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Loudoun County School Board, Loudoun Education Alliance of Families (LEAF) Meeting, Monday, September 16, 2024

Date Monday, September 16, 2024
Place Loudoun County Public Schools / School Board meeting (see BoardDocs / LCPS-TV)
Length 1h 33m (video)

- Official meeting video (Vimeo / LCPS-TV): <https://player.vimeo.com/video/1010067707?rel=0>
- BoardDocs (School Board): <https://go.boarddocs.com/vsba/loudoun/Board.nsf/Public>

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Speech-to-text: whisper.cpp, model large-v3-turbo. Produced 2026-10-21. Each paragraph starts with its time [HH:MM:SS] in the meeting video.

[00:01:05] - All right, welcome everyone. Thank you for attending this evening's meeting. If you haven't already done so, please sign in using the QR code at your table or on your note catcher. So I now call this September 16th leave meeting to order.

[00:01:22] I'd like to extend a warm welcome to our 14 new members. Yay, that's exciting. On one of our leadership team members will reach out to you this week to help you get acclimated and share last month's highlights and answer any questions that you may have, if you have any questions.

[00:01:43] The first item on the agenda is public comment. Leave meetings are open to the public and Loudoun County residents are welcome to attend. However, we ask that attendees refrain from interrupting the meeting's agenda. Per the leave charter bylaws, public comments should address items on the agenda.

[00:01:59] Members of the public who wish to comment may do so at this time. Do we have any public comments this evening? Doesn't look like it, so moving on. So last week when we met as a committee, we discussed the timeliness of addressing the topic of safety in our schools.

[00:02:19] It makes my heart heavy when I think about the unfortunate necessity of talking with our children about their safety at school. We thought it might be good to hear from John Clark, the LCPS Safety and Security Director. We're really fortunate to have him with us on short notice to address the group briefly this evening.

[00:02:36] He's going to provide us with an update. And we will have time for just a couple questions before we return to our planned agenda, but we will also be able to put your questions, if it doesn't get answered tonight, in the feedback form, and we will make sure we get those answered, okay? All right, thank you, Mr. Clark.

[00:02:52] Thank you. Good evening, everyone. So, crazy week last week, right? I think we all felt it, especially you all. It was a very stressful week for all of us in LCPS, for our law enforcement partners, and I know especially for you all.

[00:03:11] As a parent myself, I completely empathize with your perspective and what you all are going through when you see that constant threat stream like we saw last week. And you're asking yourself every night that question, should I send my kid to school tomorrow, right?

[00:03:30] That's the question that's top of mind. First, I want to say that Dr. Spence will never open a school if he believes kids are in danger. That will never happen, okay? But what I want to do tonight is give you a peek behind the curtain and kind of talk about how we address these threats in real time, okay?

[00:03:53] So first, I want to give you an idea of the volume that we were dealing with last week. And as you all know, this went on all week, right? But during the busiest 36-hour period, we dealt with 43 gaggle alerts, 21 safe-to-talk tips, 14 different emails from principals, and 13 concerned citizen calls, okay? All, just about

[00:04:23] every one of them was in relation to this threat right here or a variation of this threat. And I'm going to pass this out so you all can see it firsthand, okay? So you're going to see this threat. There were three parts to it. And again, there were a couple variations, a couple spins on as we progressed throughout the week, but we were very confident early on when this first came to

[00:05:00] our attention that this was created out of state and was not meant for LCPS, and we don't believe any of our schools were targeted. That said, we thoroughly investigate and run down every single threat or even the mere rumor of a threat, all right? We treat all threats real until proven otherwise. And that's what we did last week. So how do we do it? We have a 24-7 security

[00:05:35] operations center or SOC as we call it. Anyone heard of it? Show of hands. Okay. So they manage everything we are doing security wise here in LCPS. And again, 24-7, 365. So when we get wind of a threat, our SOC has what we consider, we call a bat phone, right? They pick up a phone.

[00:06:01] It's an automatic ring right to the 911 center. They get on that phone. They communicate the threat to the 911 center in real time, again, regardless of the time of night. The 911 center immediately takes that information and begins an investigation.

