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Loudoun County Board of Supervisors, Loudoun County Public Schools & Board of Supervisors FY 2025 Budget Meeting, Thursday, February 22, 2024

Date Thursday, February 22, 2024
Place Board Room, First Floor, Government Center, 1 Harrison Street SE, Leesburg, Virginia
Length 1h 38m (video)

- Official meeting video (county, Granicus): <https://loudoun.granicus.com/player/clip/7601>
- Agenda (Granicus): https://loudoun.granicus.com/AgendaViewer.php?view_id=73&clip_id=7601

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Speech-to-text: whisper.cpp, model large-v3-turbo. Produced 2026-10-19. Each paragraph starts with its time [HH:MM:SS] in the meeting video.

[00:05:13] Let's roll. Well, good evening, supervisors. Good evening, school board members. Good evening, both staffs, and good evening, Loudoun. I'd like to call to order the February 22nd, 2024 school board budget presentation to the Loudoun County Board of Supervisors.

[00:05:34] This room has a hearing loop. If you need hearing assistance, please switch your hearing aid to the telecom mode. If you need a headset, we have those available as well. Please see the clerk to request one. If you know me at all, you know that I am not in a room with a flag, and without saying the Pledge of Allegiance, so I know the flag is behind us, but would everyone please join me in the Pledge of Allegiance? I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America and to the republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

[00:06:14] Okay, pursuant to Code Section 2.2-3708.3 and the Board's Rules of Order, Vice Chair Julie Bricksman has requested to participate in this meeting by electronic communication. A physical quorum of the board is present in the board room and the board has made arrangements for the voice of Vice Chair Bricksman to be heard by all persons in the board room. Vice Chair Bricksman has made this request within the required time frame and the account attorney determined that Vice Chair Bricksman's

request meets the qualifications to participate remotely. The board will record in his sentence that Vice Chair Bricksman participated remotely from a private location in her residence due to

[00:06:51] illness. Vice Chair Briggsman, can you hear me? I can hear you, Madam Chair. Thank you. Welcome to the room virtually. Thank you. I'm going to turn the gavel over or turn the microphone over to Chair Mansfield to lead the members of the school board in their budget carry disclosure statements and then I'll come back make comments and then we'll go back to Ms. Chair Mansfield. She will have a slide before we do the presentation from Dr. Spence. Ma'am. Thank you, Chair Randall.

[00:07:23] I will start with the disclosures. As a member of the Loudoun County School Board, I make the following disclosure to the school board and to the general public in connection with the item on tonight's agenda regarding the budget and or health insurance and related benefits and any other discussion that may include or affect benefits for LCPS employees.

[00:07:43] Specifically, as a school board member, I am eligible to receive health insurance and related benefits as an LCPS employee. These benefits, however, affect thousands of employees well in excess of the statutory three employees whose interests may also be affected, of which I am included.

[00:08:01] I can and will participate fairly, objectively, and in the public interest. This disclosure will be reflected in the public records of the clerk of the school board for five years. Ms. LaBelle.

[00:08:31] As a member of the Loudoun County School Board, I make the following disclosure to the school board and to the general public in connection with the item on tonight's agenda regarding the budget and or health insurance and related benefits and any other discussion that may include or affect benefits for LCPS employees. Specifically, as a school board member, I am eligible to receive health insurance and related benefits as an LCPS employee. These benefits, however, affect thousands of employees well in excess of the statutory three employees whose interests may also be affected, of which I am included.

[00:08:56] I can and will participate fairly, objectively, and in the public interest. This disclosure will be reflected in the public records of the clerk of the school board for five years. Thank you, Ms. LaBelle. Ms. Chandler. Thank you, Madam Chair.

[00:09:14] As a member of the Loudoun County School Board, I make the following disclosure to the school board and to the general public in connection with the item on tonight's agenda regarding the budget and or health insurance and related benefits and any other discussion that may include or affect benefits for LCPS employees.

[00:09:31] Specifically, as a school board member, I am eligible to receive health insurance and related benefits as an LCPS employee. these benefits however affect thousands of employees well in excess of the statutory three employees whose interests may also be affected of which i am included i can and will participate fairly objectively and in the public interest this disclosure will be reflected in the public record of the clerk of the school board for five years thank you ms chandler chair randall there's one person who's not here right now ms shurnoff and she'll my understanding is that she'll have to, before she participates in the meeting, read

[00:10:11] her disclosure. Okay, sounds good. Thank you very much. Yeah, Ms. Donahue will not have to do that? I don't think Ms. Donahue is going to be attending this meeting. Okay, and Chair Mansford, before

I take the gavel back, is there anything else you'd like to say? No, I'm happy to be in here. Thank you very much.

[00:10:29] Well, thank you. So, a couple things. First, I do want to welcome all the school board members to the boardroom, to the supervisors' boardroom. We alternate this meeting every year, and so next year would be at your house. But I do welcome everyone here, and I believe, I'm fairly sure everyone knows everyone else. But what I will do before we start is, for the purpose of the public, I'm going to have everyone just roll on the table really quick, say who you are and what district you represent, and if you're on the school board or the board of supervisors.

[00:11:01] We're going to start with Ms. Glass, who, can you talk yet? Okay. Oh, stop it. That is Sylvia Glass, chairman of the Broad Run District. She says she's not sick. She just has no voice, but we're keeping her over there isolated all by herself anyway, because we're not quite sure what cooties she might or might not have.

[00:11:23] So that's Ms. Glass. Ms. Dean. I am Dr. Linda Deans from the Broad Run District, Loudoun County School Board. Hi, I'm April Chandler. I'm the school board member from Algonquian District.

[00:11:40] Good evening, Laura Tocroni. I'm the Board of Supervisors, Little River District. Hello, I'm Dr. Samara Rasheed. I represent Little River District, and I'm on the school board. Thank you. Mike Turner, Supervisor, Ashburn District.

[00:11:56] My name is Arbana Shrafi, representing the Sterling District on the school board. Thank you. Of course, I'm Phyllis Randall. I am the Chair at Large of the Loudoun County Board of Supervisors. I'm Melinda Mansfield. I'm the chair of Loudoun County School Board for Dulles District.

[00:12:13] Supervisor Matt Letourneau, Dulles District. Carrie LaBelle, Catoctin District School Board Rep. Supervisor Caleb Kirschner for the Catoctin District. Supervisor Kristen Umstadt, Leesburg District. And coming in the room is school board member Lauren Chernoff.

[00:12:34] Making an interest right on time, but we're going to keep going though, Ms. Chernoff. Would you please? Yes. Sharon Willoughby, Chief Financial Officer, Loudoun County Public Schools. Thank you. Erin Spence, Superintendent of Schools, Loudoun County Public Schools.

[00:12:51] Tim Amstreet, the County Administrator. Thank you. Ms. Chernoff, welcome. Chair Mansfield tells me that you might have a disclosure to make real quick before we do anything else. Okay. Here you go. I said I was coming in hot. You are. I delivered. As a member of the Loudoun County School Board, I make the following disclosure to the school board and to the general public in connection with the item on tonight's agenda regarding the budget and or health insurance and related benefits and any other discussion that may include or affect benefits for LCPS employees.

[00:13:23] Specifically, as a school board member, I am eligible to receive health insurance and related benefits as an LCPS employee. These benefits, however, affect thousands of employees well in the excess of the statutory three employees whose interests may also be affected, of which I am included i can and will participate fairly objectively and in the public interest this disclosure will be reflected in the public records of the clerk of the school board for five years thank you um well so again school board members and school board staff lcps staff welcome to the boardroom a couple things um i have a 6 30 hard stop if we are not complete by done by 6 30 i'm

[00:14:00] going to hand the seat to um mr turner supervisor from the aspirin district to take over um normally that would be Ms. Frickson, but of course she's participating remotely. Mr. Karan Sains also could not be here this evening because of a family scheduling conflict, but he did give me some questions to ask. Before we start the process, there's a couple of things I just want to say and remind people. First, we are all here for the same reasons. We're here to make decisions that we think are correct for the school system and the county. We may differ on our conclusions, and that's okay.

[00:14:35] But let us remember, disagreement does not mean necessarily that somebody else is incorrect. It just means you have a different opinion than them, and that's just fine to reach different conclusions. And I know already that we're going to be very respectful to one another as we have these discussions this evening.

[00:14:52] Number two, let me say that I spoke to our legislative liaison, John Freeman, a couple days ago because I wanted to try to give an update on what we have discussed before, and that was the JLARC study in front of the General Assembly. From what I understand, the JLARC omnibus bill passed through the Senate Finance Committee and through the Senate Finance and Appropriations Committee and the full Senate.

[00:15:15] It is now on the House side and will go to House Appropriations. So we, at this point, still do not know what amount of revenue will be coming from the state until the JLARC study is done. Just to give you guys a reminder, the J-LARC study that was requested by the General Assembly, what, two years ago?

