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## Loudoun County Public Schools, FY27 School Board Budget Work Session and Public Hearing, Thursday, January 29, 2026

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Speech-to-text: whisper.cpp, model large-v3-turbo. Produced 2026-10-12. Each paragraph starts with its time [HH:MM:SS] in the meeting video.

**[00:00:35]** Good evening. I call to order this January 29th, 2026 Loudoun County School Board fiscal year 2027 operating budget work session. This evening, we'll start with our disclosures. At this time, I'll start. 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

**[00:01:11]** benefits as an LCPS employee these benefits however affect thousands of employees well in excess of the statutory three employees whose interest 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 vice chair Donahue thank you madam chair 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 employee salaries, the budget, and or health insurance, and any other discussion that may include or affect salary and benefits for LCPS employees.

**[00:01:50]** Specifically, my spouse, my minor children, and I are enrolled in LCPS health insurance that may be affected by any potential changes to employee salaries, the budget, and or health insurance.

Additionally, my sister-in-law is an LCPS employee who does not reside with me and is not dependent on me. These subjects include thousands of employees well in excess of the statutory three employees whose interest may be affected of Which my spouse my minor children my sister-in-law and 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. Mrs. Griffiths Thank you madam chair as a member of the Latin County School Board

[00:02:28] 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 while in excess of the statutory three employees whose interests may be If also affected of which I am included I can and will participate fairly objectively in the in in the public's interest This disclosure will be reflected in the public records of the clerk of the school board for five years. Thank you

[00:03:08] Ms. LaBelle. Thank you madam chair 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.

[00:03:37] In addition, as a former LCPS employee, I as well as my spouse receive Medicare Advantage insurance benefits through LCPS. These benefits, however, affect thousands of employees well in excess of the statutory three employees whose interests may also be affected, of which my spouse and I are included.

[00:03:56] 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. Chernoff? Thank you, Madam Chair. 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.

[00:04:24] 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 We'll now move on to the next item on our agenda item 3 our public hearing Thank you for engaging with the school board through the public comment process.

[00:04:55] The school board welcomes comments from Loudoun County residents and believes that strong community engagement and outreach are important components of a successful school system. As a reminder, tonight's public comments should be limited to the subject of tonight's public hearing and work session, which is the proposed fiscal year 27 operating budget.

[00:05:15] Time limit. Speakers must limit comments to the time allotted. Based on the number of speakers in the agenda this evening, all speakers have been allotted two minutes each for public comment. Please be advised that speakers who miss their time slot will not be called at a later time. Decorum and civility.

[00:05:32] All audience members shall maintain civility, decorum, and respect for the functioning and dignity of the school board at all times. Please remain seated unless arriving, departing, speaking at the podium, or during a break. Violations of civility, decorum, and respect include shouting, heckling, jeering, applause, or other noise which disrupts or delays the meeting.

[00:05:56] Obstructing speakers from being able to see the school board and vice versa. Interrupting speakers. Attempting to speak when not called to do so by the chair. And approaching a speaker or otherwise attempting to intimidate, disparage, or distract a speaker, staff member, or other meeting attendees.

[00:06:13] Speakers should refrain from vulgarity, obscenities, defamation, profanity, and other like breaches of respect, nor may speakers target, criticize, or attack individual students or individual division employees during public comment. As a reminder, School Board Policy 2520 states speakers may not target, criticize, or attack individual students during public comment.

[00:06:35] Speakers should communicate these concerns to their school principal or an appropriate school official. The school board requests that comments on an individual student or employee-related matter not be shared at public meetings where the disclosure could violate applicable confidentiality requirements.

[00:06:52] Speakers should face the dais and direct their comments to the school board. Per LCPS Policy 2520, members of the school board will not answer questions or respond directly to the public during the public comment period. Violations of decorum or civility by any meeting attendee may result in the chair directing staff to remove the attendee from the remainder of the meeting.

