts real and open discussions on equity and race ///
- Experience: experience as building principal, knows how policies and practices play out at the building level; school leaders have both business skills and people skills; can lead SB to understand school prospective; respects the input of principals and other school personnel; values the experience of school leaders — promotes exceptional school-based leaders; experience at the school level: remember what it was like to work in a school; sees the entire picture of what it takes from everyone — cafeteria workers, custodians, bus drivers and everyone else who serve at the schools; experience in HS administration and central office ////
- Humble
- Maintains what is valued in Loudoun: smaller school approach; keep the small system culture with growth — respects history and tradition; tries to maintain the family atmosphere that is our culture and tradition
- Problem-solver
- Rebuilds trust: can speak and act in a way to promote trust, transparent //
- Strategic, responsive, not reactive: changes made based on research not as a reaction to current events; more planning, less reacting /
- Strong instructional leader: committed to deeper learning for all students; provides quality instruction for gifted students as well as remediation for those who need it; understands the unique needs of all school levels. /
- Student focus to address the whole child
- System-thinker, knows how to get things done in a large and complex organization; examines what organizational structures are needed because of size; can balance larger system needs within small system culture; ready to do a needed reorganization and provide some decentralized leadership; manages the day-to-day operations /
- Understands the role of technology in education
- Unifier: brings the community back together /
- Visible and open: someone who is present in schools: listens, demonstrates a genuine spirit of support for teachers, custodians, principals, cafeteria, all who make school work; not just seen in videos //
- Visionary with a clear path to reach that vision /

Comments from Interviews and Focus Group Meetings

Listed in alphabetical order
"/" indicates multiple similar responses from different interviews

Teachers

Strengths

- Continued academic focus
- Diversity: becoming more equitable, addressing issues, providing for diverse needs; working to increase diverse staffing; Equity Committee that is inclusive; embraced diversity in school calendar; schools are more inclusive //
- Effort: hard working teachers try to do their best
- Great reputation
- Interim Superintendent: Dr Z's communication has been spot on; has given solace to the teachers
- Opportunity: economic; affordable housing, teachers can actually live in the community, as can fire fighters, police
- Programs available to students with different needs and interests
- Resources: personalized learning, problem-based learning, technology; innovation is supported /
- School staff, teacher-to-teacher relationships are positive and strong; all teachers meetings in the past were a powerful bonding exercise /
- Setting is appealing from east to west
- Strong personalities
- Strong teachers
- Wealth

Challenges

- Address distance to school
- Address falling scores
- Bring in someone like Michelle Reed
- Collaboration in decision-making: teacher and employee input are sought and needed; widen; the circle of employee engagement
- Community growth
- Continue individualized learning
- COVID: need to analyze the information from this experience and use it to improve instruction, for example, some students with anxiety issues are thriving in distance learning; use technology to close opportunity gaps; teachers feel beaten down by the community during COVID
- Defining success too narrowly: The Excellence in Education banquet celebrates only
- Demands on schools: schools have become so many things to families — counselors, feeding students, provide for emotional and social needs as well as academics; teachers are pulled in many directions /
- Differentiation: LCPS expects teachers to differentiate with students; but PD is not adjusted for the varying needs of different schools; leadership does not model what is expected of teachers; professional development is often not differentiated
- Diversity challenges: regional issues east vs west; growing diversity of language without resources to support them all; diversity is not recognized; LCPS is not focused on racial, cultural,

language differences but on majority population; diversity in Loudoun is not just racial, but rural and suburban/urban; need for culturally responsive teaching; need to believe that differences are not deficits; more to do in diversity, in hiring practices—more diversity needed in the licensed workforce; racial disparity—more support for minority students—especially because entitled parents don't always support that approach ///