[00:06:21] So if I get wind of a threat right now, I'm contacting our SOC. They are, in turn, contacting the 911 center. And within minutes, they are going to have units going to start that investigation. Whether it's to interview a suspect, a victim, a witness, whatever it may be, they are going to initiate that investigation into that threat or that rumor of a threat immediately.

[00:06:48] And that's what we did last week. So when you look at all of the threats that were coming in last week, every threat that came in after school let out on one day, up until school was about to start the next day, we ran to the ground and successfully mitigated.

[00:07:09] And that's why all of our schools were open last week. We had thoroughly resolved and mitigated every single threat that came to our attention that evening and that night. Now, again, we were chasing our tail all week, so it was a constant battle every day going out and doing it again on a daily basis.

[00:07:30] But that's what we do. And as a reminder, well, first of all, the SOC, once they initiate that call with law enforcement, they then keep all of the LCPS stakeholders updated as to the status of the investigation.

[00:07:47] And then ultimately, the outcome of the investigation. And they do that again in real time. So everyone is getting those updates. Everyone is on that same page. And as a reminder, we have plans, policies, protocols, procedures that are in place here every day in LCPS to deal with security incidents in our schools.

[00:08:13] That's why we do lockdown drills. That's why we do tabletop exercises at every single school every single year. That's why every LCPS employee must take a course entitled Preparing for the Violent Intruder.

[00:08:31] So we are prepared to deal with these incidents as they arise in our school. So we're going to take questions at the end. My ask of you is, as parents, to go back and talk to your kids. And I know this is easier said than done, right?

[00:08:47] Instead of forwarding rumors of threats on to their friends, come to that trusted adult, you, the principal, law enforcement. Bring that information to those folks' attention so we can properly investigate it and squash it before it comes viral.

[00:09:07] That's our goal. And again, I know it's easier said than done, right? But if you could please do that, that would be huge for us. All right? So with that said, I thank you for your patience last week. I know it was a trying week.

[00:09:23] I'll thank you in advance for your patience the rest of this school year. It's a nonstop process here dealing with these threats that come into the school system. Okay? So I don't know if we have time for questions, but if we do, a couple questions.

[00:10:13] Great question. So mitigate means it was thoroughly investigated, and law enforcement has determined that it is not a threat to our school. And then in terms of educating our students and helping our administrators prepare to deal with this every day, it's a constant battle, right?

[00:10:31] they have to inform and educate kids. Hey, this is a criminal offense. When you falsely spread rumors or make idle threats, that is a criminal offense. Okay. It is prosecutable. And so that's an education piece that I know our SROs play a big role in, school security officers play a role

[00:10:52] in that. And then of course, administrators. Yeah.

[00:11:36] So that's not always possible. We do strive to provide as much information as we can. We are bound by FERPA protections, privacy issues, school discipline issues. So there are some boundaries there. In terms of the actual messaging itself, I may let Joan tackle that question. I don't really get too involved in

that in terms of the nitty-gritty. But yeah, we try to give as much information as we can without violating some

[00:12:13] of those other aspects that we deal with on a daily basis. Yes. Yes.

[00:12:35] So again, I can't discuss specific discipline. There are guidelines in our student code of conduct and each violation has a consequence. For this particular scenario here, yes, students out of state have been arrested for creating these threats. And we have had students in LCPS arrested for making threats

[00:13:02] in the past. I can't answer that as long as it was an excused absence. I'm sure you'll be okay,

[00:13:20] but i can't answer that yes yeah and i'll say for this one in particular so many schools were

[00:14:12] involved we couldn't name them all there was no way but again i will echo what i said at the top of this dr spence is not going to open a school if he thinks it's going to jeopardize the kids period so if the school's open that day you can rest assured that we have run the threat into the ground and feel comfortable that it has been mitigated to the fullest extent possible fair

[00:14:38] Fair enough. Okay. Thank you very much, folks. Appreciate it.