[00:07:15] Repeated or persistent violations of decorum or civility by the audience may result in on the decision of the chair, public comment being tabled until a later point in the meeting's agenda, limiting the number of attendees in the meeting room during public comment for safety reasons, or the public comment period ending for the evening.

[00:07:35] Distribution of materials to school board members. Copies of materials for board members should be given to the public information officer in the media box at the back of the boardroom before the start of the meeting. Please provide 12 copies of the materials. Under no circumstances may a speaker approach the dais.

[00:07:52] The public is reminded that access to school board meetings is available through LCPS-TV on Comcast Channel 18 and 1070 HD and Verizon Fios Channel 43. The live stream of the meeting may be viewed on the website.

[00:08:09] We look forward to hearing your comments. We will now start with our virtual public comment. The first speaker is Mayar Abdul-Watif, followed by Morgan Kabuzi. We do not have a virtual speaker by that name.

[00:08:30] Morgan Kabuzi, followed by Jacqueline Porter. Hello, my name is Morgan Kabuzi, and I am a parent. Hello, my name is Morgan Kabuzi, and I am a parent. I am speaking to support Lauren Chernoff's motion to eliminate the current one-to-one ratio of Chromebooks to students in grades K through 2 and replace them with carts. This motion will save the district money going forward as they will no longer need to maintain one Chromebook per students for these grades. Providing Chromebook carts for these grades will still enable the district to use the Chromebooks for necessary testing while hopefully eliminating unnecessary

[00:09:06] screen use in early elementary classrooms. Too often in LCPS, Chromebooks are used for free time play, indoor recess, rewards, and time fillers. As such, they are not being used as educational tools. When Chromebooks are replacing face-to-face interaction with classmates and teachers, as well as student movement and hand-eye coordination activities, they are a detriment to our children's development. By moving Chromebooks to carts only, we will be doing our early elementary students a service by cutting down on unnecessary Chromebook use. I have read LCPS's teachers' tech commentary in local Facebook groups that are great. One teacher wrote, and I quote,

[00:09:45] it makes me cringe how much time my kindergarten students have to spend on their Chromebooks. Personally, I took my elementary-age children out of LCPS last year due to the overuse of Chromebooks in school, and I know a number of parents who have done the same. If this motion were to pass, I would feel much more inclined to send my preschooler to LCPS kindergarten.

[00:10:05] Many school districts cut back on student screen use post-COVID, but Loudoun County Public Schools never did. It is time for LCPS to catch up with the latest findings in educational research and provide our students age-appropriate, hands-on quality education that is happening in other schools around the world. Our students deserve to be taught by their teachers, not kept busy on screens. Thank you. Thank you. Our next speaker is Jacqueline Porter, followed by George Heide. Hi, my name is Jacqueline Porter, and I am a parent of a kindergartner in LCPS. We are a

[00:10:43] military family that bought our house sight unseen due to the reputation that Loudoun County Public School has as a great educational system. However, now that our child is in the educational system, there's disappointment with the use of technology hindering her cognitive and educational development. It is widely known that the excessive screen time and gamifying of learning hinders our children. Lauren Chernoff not only is proposing something that is fiscally responsible but also educationally responsible for our students. It is the job of the board

[00:11:22] to make sure the money is spent well that is in support of our children. I was excited to get an email from a new board member sworn in that states his commitment to making data-driven transparent decisions for what's best for our students and families. Those are his words.

[00:11:44] He is also on the Curriculum and Instructional Committee. I'm excited to see that he is willing to do data-driven decisions that's best for our students and work on the budget. These go hand in hand. My kindergartner tells me that she gets to sit on a computer and stare at a screen while a book is read to her with graphics during the school day while another child is tested.

