



# Loveland City School District Town Hall

## Notes

October 4, 2023

### Loveland City School District Town Hall Summary / Key Takeaways

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#### Fact Card #1

*Loveland High School Students have the opportunity to take College Credit Plus classes on and off campus. Semester credit hours earned in CCP classes on the Loveland High School campus has risen from 395 hours in 2019 to 1060 hours in 2023.*

#### ***Do you feel like Loveland offers enough advanced opportunities to students?***

- General belief that Loveland is already well-covered in terms of opportunities
- Acknowledgement of the CCP program and belief that as long as it's in place, it is a valuable opportunity for students.
- Acknowledges the increase in semester credit hours through the CCP program and believes that Loveland offers enough advanced opportunities, particularly for students' future prospects. However, they raise a concern and a question:
  - They wonder about the academic or future path for students who graduate early, indicating a desire for more information about what happens after early graduation.
  - Mention of implementing something for students who graduate early if there isn't already a plan in place.
- Desire for more information about how this program benefits students and suggests that classes should be strategically scheduled for the convenience of students.
- The opportunity to save money through CCP is appreciated.
- Concern about how the program affects "lower students", indicating a worry about its impact on students who may find advanced coursework challenging.
- The ultimate goal, as indicated, is to ensure that students graduate successfully.

#### ***Are there any specific new opportunities you think students should have? If so, what are your ideas?***

- Belief that Loveland is already well-covered in terms of opportunities
- New idea suggestions:
  - They propose creating a community newspaper, presumably produced by the school, to inform the community about school activities and events.
  - The newspaper could have both print and digital versions and could be distributed at places like Kroger.
  - They also see this as a potential business opportunity for students, combining community and school information.

#### **Summary:**

In summary, the responses indicate general support for the existing advanced opportunities, such as the CCP program. However, there are concerns about the impact of early graduation and a desire for more information in this regard. Additionally, there is an idea to create a community newspaper as a new opportunity to inform the community and involve students in its production.

### **Fact Card #2**

*Loveland City School District provides a great return on investment for the community by scoring above average on the Ohio Department of Education's Performance Index and below average on per-student educational costs. When compared to other school districts in Hamilton and Clermont counties, almost no district performs better while spending less per student. Cost per pupil for a Loveland student is \$11,741.06, while the average cost per student in Hamilton and Clermont counties is \$12,599.73.*

***Do you feel like Loveland School District is effective in terms of spending money on students? Explain why or why not.***

Responses acknowledge that the data presented suggests that Loveland School District is effective in terms of spending money on students. However, some concerns and observations were expressed:

- Mention that while the numbers indicate cost-effectiveness, there are broader concerns about the increase in the cost per student, which they note has been rising faster than inflation.
- Mention of potential administrative bloat, suggesting that there may be inefficiencies in the allocation of funds.
- Concerns about the high cost of education at the college level and the burden of student debt.
- Questions about how the data is presented and indication that the perceived effectiveness may be influenced by how the information is framed.

***What questions or concerns do you have about school finance?***

- Emphasis on school finance always being a concern, indicating that this is a recurring issue
- Mention that the increase in their home value has led to concerns about how this may impact them in terms of property taxes and other expenses.
- Belief that everything, both inside and outside of school, is experiencing cost increases, suggesting a broader concern about rising costs across the board.

### **Summary / Takeaways**

In summary, the responses speak to the favorable cost-effectiveness of Loveland School District but point out concerns about rising costs and potential inefficiencies, particularly in administrative areas, especially in light of increasing property values also..

### **Fact Card #3**

*Career exploration and the development of real-world skills are goals of the Loveland City School District's #beLOVEland Strategic Vision. Loveland City School District provides real-world learning opportunities for students through our growing Loveland Tiger Pathways program. The program connects students with internships through local businesses and organizations and provides them an opportunity to earn pre-apprenticeship credentials that will prepare them for formal apprenticeship programs in the future.*

### ***Do you believe Loveland City School District is working to prepare students for lifelong success?***

- General acknowledgement of the effort made by Loveland City School District to prepare students for lifelong success
- Some concerns and suggestions were expressed:
  - They mention difficulties in navigating the high school system and suggest that the district could be more marketable to the community.
  - Mention of students coming from other schools, such as Kings, may have had more introductory classes, which they seem to view as valuable.
  - Mention of a design and models class, emphasizing the importance of providing students with skills that are typically acquired in college.
  - Belief that the district seems invested in teaching practical skills but point out challenges that students with attention-related issues, like ADD, might face.
  - Tech Help class and Google Classroom are seen as beneficial
- Belief that the new initiatives introduced by the Loveland City School District are helpful in preparing students for lifelong success.
- The responses highlight the importance of real-world experiences:
  - Responses emphasize the value of students learning about their own strengths and interests through real-world experiences.
  - Multiple pathways to success and addressing the needs in skilled trades is mentioned.
  - Suggestion that there should be better advertising about opportunities like the Great Oaks and co-op experiences.
  - Encourage following social media to learn about opportunities for students.

