



January 5, 2026

Chairs of the House Appropriations Committee
Chairs of the Senate Finance and Appropriations Committee

Dear Chairs:

On behalf of Loudoun County Public Schools, I am pleased to submit the enclosed report detailing the planning, implementation, and current status of the Loudoun County Public Schools Recovery High School initiative, in accordance with Item 124, Paragraph UU of the 2024–2026 Appropriation Act.

As required by the Appropriation Act, this report outlines the use of state general funds, implementation progress, challenges encountered, and outcomes to date associated with the establishment of a year-round recovery high school serving students in the early stages of recovery from substance use disorder. The report also reflects the transition from planning to full implementation for the 2025–2026 school year, including the official School Board designation of the program as the R.I.S.E. Academy (Recovery, Inspiration, Strength, Empowerment).

Loudoun County Public Schools remains committed to fulfilling the intent of Item 124 by providing a high-quality academic and recovery-focused educational environment that supports student wellness, academic progress, and successful reintegration into traditional school settings. We appreciate the General Assembly's investment in this critical work and welcome continued collaboration and oversight as the program matures.

Should you have any questions or require additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Respectfully submitted,

Tedra Richardson

Tedra Richardson
Assistant Superintendent
Department of Student Services
Loudoun County Public Schools



Recovery High School Initiative: Loudoun County Public Schools

Report to the Virginia General Assembly

Pursuant to Item 124, Paragraph UU of the 2024–2026 Biennial Budget

Executive Summary

Item 124, Paragraph UU of the 2024–2026 Appropriation Act provided state general funds to support the establishment of year-round recovery high schools serving students in the early stages of recovery from substance use disorder. Loudoun County Public Schools (LCPS), as the designated school division for Superintendent's Region 4, was awarded \$500,000 in Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 and \$250,000 in FY 2026 to plan and implement a Recovery High School program. This report summarizes LCPS's planning, implementation progress, use of funds, challenges encountered, and anticipated next steps. While the initial program launch was delayed from March 2025 to August 2025, LCPS has made substantive progress in program design, staffing, community partnerships, and fiscal planning to ensure a successful opening for the 2025–2026 school year.

Legislative Authority and Program Purpose

The Appropriation Act directs funding to support year-round recovery high schools that are open to any student residing in the defined region, serve students in the early stages of recovery from substance use disorder or dependency, and provide academic, emotional, and social supports to enable students to earn a high school diploma and reintegrate into a traditional school setting. LCPS's Recovery High School initiative is designed to meet these statutory objectives while aligning with the division's broader student wellness, mental health, and alternative education frameworks.

Planning and Implementation Activities

During FY 2025, LCPS focused on foundational planning activities to ensure program quality, sustainability, and alignment with best practices for recovery-oriented education. The division convened a Recovery School Roundtable that included members of the General Assembly, local elected officials, community partners, and LCPS leadership to support shared understanding of program goals and legislative intent. In parallel, LCPS conducted bi-weekly meetings with a



Project Charter Team to guide program development, timelines, and operational planning for an August 2025 launch. The Recovery High School proposal was formally presented to the School Board, resulting in additional fiscal and institutional support from both the division and locality. Facility planning also occurred during this period, and after evaluating multiple options, LCPS elected to collocate the Recovery High School with other non-traditional programs for the 2025–2026 school year in lieu of a standalone facility.

Use of State Funds

For the period July 1, 2024 through June 30, 2025, LCPS expended \$27,055.21 of the \$500,000 FY 2025 allocation. Expenditures were limited due to the delayed program launch and were focused on establishing essential clinical capacity. Funds were used to support salary and benefits costs for the Clinical Coordinator for the LCPS Recovery High School program. A total of \$20,516.53 was expended for personal services and \$6,538.69 for associated employee benefits, leaving an unspent balance of \$472,944.79. All expenditures were consistent with the approved Grant Award Notification.

Alignment of Expenditures to Program Goals

Although limited in scope during FY 2025, state funds directly supported progress toward program goals through the hiring of a Clinical Coordinator. This position was critical in advancing implementation readiness by leading the design of the clinical intake process for students and families, developing structured transition plans for students entering the Recovery High School and reintegrating into their base schools following successful completion, establishing partnerships with community mental health and substance abuse service providers, and supporting the recruitment and interview process for instructional and support staff. These activities laid the groundwork for a comprehensive academic and therapeutic model aligned with legislative intent.

Challenges and Barriers

The primary challenge encountered during FY 2025 was the identification and preparation of an appropriate facility for the Recovery High School. The initial plan to utilize a standalone location was revised in favor of a collocated model with other non-traditional programs. While this decision extended the planning timeline, it supports long-term sustainability, operational efficiency, and student access to wraparound services. Additionally, delays in hiring key



personnel, including the Clinical Coordinator, contributed to lower-than-targeted expenditures during the fiscal year.

Fiscal Status and Spending Targets

Grant guidance anticipated higher levels of expenditure during FY 2025; however, LCPS did not meet the targeted spending threshold due to the adjusted implementation timeline. In accordance with the Grant Award Notification, LCPS began accessing funds in spring 2025 with the hiring of the Clinical Coordinator. Remaining FY 2025 funds will be carried forward into FY 2026, and combined with the FY 2026 allocation, will support salaries for a Principal and Teacher hired for the 2025–2026 school year. These actions position the division to fully utilize state funds while maintaining alignment with program goals.

Next Steps and Outlook

For the 2025–2026 school year, LCPS transitioned from planning to full implementation. The LCPS Recovery School Program was officially named by the LCPS School Board as the R.I.S.E. Academy (Recovery, Inspiration, Strength, Empowerment) and is co-located at The North Star building alongside Alternative Education and the North Star program. The R.I.S.E. Academy opened for the 2025–2026 school year serving 15 students, with additional students scheduled for intake as referrals are finalized.

The program is staffed with a full-time Principal, Clinical Coordinator, School Counselor, Student Assistance Specialist, and licensed teaching staff, providing an integrated academic and recovery-focused support model. LCPS continues to collaborate with community partners and regional stakeholders and will collect outcome data throughout the school year to inform future reports to the Virginia General Assembly.

Conclusion

Loudoun County Public Schools affirms that the planning, implementation, and operation of the R.I.S.E. Academy are fully aligned with the intent and requirements of Item 124, Paragraph UU of the 2024–2026 Appropriation Act. State general funds have been used in accordance with the approved Grant Award Notification to establish a year-round recovery high school that is open to students residing in the defined region and provides the academic, emotional, and social supports necessary for students in the early stages of recovery to progress toward a high school diploma and successful reintegration into a traditional school setting. LCPS remains



committed to continued compliance, fiscal accountability, and transparent reporting to the Virginia General Assembly as the program matures.