[00:12:11] Children need to be using physical books with paper and pencil to learn. Knowing that children can use these computers at the age of five in their free time is known to be detrimental to their development. To spend the money from taxpayers irresponsibly on something hurting our children where

other prominent school districts are thriving without we should catch up with the times thank you thank you now we'll move on to in-person public comment our only speaker tonight

[00:12:43] is george heidi i do not well um that concludes the public comment um for this evening thank you all for coming out today and providing your thoughtful comments now we'll move on to item number four fiscal year 27 operating budget work session our first item is 4.01 the fiscal year budget adoption process tonight this will be presented by miss Sharon Willoughby our chief

[00:13:15] financial officer thank you I just have a few slides to walk us through the budget adoption process and what we can expect to occur between now and February 3rd when the school board will take action on the FY 27 C on so as outlined on this slide right now we are

[00:13:54] really you know focusing on what motions we can anticipate for Tuesday I'll just briefly go through the slide so the request would be to send your budget amendments to me by noon on Monday so that our team can cost that out and then we also put it in a motion structure form so for example you may send you could send me an email that I want to delete X position you're gonna get back from me a statement that I move to amend the budget by reducing exposition at you know for a cost savings of so many dollars that way we have consistency with

[00:14:31] our motions and and that it also gives us an opportunity to make sure that there are no other unintended consequences or impacts especially when it comes to positions since we have so many adopted staffing standards that is an area that we are really wanting to look at additionally to maintain a balanced budget any changes to increase the budget should have a corresponding change to decrease the budget and vice versa this can be done all in one motion if you already know something that you also want to reduce or it could be done in two separate motions however you're not bound by that it's just that right now

[00:15:07] the FY20C on that has been presented to the school board is balanced meaning the the expenditures match the revenues and is in line with the county budget guidance so if there was a motion to solely increase the budget without any corresponding reduction and that became the final adopted budget of the school board then we would see an increase in the county transfer request because we still have to adopt a budget that is balanced and so if we don't have a cost savings where we go we're going to go to that county funding line and we're

[00:15:42] going to be asking for additional dollars that would be above their guidance. Similarly there could be a motion to slowly decrease the budget and we could have a budget that is actually less than what the FY27C on is and then the same thing that we would be using the county transfer revenue line to make that adjustment and we would be asking for less dollars from the county. The next bullet is about costing and why we really are asking for for your amendments now and by noon on Monday we do not want to be in the position of trying to perform costing on

[00:16:20] the night of budget adoption it just sets us up for making an error it's you know it's a high-pressure evening to track the motions and make sure that we're remaining balanced and to do costing on the fly is just not not a good practice also once I receive all the motions a list will be provided to the school board chair so that she has a primary document to help facilitate the meeting and know where we're going that night. So I would also just highlight that at this point is really where we

[00:16:58] would transition from budget questions to forming your budget amendment motions. Any questions at this point really should be to help inform crafting any budget amendments you may be looking at for Tuesday evening we do have a packet in the board docs this is I believe our third Q&A packet there were some additional questions that were submitted later today so we will have one more packet that will go out for for Tuesday and then that would be our final packet but again I would

[00:17:33] really emphasize questions at this point should really be focused on helping you shape your amendments and so that our team can really be focused on supporting you in that manner and Sherry I don't know if you're able to advance I don't think my clicker is working thank you so also just emphasizing that February 3rd is the one and only time for the school board to adopt the budget so those motions provided advance will allow us to best support you through this process

[00:18:08] you will see on the slide what will happen on that evening you will we'll have our tote board and I'll show the tote board here in a moment but one school board member will start the process by adopting the FY27C on to begin the process after that then school board members may begin to make your budget amendments again just emphasizing to maintain a balanced budget we would you know like to see having corresponding decreases to increases and vice versa and that we would utilize our tote board to track all the budget amendments to you know help keep us all on the same page of

[00:18:47] where we're at i would also highlight that i am available to meet and discuss any ideas you may have to help craft your motions discuss costing or even discuss any potential unintended consequences i have found in my my years here with lcps is that oftentimes you may have an idea but maybe you're not sure exactly how you want to approach it and I again just offer my availability to help talk you through that. Next slide please. So this is an

