



FAYETTE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Board Meeting Buzz



Fayette County Board of Education March 22, 2021

As part of our commitment to providing timely, clear, and accurate information to students, staff, families, and community members, we are please to provide a recap of our monthly school board meetings.

WELCOME & PUBLIC COMMENT

Board Chair Tyler Murphy welcomed members of the public watching the school board meeting online. The Lexington-Fayette County Health Department has advised adults in the school district to continue meeting virtually wherever possible, including faculty meetings, committee meetings, professional learning opportunities, and meetings of the Fayette County Board of Education.

During the portion of the meeting for remarks by citizens, Murphy explained that the board has instituted a process to allow members of the public to sign up to speak in advance of regular school board meetings similar to that used by the Lexington Fayette Urban County Council. Details on that process are available at <http://www.fcps.net/PublicComment>.

Four members of the public addressed the board on topics including summer programming, COVID-19 mitigation measures, future support for students and teachers, and recommended business practices. Additionally, two members of the public submitted written comments. Their full submissions will be shared with the board members and included in the board meeting record.

SUPERINTENDENT SEARCH UPDATE

Fayette County Board of Education members received an update on efforts to gather public input about the characteristics, experiences, and attributes students, employees, families and community members would like the next Fayette County Public Schools Superintendent to possess.

Survey Results

Survey research firm K12 Insight conducted a survey of all district stakeholders from March 3-14. In all, 5,524 surveys were completed in eight languages, which is roughly 1,000 more participants than during the 2015 superintendent search. The survey covered a variety of topics such as which qualities are needed and valued most in the next superintendent, what challenges the superintendent will face, and points of pride for both the school district and the Lexington-Fayette County area.

The complete report can be found [here](#). Among the findings:

- The top professional leadership competencies survey respondents want in the next superintendent are: experience in successfully leading improvement efforts that result in measurable improvement in schools or the district, effective communicator,

and capacity to work with wide ranging groups and individuals representing multiple perspectives.

- The number one interpersonal competency identified by families, staff and students was: “Is committed to supporting diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts and champions equitable outcomes for students.”

Input sessions

Executive search firm Greenwood/Asher & Associates held multiple input sessions to collect information about 1) the professional and interpersonal competencies as well as the background and experiences people felt the next superintendent would need to be successful; 2) the main challenges and/or opportunities the superintendent would need to be ready to face; and 3) points of pride people felt existed in FCPS and the Lexington/Fayette County community.

Over the past three weeks, the firm conducted 48 listening sessions with individuals and small groups of school board members, students, teachers, administrators, families, and community partners, from post-secondary, faith-based, business, non-profit, advocacy, service, special interest, and government organizations.

Members of the community were also invited to conduct their own listening sessions with groups of their choosing and submit input from those conversations. In all, feedback from 28 of these "Do-It-Yourself" sessions was submitted.

The complete report can be viewed [here](#). Among the findings:

- The next superintendent will need to be a visionary who can clearly articulate a compelling, student-centered vision that drives successful outcomes for all students. Developing a strategic plan and building a highly skilled team that can provide the instructional leadership necessary to support high levels of learning for every child in the district will be top priorities.
- The next superintendent will need to be both a strong manager of the district's resources and skilled at building positive, productive, and mutually-beneficial relationships with families, community partners, and the school board. Stakeholders viewed the superintendent as the critical “collaborator” to ensure the rich resources of the district and the community were leveraged on behalf of students. Many people also highlighted the critical nature of board/superintendent relationship and commented on how important it is for the board to serve its governance role well so that the superintendent can confidently and successfully lead the day-to-day operations of the district.
- The superintendent must be comfortable using data to identify issues, make and support decisions, and document results. Participants were clear that data is not assessment data or program data alone. It is critical that the superintendent is communicating (i.e., LISTENING and sharing) with both internal and external stakeholders, taking into account what is heard, and considering the input as he/she makes decisions. People seemed to understand that the superintendent was going to be in a position to have to make difficult decisions, in the face of competing demands and priorities, and would need to be able to move forward in the best interest of students even when consensus is not achieved.
- The expectation that the superintendent be committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion was articulated strongly and often. It was brought up during discussions about professional competencies, personal competencies, AND background and experience. Most importantly, both internal and external stakeholders said that a commitment alone was NOT enough ... the next superintendent must have a proven track record of taking meaningful action and achieving results related to diversity, equity, and inclusion. Specifically, the people engaged in input sessions indicated they wanted to see a history of action related to implementing effective, evidence-based learning strategies that resulted in improved achievement results for diverse learners; success hiring a diverse staff that more accurately reflected the make-up of the student body; an increase in minority, veteran, or female-owned/operated businesses when awarding service contracts; and improvement in policies and practices that reduce or eliminate disparities based on gender, race, ethnicity, exceptionality, socio-economic status, sexual orientation, and gender identity.
- During the input sessions, people also shared how critical it was that the superintendent have the interpersonal skills to build trust, overcome challenges,

resolve conflicts, and build strong relationships. As a transparent communicator, he/she must be willing to regularly engage both internal and external stakeholders by actively seeking their input, listening, and synthesizing the varied perspectives and priorities into a compelling "call to action."

