



MAURY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL LOCAL SCHOOL ADVISORY TEAM

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

Meeting Minutes

April 6, 2021, 4:00 pm via teleconference

School Leadership Present: Helena Payne Chauvenet, Taeneress Griffin

LSAT Members Present: VanNessa Duckett, Jean Kohanek, Ross Kyle, D'Ann Lettieri, Elizabeth Nelson, Richard Parker, Becca Sanghvi, Katie Spellacy, Angela Stover, Stefany Thangavelu

LSAT Members Absent: Henri Cooper, Abby Sparrow

Other Attendees: Eric Bethel, George Blackmon, Jessica Clancy, Diana Dillon, Katie Durcan, Diane Johnston, Sandy I-sen Pan Lawrence, Lora Nunn, Arun Rao, Liza Rao, Susannah Weaver, Shanna Williams-Carr, Tyler Wilson, other unidentified participants

The meeting was called to order at 4:05 pm.

Condolences were extended to the teachers and wider education community with respect to the sudden loss of Washington Teachers Union President Elizabeth Davis.

- 1. Minutes from Previous Meeting.** Minutes of the March 9, 2021 meeting were unanimously approved by roll-call vote.
- 2. Community Comments.** None.
- 3. LSAT Elections.** LSAT elections will be held in late May/early June in accordance with DCPS guidelines for parents and staff elections and WTU election procedures. It would be good to have next year's members in attendance at the June 8 meeting to ensure continuity for next year.
- 4. Letter to DGS re: playground, updates re: DDOT parking.** With the pending playground update, we will lose 8 spaces from the lot; additional parking zone changes will be necessary to accommodate teachers and staff in the neighborhood.

This process was delayed at DDOT due to the pandemic; activity should ramp up this summer. Updates to come.

Elizabeth Nelson motioned to approve the letter to DCPS/DGS as drafted (see attached) and circulated with allowance of future minor technical edits. Richard Parker seconded. The motion was unanimously approved by roll-call vote.

5. **Term 4 Reopening.** In light of the recent guideline changes with respect to social distancing and cohort size, the school is currently able to offer a little more than double the number of seats for in-person learning (IPL) than offered in Term 3. Unfortunately, the school will not be able to offer space to everyone. Because the guideline changes are so recent, the school is working under tight deadlines to staff up and ready the school building. The new guidelines help a lot in terms of capacity for IPL, though there are still space squeezes around eating and using outdoor areas. We have several more staff coming back, though we do have some staff (not homeroom teachers) taking leave due to their personal situations for Term 4.

Generally speaking, Term 4 classes will be about 20 students, full day, 4 days per week, with Wednesday asynchronous learning. There will be one additional IPL class for each grade, leaving one virtual class per grade, with a few exceptions: PK3 has only two classes (one IPL, one virtual); PK4 will be adding one half-day IPL cohort (10 students), the other half will be a virtual cohort with the same teacher; K and Grade 1 will each have two IPL and two virtual classes; and the school is striving to bring both classrooms of Grade 5 students back in person. A meeting will happen with IPL families to help understand logistics; there will also be direct homeroom teacher communication around any changes.

Initial IPL lottery offers went out Friday, April 2 and Monday, April 5. Families are given two days to decide, so as of today the school is still within the decision window for most of the offers. The school will continue to roll out offers per grade, based on availability, and plans to make as many offers as seats are available. In response to questions on how the school is gauging interest for IPL among families, Principal PC stated that past survey results indicate demand; the focus is on what the school can offer—the school is committed to fill every spot it can offer, but does not have the ability to meet additional demand, given the way it has been rolled out this year. With regard to the lottery lists, Principal PC will let the grade know when IPL classes are filled.

A question was asked regarding the equity of virtual learning and the potential for virtual students to be left behind. Principal PC shared that while there will not be equality because everyone won't get the same thing, decisions are already equity-based, because some students are in priority designations for IPL to address

other areas of need. When a student is impacted academically, the school can address that with intervention and support, including over the summer for some students, as well as next year. When social-emotional issues impact academics, the school looks at what can be done to support those students, while recognizing that the impacts of the pandemic are felt by everyone.

In response to a question regarding using a two day model to bring more students back in certain grades, Principal PC stated that two days IPL, two days virtual, and an asynchronous day is actually three different instructional models for students and teachers. This was not implemented by the school because given Maury's two main instructional support staff, it is very difficult to coordinate the support and team-based work teachers need for curriculum pacing and lesson planning, and Maury's overarching goal is to give students stable and consistent learning environments. Though it seems that bringing students in just part of the week would be beneficial for all, student data has shown this is not the case: the half-day or two-day model does not work for our most at-risk students; it would be inequitable to commit to a model that we know does not work for them. While many different variations could be implemented at different grade levels in theory—each choice has ramifications, and nothing will be universally viewed as fair. Ultimately, decisions were made to make learning as consistent as possible schoolwide. The choices are hard, the timeline short, but the school seeks both community and central office input in making these decisions.

