

Update: Loudoun Public Schools

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Loudoun County Public Schools' Statement in Response to the Virginia Department of Education's Report on Restraint and Seclusion Policies, Procedures, and Practices within LCPS

The Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) has provided its independent review of Loudoun County Public Schools' (LCPS) policies, procedures, and practices relating to restraint and seclusion. VDOE conducted its review in response to a February 2018 request by LCPS. A similar request was subsequently made by several state legislators.

Superintendent Eric Williams stated, in response to the State's findings, "We appreciate VDOE's review and are generally pleased with the findings, but I want to emphasize that we have work to do to improve our policies, procedures, and practices in the area of special education, generally, and restraint and seclusion specifically."

The VDOE report states, "nothing in our review suggested that the incidents reported by parents were more than isolated" and that VDOE "saw no evidence of systematic failure to comply with the LCPS Guidelines."

Assistant Superintendent of Pupil Services Asia Jones, who assumed her new role on August 1, observed, "In my first year, I'm focusing extensively on special education, and that includes improving practices and enhancing trust with parents. It is my intention to engage and proactively communicate with parents and stakeholders. I look forward to the continued work within the department to empower all students to make meaningful contributions in their community and world."

LCPS appreciates both the commendations and recommendations for improvement cited in the report. The State's commendations included references relating to robust training provided to staff in the area of restraint and seclusion, strong schoolbased crisis teams and procedures, medical resources, and the quick, appropriate response by LCPS to the specific incident that prompted media reports in the spring of 2018.

The State's recommendations included potential procedural changes to LCPS policies and procedures, a review of classroom organization for self-contained special education students with intensive behavioral support needs, continuing efforts to improve behavior intervention plans, and several other topics. The State also reported that Virginia has proposed regulations for the use of restraint and seclusion undergoing executive review. Moreover, the State review found the LCPS guidelines related to restraint and seclusion to be "substantially consistent with the Virginia Guidance and the 15 Principles." (The "15 Principles" is the U.S. Department of Education's guidance document).

LCPS continues to work closely with the Special Education Advisory Council (SEAC), a School Board-appointed parent group that focuses on two-way communication between LCPS staff and parents. In early March, Williams wrote a letter, [click here to view](#), to the members of SEAC in which he stated, "LCPS acknowledges that there have been instances in which the guidelines have not been followed and LCPS apologizes for each of these instances."

LCPS shared last March that the Office of Special Education "is taking additional steps to promote and monitor adherence throughout the division to the best practices and requirements set forth by the (LCPS) guidelines." Since that time, increased attention has been focused on the provision of additional training regarding the guidelines; increased central office announced and unannounced site visits to assess practices; enhanced focus on communication with parents; and the solicitation of input from teachers, parents, and stakeholders regarding how to better support our students and teachers.

LCPS only authorizes the use of restraint and seclusion practices in emergency situations and within very specific guidelines. The Statement of Philosophy within the guidelines notes,

When managing student behavior, physical restraint and seclusion are safety procedures used as a last resort when appropriate alternatives have failed and the student is an immediate danger to him/herself and/or others. All children have the inherent right to be treated with dignity and respect, and school personnel bear the responsibility of ensuring that our educational programs, policies, and procedures safeguard this right and maintain a safe and supportive learning environment that promotes a climate for success. This right extends to all children, including those who require more specialized behavioral and educational supports.

In April 2018, the School Board created an Ad Hoc Committee on Special Education Services. The committee is reviewing appropriate policies, procedures and practices, associated with or in support of special education and will make recommendations for updates/modifications to the School Board. In accordance with the School Board request, staff members will consider all of the recommendations regarding practices and procedures, and update the Student Support and Services Committee – as well as the full School Board – regarding its plans pertaining to implementation of the recommendations to practices and procedures.

The Executive Summary of the report by the Virginia Department of Education is available [here](#) and the full report is available [here](#).

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