- And finally, the superintendent must be skilled at making difficult decisions in the middle of strong advocacy reflecting differing perspectives and opinions, supporting and communicating the rationale for the decision made, and continuing to nurture the relationships of those who are please by the decision and those that are not.

Additional information about the search for the next Fayette County Public Schools Superintendent can be found at www.fcps.net/search.



SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Acting Superintendent Marlene Helm began her report with a [video produced by Rise STEM Academy for Girls](#) in celebration of Women's History Month.

Virtual Learning Academy (VLA) Update

Senior Director of School Leadership Schuronda Morton, Interim VLA Director Jamie Burch and other members of the VLA team shared an informational video about the program and a snapshot of what it looks like to be a VLA student and VLA teacher.

Other highlights included:

- VLA is the only stand alone virtual school in the state that serves students in grades K-5.
- There are currently 782 students enrolled in VLA (334 of them are in elementary grades).
- Among the strengths of the school are its tested and proven curriculum taught by certified subject area teachers, interactive learning, individualized pacing, teacher touch points, and supplemental clubs.
- The curriculum offered is NCAA- and College Board-approved, and accredited by AdvancEd/Cognia.
- A survey of families regarding the 2021-22 academic year indicated families of a total of 638 students wish to continue with VLA.
- Families and students expressed enjoying the flexible learning options, one-on-one attention, and freedom to work at their own pace as reasons they planned to continue with the program.

COVID-19 Core Team Update

- **Rapid COVID-19 Tests:** FCPS Health Coordinator Debbie Boian shared that in partnership with the Lexington-Fayette County Health Department, the district has started offering rapid testing to students and employees who exhibit common COVID-19 symptoms at school. The tests are administered by school nurses in the school first aid room only after gaining permission from a student's parent or guardian, in the presence of a family-designated adult. Following spring break, additional school personnel will be trained to administer the test. "This is about early detection, so we can shut down the possibility of spread and keep our schools open," Boian said.
- **Transportation:** Chief Operating Officer Myron Thompson shared that the district is still 29 drivers short, and spotlighted recruitment efforts through social media that have reached more than 12,000 people via Facebook posts and more than 85,000 people through Facebook and Instagram ads. The district recently started another driver training courses, but of the 21 people who started the class, only eight remain. The district continues to look for new employees, while tapping existing staff who hold the needed license to drive a school bus. He also cautioned families that when driver shortages happen, routes may be delayed.
- **High School Celebrations:** FCPS Chief of High Schools James McMillin started with a shout out to The Learning Center principal Chris Salyers and teachers Adam Boldt and Bill Bates, who have stepped up to drive buses every day to shuttle their students to and from their home high schools. McMillin then announced the

graduation schedule: Wednesday, May 19, 10 a.m. – Henry Clay, 2 p.m. – Frederick Douglass, and 6 p.m. – Bates Creek; Thursday, May 20, 10 a.m. – Lafayette, 2 p.m. – Bryan Station, 6 p.m. – Paul Laurence Dunbar. He also shared that all high schools are making plans to hold outdoor proms on Saturday May 22.

Superintendent Helm closed out the team update on "the good, the better, and the we're still working on it. And now with just four more days until we welcome the start of spring break, we are going to make the big ask. Please oh wonderful community, students and families, take extra care to stay safe and practice all the things that we know it took to get us to this euphoric day, and that will allow us to return after spring break and sail smoothly to the end of the school year."



CONSTRUCTION PROGRESS

Chief Operating Officer Myron Thompson shared the [March construction highlights](#), noting that plans are moving forward for the district's last secure vestibule to be added before the opening of the Carter G. Woodson Primary Academy. He then reviewed progress on the new Bates Creek High School building, where 34% of the work is complete. The new school is slated to open in August 2022.

BOARD ACTION



The board voted to approve:

- The schedule of school board meetings for 2021-22. The meetings generally fall on the second and fourth Mondays of each month, with the exception of December and March, to accommodate winter and spring break.
- Two resolutions to refinance bonds used to pay for past construction projects when economic conditions are favorable, in order to generate significant savings due to reduced interest costs.
- The [monthly financial report](#).

The official minutes from March 22, 2021 will be posted within the agenda of the April 12, 2021 school board planning work session.

SEE FOR YOURSELF

The school board's action meetings are televised live on FCPS-ETV (Spectrum Channel 197, Windstream Channel 13, and MetroNet Channel 2) starting at 6 p.m. The meetings are also replayed the same week at 8 p.m. Wednesday, 10 p.m. Saturday, and 10 p.m. Sunday and are archived through the [FCPS YouTube channel](#). Planning and action meetings are also streamed live through the district's [YouTube channel](#) and [Video on Demand service](#). If watching on the district website, please hover over the Live Streams banner at the top and click on the play button to begin on your device.