[00:15:37] The J-LARC is a joint review committee that is completely nonpartisan. It's kind of like a think tank. It came back and said that Virginia underfunds our public school system by about \$1,900 per student. That's a whole lot of money. And so there was an omnibus bill put forward by Senator Luis Lucas, and we will see where that goes.

[00:15:58] it hasn't made its way out yet, but hopefully we'll know something before we get to the end of this budget cycle. School board members, I'm also going to assume that you won't have questions for Dr. Spence since you have heard and been part of the presentation that he's about to give the board of supervisors. So when the presentation from Dr. Spence is complete, we're going to, I'm going to first go to questions from supervisors. Supervisors, I am putting you on a clock for three minutes. If you are just, you know, have to have a second round, we can do that too. And then we can have kind of a more casual, although I only

[00:16:36] get so casual, but a little bit more casual back and forth of discussions between the school board members, the board supervisors, and Dr. Spence and Mr. Hemstreet. But I am going to first go to the BOS because this is the presentation from the school board to the board of supervisors. And so that would be the way that I do that. I'm going to turn it back over to Chair Mansfield, who I believe will have the first slide in the discussion in the presentation, and then from the next voice you hear after Ms. Mansfield will be Dr. Spence.

[00:17:11] Ms. Mansfield. Thank you, Chair Randall. Good evening, Board of Supervisors. On behalf of the Loudoun County Public Schools, I'm delighted to share with you LCPS's FY25 budget and associated county funding request.

[00:17:27] As stewards of education, we recognize the invaluable role that adequate funding plays in fostering an enriching learning environment for our students and empowering our dedicated educators to

excel. We appreciate this opportunity to share our vision and how the county's continued financial support directly impacts a student's educational journey to reach their full potential.

[00:17:53] Thank you for your time and consideration this evening. I will now turn it over to Dr. Spence to highlight the FY25 budget needs, projected revenues to support the request, and next steps. Dr. Spence. Thank you, Chair Mansfield, and thank you also, Chair Randall and members of the Board of Supervisors.

[00:18:12] It's our pleasure to be here this evening and present a first, my first budget to the Board of Supervisors and this school board's first budget to the Board of Supervisors. As you know, Virginia Code 22192 states that it shall be the duty of every division superintendent to prepare with the approval of our school board and submit to the governing body or bodies appropriating funds for the school division the estimate of the amount of money deemed to be needed during the next fiscal year for the support of public schools of the school division.

[00:18:39] So developing the fiscal year 25 budget is a multi-step process, which encompasses several months. We begin with a comprehensive analysis conducted by each of the departments around their base budget based on historical trends and pricing to identify any needed changes.

[00:18:55] Departments submit prioritized budget requests based on identified needs and feedbacks from their areas and schools. New department requests, stakeholder priorities, and school board priorities are then considered for inclusion in the superintendent's estimate of needs based on revenue projections for the upcoming year then a month-long series of school board work sessions occur where the board and its governance role may make amendments to that budget when that analysis is complete there are two ways to develop and adopt the budget the first is to prepare a true estimate of needs irrespective of funding constraints the second way is to develop a budget that tries to balance the resources and supports needed to move forward with our 11cps

[00:19:34] strategic plan objectives with what is anticipated to be available from funding from the federal, state, and local level. So the budget that I'm presenting to you this evening is based on the second method. I want to begin by noting that the reason I believe we're on such firm financial ground today in LCPS and why we're able to continue pushing forward towards our strategic goals is thanks in part to our award-winning budget and finance staff, but also to our school board as well as to you, our board of supervisors. It is not lost on me coming into Loudoun County.

[00:20:06] how lucky we are here to have a school board and board of supervisors with both the commitment and the ability to fund public education at a high level i think it's important to recognize that the board of supervisors is charged each year with closing the gap in education funding at the local level and each year you answer that call that said i want to also say that you should not have to do this alone as you know our state has a constitutional requirement to fund public education in the the Commonwealth. According to the recent JLARC study that was just mentioned, Virginia school divisions receive less K-12 funding per student than the 50-state average, the regional average,

[00:20:43] and three of Virginia's five bordering states. School divisions in other states receive 14% more per student than school divisions in Virginia on average after normalizing for differences in cost of labor among the states. This equates to roughly \$1,900 more per student than Virginia, which equals about a \$160 million loss for Loudoun County Public Schools each year.

[00:21:07] Virginia was also named as one of nine states that are poorly funded and equitable and with low funding effort in a 2023 report by the Education Law Center. I say all of that just to say that it's incumbent upon us as a community to continue to advocate at the state level for the education funding needed as outlined in the state constitution, and I look forward to working with you and with our local delegation as they continue to consider bills this session intended to make the commonwealth more competitive in this regard all of that said and despite these budget challenges we will continue to push forward to ensure we're meeting our goals of having

[00:21:39] empowered students an exemplary staff an enriched division and an engaged community those goals as outlined in our one lcps strategic plan drive three pivotal priorities which were used in developing the fiscal year 25 budget those priorities are keeping students at the center maintaining an intense focus on staff recruitment and retention, and considering allocations for new and ongoing initiatives. The fiscal year budget includes an increase of \$156.4 million. This increase is supported by an increase of \$25.4 million in state revenues and a county request

[00:22:19] of \$131 million, which is \$10 million over the county funding guidance. Expenditures are categorized into personnel operating in capital expenditures with \$146 million of additional recruitment and retention initiatives encompassing the majority of the fiscal year 25 budget increase.

[00:22:38] Operating accounts show a modest decrease associated with actual reductions and a realignment of some budget items from being classified as operating to capital outlay to meet new accounting requirements, which is why you'll see the increase in capital outlay. So a common question about why our budget is not flat to match flat budgeted enrollment growth that we've seen recently in LCPS and has projected again for next year.

[00:23:04] And I'd like to just provide additional information and context around this. So school divisions, to include LCPS for fiscal year 25, are experiencing slow enrollment growth in some cases, no enrollment growth or even a loss of enrollment. But even in that scenario, expenses will still increase.

[00:23:21] This slide provides just a few examples that we're experiencing in the fiscal year 25 budget. LCPS historically provides an annual step increase. That alone is included at a cost of \$25.7 million. This item alone would increase the budget 1.5%, but there are other costs.

[00:23:41] Health premiums, for example, are in the fiscal year 25 budget with an 8% increase to cover increasing claim costs. Next year, LCPS will open two new schools that require additional staffing and operational expenses. It's worth noting that with the opening of those two new schools, Loudoun County will open its 100th school.

[00:24:00] There are also several school board approved initiatives that have continuing additional costs or expansion in fiscal year 25, and we'll talk a little bit more about those in the upcoming slides. And then finally, LCPS also continues to experience growth, not in our enrollment, but in our English learner, our special education, and our economically disadvantaged student groups, all of which require additional resources to support.

[00:24:24] So these are just a few items specific to the fiscal year 25 budget that hopefully outlines the complexity of budgeting, the importance of decoupling enrollment growth with budget growth, and why the fiscal year 25 budget does not reflect a 0% increase, but rather the 9.4% increase that we have presented to you.

[00:24:42] So we'll talk more about some of these changes as we examine expenditures. The fiscal year budgeted expenses are categorized based on the priorities I previously shared as aligned with the strategic plan, starting with students at the center. This category includes ongoing costs associated with changes to our student population and opening of two new schools.

[00:25:03] Of the total budget increase, \$24.8 million is attributed to this category, which represents 16% of the increase. LCPS's enrollment projections for fiscal year 25 is \$83,038.

[00:25:19] This is 23 students less than this year's budgeted projection. Compared to the actual student count for this year, the projection of \$83,038 shows a 1.1% growth. Despite the flat budget enrollment, as noted earlier, we will open two new schools that will require additional resources, while some teachers will follow the students from other schools that will see a reduction enrollment that is all dependent on the distribution of students moving into those schools.

[00:25:48] Based on our projected enrollments for the next year, there will be a net increase of 60 positions related to the opening of these two new schools. In addition, as noted, our student body continues to change, with students who require additional resources continuing to outpace division growth.

[00:26:05] Our English learner population is projected to increase by 6.4%, our special education population by 4.1%, and our economically disadvantaged students by 1.8%. The table on this slide outlines the additional resources included in the fiscal year 25 budget to directly support these students.

[00:26:25] Specifically, 117.3 additional teachers and teacher assistants are included and represent almost 40% of the total new positions. The fiscal year budget keeps additional staffing resources focused on students.

[00:26:42] Of the total increase of FTEs in the fiscal year 25 budget, 91.2 are school-based. So to summarize that, 60 positions are added to staff the new elementary and middle school in the fall. Over 100 positions are added to directly support our students that require additional resources. And 82.8 positions are added that will be school-based to support new initiatives, such as the establishment of a new alternative school program, moving the STEP program to full day, providing additional student support specialists, and providing flexible staffing for our schools.

[00:27:16] 25 positions are added to provide needed non-based school support, and these include support for investigations in our Title IX office, digital security and technology support positions, and positions in our DEIA office focused on supporting the division as it implements new state evaluation standards for educators around cultural competency.