[00:15:09] Absolutely. Yeah, we preach it every day. In fact, when we do have students that are exhibiting that see something, say something principle, I go out and I give them an award. So we try to recognize that and reward it and reinforce it every day. But like I said earlier, it's a constant education from teachers, from administrators to those students, and making them aware is it's not just a joke. When you forward that message on. That is not a joke. That is a criminal violation, okay, and you need to be aware

[00:15:42] of that. Thank you, Mr. Clark. We appreciate your time. All right, moving on to our action items. The August 19th, 2024 meeting minutes are available on the LEAF website, and we've provided a few copies here for those who need a review. I hope everyone has had a chance to review them in advance, particularly the attendance section. As you may recall, due to technical difficulties, we asked members to sign in manually last time so if you just take a moment to ensure your attendance is correctly reflected and if not please let us know so that we can make that correction

[00:16:21] um i will now entertain a motion to accept the minutes from the august 19th 2024 meeting as submitted thank you we have a motion is there a second thank you we have a second all in favor please say aye all those opposed hearing no opposition the minutes stand approved as submitted we will now move on to information items before we we begin i would like to invite our membership

[00:16:51] chair to provide a brief update on our membership numbers can everybody hear me okay um well good evening everybody i have good news to report on membership since the last meeting we have a net 12 new members even though these were names submitted to the board before i became vice chair for membership i'm going to take full credit for the increase but that is good progress We are gathering, I am gathering information, email addresses, names, and so forth to be able to reach out to principals and PTA members to fill the gaps that we do have.

[00:17:31] And we do have plenty of them. Our goal is to reach 75% of schools represented. Right now, we're at 44, which is 43%. So we've got our work cut out for us. That leaves 58 gaps. A quick breakdown of the total numbers by type of school.

[00:17:51] Our membership rate is 38% for elementary schools. We have 24 out of 63. It's 67% for middle schools, 12 out of 18, and 33% for high schools, 6 out of 18. So we see where our gaps are, and I want to

work with all of you and the leadership board to fill them.

[00:18:16] I have district-by-district breakdowns, but I need to refine my numbers, so I won't share those this meeting, but I will on the next. But I have a couple calls to action where I could use your help. One is to identify alternates to yourselves.

[00:18:32] Ask your PTA presidents, ask a friend, just to be your backup so that in the event you can't attend, you can ask them to attend, somebody who is available and inclined to want to come and do the work that we do, providing feedback for the county.

[00:18:49] And the other thing is, what I'd like to do is identify one volunteer from each district, except for Dulles South I'll be the I'll be the captain for Dulles South because that's the district from which I hail but just somebody to work with me to help populate the membership for your district this is very low friction low time commitment you'll be copied on emails and just kind of help me follow up with schools in your district where you might know somebody whether it's the PTA president the principal or otherwise I could use your help so I will be emailing the district groups um just to identify someone and and ask for your help that way i'll arm you with

[00:19:28] all the collateral the one pagers the email language you need um i plan to in the next between now and the next meeting issue the first uh solicitations to principals and pta presidents i'll copy you on those and then we can kind of go uh into ad hoc uh mode from there uh but that's my update thank you great thanks brad he is getting our membership up and up and up 100 percent right all right so at this time I would like to welcome Lauren Shurnoff

[00:20:01] our leaf school board representative to share a brief school board update hi guys welcome back if you're coming back and welcome to our new members we're glad to have you I will try and keep it brief as I there's a lot going on and I want to thank the leadership of this committee for bringing and staff for bringing John Clark to the table for safety we had a meeting last Thursday and everybody was like that's what's heavy on parents hearts let's get that to leaf and I'm you know these are the kinds of changes that have been made that I think show a responsiveness to the things that are on your hearts and minds it certainly was on mine just

[00:20:39] as an additional follow-up if you're just marinating on things and have more questions I personally am sitting down with the safety leadership team on Friday I have received a myriad of concerns suggestions and emails and I am consolidating all of that into a follow-up meeting so that I can get answers and then follow back up with constituents you may not be Leesburg but I'm having the meeting so feel free to reach out I definitely encourage you to do so it keeps us vigilant and we must be vigilant for our students safety so please feel free to send me those a few updates for the full board and committee since we last met I wanted to make you

