



MAURY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL LOCAL SCHOOL ADVISORY TEAM

1250 Constitution Avenue NE, Washington, DC 20002 • (202) 698-3838 • mauryelementary.com/lsat

Meeting Minutes

September 24, 2019, 7:30 am

School Leadership Present: Helena Payne Chauvenet, Taeneress Griffin

LSAT Members Present: Stefany Thangavelu, Becca Schendel Norris, Norah Rabiah, Katie Spellacy, Jean Kohanek, Elizabeth Nelson, Shannon von Felden, D'Angela Williams

LSAT Members Absent: Becca Sanghvi, VanNessa Duckett, D'Ann Lettieri

Other Attendees: Adam Fisher, David Pinchotti, Lora Nunn, Eli Hoffman (DCPS Office of Communication & Engagement)

1) New Meeting Guidelines. Jean Kohanek, Parent Co-Chair, detailed some ground rules and guidelines for this year's LSAT meetings:

- Sign-in on the attendance sheet.
- Keep all discussion respectful.
- Each meeting will include a public comment period. During this time, Other Attendees are welcome to deliver comments not to exceed 2 minutes in length.
- For topics requiring a longer discussion, Other Attendees should ask to have the item placed on the Agenda under "New Business."

2) Membership Updates.

- Elizabeth Nelson has agreed to serve again as the LSAT Community Representative.
- D'Angela Williams has replaced Patrick Koontz as the LSAT's non-instructional staff member.
- Maria Maya has resigned as an LSAT staff member. A new staff member will be elected per WTU guidelines.

3) LSAT Secretary. The group agreed by a unanimous vote to rotate the position of LSAT Secretary among the LSAT parent representatives, with Becca Schendel Norris serving as Acting Secretary for this meeting.

4) Public Comment Period:

- An attendee commented that the LSAT violated the Open Meetings Act by not publicizing the Sept. 10, 2019 LSAT meeting. The attendee believes that the legal opinion generated from the complaint the attendee filed regarding the Sept. 10 meeting will dictate that any actions taken then should be redone at this meeting, as you would expect from a city council or ANC in the same situation. To this point, Eli Hoffman, of DCPS's Office of Communications & Engagement, clarified that LSATs are advisory in nature, and don't pass resolutions. [Additional discussion on this point under Item 5.]
- Another attendee asked for clarification about the purpose of the LSAT. Eli Hoffman explained that LSATs were started in 1992 as an advisory group of parents and staff (and students at the secondary level). Their purpose is to advise the Principal on any matters affecting student achievement, including but not limited to school budgets. The Principal is not a member of the LSAT, but must be present (in person or designee) for the LSAT to meet. The LSAT is advisory; the Principal has the autonomy to make final decisions.

5) New DCPS Guidelines for LSATs: Eli Hoffman, of DCPS's Office of Communications & Engagement, made a presentation on the [new LSAT guidelines](#) that DCPS released last Friday, September 20, 2019.

- The DC Office of Open Government has recently determined that LSATs are subject to the Open Meetings Act ("OMA"). This requires some changes in LSAT procedure, including tight timeline for turning around meeting minutes, and expectations around advertising meetings. This may be a point of frustration for LSATs as they are made up of volunteers, and DCPS understands that.
- The Chair asked whether the DCPS LSAT Guidance is the guide that they should use for complying with OMA, or if LSATs also need to review OMA itself to be in compliance. Eli Hoffman replied that the revised DCPS LSAT Guidance should incorporate all known legal requirements. There will be OMA training for all LSATs this year.
- The Chair acknowledged that the LSAT did not properly advertise its meeting on September 10, and has been open with the school community about it. This mistake occurred in part because without officers—something typically handled at a first meeting—responsibility for this duty was not clear. DCPS acknowledges that this is not uncommon for LSATs; the start of the year can be rocky. If LSATs are operating in the spirit of openness and have taken steps to prevent a similar mistake, that is sufficient. LSAT Members suggested that additional detail on this topic in DCPS LSAT guidance would be helpful.