[00:27:38] Regionally, we have comparative data for school-based versus non-school-based positions based on the Washington Area Board of Education's Guide, also known as the WAVY Guide. For the current year, Loudoun is the second highest in school-based positions when compared to four of our neighbors. For fiscal year 25, we're projected to increase our school-based staff to 92.1%, largely due to the additions mentioned earlier.

[00:27:59] As a reminder, non-school-based employees include positions such as enterprise support specialists in DDI, human resource and talent development recruiters, maintenance personnel, accountants, and payroll specialists, among many others. Moving to our next category of staff of recruitment and retention, staff compensation represents 76% of the total fiscal year 25 budget increase.

[00:28:25] With personnel costs comprising 90% of the total school operating budget, I'm sure you're aware it does not take much to impact the budget. As we mentioned earlier, a step increase alone is just under \$26 million. The fiscal year budget not only includes step increases in top-of-scale payments, but also a 4% cost-of-living adjustment for the universal and auxiliary scales and an average 4% strategic teacher scale adjustment.

[00:28:52] Combined, this equates to an average 6.5% pay increase for LCPS full-time employees. Also included is the Governor's proposed initiative for a one-time 1% bonus payment to all full-time eligible employees. This budget continues to fund the ongoing classification reviews performed by our Human Resources and Talent Development Department and includes an 8% health premium increase.

[00:29:16] The last category in our expenditures is for new or ongoing and expanded initiatives. When developing the fiscal year 25 budget, departments first focused on finding reallocations and saving opportunities to fund these initiatives. The departments in the budget team were diligent in reviewing accounts across the division and performing an analysis on historical spending patterns, projected inflationary impacts, and the need to identify those savings opportunities.

[00:29:41] And as a result, over \$4 million was identified to reallocate towards fiscal year 25 budget priorities. With that, the net increase of the budget for these new and expanded initiatives stands at \$13.4 million. As an example, some of the ongoing or expanded school board supported initiatives include the next phase of the dual language immersion program.

[00:30:02] and expansion of middle school intramural sports to all middle schools. The fiscal year budget, 25 budget, also includes resources to launch the Health and Medical Sciences Academy and to continue making our substitute teacher rates more competitive. Additional highlights amongst new initiatives include the introduction of a new alternative program at the North Star School.

[00:30:24] For the 2024-25 school year, LCPS has prioritized two of seven identified needs across our student population to focus our alternative educational programming and these would be to support students requiring disciplinary placements and those requiring targeted assistance with managing their academic and mental health needs while accessing the educational setting. This is a shared new initiative between the Department of Student Services and the Department of School Leadership and staff across departments have collaborated in the review of data for those we serve in LCPS with a focus on students that have required an alternative placement due to disciplinary

[00:31:00] infractions and those requiring intensive supports for mental health needs from a review of our data from our unified mental health team staff across our division. Currently, it's worth noting that LCPS is one of nine divisions out of the 19 divisions in Region 4 that does not offer alternative or non-traditional programming. In addition to that understanding and in addition to the review of LCPS data, we have assessed for focus of our neighboring divisions and how they are serving students with similar needs. Common themes across the region include focuses on secondary students, behavior, discipline, mental health, smaller classes, attendance issues, and

[00:31:38] project-based learning. In addition to an alternative program, we're also seeking to expand our STEP program. The Starting Towards Excellence in Preschool program is a state-funded high-quality preschool program for at-risk four-year-olds funded through the Virginia Preschool Initiative, or VPI. Loudoun County is presently only one of three localities in the state to offer only a half-day program. Allowing our neediest students to attend full day will result in significant increases in school readiness

and will support families in our community. In addition to supporting students and families, moving to a full-day model will correct current program length deficiencies that were noted during a state review in 2019.

[00:32:19] The fiscal year budget also includes funding for additional cybersecurity tools, which will help improve LCPS's security posture and our ability to respond to threats. The Board of Supervisors may know that school divisions are one of the largest targets for cybersecurity attacks in the We'll provide IT security operations 24-7, 365 coverage, which will ensure coverage at our most vulnerable times.

[00:32:46] In direct response to principals requesting more staffing flexibility, additional resources are available for schools to tap into to address their student needs as we continue to assess and to address the impact of interrupted learning during the COVID pandemic. The fiscal year 25 budget also includes a new recruitment signing bonus to help fill our needed teacher positions.

[00:33:06] This program is for newly hired eligible teachers with additional incentives for those taking on special education positions and positions in our Title I schools. Finally, a new school extracurricular allotment is included to provide additional funding support for student clubs and extracurricular activities.

[00:33:24] This new allotment supports the Board of Supervisors and prior school boards priority of reducing and or eliminating student fees. So now that I've shared a bit about what LCPS needs are, let's talk about the funding that's needed to support this budget. LCPS funding comes from three main categories, federal and other revenue streams, state funding, and the local county transfer.

[00:33:46] The fiscal year 25 budget projects no change in LCPS's federal or other revenue streams and the school operating fund. The second category is state funding, and the fiscal year 25 budget includes a net increase of \$25.4 million based on the governor's proposed budget.

[00:34:06] The General Assembly may make changes to the budget that could impact LCPS's funding and expenditures, but at this time, the budget that's been approved and presented to you this evening is based solely on the governor's proposed budget. We'll talk a little bit more about the state budget in just a moment. With all of that said, the governor's proposed budget included increased funding to support benchmarking basic aid funding for schools, funding for a one-time 1% bonus, and fully funding the staff room requirements for the Virginia Literacy Act.

[00:34:33] The increases in these areas offset reductions in state revenue from updated sales projections and the elimination of the grocery sales tax hold harmless payments. Understanding the governor's proposed budget, we are pleased to provide you with an update on proposed budget amendments in the General Assembly.

[00:34:50] On Sunday, the Senate Finance and Appropriations Committee and the House Appropriations Committee released their budget amendments. The House amendments would yield a net increase in funding to LCPS of \$10.5 million. This increase is to fund a tiered approach to the EL staffing formula, provide a 3.38% pay increase to move to a four-year plan to exceed the national average teacher salary and reductions from changes to the at-risk funding model.

[00:35:19] LCPS fares better under the Senate Amendments, where LCPS would receive an additional \$33.7 million. The net increase is driven from a variety of initiatives with the following highlights. Funding for a 3% pay increase, increasing the EAL staffing ratio, removing the support cap and holding school

divisions harmless from the grocery sales tax removal. These are offset by the removal of the governor's proposed 1% bonus payment. Estimates are based on distribution sheets provided by the respective committees and final amounts will ultimately be determined using the Department of Education calculation tools. Any additional funding

[00:35:55] from the state would first be prioritized to fill the \$10 million gap that exists between the requested county funding and the county funding guidance. Any additional funding would then be prioritized by the school board with that information shared with the Board of Supervisors. Earlier, I mentioned alternative educational programming in this budget, and I want to note that the LCPS alternative educational programming discussed is a separate initiative from the recovery school model you may have heard about. We are seeking to develop a recovery school for our region, which is not in this budget because budget amendments to support a school

[00:36:31] in our region are in the General Assembly. With the support of the General Assembly, the Loudoun County Recovery High School will be designed to educate and provide services for students who are in recovery from substance use disorders. The Recovery School will empower adolescents recovering from substance use by providing an alternative environment to support their recovery while making progress towards a high school diploma and with the plan of reintegration back into the traditional school setting. We aim there to provide a fresh start for students surrounding adolescents with peers who share in the struggles of battling a substance use disorder. The recovery school will have a defined admissions and enrollment process. It will

[00:37:07] be staffed with therapeutic and educational focus with administrative oversight, having a comprehensive background in mental health and substance abuse disorders. In addition to the highly trained staff, you can see that we've highlighted the key components of the program to facilitate recovery through sustainable structures such as individual and group counseling, parent support and counseling, transition planning and support for reintegration into base high schools, and community partnerships for therapeutic interventions and wraparound services for our students and families.

[00:37:37] We believe if we get this funding for the program through the General Assembly, we would use that to plan and then start with a small group of LCPS students as we build it out. In year two, we would open that fully and also consider opening that to students from districts across Region 4. The state's budget timeline depicted here, outlining the steps it takes to adopt the state budget.

[00:38:00] The two packages of amendments I shared earlier will now go to a joint budget conference committee to resolve differences with a final report due March 7th and approval and adjournment on March 9th. However, as our recent experiences show, those dates may not be met. We will continue, of course, to monitor state budget activities. As Chair Randall noted, there's additional movement on the JLARC study, and we will share any information with the Board of Supervisors that comes to us to assist you in your deliberations on the LCPS fiscal year 25 budget.

[00:38:30] This budget also, or as noted, includes a request of \$131 million from the county to fully fund the needs of our division. On January 10th, our county administrator transmitted a letter providing budget guidance of \$121 million based on the current real property tax rate of 0.875.

[00:38:52] The county administrator also shared information based on an equalized rate of 0.83 that would provide \$98 million of funding to LCPS. As noted earlier, this budget requests funding that is \$10

million above the county budget guidance, and again, we would seek first to prioritize closing that gap with additional funding from the state should that become available.