### **Summary / Takeaways**

Responses generally support the efforts of the Loveland City School District in preparing students for lifelong success but provide feedback and suggestions on how to enhance these efforts, including better communication and support for students with varying learning needs. Responses also emphasize the importance of real-world experiences, including guest speakers, shadowing opportunities, and extended partnerships with businesses, to enhance outside-the-classroom learning and career exploration for students.

### **Fact Card #4**

*Loveland City School District is partnered with Great Oaks to provide vocational education opportunities for students. The number of Loveland students attending Great Oaks has risen from 48 in 2019 to 62 in 2023.*

### ***Do you believe Loveland City School District connects students with vocational education opportunities?***

- Responses indicate belief in vocational education opportunities when it comes to lifelong preparation.
- Responses speak to the growing attendance at Great Oaks, and belief in Loveland City School District when it comes to promoting these opportunities.
- Desire for vocational classes to be taught at Loveland Schools by Great Oaks teachers so students don't have to change schools.

### **Summary / Takeaways**

Responses indicate that there is a belief in Loveland City School District in promoting vocational opportunities. More opportunities at schools would be welcomed.

### **Fact Card #5**

*Over the last 5 years, our 4-year graduation rate has been as follows:*

2018 - 94.3%

2019 - 95.7%

2020 - 98.2%

2021 - 97.5%

2022 - 98.1%

### ***What do you think Loveland has done well to gradually increase graduation rates?***

- Belief that positive relationships between teachers and students are an essential element. Teachers challenge students and go beyond the standard curriculum, helping them develop critical thinking skills.
- Mention of a teacher in the Honors Bio class easing students into learning how to use their minds, take notes, and study for what's beyond high school demonstrates a focus on holistic student development.
- The AP Geography teacher is commended for providing insights into what lies beyond their specific class.
- Acknowledgment that more input would be helpful, but overall, it recognizes these trends as positive steps in improving the graduation rate.
- A response mentions a specific example of a struggling student who received support from teachers and counselors for their mental health issues, including APEX courses to help students.
- The positive and supportive environment is emphasized, with teachers actively inquiring about students' well-being and offering assistance.
- The expansion of options and systems in place to assist students is noted, including the availability of various programs such as the seal of biliteracy.
- The involvement of the community in supporting student learning is also recognized as a contributing factor.
- Importance of extracurricular activities, particularly clubs, in creating a welcoming and inclusive school environment.
- Belief that there should be a central location on the website for students and parents to easily find information about the available clubs.
- The Club Fair is mentioned as a positive initiative, but the response questions whether its communication to parents is sufficient.
- An example involving 8th-grade students featuring the track team demonstrates efforts to engage students early in extracurricular activities.

### **Summary / Takeaways**

The responses emphasize the importance of positive teacher-student relationships, student support systems, and extracurricular activities in contributing to the gradual increase in Loveland's graduation rate. These factors create a supportive and engaging educational environment that helps students succeed.

## **Fact Card #6**

*We want your feedback...*

***When it comes to academic excellence at Loveland School District, what are the changes that you want to see?***

- Comments acknowledge rapid changes in academics and highlights the importance of professional development to ensure that teachers are well-prepared for success.
- Need for students to develop better writing skills by the time they graduate, particularly focusing on grammar and fundamentals.
- English teachers are encouraged to put more emphasis on basics rather than just creativity.
- Comments discuss issues with spelling and grammar as early as 7th grade and suggest a regional focus on these areas.
- In terms of mathematics, there's a call for more emphasis on practical math and the importance of teaching basics.
- Concerns are raised about the impact of technology, specifically Google, on students' ability to learn the fundamentals.

***What are the particular struggles you think Loveland students face in achieving academic success?***

- Impact of technology, with Google potentially hindering students' focus on learning the basics.
- The student-to-teacher ratio is raised as a potential challenge.
- There's a concern about the overwhelming transition from grade 6 to grade 7.
- The immediate transition to extracurricular activities right after school is seen as contributing to long days for students.
- Suggestions for a gradual move toward the middle level during 6th grade to ease this transition.
- A need for students to learn how to effectively use "Tiger Time" is mentioned.
- The idea of offering a "Tiger 101" program for 6th graders is proposed to help students adapt more easily.

