

# BLUE RIDGE SUMMER UPDATES

Chairman Ian Serotkin, Loudoun County School Board

---

*Please note that the views contained herein reflect the views of the individual School Board member who is the publisher of this newsletter and may not reflect the views of the Loudoun County School Board and/or Loudoun County Public Schools.*

---

Another school year has finally come to a close, wrapping up with a flurry of graduations and celebrations across the district. It was my pleasure to attend the Blue Ridge graduation ceremonies and see the excitement and pride of families, friends, and students as this chapter of their lives wraps up and a new one begins. Whether our students go on to military service, community college, a four-year college or university, or are taking some time to work or figure things out, I hope that their experience at LCPS has prepared them well for the next steps in their journey and that they will always call Loudoun County home. The School Board and School Board staff begin a one-month recess on July 1st, and we look forward to the start of the 2023-24 school year with our first Tuesday School Board meeting on August 8th. Until then, thank you for a fantastic and memorable year, and I hope you and your families have a happy, healthy, and relaxing summer.

---



**Congrats to Loudoun Valley...**



**Woodgrove, and the entire Class of 2023!**

---

## **LCPS Welcomes New Superintendent Dr. Aaron Spence**

On June 2nd, the Loudoun County School Board voted to appoint Dr. Aaron Spence as the next superintendent of Loudoun County Public Schools.

Since 2014, Dr. Spence has served as superintendent of the City of Virginia Beach Public Schools, a school district of more than 65,000 students and 10,000 employees. Prior to that position, he was superintendent of Moore County Schools in North Carolina for two years. A nationally recognized leader, Dr. Spence was named 2018 Virginia Superintendent of the Year by the Virginia Association of School Superintendents. In selecting him for the award, VASS praised Dr. Spence as a "textbook example of leadership needed to make large-scale changes in an organization that produce significant change and positive results." He was also named EmpowerED Digital Superintendent of the Year by the American Association of School Administrators and the Consortium for School Networking at the 2020 National Education Conference and serves as a mentor and teacher to new superintendents across the country.

"I am excited to meet with students, parents, staff and community members as I learn more about their hopes and aspirations for the school division," Spence said. "I am honored to serve as your superintendent and look forward to building on the already strong foundation of academic excellence in Loudoun County Public Schools. It will be my goal from day one to ensure that we are leading together to build trust, create even greater transparency for our community around the outstanding work of our school division, recruit and retain a team of world-class educators, and leverage the power of relationships with families and stakeholders to strengthen us."

Dr. Spence is expected to move with his family to Loudoun County and will begin his employment with LCPS on September 1st. Dr. Daniel Smith will continue to serve as interim superintendent until that time. Dr. Smith said, "I look forward to welcoming Dr. Spence to the LCPS family and supporting a smooth transition."

To learn more about Dr. Spence, visit [Meet the Superintendent](#)

---

## **New Elementary School Named for Henrietta Lacks**

At the Tuesday, June 13, School Board meeting, the School Board approved my motion to name the new elementary school—colocated on the same campus with Hovatter ES and Lightridge HS—Henrietta Lacks Elementary School.

Henrietta Lacks was born in 1920 in Roanoke and lived most of her life in Virginia. She died at the age of 31 of cervical cancer. Before her death, while being treated for cancer at Johns Hopkins, tissue samples from her body were collected by the cell biology research team there – without her permission or her family’s knowledge – for research and preservation purposes. The researchers discovered that the cells which had been taken from Ms. Lacks could be kept alive indefinitely, rather than surviving for only a few days. It was the first, and for many years, only cell line able to reproduce in a lab, becoming known as the HeLa immortal cell line. It was - and still is - widely used in laboratory research on viruses, cancers, infectious diseases, radiation, and human genetics. It was used by Jonas Salk to test the first polio vaccine in the 1950s.

As of 2009, more than 60,000 scientific articles had been published about research done on the HeLa cell line. It has been so widely used that if you could pile all HeLa cells ever grown onto a scale, it would weigh more than 50 million metric tons – as much as a hundred Empire State Buildings. Ms. Lacks was never aware that her cells were taken, and her family remained completely unaware that her cells had been used in this way until the 1970s. The lack of informed consent in this case influenced the creation of the Common Rule, a rule of ethics implemented in 1991 by the U.S. government that sets strict standards for researchers obtaining and documenting the informed consent of their patients. Nearly all U.S. academic institutions now hold their researchers to the Common Rule standards.