[00:39:12] As initially shared, the fiscal year 25 budget was developed to balance needs as much as possible with available resources versus developing a full needs-based budget. Recognizing that, I do want to highlight just a few priorities that are delayed to future years. For example, the next phase of the IB expansion is pushed to fiscal year 25 and will now align with a broader expansion for LCPS.

[00:39:34] Various positions throughout the organization were not included along with reduced amounts to address recruitment and retention. Amongst many, these were just a few of the decisions we needed to make when developing this budget. As a final note, it's worth pointing out that LCPS is in the middle when compared to our neighbors and cost per pupil.

[00:39:52] For fiscal year 25, this amount will increase to \$21,793, which does represent concurrent with the budget increase, a 9.5% increase. As discussed, factors increasing our cost per pupil are, again, the opening of two new schools and a significant investment in employee compensation and support for students.

[00:40:11] I want to thank you for your attention regarding this overview of the fiscal year 25 budget and just now provide a recap of information and a review of next steps. So we've obviously shared a great deal of information with you very quickly, but the key takeaways are captured here. This budget is \$156.4 million, or 9.4% above the Fiscal Year 24 budget.

[00:40:33] The county transfer request is \$131 million, or 11.3% above the Fiscal Year 24 county transfer. And again, the state budget deliberation is ongoing, and we will promptly provide any updates. So despite the funding obstacles we've talked about, LCPS, as I noted, does continue to thrive.

[00:40:54] Here are just a few of many of our accomplishments over the last year. LCPS achieved an overall graduation rate for all students of 97%. 17 LCPS high schools had a graduation rate at or above the state average of 91.9%. All 16 eligible Loudoun County Public High Schools are ranked in the annual U.S. News Best High Schools report.

[00:41:15] Schools there were ranked on the following factors, college readiness, state assessment proficiency, state assessment performance, underserved student performance, college curriculum breadth, and graduation rate. LCPS earned the 2023 Energy Star Partner of the Year Award for Sustained Excellence from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Department of Energy for the 12th year.

[00:41:37] LCPS is one of only 74 organizations to receive this award for energy management and the only school system with 12 years as a sustained excellence partner. All 17 LCPS middle schools have received the Schools to Watch designation from the National Forum to Accelerate Middle School Reform.

[00:41:54] The new Dual Language Emerging Program launched, serving kindergartners at Sanders Corner and Potomac Elementary Schools in a 50-50 model with Spanish as the partner language. Heritage and Loudoun Valley High Schools are now authorized International Baccalaureate, or IB World Schools, offering the diploma programs.

[00:42:11] Some notable celebrations from our Office of Student Mental Health Services include school counseling services successfully adopting and implementing a new college and career platform. LCPS

observed an increase in student interest and participation in that platform, and by the end of last school year, roughly 9,000 secondary students completed the onboarding process.

[00:42:32] We have in our schools a Sources of Strength program, a program that promotes school-wide resiliency and mental wellness, and that's been implemented at 16 high schools and 14 middle schools across the county. The division has established a chronic absenteeism workgroup with stakeholders from various offices to monitor division-wide data as it relates to absenteeism affecting accreditation.

[00:42:52] This workgroup was essential in drafting new LCPS Policy 8140 and developing effective strategies and interventions to address problematic attendance patterns for both excused and unexcused absences. As we continue this work in this school year, the SOS Signs of Suicide and Sources of Strengths programs will be implemented in all secondary schools across the district.

[00:43:15] Signs of suicide presentations or booster sessions will be provided to students in 8th through 12th grade. A workgroup of experienced psychologists will continue to work to review the content of these presentations and work to improve student engagement, retention, and connection with the material. Student Assistance Services continues to collaborate with the Loudoun County Sheriff's Office to provide 9th grade fentanyl awareness presentations in addition to existing educational efforts.

[00:43:42] And we will expand partnerships with community partners to support student and family engagement as we work to improve chronic absenteeism, including mentoring support and therapeutic day treatment. And then finally, a few highlights related to literacy. The Department of Teaching and Learning is leading our response to the Virginia Literacy Act.

[00:44:00] We are updating our core resources, K-8, to align to the science of reading while evaluating the interventions and supports needed for all of our learners. LCPS has established a comprehensive curriculum plan with a countywide scope and sequence, including unit resource documents and alignment to the new standards from the Virginia Department of Education, and this includes a textbook and digital resource adoption during the current school year. In response to questions we've received from your colleagues, an update on capital projects is provided briefly here. On November 14, 2023, the Board of Supervisors took action to fund several LCPS capital projects in the amount of

[00:44:38] \$7.94 million. These projects included the Dominion High School weight room edition, press box, and tennis court lighting, the Heritage High School weight room edition, press boxes and tennis court lighting and potomac falls high school press boxes and tennis court lighting it's worth saying that to date all of the site plans and construction plans have been approved by building and development bids have been received are within budget and the construction is on schedule to be completed by the end of this calendar year so now in terms of next steps the budget q a process we anticipate will mirror past practice where supervisors certainly this

[00:45:15] evening may ask questions and then after this meeting may email their questions to megan bork who will continue who will coordinate with lcps staff to ensure that you have the answers you need as you deliberate on our budget with that i'll turn it back over to chair mansfield thank you dr spence in closing i want to express my sincere gratitude for collaborating with us in this process and considering lcps's funding request your continued support not only fuels lcps's mission but empowers us to make a tangible difference in the lives of Loudoun County children and to create a brighter future for our community.

[00:45:51] Thank you for your thoughtful consideration and belief in our vision. My fellow school board members, Superintendent Spence, and Chief Financial Officer Sharon Willoughby are here to answer any questions y'all may have. Thank you, Chair Mansfield. I appreciate that very much. Supervisors, it was a little bit hard because I understand that that slide deck was emailed to us today, but we didn't have it in front of us, and so it is being printed out for us right now.

[00:46:15] It'll be here a little bit later, or I guess probably in the next 10 minutes, so it will be coming. It's easier to follow along with it. So what I'm going to do is first I'm going to start with the question from Mr. Sains because it could be in his time.

[00:46:31] He's not here, and it gives him more time to get the slide decked. I mean, yeah, the slide decked to us. Dr. Spence, thank you very much for all that information and that presentation. My colleague, Mr. Sains from the Sterling District, actually did send me one question.

[00:46:48] He asked about the, gosh, I've got to find it now. I think he asked about your public information, your communications department. It is his question of, do you believe that the, and I know this is kind of a blunt question, but I'm reading the question.

[00:47:12] Do you believe that what you have right now is really not sufficient in the communications department and that the amount that you're requesting in the budget is a necessity? So the additional request in the communications department specifically was for web development.

[00:47:33] So we currently have web developers who work on the technology side of the house. they're responsible for platform integration, a lot of the kind of behind-the-scenes work that happens with our web presence, but they do not have experience with the front-facing part of our web presence, which is the communication piece of that, the video storytelling, management of our school websites, ensuring consistency, and making sure that communication is easy, easily identifiable, and easy for our parents and families to find. That is what a web developer will do for us in the communications department. Short answer, yes, I believe it's important or I wouldn't have put it

[00:48:10] in there. All right. Thank you. And then the next question, because Mr. Sainz asks this question every year, is are you willing to give us things on your budget that you see as priorities or do you have a priority list? The list that we presented this evening would be the priority list.

[00:48:32] What I want to say is we spent considerable time in the months leading up to our presentation of the estimated needs to the board, going through a vast number of requests and whittling those down and prioritizing those. If the question is, do you want me to prioritize by line item each of the requests in this budget, I certainly can look at that.

[00:48:55] I think his question probably is, do you give everything equal priority? I first and foremost prioritize employee retention and recruitment. And so that is why that is the vast majority of this budget. Most of it is put towards that. So, you know, I believe the compensation increase is appropriate. I think that the recruitment retention incentives are appropriate. However, when we think about, for example, some of the other high parts of the budget, if you think about the increase in our special education population and need to support

[00:49:31] them. When I've been out at our community listening sessions, one of the things that comes up at every single session is the need for us to improve our efforts around special education. So I think that would be a top priority and I don't know how to prioritize that against compensation for our staff I would

say the same thing for our English language learners that is an exploding population in Loudoun County that requires significant staff support and I would say that that's a high priority so I mean I think we could go down the line and find some things where I would say that may be a lesser priority but each of them is in there for a very specific reason and most of that is driven either by what's in our strategic plan or what I've been hearing since I've gotten here

[00:50:07] around, for example, communications and the need to improve our communications. But again, if the need and the desire of the Board of Supervisors is for me to take a look at that and try to identify lesser priorities, I can take a swing at that, Chair Randall. Well, thank you. And again, those questions were from Mr. Sains, but I'm sure he's watching and those answers will be passed on to him.