[00:19:20] example of the TOTE board that you can expect to see on Tuesday evening. It tracks key elements such as expenses, FTEs, the county's local transfer, and total revenues. As illustrated we will begin with the FY27C on which includes a budget of \$2.06 billion, 13,564.1 FTEs, accounting transfer of \$1.48 billion, and total revenue equaling total expenses in the final column. You'll notice the green boxes indicating that the budget is currently balanced, meaning expenses match revenues. By the end of this

[00:19:59] process, our goal is to maintain these green balanced boxes. This slide also includes an example of a budget amendment row one shows a motion to increase the budget by a hundred thousand while row two reflects a related motion to decrease the budget by the same amount this ensures the budget remains balanced as I previously mentioned school board members can propose increases to the budget would which would raise the county transfer request or propose decreases which would decrease the county transfer request on February 3rd we will also begin with the motion title technical changes in the investment in

[00:20:35] students' presentation last week, Ms. Mitchell described the change in the number of APs requested for FY27 and how there was a difference from what was published in the book. Specifically, one less AP is requested to meet the enhanced staffing standard. As a result, this will be removed from the FY27 SEON and included in the technical changes starting motion, noting a reduction of one FTE and a savings of \$212,804. So that would be where our starting point would be of having two hundred and twelve thousand on the table available to support

[00:21:14] any school board's motion maybe whoever gets gets their motion first next slide finally also in board docs we have our draft budget resolution this budget resolution aims to provide transparent

transparency and accountability in managing lcps's resources by clearly identifying each funds budgeted revenues and expenses additionally we are clearly specifying other approval actions such as the authorized staffing levels pay increases health plan benefit changes and setting meal prices the draft budget resolution again is included in board docs for your review

[00:21:53] and would be included as part of the budget adoption action on february 3rd last last slide so in developing the budget calendar we heard the need for school board members requesting to discuss the budget after presentations were complete and that's why next on the agenda is space for that to occur cabinet is ready to answer any questions you may have as you think about your adoption action on tuesday this time also supports budget transparency for the public to hear school board discussion on the f by 27 c on and what could possibly occur on tuesday evening and with that

[00:22:32] i will conclude my presentation and join my fellow cabinet members thank you thank you miss willoughby school board members do you have any questions on this section or the process of approving the budget mrs. Griffiths um just a quick question I don't know who can answer that answer it um uh will the budget this school budget for FY27 will it raise taxes um I'm wondering if it'll raise

[00:23:04] the property tax um 0.805 um can you just let me know if that's gonna raise taxes thank you I can't presume to know what the board of supervisors actions will um will occur as they begin their budget process in February. What I can share, just recalling what had been shared previously, is that their budget guidance looked to maintain current tax rates. So that yielded the amount of funding that we used to build the FY20C on. But again, as they build their budget, anything can

[00:23:43] happen. Thank you. Mr. Cardi. Thank you, Madam Chair. So I think I want to start, first I had It's kind of a basic question, and then I'll kind of get into some other things, too.

[00:24:04] If I understand correctly in looking at this, right now we have the universal staff are getting a 5% COLIT increase, and teachers are getting 4%. Is that correct? Thank you for the question, Ms. Riccardi.

[00:24:24] So based on negotiations with LEA, as the exclusive bargaining representative of both our certified and non-certified bargaining units, our certified group, which is our teachers, our licensed staff, is receiving a 4% increase.

[00:24:44] That is what was negotiated based on a COLA, as well as the average 2.5% step. The non-certified group, which is on our scale B, was negotiated at a percent higher, at a 5% COLA, and also included an average of a 2.5% step increase.

[00:25:09] And can you tell me about universal staff? So universal is scale B. That is the previous title for that scale before we went to A, B, and C. And they're getting, what did you say, 5.5? 5% COLA.

[00:25:26] And teachers are getting? The license scale, all licensed certified employees are getting the 5% COLA, which was negotiated during our collective bargaining agreement.