[00:21:16] aware since we have I personally have talked so much about our committee work we're adding a new committee we voted on that last meeting as a school board it's a performance monitoring committee it will be established hopefully here very soon and I've been vocal about my support for this it's basically a data monitoring committee so whether it's a new initiative that we're putting out or looking at student data we're gonna be making that part of a routine process so that the board is constantly aware of where we stand as a division and I've said it before but educators use data to drive their instruction school board should use data to drive the division. It just makes sense to me and so I'm

[00:21:55] excited about that getting up and going and we'll be running probably policy through that as well. Additionally I just want to put this on your radar and I don't want anyone to take a deep breath but the Student Service Committee last Thursday met for a special work session on the special permissions process. I don't know how involved you are personally with the special permissions process but it's very unique here in Loudon in fact we are one of the only counties that I know of that do special permission at the level that we do and the committee is simply asking questions at this point and starting to look at

[00:22:33] some potential changes to the policy to the timelines to the criteria that would impact special permission going forward so you will probably be hearing about that in the coming weeks and that will now be a item of information on their October meeting they meet this week also but they didn't have enough time to pull all that together and then the last thing I just wanted a reminder especially for Leesburg folks but anyone who's interested Francis Hazel Reed renaming Town Hall is tomorrow night at 7 o'clock p.m. but the location is smart's mill so it's a little like confusing it's open to anyone in the county and anyone in the

[00:23:12] community as we kind of explore whether the school names reflect LCPS's values and that town hall is again for all to come and share what they feel about the renaming process and it's only certain schools that are going to go through the process and Francis Hazel Reed is the first elementary school and then Mercer Middle will be the next and we will also be forming committees that will look at renaming renaming committees can submit new names but they can also submit that the names stay the same so that is still on the table it's not definitely changing I'll cover more

[00:23:48] of the policy work in my small group but thank you for listening all right thanks Lauren appreciate it all right so next due to time because I want us to have as much time as possible in our collaborative conversations if we have time at the end I want you if anybody has any ideas about how they are sharing out information and gathering feedback from their communities whether others through their PTA meeting.

[00:24:16] If you have found something to be really successful where you've gathered feedback, we would love to hear those ideas. But if we have time at the end, we'll circle back to that, and if not, we'll talk about that at the next meeting. So what I'd like to do now is we've done this, I believe, at the last two years, but we want to gather your feedback on the topics that you would like to address over the course of the year.

[00:24:39] So, in the past few years, the members have provided valuable insights into topics important to their school communities, and we want to hear from you again. This year, we're asking you to use your phones to provide your community's hot topics. Your input will guide our discussions at future meetings.

[00:24:57] So, at your tables, you'll notice there's a green QR code. If you would scan it to access the response form and list up to five key topics relevant to your community. These can include urgent issues, common challenges, or other areas of concern.

[00:25:16] If you need something just to kind of get you started, there's some questions to consider, I think, on the next slide, right? Or no, maybe not. Okay, I'll just tell you what the questions are. How about that? What are current challenges or opportunities in your community or the division that we should discuss in LEAF?

[00:25:35] Are there any recent developments or emerging issues that require immediate attention in your communities? what key decision points or policy considerations should we prioritize on the agenda

this is a really good activity to inform how we move forward with the speakers that we bring in for our collaborative conversations so i'm going to give you about five minutes to go ahead and put your feedback in again give me your top five topic areas that would benefit your community's best yes question

[00:26:13] you can fill it out now and if you think about it and want to do it later that's fine as well we look at all the feedback so that's fine too well after um when we meet next time we'll look at those and we prioritize them and then that's how we decide who our speakers are so really probably i'd say what jones friday what is today monday friday fr by friday yeah because we we plan out our meetings we try to plan as far ahead as we can it's hard to get speakers um so we want to make sure we get them on the books as soon as possible.

[00:26:47] So, yeah. So, if you just have it by Friday, that would be great, but I'll give you a few minutes now if there's something top of mind so that you can put right in on the feedback form. Any other questions?

[00:26:58] Okay.