- Regarding electronic recordings of meetings: DCPS states that it should be done “when feasible.” DCPS does not intend to purchase special recording equipment for LSATs, and cannot reasonably ask individuals to use their personal devices to record meetings. DCPS believes that detailed notes are sufficient to comply with OMA under these circumstances. (An attendee disagreed with this position.) If a meeting is electronically recorded, there is no requirement to proactively post the recording but it must be produced if someone requests it.
- Meeting minutes should be sufficiently detailed but do not need to read like a transcription. LSAT Members requested clarity from DCPS General Counsel on what OMA requires regarding minutes, including whether speakers should be identified by name—particularly members of the public who provide comment, as the LSAT wants to protect the meetings as a place for candid feedback from the community.
- Regarding closed meetings: LSAT meetings should be closed for any discussion of staffing levels or positions, which will typically occur around the budgeting process. In order to close a meeting to the public, the LSAT should first make an announcement (either at the prior meeting, or at the beginning of the meeting that will be closed) explaining the reason why the meeting will be closed, and that reason should be included in the meeting minutes. The Principal has the final say on whether a meeting will be closed to the public. Materials shared in a closed meeting are not required to be made available to the public. DCPS will get back to the Maury LSAT on whether a recording of a closed meeting must take place and if it is subject to FOIA.
- The chair(s) of the LSAT, in coordination with the Principal, should set the agenda and business for LSAT meetings. LSAT business should reflect the priorities of the school, and be a collaboration between LSAT members and school leadership.
- Regarding sharing LSAT materials, FOIA: DCPS is the entity that is FOIA-compliant, not individuals; at least one DCPS staff member on LSAT should have electronic access to all final LSAT documents, so that production of those materials can be compelled via FOIA. Items that are in draft form, or that reflect internal deliberation, may be redacted from a FOIA release. The DCPS General Counsel’s office has the final call and will handle responses to any FOIA requests (not individual LSAT members). In the spirit of transparency, an LSAT should consider sharing requested information proactively; if the LSAT does not believe that is appropriate, the request should be handled via the DCPS FOIA office.
- Complaints about LSAT should be registered in the first instance with the DCPS Office of Communications & Engagement. Complaints can be elevated to the DCPS Office of Integrity.
- Regarding the business conducted at the Sept. 10, 2019 meeting: as long as the results of the officer elections were shared publicly, no need to repeat those

- elections at today's properly-advertised meeting. Officers do not necessarily have to be elected at a public meeting, as long as there is a record of that vote.
- The quorum for a meeting is 1 parent, 1 teacher, and the presence of the Principal (or designee). If no teacher is nominated to fill the current vacancy, the position may remain vacant. There is no requirement for an LSAT to have a teacher co-chair; Maury has traditionally had this position and would like it to continue.
- 6) Updates on Prior Business.** The LSAT covered the substantive discussions from its Sept. 10 meeting again, and provided additional updates.
- **Book Club:** The LSAT is planning a book club aligning with the 5 stances. The first date will be in November and will be announced soon.
 - **Community Days at Maury:** We will invite neighbors to visit the school during the Yard Sale and Bake Sale on October 5, 2019. We will advertise the "Open House" in conjunction with the Yard Sale and Bake Sale, and recruit student and parent volunteers to give tours during the event.
 - **Story of Our Schools:** We are exploring applying to work with this non-profit program, which merges art and history through a research approach to an individual school's history. Elizabeth Nelson suggested incorporating an art or history project involving the two historic call boxes on the street outside Maury, which are under the authority of the Capitol Hill Restoration Society, and would be available in principle for the purpose of sharing the history of the school.
 - **LSAT Communications.** We seek to share information about LSAT activities and report out to the community, but not overwhelm the public with information. Any feedback on how we can do that better is welcome.
- 7) DCPS Volunteer Requirements.** The group discussed the burdens of complying with DCPS's bi-annual volunteer requirements re: fingerprinting and TB tests. LSAT Members agreed to consider advocating for adjustments to this policy. It was noted that many have complained about this, and the more individuals that communicate their frustration with these requirements, the stronger the case is to change the law.
- 8) New Business.** There was no new business.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:35 am. The next LSAT meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, October 8 at 7:30 am.