[00:25:43] And what would, can you ballpark estimate for me what we would be looking at if we just did a 4% across the board? We cannot do a 4% across the board. We have already ratified our collective bargaining agreement. And so for fiscal year 27, that agreement includes a 5% increase for non-certified staff.

[00:26:06] Okay, so then for all of the other staff that aren't included in that? All other staff that are not in a bargaining unit? Correct. I don't have the numbers, but I think Ms. Willoughby may have the numbers.

And was there a COLA increase for those individuals planned?

[00:26:28] There's three groupings. So you've got, as Ms. Boland said, you've got the 4% for the licensed collective bargaining unit, the 5% for the non-licensed collective bargaining unit, and then 5% for the non-bargaining unit employees.

[00:26:46] And Ms. Boland can probably walk you through why that occurred to maintain the structure of our salary scales. I don't have the cost directly in front of me, and so I can take that down as a written question. I'll also share, since Tuesday will be our last packet, We will aim, rather than having the packet available on Tuesday night, knowing that, again, as I emphasized, questions at this point should really be to help form, you know, budget motions, that we will strive to turn those around sooner.

[00:27:15] So what we'll do as the budget team is taking these questions down that we can't answer right at this moment, we will turn those around in an email sooner and then still have our packet on Tuesday evening. Okay, so I still want to get back to my question and then a follow-up on the timeline.

[00:27:31] so I'm obviously I honor our collective bargaining agreement absolutely so for the remaining staff that are not included in that it would be helpful to see what the cost would be if we did a 4% cola of 4.5% and the five if we could get that one you know in the packet that would be great and then okay thank you and then secondly on the timeline for questions and then this is going to of roll into a little bit more of my philosophy on some of this but um do you have a time frame

[00:28:09] for when we'll be able to get those questions i know a lot have been submitted thus far because i'm going to make an ask so i'm but i'm going to i want to give you the opportunity to tell me what you think is reasonable it's hard to know without knowing the question some questions that we receive are are turned around within minutes i mean they're relatively simple others may require additional time in coordination one of the one of the things to that the budget team does as they are managing the questions that come in is that sometimes the questions may may impact multiple departments and so they're you know

[00:28:46] really trying to manage and make sure that we're covering all our bases and truly you know avoiding any unintended consequences so it's hard for me to give you like a set turnaround time because it's really question dependent okay so with that said what I would like to see and certainly would like to get the thoughts and opinions of my colleagues is I would like to see those rolled into like a daily update so as you guys get questions I mean over the weekend and into you know at the latest I would say Monday so that we can start processing those questions over the weekend their responses over the weekend so that we

[00:29:24] can actually not get stuck here on Tuesday for you know five-hour session because we're trying to still process what we're reading um so i don't know how you guys feel about that i mean even a daily a daily update on those questions until they're done would be great my intent was to actually try to turn them around sooner so that rather than waiting so for example if i received a question tomorrow morning and it was one of those easier questions rather than wait for like a daily packet at the end of the day my intent is as soon as we have that answer to turn that around because again i'm thinking you're wanting that information to help craft a

[00:30:03] motion which is highly important for us in preparation for tuesday yeah that's great thank you so much i have more but i'm going to wait thank you so um school board members are there any further

questions on the budget adoption process seeing none we'll move on to the last item on our agenda tonight which is item 4.02 school board discussion please feel free at this time I'll open the floor to any questions that relate to the general budget process. Ms. Chernoff?