[00:50:27] Supervisors, if you have questions, please put your light on. I'm going to go first because she is virtual. I'm going to go first to Vice Chair Bricksman. Thank you, Madam Chair. thank you for the presentation. I think this is probably the first time I've seen an LCPS presentation where there was a slide on the things that you felt like you had to leave out because of the 60-40 split. So I do appreciate that. And in my mind, that tells us what was a priority for

[00:51:01] you. And how did you know I would ask about those weight rooms and tennis court lights? thank you for for teasing that out because sometimes i do find it difficult um when there's like a big block of money for certain things and we don't know exactly where they're going so i appreciate that i i think what i hear you saying and we do get um i feel like sometimes there's there's mixed messaging in the county and we hear a lot from our constituents the schools are too crowded and then we hear from other constituents there's no growth in students so we shouldn't

[00:51:37] increase the school budget. And what I hear you saying, and you can correct me if I'm wrong, Dr. Spence, is that just because we're not having vast amounts of growth in the student population right now doesn't mean that we've solved for all the growth we had in the last decade or even two decades where we grew by 35 percent. Yes, ma'am. I would say that's precisely true. We certainly have a need to have conversations about class sizes. We have a need to have conversations

[00:52:10] ongoing about facilities but also and then in addition to that solving for growth you know just alone making sure that our employees are properly compensated so that we can remain competitive in the marketplace is such a significant part of a budget increase that even without any any further student enrollment growth the the community should anticipate some kind of increase every year if we're going to compensate our staff appropriately and again I know Loudoun County is committed to that. I know we want our teachers to feel they can live and work here, and I know we want to be competitive. Given the shortage of teachers across the country, we want to make sure we can continue

[00:52:48] to entice them to come and work in our great school division. Thank you. And I'm excited to hear about the Fold and Step program. Are you confident that we have the space in the county for accommodating that? Because sometimes when I go to the schools, I feel like, especially our older schools they're using like every centimeter of space with programming so are you confident we're going to have the space to do that and i'm going to probably need a second round madam chair okay yes ma'am we we before putting that in the budget we had conversations about where those programs might fit and so we have space both in some of our elementary schools for that as well

[00:53:26] as some of our secondary schools okay um the last question i has with the lcps nutrition fund went down, I think it's 5.6%. So I was just wondering why that was reduced. The FY25 budget is focused on

the base operations, whereas the FY24 had significant one-time capital expenditures as a result of a spend-down plan. So that's why you see that decrease occurring. All right. Thank you, Ms. Brixman. And there will probably be a second round. I may be gone by then, but we'll probably

[00:54:01] do a second round. Ms. Umstead. Thank you, Madam Chair. Dr. Spence, welcome. I want to thank you especially for your outreach to members of the board of supervisors when you first came on board we really appreciate that and I want to thank my colleagues on the school board for being here and being so diligent and valuing transparency and obviously hard work I have some difficult questions that I

[00:54:35] will send you in writing through staff but I wanted to give you an overview right now. The main questions I get from my constituents tend to be whether LCPS is top heavy in administrative positions and whether the additional administrative positions proposed are essential to teaching our children. We also get questions whether our percentage of administrative positions to actually in-school positions is in line with our neighboring

[00:55:14] jurisdictions. I thought you did a good job talking about how many of the positions are in-school positions. We also get questions about whether administrative staff compensation is in line with that of our neighboring jurisdictions, and whether the current numbers of staff additions proposed for two areas, especially public relations and collective bargaining, whether those are essential.

[00:55:43] One question I get every year from educators especially is, how are we addressing the SAG in teacher compensation? LCPS has done a really good job in the past at making us extraordinarily competitive for attracting new teachers, but there's always been a SAG for more experienced teachers who could leave LCPS and go teach for better pay at other, in other jurisdictions.

[00:56:16] And so if you have that, I know that's a complicated answer. I'll be sending that in writing. Finally, the most difficult question I have for you is that you may have seen Delegate Higgins' letter today about the student who is being denied the ability to play her chosen sport at her new school. I know that you and all members of the school board sincerely wanted what is best for our students. But if a student is forced to switch schools because of bullying, I think it's important

[00:56:50] that we look at that situation as a unique situation and find a way to allow her to play her sport in the new school from the board of supervisors standpoint we're always concerned about lawsuits both against the county and against the school system that your time is up yes thank you very much what you want to you want to say anything she says she's going to send those questions to you later that's right okay we'll be happy to answer those questions

[00:57:25] okay thank you um mr crony thank you and thank you dr spence and thank you school board members I'm really excited to see that you're increasing special education funding and the amount of FTEs. When I went door-to-door in the Little River District, that was mentioned numerous times that we needed to increase the amount of staff for special education, that there were a lot of needs there.

[00:57:53] So I really appreciate that. And the 97% graduation rate, that's awesome. I have a daughter in high school, so that's great. That's wonderful at Light Ridge. Question about the transfer. So you mentioned that if you get \$33.7 million from the state, additional funding to Loudoun County Public Schools, that the school board would allocate that funding, even though we've already given our transfer.

[00:58:25] Would we get back that money, or would you go ahead and allocate the extra that you get from the state? but I think some of that's gonna be dependent on timing and I mean as I stated I and I believe it

would be the school board's goal to reduce that gap we've talked a little bit about that to reduce the the 10 million prioritizing state funding for that first money above that we would want to look at are there other needed expenses around compensation and addressing SAG and teacher pay some of the questions that were just asked and we'd have to have a conversation with school board about that okay so the money wouldn't come back then as far as a

[00:59:03] transfer like we've already given the transfer and the difference wouldn't come back the delta right yeah it's again i think it's a timing issue and to be determined okay um and then the recovery high school do you guys have a location for that or is is that going to be at another high school likely would at least for the time being being another one of our facilities we're working through the facilities question right now okay and could it be for kids with mental health issues is it just going to be for substance abuse or we kind of a recovery school would be specifically for students with substance abuse issues who are actively in recovery from from

[00:59:41] those issues we do however have money in the budget for alternative school programming which which one of the intentions of that would be to support students who are dealing with mental health issues and then the tutoring program how is that going I know I know that the governor it was encouraging tutoring because of kids being behind with COVID-19 how is that going in the schools full speed ahead full speed ahead so we are we have a plan for every child who is needing tutoring we have nearly 100 tutors who are working full-time in our schools in addition

[01:00:18] to the teachers who are taking on tutoring responsibilities and other staff who are taking on tutoring responsibilities, so it is full speed ahead. It's going well, and we recently provided the board an update. We can send the link over and a list of questions, and then we can provide any additional information about what's going on now.

[01:00:36] Do you have a location for that whole thing? Mr. Frani, your time is up. I'm sorry. I'll do a second round if we need to. Mr. Kirshner. Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to all the school board members that are here, and to you, Dr. Spence, thank you for putting this together and everybody else that was involved in it. I know it's a lot of work. I've got a couple of thoughts and comments that I really, and it's kind of the way I approach the budget, I will tell you that the way I see this whole process working out with the schools is really a push and pull.

[01:01:01] You guys have a responsibility as the school board, as the administration, to do the best you can for the students that we have in Loudoun County, and I commend you for trying to do that. But obviously, we here on the Board of Supervisors, we also have a significant responsibility to handle our budget correctly. And right now, under the current guidance, I think we're at four to five cents above the equalized rate on our current guidance, which puts a real stress on us how do we fund our schools adequately at the same time also keeping it reasonable quite frankly to live in loudon county under a significant cost so i know you know this but i think for people in the room the media listen it's it's always this push and pull and quite frankly this year the

[01:01:39] budget that's been presented to us all the time that i've been on the board i think is the largest transfer that's been requested now with that said there's a couple things i want to point out and you know, you address some of them here. And what I'm struggling with in this budget is I look back all the way back to 2019 and saw our student growth literally has not, we're pretty much flat since 2019, about 83,000 or so students. The projections aren't significantly high. And yet we have a 1.3, 1.130 million transfer requests.

Some of the things that you put on there make total sense. I think we should totally make sure that we are our teacher compensation, our step up

[01:02:18] that those are competitive but obviously just like with our board there's always a lot of programs that can be added and are great to be added but there are some constraints on that and i'm going to ask you a question kind of like if you don't get the full budget how are you going to approach that process on what you i know it was kind of a question that was asked a little bit earlier um i've also and i've also looked at the per pupil cost in the budget and in the last seven years, we've grown about 53% from the average per pupil cost of 14,260 to 21,789. The other

[01:02:55] thing I've looked at, and you mentioned some great things, our graduation rates, et cetera, Supervisor Briskin mentioned it, but I also have gone back and looked at some of the proficiency numbers. And to me, I want to know at some point, and I can send you questions if we don't have time to answer them here, how does that translate? How, when you look at a budget, is that going to really translate into proficiency because money isn't always necessarily the answer but when i see all but three of our high schools are below proficiency in history it alarms me honestly um i'm about out of time i've got 19 seconds left so just a couple of things i saw in the budget

[01:03:30] 218 000 for travel expense etc for the division of diversity and equity our board got into a lot of hot water because of some travel that might be something you would consider cutting um the The, as was mentioned earlier, because of disinformation about travel.

