



MACHINE TRANSCRIPT • CORAGGIO CONSULTING

Loudoun County School Board, Loudoun Education Alliance of Families (LEAF) Committee Meeting, Monday, February 12, 2024

Date Monday, February 12, 2024
Place Loudoun County Public Schools / School Board meeting (see BoardDocs / LCPS-TV)
Length 1h 25m (video)

- Official meeting video (Vimeo / LCPS-TV): <https://player.vimeo.com/video/912389840?rel=0>
- BoardDocs (School Board): <https://go.boarddocs.com/vsba/loudoun/Board.nsf/Public>

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[00:00:01] Good evening, everyone. Welcome, LEAF members. Good to see everyone back after winter break. Hope everyone enjoyed some time off with their families. Thank you for attending this evening. We realize it is a really busy time for everyone, and people may be recovering from the Super Bowl, so I'm glad that you all are here today. If you haven't done so already, please fill out the attendance form on the computer. Oh, our computer system isn't working, so we are manually signing in. So if you haven't done that, please take a minute to do that. We are sitting by levels

[00:00:38] elementary at these tables here, then middle school and high school tonight. So I'm going to call this meeting to order. The February 12th Loudoun Education Alliance of Families meeting will come to order now. The first item on the agenda is public comment. Leaf meetings are open to the public. Loudoun County residents are welcome to attend the meeting, but must refrain from interrupting the meeting's agenda. Per the LEAF charter bylaws, public comments should address any agenda item. Members of the public who wish to address items on the agenda may do so at this

[00:01:16] time. Do we have any public comments tonight? We do not. Great. We will move on to the agenda item of the number three which is the approval of minutes the november 20th 2023 meeting minutes are on the leaf website and a few copies are at your table for those who would like to like an

additional review i will entertain a motion to accept the minutes from the november 20th 2023 meeting as submitted we have a motion to accept the minutes motion thank you we have a motion by

[00:01:56] name please your name please thank you is there a second second holly mctearnon thank you holly we um we have a second all in favor say aye all those opposed with no changes requested the minutes stand approved as submitted at this time um i am happy to welcome our new school board representative for relief who was also a part of our leaf committee lauren shirnoff she's going to

[00:02:29] come up here and say a few words all right hi everybody thanks for coming out I'm Lauren Chernoff I'm the Leesburg district representative for the all new nine school board members so we are getting our feet on the ground this first month and I have prepared some remarks I'm not so great off the cuff yet so I'll work on it but I'm humbled and honored to have been elected to the school board and even more honored to be the LEAF liaison many of you know I have served on this

[00:03:05] committee for the last year and a half as the Tolbert Elementary representative. So when it came time to be assigned to committees, I definitely advocated to be the liaison for this one and I thank our chair for allowing me to do so. Before coming to the school board, I was a public educator for 16 years. I taught kindergarten and first grade in Fairfax County and then I was a literacy coach here in LCPS at the district and most recently at the school level at Guilford Elementary until I was elected this November and had to resign. I am also a parent of a middle schooler and an elementary schooler here in LCPS. My experience at the school level and involvement as a parent

[00:03:43] in the community is what motivated me to run for school board as I felt our leadership at the highest levels was somewhat disconnected from the actual needs of our schools and community. It is the same reason that I joined LEAF. I have a unique perspective of coming straight from our LCPS classrooms to this role. I have also been active in the community, serving on my PTA, the Advocacy for Youth Commission for the Board of Supervisors, and of course, LEAF.

[00:04:08] If we want to have our voices heard, we have to do our part. And I thank you for being here and doing your part to have a voice for our kids and for their schools. My hope is to be a leader that helps to bridge the divide and heal, and I pledge to take feedback from authentic stakeholders and to use it to drive my decisions. I know this partnership will help provide that. I already knew Sherry and I'm excited about what she is bringing to this committee as chair. Even with the setup tonight, you'll see we're divided in a different way. It shows the priorities of this group are being heard. The hope is to move away from just receiving information to having actual

[00:04:47] authentic dialogue about important topics driven by your interests. I mentioned to Sherry earlier today. I desire for this to be a true partnership. I plan to be engaged and listening always and please do not hesitate to reach out or ask questions. Each meeting I will plan to come early and stay late if that if you need to connect. Thank you so much for your time and for serving our schools through this committee. I'm excited about what the next few months hold and I will do a little update on what's going on with the board if that's okay. Is that good now? So like I said we're hitting the ground running. It's been a very busy