- EL issues: need to adjust to growth in EL population and in the different languages and cultures; challenge to get EL students what they need within the County; often language becomes a barrier to receiving other needed services
- Equity of opportunity: gifted programs do not reflect the general population; White and Asian students over represented; with changes as TJ, need to look at LCPS home grown program and keep Academics of Loudoun equitable and diverse
- Expand programs for gifted
- Facilities: some older buildings are in bad condition that is compromising instruction — inequities result; new buildings can provide more space than the older ones for same size populations
- Haves vs. Have Nots: Many students in Loudoun are not affluent but are highly motivated and working hard; Title I schools have a stigma in Loudoun; Title I eligible schools are also in need of help but communities don't want label
- Improve communications
- Inconsistencies among schools; sometimes rogue principals — more than just flexibility can lead to inequity and confusion; too much autonomy in some areas; these differences have been highlighted in COVID in that some schools are handling things very differently /
- Need MANDT relational training for all teachers to teach de-escalation
- Need to utilize research
- Over emphasis on college entrance, academic competition: Advanced Academic diploma is restricting students rather than promoting excellence
- Professional Development: teaching assistants could use greater access to the PD that teachers receive
- Program planning and accountability: initiatives are started and then let go; i.e., three different reading programs in 10 years; One to the World, started and dropped; teachers “buy out” because nothing is sustained: hard to get rid of program that does not work; do not always use data to make decisions about programs and student needs; use of more scripted lessons that take the art out of teaching; many new initiatives—always something new before the most recent addition was fully implemented ///
- Reputation: LCPS. has made worldwide news in a negative light — concern that this will deter good people from wanting to come here; good things that we do are lost along the way
- Resist reinventing the wheel
- Schoology needs improvement or better tweaking
- Special Ed and EL teachers are not named on secondary school schedules in teamed classes; this is dismissive of these teachers; also, Special Ed and EL teachers were not always provided shields (PPE) in pandemic response
- Special Ed: over-identification of males as Special Ed; need better organized planning to respond to students who have learning problems BEFORE they are recommended for IEPs
- Standards are horrendous on PISA and NAEEP
- Student Achievement: need to look at the data with all subgroups and see how things are trending; stay on top of student achievement — and differences among subgroups; match resources to student achievement needs /
- Use data in decision making
- Vocal families who are very loud and complaining, but don't represent the majority of parents; if you listen to some parents you would think that LCPS is not open minded, is not open to addressing equity and racial issues

Characteristics

- Able to manage a changing community
- Bridge builder, unifier: ability to get people back on the same page; respects all levels of workforce from custodian to Assistant Superintendent /
- Communicator: will improve communication — tell Loudoun’s entire story not just the things that go wrong; advocates for Loudoun, communicates the positives while addressing problems; strong communicator both verbal and written
- Compassionate and understanding
- Continue focus on academics
- Excellent communicator
- Experience in managing large systems
- Flexible
- Focuses on student academic achievement
- Inspiring and engaging
- Open to learning from COVID experience to improve differentiation and opportunity
- Reach out to students, staff and community
- Relationship builder with community, in the “it takes a village” spirit: desire to increase engagement with the community
- Strategic planner: Invests in quality programs and researched based initiatives and stays with them long enough to see results
- Understand curriculum
- Visible, engaged : in school buildings, engages with staff ; has a finger on the pulse ; holds some meetings within the community ; gets out of the central office bubble ; visible in the community as a community member ; community involvement a must have /
- Vision: can move LCPS from good to great by focusing on the needs of all students, adapting to change
- Will step away from notion that entrance to a 4-year college is the measure of success

Comments from Interviews and Focus Group Meetings

Listed in alphabetical order

"/" indicates multiple similar responses from different interviews

Parents and Community Members

Strengths

- Academies—very innovative
- Administration in schools is very strong
- Administration is very good
- AP credits are available for students matriculating to college
- Data decisions are used by the schools
- Fertile ground to teach
- Finally have full day kindergarten
- Good reputation—teachers—good academic reputation
- Left FCPS for LCPS—because of the teachers
- Many sites in Loudoun are history laden
- Moved to Ashburn for the schools—because of the affluence—and have a nice house with excellent school
- Parents—Indian parents teach their kids after school
- Science center acts as a resource to ES
- Sheer volume of money showered on the workforce is an asset
- Students and teachers have great technology access
- Students are incredible
- Students—exceptionally talented—a monkey could teach them
- Teachers—"I home schooled for a while—but once I switched to LCPS I couldn't believe the high quality of the teachers
- Teachers—all our children's teachers have been great

Challenges

- Academic standards need to be raised and enhanced to inspire teachers
- Academies—what are they?
- Administration of schools is too decentralized--differences in math departments by high schools
- Advanced curriculum for the elementary is needed
- Arts education—staffing is very low for music teachers—more resources are needed for the arts
- Athletics is also an example of varying degrees of implementation—inconsistency between schools is disturbing
- Better remediation skills for teachers
- Board doesn't focus on academics—too much focus on facility growth
- Bringing kids up to grade level is the focus—but students on grade level languish without being pushed
- Conflict of interest for the search consultant because of grandsons in the school district
- Critical theory—don't switch to this curriculum
- Curriculum—standardized tests are missing and deemphasized
- Data driven decisions—LCPS does not use data
- Diversity is a top priority—not always popular—awareness of equity needs to global but still allow for merit