[00:30:53] All right. Thank you for taking the time to share, and again, you have up till Friday to put those in, and we'll look at the feedback. We look forward to seeing your feedback and discussing it at our next meeting. Now, before we engage in tonight's collaborative conversation activity, I'd like to invite Renee Dawson to introduce one of the discussions for this evening.

[00:31:12] Her introduction will help guide the conversation during our rotations.

[00:31:16] All right, Ms. Dawson.

[00:34:19] Thanks, Renee. All right, so we're going to begin our collaborative conversation activity discussion. So like last time, we're going to have three groups. So if we could, just so that we're even, these two tables can stay, but this table right here, if you guys could move over this way and we'll have you guys join this group over here so that we have three groups.

[00:34:45] Is that okay? And I, yeah, go that way. Sorry, I felt like that wasn't a very good explanation. You can join groups, and yeah. And then, so we have three discussions tonight.

[00:35:02] While you're moving, I'll tell you about those. Carrie Williams from LCPS Ombuds Office will be one. Mrs. Dawson and Mrs. Chernoff for policy. We're gonna rotate every 15 minutes. If we run behind, we'll shorten it to 10 minutes.

[00:35:19] You guys will remain seated and speakers will rotate. I need a couple to go over there. Yeah, okay, perfect. Right.

[00:35:45] Okay, and I'll rotate as well. I can take a few notes down. Well, I'd like to hear what Renee and...

[00:36:03] Okay, I'll start with training.

[00:45:37] Excuse the interruption. We have five more minutes in our groups. Five more minutes.

[00:50:21] We'll ask that each group start to wrap up. We have about 45 seconds left in our group.

[00:56:28] Good evening.

[01:02:30] Pardon the interruption. We have five minutes left in this group. Five minutes.

[01:06:58] We have one minute to wrap up. One minute.

[01:08:29] As they say in volleyball, it's time to rotate. Thank you all. We're going to change up the groups now.

[01:20:07] Excuse the interruption. You have five minutes left in your final rotation. Five minutes left.

[01:24:39] We have one minute to wrap up. One minute to finish up your collaborative conversations.

[01:25:51] All right. Thank you to everyone who participated in our discussions. Thank you to our presenters. We really appreciate your time. At our October meeting, we will have Superintendent Dr. Aaron Spence, and we are going to have Dr. Daniel Smith, the LCPS Chief of Staff, just to give you a heads up.

[01:26:13] That's what's happening, some of the things that are happening in October. I continue to encourage you to engage in some two-way communication with your communities. If you know of a school in your area without LEAF representatives, consider sharing how important it is to join LEAF.

[01:26:30] You can reach out to your principals or to your PTA presidents, whether through an email or a phone call or even a quick conversation. Before we wrap up, I'd love to hear your feedback. We always read the feedback from the link on this form here.

[01:26:49] So right here, you can see where you can sign in for attendance and then meeting feedback are your QR codes. So those are always on the note catcher. So we always read the meeting feedback. had we only had three pieces of feedback last time so we would love to see more that would be great one will be the hot topics for sure and then as a note the feedback included from last time is that we do take notes on our collaborative conversations and the staff does those notes and then there's a recap summary provided from each meeting that is sent out to you so if you're

[01:27:27] new know that those that that will be coming and that's something that the staff generates and they will send to our membership one other question that I have is we don't share your emails among each other but in talking about planning and communication and transparency and all of that we were wondering if if there's anyone who is not comfortable sharing their email with just the executive committee so that would be everyone that sits up here for planning purposes if you

[01:28:02] would put that in the feedback form we will not the staff will not share your email with us okay so if you do not want your email staff shared with the executive and it's only email it's not phone number anything like that please let us know in the feedback form and we will make sure that is not shared okay now moving on to new business I know we only have a little bit of time is there any new business to discuss before we adjourn no again i thank you all for your time and i'm participating this was a great meeting our next meeting is scheduled for october 21st

[01:28:38] in this room and thank you for your participation we will now adjourn the meeting oh and pick one of these i forgot there's a guidance directory for the school so pick pick this up on your way out



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