[00:05:21] six weeks. Budget season was super fun and awesome, and it was none of those things. We are working really hard to just learn what all of LCPS is. It's interesting to me because I come from this world, so I know our schools, I know our teachers, I know our curriculum, but learning the side that is behind the scenes to make all the things go, especially with operations and some of the larger scale projects that we

have going on has been really fascinating, probably the most exciting part um we did pass the budget last week um and we had some really every school board member had

[00:05:58] different voice and say in the different things that went through so i would encourage you to look at that um personally i am chairing the curriculum and instruction committee which i'm really excited about that's my passion is comes from schools uh and two notable things that we are beginning the journey of talking about if you have interest in them are uh last thursday i reopened the conversation around the grading policy. So 50-30 is back on the table officially as of last Thursday. There's lots of feelings around this policy, good, bad, and otherwise. And so we're

[00:06:32] going to be opening up for some feedback. So be on the lookout for that. As parents, you probably have some feelings about the grading and assessment policy that was rolled out. So please be attuned to that. Also, we're going to be talking about, if there's any teachers in here, the elementary master schedule is something else and the minutes that were assigned to that master schedule last fall and kind of the the trickle-down effect of that impact is definitely another piece of feedback that we are going to be soliciting I'm also on the legislation audit and policy committee and we are working on our collective bargaining resolution which the old board was set to adopt

[00:07:12] but did not quite make it there so it got punted to us we have voted at our first meeting to have a joint committee that's going to have voices from all different parts of people that are really for collective bargaining as well as teachers that have apprehensions towards collective bargaining as well as some other different staff types of people that are going to be impacted by it so that committee has been formed and that will be they will begin that work towards working towards a resolution and then I just wanted to do a quick pitch because we are going to be talking about fentanyl and addiction and some of the overdose issues tonight.

[00:07:50] You're going to have some conversations about that. I am excited about the proactivity that is going on behind the scenes, and we're really blessed to have Ms. Evans with us tonight, as she is the expert. But we are planning a visit in March to a recovery school.

[00:08:05] So Senator Perry put forward on the state floor a bill that's going to help bring some money to Loudoun to build a recovery school, which is really exciting. And we are going to go visit a recovery school that already exists as a school board and with some of our colleagues to just kind of start the process of thinking about that.

[00:08:25] So I wanted you to know that that's in the works. Please, again, reach out. You can get us through the website, through Let's Talk. We each have Facebook pages. I try really hard every week to put out a very clear recap of my week and the things that are covered.

[00:08:42] I do board meeting recaps. Every single thing that we're doing is out on that page. So I encourage you to engage, engage that way. Transparency and accountability starts with us. What? Oh, she doesn't? I apologize.

[00:09:01] Thank you for telling me. Almost all of us have a Facebook page. So, and other means to reach us. So thank you so much for being here. And I've taken way too much time per usual. Thank you, Lauren.

[00:09:19] I appreciate you taking the time. I'm excited about the partnership that we will have as LEAF, as an advisory group, continues to evolve. We do have two vacancies on the LEAF committee.

[00:09:35] We have vice chair of membership and vice chair of communications. And I'm sure we'll have lots of volunteers to fill these two positions and join Erica and I. We're a very exciting group to be with, so I'm just going to pitch it out there.

[00:09:52] We will first take nominations for the office of vice chair of membership. We ask that the candidates who wish to nominate themselves be prepared to speak. To your interest and qualifications, we will take nominations from the floor.

[00:10:12] We don't bite. Crickets, I knew it.

[00:10:24] Yes. Maybe you could just do a quick recap of what is expected. Just real quick. Thank you. A quick recap of the responsibilities of the chair of membership. Yes, thank you. Would you like that? Joan, do you have? Oh, it's up on the board.

[00:10:42] Great. So up on the board here, the responsibilities are to help with outreach annually to school, parental organizations, and to submit nominees to the school board, help keep a record of member attendance in accordance with the bylaws, provide new member orientation, and discharge any duties delegated to him or her by the chair. So we are coming up on the time of year where we're going to need to recruit members if you are not going to serve next year, or I don't know. Joan, do you know where we're at with membership currently? I don't mean to put you on the spot. That's okay.