## **Summary / Takeaways**

Respondents' feedback suggests a desire for a stronger emphasis on foundational skills in writing, grammar, and mathematics to improve academic excellence within Loveland School District. The responses also identify various challenges and potential areas for improvement in terms of the educational experience for Loveland students, including issues related to technology, transitions between grade levels, and extracurricular activities.

## **Fact Card # 7**

*Voters in the Loveland City School District approved a 4.9 mill operating levy in May 2023 - the first new operating levy in 9 years.*

*The levy provides funds to maintain the current level of operations for Loveland City Schools.*

***Do you feel like Loveland School District is focused on fiscal responsibility? Why or why not?***

- Responses indicate the belief that there's been no frivolous spending.
- Feeling that more and more people are moving in and coming to the same size schools.
- Belief that per acre of space is less revenue. Loveland does not have commercial growth which brings income tax.

- Feeling that the school should go to the city and request to halt building residential property and see if we can focus on commercial growth.

***Do you feel like Loveland School District displays transparency when it comes to school finance?***

- Belief that board meetings are accessible. Links are helpful as well.
- Belief that administrators are accessible. They will spend time to help with understanding the circumstances.
- Appreciation for the system that is in place.

**Summary / Takeaways**

Responses indicate overall trust of the Loveland School District when it comes to school finance. General feeling of accessibility and visibility when it comes to board meetings and school administrators. Indication that growing student populations could lead to a problem down the road when it comes to school space.

**Fact Card #11**

*The last major renovation to school buildings in Loveland City School District took place in 2000. In the decades that followed, investments have been made in security features like doors, keycard systems, and cameras, but safety standards for schools and buildings have changed significantly since school buildings in the Loveland City School District were last renovated.*

*Currently, trailers are used as music classrooms at Loveland Primary and Elementary Schools because of limited space in the buildings. Trailers are used for art and music classes at Loveland Early Childhood Center.*

***Do you believe Loveland City School District has sufficient facilities for students?***

- Responses indicate surprise that they don't fit. Primary and Elementary schools especially.
- "This facility is beautiful" (referring to LIS/LMS)
- "I grew up in an area with a 60 year old school building, and they are still using the same school building there as it is in great shape"
- "As long as they serve the function of education, I don't see any issues with the buildings"
- "There is not enough space at LPS/LES"
- "The dead zones in the room can impact wifi"

***Do we need metal detectors? Addressing threats might be needed though.***

- Responses ask if it might be more effective to build a new building. Discusses how the area is landlocked. Is there anywhere to go?
- Out of date equipment is unsafe. Replacements are expensive. Many needs for replacements.

***How can Loveland School District better utilize their facilities to provide students with a positive educational experience?***

- The students' experience is good, but there's a desire to make it better.

**Summary / Takeaways**

In general, the responses indicate that no major changes are needed when it comes to sufficient facilities for students (see above). Some concern was conveyed when it comes to updating out of date equipment at the schools.

### **Fact Card #12**

*Loveland City School District has expanded efforts to provide mental health services and support for students. School Counselors and School Psychologists serve each building. Professional therapists from Best Point are available to work with students on-site. Staff receive training to recognize warning signs of students in a mental health crisis, and students are active in the peer-to-peer suicide prevention program, Hope Squad and Jr. Hope Squad.*

***Do you feel like Loveland School District has made the mental health of students and staff a priority? Discuss.***

- Unsure of the question because not aware of what steps have been made. “Questions about Hope Squad.”
- Conversations about transgender and questions about our policy for using restrooms.

***What kind of mental health challenges do you think our students face? Our staff?***

- Comments mention students being “babied” too much in schools.
- Comments preach conflict resolution. “Kids need to know how to cope with situations on their own.” Trend in society- contributing to mental health needs.
- It’s a tough world with social media- blessing and a curse. Questions about cell phones in schools. Questions about AI and chromebooks 1:1

***What do you think Loveland should do to address these challenges?***

- Comments mention conflict resolution lessons / training
- Empower students with the necessary skills to deal with life’s hard situations without external parties.

### **Summary / Takeaways**

General comments show that mental health is an important topic for surveyors. It is important to have an environment that supports mental health. It is equally important to equip students with life skills to deal with problems on their own, knowing they can always ask for help if need be.