- No political fads needed
- PhD should not be required—there are other ways to have deep knowledge other than a PhD
- Pivot and forge new paths
- Someone who has come from a midsize district
- Stick by decisions
- Strong personality-ability to handle the other strong personalities
- Transformative
- Very transparent
- Visible
- Vision to reach the potential of LCPS
- Weed out community input—cut through the weeds-ability to defend a position that isn't popular with everyone

Comments from Interviews and Focus Group Meetings

Listed in alphabetical order
“/” indicates multiple similar responses from different interviews

Specific Parent Groups (SPEC, GT, MSAAC, Equity)

Strengths

- Access to tremendous resources
- BOS does support the school budget
- Diversity even in types of jobs and employment
- Facilities are filled with resources
- Great geographic area to raise a family
- High tech industry—government and military have a high presence
- LCPS is a leader in Virginia for many instructional issues
- Loudoun is diverse
- Strong multi faith environment—all work together well
- Very supportive community and parent involvement is very high

Challenges

- 40% of nations Muslim children are bullied by teachers and other students
- Address the social and emotional needs of students
- Admissions at academies is not an equal playing ground for minority students
- African American, Latinx, Jewish, Hindu, Seik, Muslim, LGBTQ all need advocacy
- Anti-Semitism is the top hate crime—violent crimes—and bigotry is at its peak—hate crimes against Asians
- Asians are wrongly considered the “Model minority”—Asians endure—don’t cause trouble--not a good stereotype—parents need more outreach to learn how to communicate with the school system—students are too compliant sometimes
- Attract a diverse workforce
- Dyslexia students are not identified until 4th grade
- ELL language—pay attention to east Asian students
- ELL students are being judged in English for literacy rather than in their native language
- Equal playing field for admissions to Academies
- Equitable education and equitable achievement for all
- Gifted students needs are not always met
- Large division—need skills for large management issues
- Latinx and African American students are disciplined 2 to 1 compared to Caucasian students
- LCPS will become a majority minority school system very soon
- No one solution will fit all the communities for Loudoun
- Only one student with disability at Academy
- Personalize learning and 21st century skills need to continue and be enhanced
- Personalized learning for every student and empowerment for students to advocate themselves—this needs to be an emphasis
- Policies need to be accessible to all parents regardless of language barriers
- Reading and literacy—Tier 3 intervention level only—we need to expand it
- Students need more non-college opportunities

Comments from Interviews and Focus Group Meetings

Listed in alphabetical order
“/” indicates multiple similar responses from different interviews

Students

Strengths

- Clubs – may offerings provide for everyone’s interests
- Good curriculum materials and resources for each grade
- Resources – Technology, Chromebooks, and many higher-level courses offered for students

Challenges

- Need for more fun activities that make students want to learn
- Need for more time for learning before tests, rather than rushing before students are ready
- Overuse of textbooks rather than more personalized learning
- Schools that do not have project-based learning, but only assign worksheets, homework and tests
- Students who are not doing well need more time and teachers need more time to assist those students
- Substitutes - some not well trained and do not handle themselves well with students

Characteristics

- Charismatic and social
- Can take on big responsibility
- Experienced
- Flexible
- Strong - not influenced easily, not a follower
- Thinks outside the box
- Thinks about how what they do affects other people

- Demonstrate a deep understanding of educational research and emerging best practices and implement strategies. (VV)
- Understand and be sensitive to the needs of a diverse student population (TL)
- Provide a clear, compelling vision for the future (VV)

Loudoun County Public Schools Superintendent of Schools Desired Characteristics

After seeking input from its Board members, parents, staff, students, and community via focus groups, interviews, and an online survey, the School Board of Loudoun of Loudoun County Public Schools (LCPS) seeks a strong educational leader who possesses the following characteristics:

- Committed to embracing diversity and promoting equity in all aspects of LCPS
- Decisive, clear, and strong enough to confront difficult issues and deal with dissent
- Demonstrates transparency, fairness, ethics and honesty
- Fosters open communication and trust
- Instructional leadership with extensive school experience
- Likable, personable, approachable and visible in schools
- Politically savvy with all aspects of a large school division
- Possesses the ability to work collaboratively and build relationships and trust with all constituencies in Loudoun; community, schools, central office, Board of Education and Board of Supervisors
- Strategic planner and implementer
- Student-centered
- Team builder—can assemble and delegates responsibilities to a highly skilled cabinet
- Visionary

With regard to leadership experiences and accomplishments, the successful candidate will:

- Is or able to be certified as a Virginia superintendent
- Demonstrates a solid track record of increasing responsibilities and success
- Has experience in a medium to large school division and/or has experience as a superintendent
- Doctorate preferred