[00:11:19] hi everybody yeah and membership update i think we have 67 schools with members right now a little down from last year we are going to open the recruitment and membership process a little earlier this year so we'll be communicating with principals in early march and asking for them to start renominating and nominating folks who can sit on the leaf alliance really not that bad i

[00:11:52] promise. Thank you. Peg, great. Um, so, well, if we don't have anywhere else, Christina, we're good, right? Okay. So we, all right. So would you please state your name for the record and your

[00:12:26] nomination? Good evening. My name is, uh, Mital Gandhi. I did membership last year and, uh, I know everything that needs to be done and we look forward to trying to get as many members as we can thank you i really appreciate you volunteering um let's see so may i have a motion to nominate as the new position as the vice chair of membership i make a motion okay second all right all those in

[00:13:03] favor all right motion carried thank you i appreciate it i'm just thank you so much one down one to go all right so do we have anyone who's interested in vice chair of communications so we asked again that candidates who wish to nominate themselves be prepared to speak to your interest and qualifications we will take nominations from the floor again the responsibilities of the vice chair of communications is up on the board is anyone interested in the

[00:13:43] vice chair of communications position. It's not a huge time commitment, I can tell you that. Can I ask a quick question?

[00:13:59] Absolutely. Is that for the remainder of this school year or the 24 year? It's the remainder of this year. That's a good question. It's not taking minutes. It's not taking minutes. Okay, my name is Kathy Summers.

[00:14:16] I'm with Emmerich Elementary. I've sat as the communications VP for them. I'm the communications chair for my church, And I would be willing to sit as the vice chair for communications for the remainder of this school year. Thank you, Kathy. Anybody else interested?

[00:14:40] All right. So we will move. Who would like to make a motion to nominate Kathy Summers? Thank you. That was quickly. All those in favor?

[00:14:56] All those opposed? Motion carried. I appreciate you both very much. Thank you. I promise it won't be that bad. Okay. So thanks to our newest officers elected to serve for the remainder of the 2023-2024 school year.

[00:15:17] I really do appreciate your willingness to serve. You're welcome to join us up here if you would like. Or if you don't prefer that, that's fine as well. And I'm going to pass it next to Erica to discuss recruitment for 2024-2025.

[00:15:35] Thank you, Sherry. And as Jones said, we're going to start recruitment early this year. Staff will begin contacting principals in March to discuss LEAF participation and representation for the 24-25 school year. If you want to continue as the LEAF representative or share that opportunity with your PTA, PTO, and school community, go ahead and do that. The more people that want to return, if you go ahead and let us know, then that lets them know who they don't have to recruit. As a reminder, your term as a LEAF representative is for one year. However,

[00:16:15] there isn't a limit to how many years you can serve. So if you have done it last year and this year, you're welcome to come back. Just let your principal know if you want to remain your school's representative. Principals submit names annually, whether they're new or repeat members. Just a side note, if there's anyone I'm trying to recruit for my position at my school, and I have suggested that the two people who are interested come and attend as a member of the public so they can get a sense of the format and how it works.

[00:16:48] So you might want to make that suggestion. Are there any questions? Okay, I'm going to turn the meeting over to Joan. Hi, everybody.

[00:17:10] Thank you for being flexible and sitting in your new arrangements tonight. We really heard your feedback at the last meeting that you had some topics you wanted to tackle by level, so appreciate that. But we wanted to bring a new concept to this group first. We are looking at, as a division, finally improving our website.

[00:17:30] It's long overdue, and it has been on my list since the first day I got here. So one of the first things we wanted to do as we consider this redesign on the website is to come to our parents and say, what's your feedback? What's your interest in this? What can we do better? What do you use it for?

[00:17:46] So tonight we're using a platform called Thought Exchange. It's very simple to use. I have to put my glasses on to read the instructions. So we do want to get your thoughts and feedback. It won't take a long time. You can use the QR code there to access.

[00:18:02] You can go directly on your phone or computer to the tejoin.com note that you see above. You can go directly to that URL. What you'll see there is an opportunity to sign in through a couple of very basic questions. And then you'll be asked the question on the screen.

[00:18:20] What areas of our division and school websites do you think work well? need improvement, or could be added to to enhance your user experience. So this feedback would include both your school website and the division website. You'll be asked to then put in a few thoughts, observations, and then to rate others' thoughts. So you can see an idea that you didn't think of yourself and go, wow, that's super

important. Let me rate that. So this process will take about five minutes. Is anybody able to access everything they need? Are we ready

[00:18:54] to go oh 13 participants so i can see everybody signing in 16 we want to get well past 16 here we'll give everybody a minute to use the qr code or sign into the url and then you don't need the hyphens in that code it's just 130-641-589 up to 22 give everybody a minute to finally finalize

[00:19:20] and click through four are we close anybody having terrible difficulty we can help you with 30. All right, we're getting there. All right, so Kim, I'll ask you to start the timer and advance.