It is a truly unbelievable story. I was floored by it when I read a book called *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*, which documents the story of Ms. Lacks, her immortal cell line, and her family’s search for answers – a story that was nearly lost to history, as the identity of the woman behind the HeLa cell line was kept secret by the researchers for over two decades. It is entirely possible that some of the students who will learn at this new school would not be there without the research and scientific advances that Henrietta Lacks made possible. I hope it inspires the students there to learn more about science the way it inspired me when I read her story. I want to thank the naming committee for making Henrietta Lacks Elementary School one of their name recommendations for the new school, to honor her meaningful contributions to science and her enduring legacy to the world.

---

## **UPDATED MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING APPROVED BETWEEN LCPS, LPD, AND LCSO**

At the June 13th School Board meeting, the Board unanimously approved an updated Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Loudoun County Sheriff’s Office (LCSO) and the Leesburg Police Department (LPD), intending to promote a positive relationship between students, staff and law enforcement in order to maintain safe, supportive and secure school environments. The MOU is meant to establish a mutually beneficial framework that facilitates effective, timely communication and coordination of efforts for LCPS and its law enforcement partners.

The LCSO and LPD currently provide School Resource Officers for every high school and middle school in the division. These officers also support LCPS elementary schools across the county.

The School Board maintains a MOU with local law enforcement, with the most recent version signed in 2021. Virginia law requires that a MOU be reviewed annually and updated at least once every two years. "Collaboration with our school partners has improved, and the new MOU demonstrates the critical importance of working together for a common purpose," said Loudoun County Sheriff Mike Chapman. "LCSO will continue to enhance the resources we dedicate to school safety and SROs, who are among our most experienced and well-trained deputies," he added.

Research has shown there are significant advantages to a strong partnership between schools and law enforcement. Things such as acting as a deterrent for student misbehavior and delinquent activity, availability for responding to emergencies, and acting as role models make students, staff, and parents feel safer. "The Leesburg Police Department remains committed to the School Resource Officer program," stated Leesburg Interim Chief of Police Vanessa Grigsby. "The safety and security of all students and faculty is of the utmost importance and we look forward to continuing to work with school administrators and our law enforcement partners in problem-solving and promoting a safe and secure learning environment."

Possibly the most significant impact of this revision process isn't the final document, but rather the mending and restoration of positive working relationships that foster open communication and trust, to meet a common goal of ensuring a safe and secure learning and working environment. Staff from all three organizations have applauded the efforts to make impactful changes, including:

- Documentation and clarification on expectations between LCPS and law enforcement
- Recognition of LCPS' requirements under Title IX to address claims of sexual harassment and discrimination
- Clarification of training in crisis intervention and trauma-informed techniques for SROs

The MOU will go into effect once it is signed by all parties. To learn more, visit the [LCPS website](#).

---

## Four LCPS Schools Receive VDOE Recognition

The Virginia Department of Education awarded four LCPS schools with Exemplar Performance Awards. This awards program recognizes schools for exceeding state accreditation standards, narrowing achievement gaps and making progress toward educational opportunities for all students. **Briar Woods High School, Emerick Elementary** and **Waterford Elementary** received the 2023 Highest Achievement Exemplar Award; 48 schools in Virginia received this recognition. **Loudoun County High School** received the 2023 Continuous Improvement Exemplar Award; 93 schools in Virginia received this recognition.

Congratulations to the hardworking teachers, students, and staff at these schools for their commitment to excellence and for receiving this prestigious distinction!



---

## SUMMER DATES TO REMEMBER

**Tuesday, August 8, 4:00:** Second Tuesday School Board Meeting, LCPS Administration Building

**Thursday, August 24:** First Day of School for Students

---

*Parents/guardians who do not wish to receive future issues of School Board member newsletters should follow the instructions found in the [Blackboard Mass Notifications FAQs](#) to opt-out of receiving email messages.*

---

### Stay in Touch

Email: [ian.serotkin@lcps.org](mailto:ian.serotkin@lcps.org)

Phone: 571-252-2411

Facebook: [Chairman Ian Serotkin, Loudoun County School Board](#)



**Ian Serotkin**