### **Fact Card #13**

*Loveland City School District received \$5.2 million in Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funds during the COVID-19 pandemic. These federal funds were earmarked to improve the health and safety of students and assist with pandemic-related learning loss.*

*Loveland City School District used ESSER funds to supplant existing salaries wherever possible rather than increasing salaries or providing “hero pay” to staff.*

*Currently, 2.5 teacher positions and 5 aide positions are funded by ESSER through the end of the 2023-24 school year. When those funds run out, Loveland City School District will either need to eliminate those positions or find the necessary funding.*

***Do you believe that Loveland City School District has used federal ESSER funding appropriately?***

- Comments confirm COVID brought out the importance of schools as a foundation of the community—underprivileged students, providing lunches, providing devices—yes they were used appropriately
- (Current 16 year old) “My COVID experience began at the end of 7th grade and beginning of 8th grade, schools did so much for me, if that reflects the funding and money spent, then yes they spent the money well, school provided unity”
- District utilized the funds to the best of their ability, to save money, supplanting salaries, etc.

***What factors should Loveland City School District use to determine whether to continue those positions?***

- “Hope that we try to continue those positions especially if it’s supporting students, sustain to maintain”
- Comments feel that student impact and growth should be considered. Class size (these things should be evaluated). Student data is important to consider

**Summary / Takeaways**

Overall sentiment trends towards a positive reaction to Loveland School District’s use of funds during COVID and up until now. The hopes are that positions that are currently being funded by COVID relief will be able to be maintained based on class size, etc.

**Fact Card #14**

*The number of students with special needs in the District has remained fairly steady at around 14%, ~580 students. We have seen an increase in the number of students requiring significant medical support (special transportation, medical equipment, nurse support, or even outside facilities). We have also experienced rising costs across the board on the materials and services needed to support our students. Many of the services provided to students are required by state and federal law. The ever changing and evolving needs and the increase in costs continue to be challenges we navigate.*

***What are your thoughts or experiences about how Loveland City School District serves students with special needs?***

- Comments trend toward positive experiences and perspectives on how Loveland City School District serves students with special needs.
- The mention of ambassadors who help typical students understand how students in special needs classrooms learn and grow is noted as a valuable initiative.
- Personal positive experience in preschool, where students were paired with both typical and special needs students, fostering empathy.
- The community is recognized as a source of support.
- Comments acknowledge the challenges related to the costs involved in providing support, especially for significant medical needs, special transportation, and additional aides on buses.



- There is a sense that many community members may not fully understand the requirements and costs involved.

***What changes would you like to see when it comes to how Loveland City Schools serves special needs students?***

- Responses express some uncertainty about what specific changes are needed in how Loveland City Schools serve special needs students.
- Expressed the importance of all teachers being informed about students' medical needs, such as the need to wear a hoodie.
- There's a suggestion to train teachers to recognize that special needs students are not always easily identifiable.
- Another individual suggests that privacy restrictions might play a role, but the initial responder implies that this issue may have been resolved with specific staff members.

**Summary / Takeaways**

In summary, the responses generally highlight positive experiences and programs in Loveland City School District for serving special needs students. However, there is also recognition of the financial challenges and a sense that the broader community may not fully understand the costs and requirements associated with providing necessary support. The desire for teachers to be informed about students' medical needs and trained to recognize the diverse needs of special needs students is also mentioned.

**Fact Card #15**

*Each day, Loveland City School District transports about 2,300 students to our schools. We also transport 275 students to private and parochial schools because we are required to provide services to those students at the same level as our students. Transportation is provided to students in preschool through grade 8, as high school busing was eliminated in 2020 as a cost-saving measure.*

*Hiring new bus drivers has been an ongoing challenge. Loveland City School District changed school hours beginning with the 2022-23 school year to ease transportation challenges. Because of driver shortages, the district's transportation director or the transportation department administrative assistant sometimes drive routes to cover absences.*

***What strategies could the District use to address transportation challenges?***

- Comments acknowledge that the district faces a difficult balance between cost savings and serving the community.
- The elimination of high school busing was mentioned as a cost-saving measure, but it's acknowledged that this decision can be divisive.
- The idea of eliminating busing for students living within 2 miles was considered but deemed potentially problematic for younger students.
- It was suggested that increasing pay for drivers could help attract more drivers.
- The possibility of involving older students, such as freshmen, in addressing transportation challenges was raised.
- Additionally, the idea of partnering with another district to transport the 275 students attending private schools was proposed.
- Responses indicate that hiring bus drivers has been a challenge not only in Loveland but nationally.

- It was mentioned that Loveland has implemented incentives to attract more drivers but has still faced difficulties in hiring.
- The lack of government assistance for transporting students to the private sector was noted, and it was mentioned that reducing bus limits within a 2-mile radius for LCSD might be an option.
- The idea of clustering bus stops was also suggested.