[00:19:49] There you go. Leave it on there. And the thought exchange should be open. You should be able to add some thoughts and rate others. Do you see that? Kim, you can go to the next slide.

[00:20:45] We're approaching our halfway point in time. If you haven't taken the time to rate others' thoughts,

[00:21:56] you can move on from entering observations to rating others' thoughts. About average is 20 thoughts per user so feel free to share rate as many thoughts that have been shared as you like

[00:22:08] y'all are doing a great job so far we have over 40 thoughts shared and 357 ratings we have about

[00:23:30] a minute left so make sure you rate as many thoughts as you can okay our timer has run out

[00:24:50] thank you all for participating nobody seemed intimidated everybody jumped right in that's great hey kim would you advance to the next slide and here we'll see the uh the thoughts that rose to the top so we're really mindful that we wanted to show you immediate feedback but one of the questions this group has constantly asked is what the heck are you doing with our feedback so here's your feedback right back at you so I love this platform because it shows us immediately what really rose to the top in case anybody as is asking themselves the same question I did this platform has an AI generator in the back so any thoughts that you all have shared

[00:25:28] are randomly generated in random order so it's not like the first thought that was shared would automatically get the most ratings right that wouldn't be quite right so it's a remarkable platform and here um and no surprise the the top rated thought is calendars between individual school websites and the district website are confusing yes i agree sometimes i get my answers for random other schools rather than from my school or district yeah so that received a 4.2 16 people rated that thought um and i don't know we've seen the other couple of top rated thoughts there and I don't know if anyone has um wants to share any observations about something they rated

[00:26:07] or something they they thought of I'm not surprised to see calendars two of the top three rated here that's super important to everybody all right well we appreciate your feedback uh the next step this uh you all are the first folks to use this platform and we came to our parents first with this website um we will be opening um this opportunity up for public feedback as well from all our parents and students but y'all are the first audience I'll be talking with the principals tomorrow doing the same sort of exercise and on the back end we can certainly see what was most

[00:26:46] important to students what's most important to parents what's most important to staff so we can break down that analysis on the back end and really design a website that works for everybody in the coming months so we appreciate your feedback and I will turn it back over to the chair thank you thank you Joan thanks to everyone for participating next we're going to engage in our collaborative conversation

activities discussion so as you notice when you arrived we're sitting according to elementary middle and high school level an arrangement requested by the membership specifically

[00:27:24] to focus on the safety and security conversation if you can see here that we're a little unbalanced and so if you have more than one child say you're in elementary, but you have a child in middle or high school, if you could possibly move to one of the other groups to balance the groups out, that would be great. You don't have to move right this minute, but if you can go ahead and do that. If you've noticed, we really were trying to take membership feedback and restructure how our meetings look so that we can have more of

[00:28:02] collaborative conversation versus feeling like you're just taking in information so that's the change and so I'll be interested to hear your feedback on how you like this new format as we move forward to the end of the year we do have three presenters with us this evening and we really appreciate their time we have Jennifer Evans who's the director of student mental health Services, whom we met in November. We have John Clark, Director of Safety and Security, and Jeff Roundsley, one of the Directors of Teaching and Learning. So our topics for discussion this evening

[00:28:40] are fentanyl, school safety, and the LCPS instructional framework. So again, this is a different format to facilitate conversation, and your input is requested. Rather than a presentation, we will have group conversations. You can ask questions, offer feedback, and connect with our presenters and your other group members. The presenters will start with one group, and then we will rotate every 15 minutes. You will not need to move. The presenters will move. Each group

[00:29:18] will have a note taker to capture our conversations, and then we will provide a three-minute wrap-up warning, one minute, then a prompt for presenters to shift. Are there any questions about tonight's format? Do we have anyone else who can or wants to move to a different table? High school's looking a little lonely over there. I don't know if we have any other parents who have high school students. I'm not there yet. Yeah, you're not there quite yet. Okay, thank you so much. I really

[00:29:55] appreciate all your flexibility all right any other questions before we get started all right

[00:36:21] great thank you just to let everyone know you have about three minutes left in this group three

[00:42:44] minutes and then we'll rotate everyone has one minute left in this group it's the time to get

[00:44:56] your final questions answered you can support uh submit any feedback as well one minute left

[00:45:02] thank you everyone we're going to wrap up these first groups and ask our presenters to head to

[00:46:00] their next group. Jen Evans, you'll head over to high school. Mr. Clark, John Clark, you'll head down to elementary school. John Clark, you'll head down to elementary. And Jeff Roundsley, you'll be in middle school now. As a reminder, you can always submit any additional questions and feedback through our typical feedback channels listed on your one pager through the QR code or the URL.