[01:03:46] I'm going to go to the next person. All right, Mr. Turner. Thank you, Madam Chair. I've been through this process a few times and watched it a few times before I got elected last time. I always get uncomfortable when the Board of Supervisors dives down into granular minutiae on your budget.

[01:04:04] I don't feel qualified to do that. I think it sidesteps, I think, the main thrust. So generally, I try and stay up at strategic level and assume that you guys have done your granular homework on the other end, just like we do. So I'm going to try and keep it at that.

[01:04:21] The slide you had that showed a 91.7% school-based FTE versus an 8.3% non-school-based FTE, that's a compelling slide. What I would like to see, if you could send it to me or do some research, is that's a 9 to 1 ratio.

[01:04:36] If I could see the ratio of the portion of the budget that funds those in-school FTEs compared to the portion of the budget that funds those out-of-school FTEs, that would be revealing to me if we could get that. The data on the slide of where we are compared to our comparators in Virginia versus a 50-state average and a South Atlantic regional average, those are good numbers.

[01:05:03] We do get a lot of questions about how are we doing, how do we compare, and I think that's a good answer. The problem is the date on that slide is FY20. It's four years old, five years old. I'd really like to see an update on what those statistics look like in a more recent basis, if we can get that.

[01:05:19] Can you explain to me the genesis and the mission of the alternative high school program? I'm fascinated by that. I think it's a good concept. But can you give me more information on what that is? Yeah, I can speak to that at a high level. And this was an express need to me when I arrived, and I've heard it in different ways.

[01:05:39] I've heard it from our staff. I've heard it from our principals and I've heard it in our community listening sessions. We don't have a place for students to go in Loudoun County who are struggling particularly with behavior and particularly with mental health issues. We also don't have a place for students who have some other significant needs, but we needed to in our recommendation to begin an alternative school program kind of identify a couple of the key areas we could focus in on first and staff in this budget.

[01:06:05] So those were the two areas that, for example, our principals were saying we need the most help. These are kids who just really can't thrive in the comprehensive setting, need additional support, smaller classes, therapeutic interventions. And we can provide that in an alternative setting for those schools with the aim of getting them back into their comprehensive setting after they've built the skill set to be able to do that.

[01:06:27] So that is kind of the big picture of what the alternative programming would look like. And again, fairly normal, certainly in districts our size, incredibly normal to have an alternative school program available. Because of the number of students that we serve, you're just going to run into some kids who just don't run away.

[01:06:43] I want to get one quick question. I've got nine seconds left. Sort of corollary to that, are there programs in the schools that deal with social media bullying? Because it's a prevalent issue. Are we addressing that? Is there a program in the budget? - We do have a number of, it's not in this budget, but we do have a number of things that we talk about with regards to bullying, with regards to digital literacy and those conversations do happen in our schools.

[01:07:09] We have a number of peer organizations who focus on that and do assemblies and peer-to-peer training. So we are intensely focused on what's going on in the cyber world and understand the impact it's having on our kids. - Thank you. - Thank you, Mr. Letourneau.

[01:07:26] - Thank you, thank you, Dr. Spence. Thank you to school board members for coming over. Welcome to the county building. Welcome to the world of a strict timer, which we have over here on our discussions, which caused us to talk quickly. I would like to just thank you for the dialogue we've had so far in the presentation.

[01:07:45] Maybe just a few general comments, a little bit of the same train as Supervisor Kirchner in that we do have to, you know, Supervisor Turner's right. It's difficult for us to dive deep into this budget because we don't have the time to do that. At the same time, I always feel like I have to be able to justify because this is such a huge percentage of the county tax rate that we ask folks to pay all of these expenditures, and that's hard to do that.

[01:08:09] The reality is there has been a lot of growth in the budget. Post-per-pupil, however you parse it, it's up about 40% since 2020. Enrollment roughly flat since then. Inflation is about half of that. Obviously, we've gotten into some of those reasons, very legitimate ones.

[01:08:25] But, you know, folks look at that and understandably have questions about it. Just so I kind of level set in terms of what happens with the process in the House and Senate, if there is additional funding that comes in, which would be very, very welcome, above the \$10 million, so the first \$10 million, assuming the Board of Supervisors approves the transfer request as presented, that would go to cover that gap.

[01:08:48] If it goes higher than that, my understanding of the process is that that funding goes to the Board of Supervisors. The school board appropriated amount is the appropriated amount. So that money would then be used to sort of start clawing back, I think, that local tax versus state tax discrepancy that we'll say, I think we all agree, kind of exists.

[01:09:10] Is that a fair, I guess, both to Dr. Spence and to Mr. Hemstreet, is that a fair description of kind of that process? I think that's a fair description of one way that the process could go. Again, recognizing it's very dependent on the timing as well as the school board priorities.

[01:09:30] You may recall just last year where during the process the school board requested an additional appropriation recognizing the additional state revenue. So that could be another option as well. So I think there's two possible options on the table.

[01:09:47] Right. No, I appreciate that. I guess I would like to kind of lay down the marker then. I think we all agree that we're out of whack on the state versus local tax transfer. I think, thank you, Dr. Spence, for kind of acknowledging at the front end of your presentation that on the Board of Supervisors' side, we've tried to be cognizant of that and have been making that up.

[01:10:06] But if there is significant state funding, I think there's an opportunity there to start getting that back into whack a little bit on the local tax, percentage-wise. Just one other kind of basic question, and I will submit some more detailed ones. So 6.5% is the average salary increase for educators.

[01:10:24] Is there an average for administrators? Yeah, so that's across the scales. 6.5% for everyone. So it's a step increase plus a 4% cost of living adjustment across the scale. For everyone. That's correct. I see. All right, so President, if you have a second round, turn your lights on.

[01:10:42] I may be leaving before we get through it, but just in case. So first of all, I want to say that, you know, I do not ever minimize some of the issues that we saw last year and that we see in the school system. We never want to minimize those.

[01:10:58] But we also never want to talk only about the challenges and never about the incredible bad successes we've had in our school system. A school system with a 97% graduation rate is almost unheard of. A school system with that many schools in the top, would you say top 20%?

[01:11:17] Top 20% is almost unheard of. We have, by any objective analysis, an absolutely excellent school system. And I think we should say that more often and more clearly and even more forcefully.

[01:11:34] Not to minimize issues, because issues have to be dealt with. But I will say that all the time. I do have a couple things. One, when you all go to visit the recovery school, wherever it might be in Virginia, I would love to go on that visit with you.

[01:11:51] I'm not yet convinced about a recovery school. It is unrealistic to think you can have a recovery school without having co-recurring, comorbidity issues. So if you have kids who are using, those kids are going to have mental health issues.

[01:12:08] There's just not any way you can separate those two things. And so I don't know how I feel about that yet. I need to do a whole lot more research. And I'd like to go with you all if you don't mind me making that trip with you. I really appreciate it. I love that you have the Sources of Strength programs in the school.

[01:12:24] It is evidence-based, all hail to Susie Bartel and all the work she's done around mental health and suicidology amongst our young people. I do not love that you have a fentanyl awareness program. I think that's the wrong thing to do. I think you have an awareness program about the disease of substance dependence and not about one substance.

[01:12:44] I will go on a soapbox about that later on because that's a big, long soapbox for me, so I won't do that right now. I love that you have a school that you're named after Henry of the Leagues. If no one knows who that is, everyone should go study who that person is because it's quite the amazing story.

[01:13:03] I, as somebody who very much supports the school system and school funding, even I think that this school that they're requested about is a little hard for me to put my hands around, to be quite honest. I understand that especially ESL and special needs students, that's an issue, but this one seems, this is a little hard for me to put my hands around.

[01:13:26] Having been in the trenches as a parent of the boundary line adjustment discussions, good luck to y'all when y'all start doing that because that is not a pretty site. I do not understand how we have some schools that are rather under-enrolled and other schools that are busting at the seams because how is that not a boundary line adjustment issue?

[01:13:52] Well, ma'am, they should be boundary line adjustment issues, and we have a process for identifying which schools administration recommends and brings forward a recommendation for those boundary line discussions. Mr. Lewis and the operations team, they look at that every year.

[01:14:08] We work with our planner and we identify that and we bring those conversations for we brought one of those forward this year for discussion with the school board in the fall and that didn't move forward. But that's a that's an annual review process that we will continue.

[01:14:33] All right. And good luck with that school board members. That's just not fun. All right. Second round of questions. Miss Bricksman. Thank you, Madam Chair. And I appreciate all the questions and answers. This is a good discussion. I do get a little frustrated. when we're looking to the schools to cut stuff so that we can lower our tax rate. If the state would basically pay its bills, we could lower our tax rate 10 cents.

[01:14:55] So I just want to put that out there. If they were funding at \$160 million a year that they're shorting us on, we could lower our tax rate about 10 cents. I wasn't quite understanding the answer on the reduction in the nutritional fund.