[00:30:41] Thank you, Madam Chair. These aren't really questions, but I'm narrowing in on some of the things that I would like to see in terms of amendments, and I wanted to thank Ms. Willoughby and Ms. Boland for indulging me over the snow days virtually to kind of hash some of this out in terms of trying to find a balance for what I am hopeful we can include but also make sure that we are not increasing our budget I think I've been pretty clear over the last years that increasing the ask is not something that is a priority for me I feel in terms especially as

[00:31:17] we're looking at you know the data center money leveling off in the next five to seven years and kind of scaling back that growth I really want to honor what the board of supervisors has offered us and I'm very grateful to Dr. Spence and staff through the Sion process that it does that this year and in order for extra things to get in that means other things have to come out and so that's never a super fun conversation but I am grateful to staff who've helped me kind of navigate some of the things that I'd like to see so I'd like to socialize that with you all tonight so that you have time to think about it I will probably follow up with some phone calls

[00:31:52] over the weekend to see if I can garner some support. At the very top of my list is additional support for our English language department. I feel like this is a conversation that we have had for not just the past two years but even precedes us. I feel that it is very timely given the shift in keeping the EL scores as part of school accreditation as well as just seeing the staggering gaps that we have had. But we've also seen some success over the last year some real places to stop and celebrate and one of the things that we committed to as part of creating the performance monitoring committee was not

[00:32:32] just to check the box in terms of here's some data cool go about your business it was we were gonna have a cyclical review of if this data in these programs and these this support is moving the needle for kids and closing achievement gaps and we're seeing that time and time again we're going to replicate that and and put our resources there.

[00:32:53] And so this amendment that I'll be bringing forward is directly responsive to that. So our English language department has done some incredible work around professional learning with full school buy-in with QTEL, which is a high leverage strategy set of questioning and opening up talk for English language learners within the curriculum.

[00:33:15] And our schools have really come to adopt and get behind these strategies, Particularly, I'm thinking of two schools, Parkview High School, as well as Freedom High School. So the work that has been presented, even to the full board, Freedom was highlighted for this.

[00:33:34] I have seen that when we go all in, we can see amazing closures of gaps for our English language learners. In some cases, in one year, we're seeing 40-point jumps. That's not something that just happens. And so I want to support that work.

[00:33:49] And I believe that we have done a very good job with the flexible staffing additions and changing the staffing standard and having aspirational standards to get the right teachers, English language teachers, in our buildings in front of students to do the work with students.

[00:34:06] I think what we need now is the coaching and the professional learning. And so that would be in terms of sort of expanding the English language leadership office. So there are some things being proposed already the budget that have made it through the Sion I want to double down and go even more on that so I'm going to be asking for two additional content specialists for the English language department as well as three additional English language facilitators hoping that a lot of that focus will also beef up some of the elementary that department right now serving a hundred schools is pretty

[00:34:42] thin in my personal opinion and they're you know mr. Rosario and her team are doing amazing work and I feel that the time is now and I really feel like this is where the money can be well spent. So I'm working with Ms. Willoughby and the team to find those efficiencies within the budget to expand that department. So that's first and foremost. Should I go through my other list? Okay. I'm also looking into possibly restoring the one educational diagnostician. I saw Mr.

[00:35:10] Pepper and Ms. LaBelle also asked about that. I believe it's a staffing standard issue because of enrollment but I have experienced firsthand working with them and when we don't have enough of them the testing slows down we spoke about some of those gaps last night between you know behavior assessments and the you know behavior plans those kinds of things you know diagnosticians are really important so I'm going to be looking into that you've heard the public commenters my community has come out and is really concerned about our device usage so looking at possibly moving towards carts in first grade but

[00:35:47] I believe that dr. Spence and I and the team have also had some discussion about doing more of a phased approach with that and what that might look like and also garnering some feedback from teachers as part of that process so we have not done that yet but you might see some attempts to move towards that device usage for first graders at least I hope down the road we can do more but I think in the here and now that seems doable. Additionally I am very supportive and I am apologize that I had to go to well I don't apologize for being at my daughter's band concert but it was during our budget meeting so I didn't

[00:36:23] get to ask additional questions about the Career IB program that was on the list of things that did not make it in. It is something specifically that Heritage High School has been a huge advocate for in my district but also the other two IB programs are also asking for it it aligns with the CTE pathways that we're exploring and it's \$25,000 this year to kind of get the ball rolling so I am going to be looking for money for supporting that and then just recently on my radar you heard last night the athletic directors the assistant athletic directors pay scale is something new that just came on my radar so I've asked some questions in the packet so I'll be exploring what