### **Summary / Takeaways**

Addressing transportation challenges is a complex issue, and there are different perspectives on how to best manage it. The responses acknowledge the difficulties in hiring bus drivers, and there is a balance between cost savings and serving the community. The effectiveness of transportation is generally viewed positively, with efforts to consolidate stops contributing to efficiency. However, the challenges of recruiting bus drivers and the need for creative solutions to transportation issues are recognized.

### **Fact Card #16**

*There are currently more than 30 languages spoken in the homes of our Loveland City School District families. Loveland City School District has a rapidly growing population of students for whom English is not their native language. Under the Every Student Succeeds Act, Ohio must identify English learners, annually assess their English language proficiency, provide reasonable accommodations, and implement accountability systems that include long-term goals and measures of progress. English Language Learners (ELL) receive support to ensure they are overcoming language barriers and finding success in the classroom.*

### ***Are you aware of this growing population in the Loveland City School District?***

- Responses indicate awareness of the growing ELL population in the Loveland City School District. However, they express surprise upon learning that there are more than 30 languages spoken in the homes of district families.
- Responses also mention a specific student from Ukraine and their friend who speaks Russian, highlighting some of the language diversity within the student population.
- One person was not initially aware of the growing ELL population but is not surprised given the diversity in the Cincinnati area. They attribute this to the general diversity that Cincinnati has drawn.

### ***Do you believe this population is being appropriately served by the District?***

- Responses express uncertainty about whether this population is being appropriately served by the district. However, a student and a parent provide positive perspectives.
- A student mentions that Loveland does a good job of accepting these types of students, and while the outside perspective may not show a lot of diversity, friend groups can be pretty diverse.
- A parent agrees with this student's statement, emphasizing that acceptance starts in the schools.
- Responses raise questions about the services and support available to ELL students, suggesting that it's hard to tell if they are being appropriately served. They also mention the possibility of corporate sponsorship, with P&G being suggested as a potential sponsor.

### **Summary / Takeaways**

In summary, the responses indicate a varying degree of awareness of the growing ELL population in Loveland City School District. While there is some uncertainty about whether the ELL population is being

appropriately served, there are also positive perspectives on the district's acceptance and support for these students. The suggestion of potential corporate sponsorship to enhance support is also raised.

#### **Fact Card #17**

*Loveland City School District is a high-performing district with a veteran staff. Because the District is a desirable place to work, and our veteran staff members are willing to mentor and develop new teachers, the District has been able to institute cost-saving hiring practices.*

*When long-serving staff members retire, Loveland City School District works to hire high-quality candidates with the least amount of experience possible. These hiring practices helped the district realize savings of more than \$600,000 in the 22-23 school year and more than \$800,000 for the 23-24 school year.*

#### ***What are your thoughts on the District's hiring practices?***

- Responses suggest that hiring candidates with the least amount of experience might not always be the best approach.
- They argue that experienced teachers bring a wealth of tools and experience that can have a direct impact on student learning and experience.
- While they appreciate the cost-saving aspect of these practices, they acknowledge that there are pros and cons to both experienced and less-experienced teachers.
- A student notes that they cannot differentiate between new and older teachers.
- Responses advocate for a balanced approach, emphasizing the importance of being aware of budget constraints.
- The presence of experienced teachers can be valuable, and they mention that experienced teachers often remain in their districts due to better pay.
- Responses generally support the district's hiring practices.
- Responses suggest that if the teachers hired are high quality and can learn quickly, it is a great practice.
- They also raise questions about teacher evaluation, student performance, and the effectiveness of new teachers.
- The focus is on getting the "best bang for the buck."

#### ***Do you feel like the District employs high quality teachers and educators?***

- Student Response: "strongly believes that Loveland City School District employs high-quality teachers and educators."
- They have had great educational experiences and have heard positive feedback from friends in other districts.
- As a parent, one respondent also shares their positive experiences with Loveland teachers, emphasizing the support for their children's interests outside of academics.
- Responders' view on teacher quality is mixed.
- While they acknowledge good experiences with some teachers, they have also heard stories that raise concerns.

- Responses express worry about certain political and ideological influences in the classroom but notes that not all teachers are affected by this.

### **Summary / Takeaways**

In summary, there is a range of opinions regarding the district's hiring practices. Some emphasize the value of experienced teachers, while others appreciate cost-saving practices as long as high-quality educators are hired. Regarding the quality of teachers and educators, there is generally a positive perception, with students and parents expressing satisfaction with their experiences. However, one respondent acknowledges concerns related to political and ideological influences in the classroom.