[01:15:11] I can put that in writing. The other thing I wanted to know about is I don't know how Senator Rome's bill is getting through the General Assembly on basically providing meals for students, for every student, and free.

[01:15:30] But I was wondering if we could get a calculation on what it would cost for Loudoun just to do that. Not tonight, but could you do it if I submit the question? Yes, we can. And there'll be some some variables in there.

[01:15:45] There's some changes to the CEP program that are moving forward that would allow us to have several more schools involved in that program, which is all students receiving free breakfast and lunch. I believe the bill going through the General Assembly has shifted now to only focusing on free breakfast and not free lunch.

[01:16:03] And so that'll be an impact there. And then we can provide additional costs for what free lunch for all students would would entail. Okay, thank you. I'll submit that question. You mentioned both Senate and House funding or budget proposals include compensation increases.

[01:16:31] I think you said 3%. Does that require a local match? Do you know? Yeah, so it does require local funding, but because of our 6.5% proposal, we would fall well into parameters there. Oh, I see. Okay, great. And would that be, is that, do you know if the proposals are for 3% each year or is it 3% over the two years?

[01:16:56] I think one of them was ongoing. I'd have to go back and look. I know I mentioned it. Okay, I'll ask. Yeah. And the recovery school, I agree. I, you know, I have had a family member that has utilized a recovery school in a different state.

[01:17:17] I'm just wondering, is it proposed to be just for Loudoun or is it regional? And then what do you suspect the size would be, the attendance would be, or do you know yet? So we don't know just yet. The intention would be to start slow to go fast. So start small, get it right, figure out the details of what's needed to support those students.

[01:17:35] And then, as I mentioned in the presentation, we would likely, the idea would be for it to be a regional school. So we would begin seeing if other divisions in the region needed to send some students to us. Okay. All right. Thank you. I'm out of time. Thank you very much. Thank you, Mr. Crony.

[01:17:52] Thank you, Chair Randall. So the question I was going to ask was about where will the health and medical science program be located, Dr. Spence? Do you have a location yet? We do. We have two schools, and I can't off the top of my head remember which one's there. I apologize for that. We'll get that to you, though, in writing.

[01:18:09] Okay. And the alternative school that Supervisor Turner brought up, is that located at a school, or are you building another school for that? No, we wouldn't be building a new facility. We would be either housed inside of one of our schools or using another existing facility. Okay. So then I have a question going to Chair Randall's point about boundaries and enrollment.

[01:18:33] I would like us to look at, and I'll be putting forward a question, moving up HS14 one year. I know it is supposed to open in 28, but I would like to see us look at opening it in 27, and that's due to all the developments in the pipeline in that area will impact overcrowding in different clusters like John Champ and Light Ridge Cluster and it would give an opportunity to really focus on HS14 taking the kids north of Route 50 and there are a lot of developments coming online north of Route 50. There is a cumulative impact. I know the Board of Supervisors

[01:19:13] looks at applications one-off, but when they get all together, there's a cumulative impact. And I do think we will need that school one year earlier, 2027. And I believe Loudoun County Public Schools is doing the road improvements, am I correct, with Evergreen and Red Hill?

[01:19:32] That is correct, yes. Okay. But you are opening up Watson Mountain Middle, right? So you will be doing some of those improvements for the middle school that's opening this year okay also correct so there could be I mean I would like to work together with the school board with dr. Rashid and other school board members to see if we can move that up one year and and ma'am I would say is as you are looking at the as you are looking at the school board's proposed capital improvement plan that's all discussed in there

and and what it would mean would be some significant shifting of other projects in order to accomplish that and so we would just want to have

[01:20:11] some further discussion about what that might look like yeah and it is funded in FY25 just so you know in our budget so understood Mr. Turner thank you Madam Chair just some larger questions I've seen statistics my school board counterpart mentioned in an email to me today a 50% proficiency in middle schools and math and science.

[01:20:43] And then Supervisor Letourneau talked about, or Kirshner mentioned, I think, all but three high schools are below. Three or four, yeah. That are below 50% proficiency or non-proficient in history. Those are alarming, but can you put some context around those, where those numbers are coming from, what they're referring to?

[01:21:06] We don't have enough time for me to put a lot of context around that, but yes, I can. And first of all, I would never disagree that any numbers where we have significant numbers of students who are not proficient is alarming. One of my responsibilities coming into the school division is to take a hard look at our data, figure out our structures and processes, both from an instructional perspective and a school improvement perspective, to try to address those.

[01:21:30] And I agree with the conversation that money doesn't solve all those problems. And there are other structures and processes that have to be in place. And when I put out my post-entry planning report in the spring, I'll be discussing some of what I'm seeing around that. There are nuances to some of that data that are important to understand.

[01:21:51] There have been changes to the verified credit model for graduation. So some students do not need verified credits in some of those subject areas. And so the only students who end up taking those tests are students who have failed other tests. And so you're just going to see lower numbers. You'll see that in some of our math courses.

[01:22:08] You'll see that in some of our history courses. So it's important to kind of parse those out individually and we can talk about that context. And then more broadly, we're still recovering from interrupted learning, and we're doing a great job. I mean, it also is important to put context on that and look at how we are compared to our comparables around the state, and Loudoun County continues to outperform comparables around the state.

[01:22:29] So contextually, while there are concerns and we don't want to minimize those, my job is I'm never going to be satisfied until we're across the board proficient for all kids. you know at least it's important to understand contextually how do we how are we faring are we have we gone way off the rails in Loudoun County and everybody else is getting it right or are we doing some good things and we need to continue to improve my assessment early on is the latter we're doing some good things we need to continue to improve we remain a high-performing division in the state of Virginia great that's a good answer and that's exactly the kind of context I'd like anything you can send me because we're that those

[01:23:05] Those statistics are being used by our constituents to make a point, and I have no counter, and I would like to have a counter and say it's out of context or there is more information around that because I'm hearing great schools with good data around great schools, and then I see emails that say, yeah, but 50 percent proficient in math and science in middle school.

[01:23:25] I need to bridge that gap somehow just in the branding for me when I answer that email. Thank you. Thank you. Mr. Kirshner. Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you for that. That was actually really helpful. So along those, I have some other questions, but I want to piggyback off from Supervisor Turner. Along that line, given that a lot of these problems are perhaps being caused by the interrupted learning we had because of the COVID pandemic, have their programs been implemented to try to address those?

[01:23:50] That would be a question. You don't have to answer all of that now, or you can wait until the end. The one thing I have heard, and I think Supervisor, who said that? Chris, Ms. Umstead said that. And I've heard from many, many teachers. This is not this is just not single anecdotal. This is teacher after teacher who are very concerned.

[01:24:08] Those who are student facing are concerned about the middle administration and the top heaviness. Has there been any sort of survey or reach out to these teachers as to, hey, because I'm hearing it on a regular basis. I really am. And so I think that is maybe one of the concern when we kind of deal with a budget.

[01:24:27] It's not something I'm not going to get granular, like Supervisor Turner said, but it is something that continues to be, you know, talked in my ear about. It's like we were way too heavy. And these are from actual teachers in Loudoun County Public School Systems that are saying this on a regular basis. And then the final question I have, and I'll kind of shut up because I talked the whole last time and gave you no opportunity to answer.

[01:24:45] My apologies because I got cut off by the chair. Oh, we're going to go outside. I don't know for sure where we will end up in the budget, but if we passed a budget that obviously did not provide the full transfer, what process would you go through to evaluate how and what to spend the money?

[01:25:07] And I'm really glad to hear Supervisor Briskman said, if the state kicks in more, we're going to reduce our tax rate. So that was great, great news. So the process we would do, I mean, we would go back administratively, and we would look through the budget and make some recommendations on where we would make cuts, and then we would bring those to the school board, and we would have a conversation with them in terms of what their priorities would be to make those adjustments in the budget.

[01:25:29] So it's really their budget, right? So I'm presenting it to you, but it's theirs. And so we would work with them to identify that. And let me just briefly speak to this idea of kind of top heaviness, if I could. So I think it's important to like operate from a space of data, right?

[01:25:44] So I've looked into that. I've taken a hard look at that. I took a hard look at that. First of all, I told my team during the budget development process that that was gonna be an area that's an important focus for me is to make sure that we are forward-facing with our budget that it's in the schools and I think we achieve that in this budget I think the question would be like how is that an actual truth or is that just a perception and perception matters I get that and I've worked in seven school divisions and in every single school division there's always been this conversation every time a budget comes up right is your two top heavy you need to reduce the top heaviness and then the question is well who are we talking about and so if you look at in in

[01:26:23] in Loudoun County, I think largely people are probably talking about like supervisory positions and up in the central office. And if you look at that, that's 1.4% of the overall FTE of our school division. So

the question is in managing a \$2 billion organization with 15,000 employees is 1.4% of your FTE and administrative supervision. Is that top heavy? I mean, I would say no. And when I look at other school divisions, we actually do much better than them. And so I think those are important comparisons to have when you look at the school-based versus non-school-based staffing and how we we really are quite good at that here in the in the Washington region and then I think

[01:27:01] you know frankly just my experience in other school divisions tells me we're pretty good we're not I don't see us as being particularly top heavy in fact I think part of the concern may be that what you've seen is some right sizing over the last you know several years because the school division grew so fast and the focus was on build the schools and staff the schools that there are needed supports that happen at a division level that weren't in place that are now, you know, that have been being put into place over the last several years.