[00:37:03] that cost is and then I'm still troubled by this nutrition thing I went home and last night and I'm I just don't want to raise lunch prices I don't know how we can find 700 K in the base budget but I I'm I'm still working on that but those are some things that I will be floating to you all over the weekend that's where my heart is right now on this budget I think we can do some really really powerful things for kids and I'm looking forward to hearing what you all are bringing to the table as well. Thank you. Thank you. Mr. Pepper. So thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you, Ms. Chernoff, for bringing your thoughts to the table. I feel like

[00:37:42] you and I are in agreement on several of these things, so I'm happy to hear your thoughts and kind of places we can look to pick at and cut from to get kind of what we need. That careers program

hasn't been in the budget, but as someone who went through the whole process and it's so cheap and it will benefit so many students, I am all for that. I know we did not talk much about One of the key things that I would love to see put in some of my questions around this, I know Mr. Svensson asked questions along the same lines, is on the special education mentors.

[00:38:13] One of my questions was very focused on, one, how many new special education teachers we have in the division, but as well, how many we were retaining. And the percentage was roughly about 70%, 80%. I just quickly glanced at the answers because I just looked at them now because they came today.

[00:38:30] But, you know, the money it costs just to bring in a teacher is so expensive and to recruit and retain. So even adding an additional special education mentor coach just to try to get those ratios a little bit lower is something that's kind of near and dear to my heart because it's hard to find great special education teachers and it's even harder to keep them in the field.

[00:38:49] So that's one of the things I'm looking for. I'm also extraordinarily conflicted about some of the link payment stuff. I know I've talked to my colleagues who have children not just in LCPS but in other divisions and how they pay their lunch prices.

[00:39:08] I have a friend in Arlington who's like, oh, no, we always pay a fee when we do this. And then in Falls Church, they don't. So it's like, are we doing this right? I'm very concerned, particularly as the way the fee is structured, that every time you make a deposit, there's a fee because, let's face it, parents aren't going to be sending their children with checks to the school.

[00:39:25] They're not going to be sending their kids with cash to the school. So we've got to find a way to kind of mitigate the burden, particularly on those parents who are right above that free and reduced line. And I feel like that link fee is going to be a heavier burden on those parents.

[00:39:42] One of the things I'm looking at perhaps as a cost savings, I'm just going to broach this out to my colleagues on the board, is one of the things that was recommended in the budget was the two additional days for teachers, not new to the teaching, but new to LCPS.

[00:39:58] And I dug a little deeper and asked a question, and it's in the packet for you all to peruse on. But we actually provide a banded rate, an hourly banded rate to new teachers to LCPS. And that was surprising to me because if you look at the teacher contract, it's 197 days.

[00:40:18] They attend 194. I know this may bring up some inequities, but whenever I started in a new division, and I started a new division several times, I was expected to come in a whole week before everyone else, and I never got paid for those days. They were part of my contract.

[00:40:34] And so we have those extra built-in days. If you think about it, it's right now three extra days per year. I asked if this was part of the CBA, and it wasn't. So we might find some cost savings in those brand new teachers. And I hate doing it because they're the ones who make the lease and really could use that money.

[00:40:54] But it's a place we might look for savings, even just you know keeping those teachers who are new to lcps at three days is another way to have cost savings so i'm kind of trying to look and find places where where we do have savings in this budget to kind of get some of those wants and things that um things that are better so that's where i'm at right now i'm just going to share my thoughts with you all and

i'll yield the rest of my time thank you miss labelle thank you madam chair um i just want to say that i also as Ms. Chernoff and Mr. Pepper are saying that I am concerned about special

[00:41:32] education. Currently we have 33 diagnosticians. They serve about 2,500 students apiece and yet we're going to cut one of them. We really can't afford to do that. Their job is to do not only evaluations for students entering the special education realm but also to conduct all the re-evaluations that have going on. I would like to see us retain that one position and keep it at 33 educational diagnosticians. I've done that job myself. I know how it is. I know