[00:52:58] Just coming online to let you know you have three minutes left in this group. Three minutes.

[00:59:23] One minute left, friends. One minute in this group to ask your final questions.

[01:02:02] Thanks, everyone. Time to wrap up this group and move to your final group.

[01:02:42] As a reminder, the QR code and the URL are on the screen to provide any feedback or follow-up questions that you have. And we're going to ask our presenters to move to their final group now. So, Mr.

Clark, you're going to middle school, Jeff is going to high school, and Jen Evans is going to elementary.

[01:03:02] Hey, y'all. Three minutes remaining in this final group. Three more minutes of discussion.

[01:18:44] One minute remaining. One minute for your final questions with your subject matter expert at your

[01:18:49] table. Time to be winding up those collaborative conversations at the tables and thanking

[01:20:16] our special guests tonight. I'm going to call our chair back up. And real quick, I'd like to extend a personal thank you to our directors who have joined us tonight. John Clark, Director of safety and security jen evans director of student mental health services and jeff rounsey director of whatever teaching and learning all right thank y'all all right we have a um again thank you to

[01:20:54] our presenters um we have our last information includes um some several just housekeeping item items to touch on um we wanted to remind you of the superintendent's community listening sessions several sessions are happening over the next several weeks including we've got loudon valley on the February 29th, Riverside, March 6th, Rockridge on March 14th, and information is also included on the LCPS website. We will continue to share feedback opportunities about policies, the instructional framework, and other items that come up. So we did have the opportunity,

[01:21:30] Joan and I, to meet with Dr. Spence about how the feedback we've had for membership, how we would like this advisory community to function so that we can one of the suggestions was to we wanted to pivot to how we were running our meetings again that's why there was a change so we're really interested in hearing how you feel about how we're changing the structure of the meetings I think we have a great opportunity here we have a new board we have a new superintendent So I think there's a lot of really great opportunity for our voices to be heard.

[01:22:07] We also talked to Dr. Spence about closing the feedback loop on policies. I know we've heard a lot about we put policy about when it comes out and are they hearing our feedback and how is that making an impact. So we are working towards those things. It is really important that you are sharing when looking at the policy review data for the 25 policies we have shared thus far.

[01:22:28] We have 11 LEAF members have contributed, 31 comments. As policy and feedback opportunities arise, we hope that LEAF participation will increase because we can see where feedback is coming from. That concludes our agenda items.

[01:22:44] The next meeting will include information about all-in-Virginia tutoring, support opportunities. As always, we welcome your thoughts and feedback in advance to help staff share information that is useful to your communities. take your opportunity to use the feedback form and share about anything about what happened for our meeting tonight do you like the structure do you you know is it do you what changes are you looking for we really do look at your feedback forms and want to make this a really impactful

[01:23:16] committee so before we have move on is there any new business anybody have any questions yes I don't want to hold everybody up, you know, with this, but I think it needs to be addressed.

[01:23:34] And, you know, perhaps by this committee, if you remember the first meeting of the year, once Dr. Spence talked to us about the attendance concerns. Yes. I don't know if you remember, I had

specifically mentioned to him about the, you know, kids' immune systems are still recovering and there's a lot of kids who are out sick and parents are more willing to keep their kids home when they're sick.

[01:23:55] And LCPS Today actually just sent an email out saying if your kid's sick, keep them home. Well, at the same time, they're sending, like, threatening letters to parents. I have, like, tons of parents reporting to me that they're getting threatening letters from their schools at my school and, you know, as the LEAF rep and parents I know from other schools because they know I'm plugged in over here telling me it.

[01:24:14] And then I just got one for my kids as well. Well, if you recall, when I brought this up to Dr. Spence, I said, you know, it would probably be better to take a conservative approach and, you know, not implement anything, watch, see if, you know, kids' immune systems start to improve. And he specifically agreed in this meeting that he said, oh, we're not going to do anything.

[01:24:31] But they clearly are doing something, and I think it warrants being addressed. Sure. That would be something great to include in the feedback form because – I did. Okay. Yeah. Okay. That sounds good. Thank you. Before we adjourn, I also wanted to remind everyone again just to please complete the feedback form.

[01:24:50] If there isn't any other business, thank you so much for coming. And we will see you at our next meeting, which is set for March 18th, 2024 here in this room. Thank you so much for your participation, and we'll see you next time. The meeting's adjourned.



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