[01:27:27] And I would look at that as right-sizing. One of my jobs is to assess as an education expert and somebody who's been working at a division level for a long time, do we have what we need to get the job done and support our schools? And if we do, then we don't put more positions there, we put them in the schools, which is, again, why in this budget most of the positions are in the schools.

[01:27:46] But there are times when you look and you say, yep, we are going to need another Title IX coordinator. Why do we need another Title IX coordinator? Because the rules are about to change in Title IX. They're going to require a significant number of new investigations, and we have to have people who are going to support that work. And, of course, I always, you know, I mean, we can look at it.

[01:28:04] I think it's, I don't know, 2% of the budget, something in that range of the actual budget versus the percentage of FTEs. And if we eliminate that 2% of the budget, then we'll get a one-time step increase in a couple of percentages of pay increase.

[01:28:19] And then begin to ask the questions, okay, well, so who's going to do the payroll? Who's going to do the accounting? Who are going to route the buses? Who's going to manage our school nutrition services? Who's going to handle, I mean, because that's the people we're also talking about, right? I mean, and these, and, you know, who's going to, when we get curriculum changes from the state, who's going to work to address those curriculum changes, provide training for our teachers on those curriculum changes?

[01:28:40] I mean, there's a lot of work that happens at the division level, and I think when folks do an honest assessment of that, I mean, I don't have anybody in my team sitting back doing nothing. And I realize that some people think that sometimes is the case, but I've met that resistance in every organization I've worked in, and I've never found anybody who could point to a role and say, we don't need them.

[01:28:59] And then if they, you know, we can have disagreements on some of that. Communications has come up a couple of times. Well, I came to Loudoun County Public Schools, and what was the number one thing that I heard was a problem for us? How we communicate. How we're not transparent. how we engage with our community and one of the things i talked to the school board about during that time when i was interviewing for the position was just a second this is the only large school division i'm aware of that doesn't have a department of communications we need a department of communications it does not need to report up through the superintendent it needs somebody who is running that shop who has an

extensive experience in managing communications and community engagement the board agreed with me that was my assessment if people don't agree with me

[01:29:38] that's totally okay but honestly i think that's just being driven by one particular point of view from one particular person. Thank you. Thank you. Ms. Umstead. Thank you, Madam Chair. One question. This predates you by several years, and it predates every member of the school board by several years, but when Charles Monroe Technology Center, which was our vocational and technical training facility, was folded into the academies of Loudoun, it was not an easy merger, and there

[01:30:16] were a lot of concerns expressed by a number of teachers in different fields, vocational fields. So the question I've received recently from some educators is they acknowledge the academies are great for our top academic students, but they're worried that we are putting vocational education at a disadvantage.

[01:30:43] For normal students who may not want to go to college, may want to know how to build a house or, you know, repair an automobile. But there's a special disadvantage for special needs kids who might be able to do a lot of this vocational work but are not necessarily getting the attention as part of this program that they should be.

[01:31:15] What are your thoughts on that? So I agree with you first that the MATA program in particular over there is a great program. I think all the programs at the academy are great, and I think we don't do nearly enough for all of our students, so I agree with you. I think one of the things that's incumbent upon us is to kind of pull our community together under a big tent and have a conversation about what we want our students to be learning with regards to workforce development, with regards to kind of the what's next for them and their pathways, and then identify where those opportunities don't exist and where we need to put them, And I think that is going to require some some investment in of time, energy and treasure.

[01:31:53] You know, it would be great for me to sit here and say we should have an auto program at every high school. It's not realistic because we don't have the space for it and it would be very expensive. But it doesn't mean we can't have more than one. For example, right now, as we're building the new Parkview High School, we're looking at what would be the career and technical education opportunities in the new Parkview High School.

[01:32:11] So I think as we're renovating and building these spaces, we should be thinking about what other opportunities can we build out for our children. Thank you. So I have to get ready to leave. Dr. Spence, it's been a pleasure. I think your answers have been complete and full and transparent, and maybe not what we all want to hear completely, but I have very much appreciated this conversation thus far, and I look forward to more conversations with you and the school board.

[01:32:38] Chair Mansfield, just give me a call, and we'll talk about how to put your board on a timer, girl. That's really a good thing. It helps a whole lot. And if you have school board members like Mr. Kirshner who are just going to give you trouble for no reason, we're going to talk about that too.

[01:32:53] We're going to talk about that too. Really, seriously, thank you all very much. And I'm going to trade places now where I have Mr. Turner come sit in this seat. Thank you, everybody, and I'll see you later. Thank you. We'll have no time limits from this point forward.

[01:33:15] Oh, yeah, right. For those who have not spoken a second. Chair Rendo, are you leaving? I am so leaving. I am. I am. You're the chair in that month. Supervisor LeTerno.

[01:33:33] Supervisor LeTerno, I think you were next. Yes, thank you. I would have retired a long time ago without time limits, let me tell you. So just go back to big picture for just a second. I think, in fairness, I'm kind of doing the same thing with the county budget, where I make an overall point, This is also the chance that we get to talk to everybody.

[01:33:56] So I'll raise a few kind of outside-the-box things in a minute. But overall cost growth, I fear, is just not sustainable on both the county and the school side long-term, which doesn't mean dramatic changes this year, but giving what our revenue picture looks like, the amount of new revenue coming in, where the data center discussion in the county is going, and then continued need for being competitive in the marketplace on labor costs and things like that, we're kind of going in a trajectory like this, and we need to try to get ahead of that.

[01:34:30] So one way to do that that we had raised previously with previous school boards was through revenue sharing. It's something that's common in other school districts, and I think it might be a way essentially in years that we have more new revenue than anticipated, it's good for everybody, and in years that we don't, then everybody has to tighten their belts a little bit.

[01:34:50] So I would just encourage that discussion to maybe be rekindled at some point now that we have a new school board and a new administration. Two other things I just wanted to raise just kind of as general issues, ask you to take a look at middle school foreign language.

[01:35:07] I raise this every year. The way our system works now is we have high school curriculum being taught to middle school kids. And I think that that has a real negative impact on being introduced to foreign language and fairly high washout rate as a result of that, but that's kind of the way we're set up.

[01:35:26] We used to have a program called FLES, which a lot of folks had some issues with too, but I just think that's something with maybe even with internal resources that we could do differently, and I would just encourage that to be looked at. The other one would actually, quote-unquote, make worse the overhead problem, which I agree with you is probably not a problem, but, you know, criticism, And that is taking a look at the office of your counsel, actually.

[01:35:53] So we do things very differently on the county side. The county attorney has a very large staff of 18 to 20 attorneys. We handle most of our litigation issues in-house. LCPS traditionally has had division counsel, relatively small office, and goes out of house for a lot of things.

[01:36:11] We're in a very different world, very different environment. There are a lot of things that come up. And so long term, I just think it's something that's worth looking at for the school board and administration, potentially bring more of that resource in-house and get some efficiency and some sort of consistency with how situations are handled and things like that.

[01:36:29] So those are just two sort of outside-the-box things. It's my opportunity to raise with the new school board and you. So thank you. Thank you. Supervisor Letourneau, I don't see any other boarders. I think Dr. Spence might have. Dr. Spence. Yeah, just briefly acknowledge that and say thank you.

[01:36:47] And I will note we have expanded the Office of Division Council, so we did have a third position. And we did that after an analysis of what we were paying for outside contract reviews. And so we hired that person specifically to help us with FOIA and contract reviews. So I appreciate that, and we'll keep looking at that because we do spend quite a bit of money on outside counsel as well.

[01:37:06] And I appreciate the other thoughts. Obviously, the school board would need to talk about revenue sharing formula, but I come from a division that had a revenue-sharing formula. It's why I tried to stay very close in the ask here to what was suggested would be the county transfer from the county administrators, because I think that's the right way to work together.

[01:37:24] Thank you. Thank you, Dr. Spence. Supervisor Bristman, did you have any other questions? I do not. Thank you. Okay, thank you. I don't see any other supervisor lights. Chair Mansfield, I'd like to give the school board members an opportunity to ask questions of the board of supervisors if they would like to do that, And if you have done, that's totally fine.

[01:37:48] But I would like to extend that opportunity. If any of you have any questions for the board, going once, going twice, very well. And I think if there are no other comments, staff, any other comments for the meeting?

[01:38:07] Yes, sir. We appreciate the opportunity to be here tonight. And I speak to the entire board in this circumstance in thanking you for coming over. It's a very good presentation. We do appreciate your frankness and your honesty. And to the entire school board, Chair Mansfield, thank you for taking the time, and we'll see you down the road when the budget matures.

[01:38:29] Thank you all very much. We are adjourned.



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