[00:42:11] how it is to be crunched and have to work and write and do all the testing. So I can tell you that it is a very important position. The other thing that I am concerned about is the costs to the credit card program. We have people, yes it's true that if we do have five or six children and we want to put all of them on at one time so we only incur one credit card charge, that's all well and good. But if you're from a lower income family, if you're one of those people

[00:42:51] that doesn't get paid monthly, that gets paid weekly, there's no way you can do that. And I think that we are doing a disservice to many of our parents by charging that credit card cost back to them. So I'd like to see something done about that, if we can come up with some idea and have everybody think about that over the next few days. I'd appreciate that.

[00:43:16] Thank you. Thank you. Mrs. Griffiths. Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to mention one amendment I was thinking about I'm still going through the process asking questions and getting all my information but regarding Ms. Chernoff's ask and the special ed ask I will be and we can discuss it I will be putting an amendment forward to remove the sustainability specialist for a cost savings of a hundred and ninety six thousand three hundred and one dollars so that may

[00:43:54] help on the EL side or the special ed side so I would like everybody to please consider that thank you thank you mr. Cody thank you so much so I just want to appreciate everybody's feedback on all this I think it's really great to kind of see where everybody's priorities are and I think I'm probably pretty aligned with everybody which is really good I think the thing I'm gonna do is kind of pull back a little bit to the you know 70,000 foot perspective in this entire process this is actually my fourth budget process that I've kind of sat

[00:44:33] through and watched and as a member of the Finance and Operations Committee and just kind of leveraging some of my professional background I think one of my biggest focuses over this next year is going to be to completely overhaul how we do budget processing going forward and a big part of that is if you are just a citizen looking at this budget process there is no way you can take a look at this Sion document the presentations and our line-item budget

[00:45:06] and make heads or tails of hardly any of this it's next to impossible there's stuff that's in the Sion which I thought was kind of our Bible for the budget only to find out that actually the presentations are but there's many times when these things are not even all in alignment about about varying things and and I'm not blaming any one person I just think what we've done is we've been copying and pasting the process for so long that it's it's really difficult to look through this and make sense of it the other part that's really difficult

[00:45:42] is to ask for Tuesday where we're supposed to understand how we can pull something from the current budget in order to fund what we want to fund when And we don't ever have a clear picture of what

the current budget and all the major programs and costs are within it.

[00:45:58] And it's, you know, and there's ways to make this a much more simplified process and much more clear and transparent. And so over this next couple of months, hopefully through F&O, and this is something I would love for us to talk about there, that we can really start looking at just overhauling this process in general and making it much more transparent so that anybody could come in here and start understanding what in the world we're talking about and how to cross-reference it. I love the fact that we have a strategic plan. Strategic plans are great, but we're getting strategic plan-tied presentations that don't align with

[00:46:35] this book, and we're getting them only because I asked at noon before a 4.30 meeting and trying to then flip through this book while we're watching a presentation be explained to us. And I think the whole thing is in my opinion and only my opinion enormously chaotic from a board perspective trying to to really digest what we're getting and what we're seeing and it's just it's it's a lot and it's I think there's better ways for us to do this so I'm gonna really challenge us this year as an organization to really

[00:47:12] kind of rethink and reimagine how we do budget and then also then quarter quarterly and periodically how we're looking at our financial statements and what we're getting presented as a board from a strategic perspective and making sure that that gets aligned with the same process. I could be the only one in this room that thinks this and that's okay, but I've seen similar processes that are much more transparent and much cleaner and clearer and much easier to sort out. And so I just want to put that out there for whatever it's worth. Thank you. Any further

[00:47:51] questions okay seeing no further questions we'll move on to adjournment the January 29th Loudoun County School Board fiscal year 27 operating budget school board work session is now adjourned thank you for coming and please drive home safely



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