Maury's Term 4 approach is limited by some factors set under the Term 3 model, and scaling up is based on what is feasible to ensure quality of instruction for all students, whether learning in person or virtually. It has been a huge priority at Maury to ensure that IPL and virtual learning share the same academic content and pacing so all students are prepared for the next academic year. Much of this is now done on Wednesdays, where teachers meet in teams to ensure pacing and consistency and have professional development with Maury's instructional coaches. It should be noted that every time there is a change of setting or teacher, that sets learning back because there is social-emotional work, community-building, and learning of new routines that has to take place. This is why keeping a consistent teaching model is important: though it is challenging to implement, the school has committed to curriculum pacing and academic targets to make sure kids are prepared for the next year.

It was noted that teacher continuity was really important for many families, and that some students were changing teachers for a third time this year. Given the previous focus on maintaining teacher continuity, it was asked how that was factored into decision making for Term 4. Principal PC acknowledged that the guidance was not clear for schools. In fact, prior to the recent changes around cohort size and

distancing, the school was far into developing a plan for Term 4 to stretch the week to make a lot of outdoor learning groups work in order to maintain teacher continuity, only to have to pivot. There is no perfect solution; there are a lot of competing priorities for Term 4, and the school knows it's not ideal. Maury will work to transition families with new teachers and support adjustments. School leadership is aware of the few instances where students are getting a new teacher for a third time; there is some flexibility and the school will work to support those families.

- 6. Summer Learning, Planning for SY2021–22.** DCPS is providing additional money to fund summer programming at schools. AP Griffin shared that planning for summer learning is currently on pause, but will ramp up again after Term 4 begins. Summer programming is targeted for students with priority designations and those furthest from opportunity; families will be contacted directly with an offer. Maury is currently working to get staffing for its summer programming, which will determine available seats. It is not clear if the updated guidance on cohort size and distancing would impact summer learning; however, it is beneficial to keep classroom sizes small to provide the most effective support for students. In addition, Ludlow-Taylor will be co-housed in the Maury building this summer while their HVAC system is updated, which will impact planning. For anyone wondering if they should sign up for DCPS summer offerings or wait to see if they would receive an offer from Maury, AP Griffin advised that anyone who wants summer learning, even if your child has a priority designation, should sign up for the DCPS citywide summer offerings, as those tend to fill up. If your student receives an offer from Maury, the DCPS spot can always be declined and filled from their waitlist. However, if your family qualifies for extended school year, that should be your priority for summer learning. There is much yet to be determined, including whether after-school programming can be provided. More details to come.

The Reopening Committee will be reconvened at some point this year when there are more details to discuss for SY2021–22. Any additional budget and considerations for virtual learners are still to be determined. The school is planning to provide IPL for all students who wish to return in person next year.

- 7. New Business.** There was no new business.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 5:15 pm.

The next LSAT meeting will be held Tuesday, May 11, 2021 at 4:00 pm via teleconference.



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April 7, 2021

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

Patrick Davis, Chief Operating Officer
District of Columbia Public Schools
1200 First Street NE
Washington, DC 20002

Kevin A. Anderson, Director
District of Columbia Department of General Services
2000 14th Street NW, 8th Floor
Washington, DC 20009

Dear Mr. Davis and Mr. Anderson,

The Maury LSAT was recently made aware that the Board of Zoning and Adjustment granted a special exception to allow a playground expansion for Maury. This was brought to the attention of the school by Maury parent and ANC6A Commission Chair Amber Gove, who in her capacity as ANC Chair, signed a letter of support for the special exception on behalf of the commission. Because the playground expansion will reduce on-site parking for staff, Dr. Gove noted that ANC support is conditional upon its request to DDOT for both ROP and RPP zoning on 12th Place NE. In addition, the school community will be working with DDOT to zone the surrounding streets in accordance with the Daytime School Parking Zone Act.

We are excited about the proposed changes. However, given the importance of outdoor space in our reopening plans, we are concerned that we don't have an established point of contact for this work at your agencies. The playground expansion has also brought to mind past LSAT discussions on systemic issues regarding the renovation process that were set aside with the pandemic, but feel timely to share now.

Thus, we are writing today with two requests: 1) to establish a point of contact at DCPS or DGS for Maury as soon as possible to gather more information on the timeline and details of the upcoming playground expansion; and 2) to consider keeping school SIT Teams intact through the first year of a new building.

Playground expansion timeline. As you know, schools are in the midst of planning an expansion to in-person learning for Term 4, as well as in-person learning opportunities for summer. Outdoor space will factor highly in terms of the opportunities we can offer to students. Due to the impact the playground expansion will have both for recess as well as outdoor learning spaces, it is imperative that our school leadership has an understanding of the timeline for the project as soon as possible, as well as any full or partial closures that may be necessary while work is completed.

Community presentation on playground expansion. The playground is a valuable resource both for the school and the surrounding neighborhood, and there will be a lot of interest in the new design. While we have some of the technical documents from the proposal to BZA, they aren't easy to understand. If more user-friendly materials like a presentation or fact sheet are available, we would welcome the opportunity to share that with our community.

Ensuring a smooth transition after a renovation. The multi-million dollar renovation of a school is no small task, and ongoing issues are to be expected as new systems are tested, new spaces are used, and the final building punchlist is completed. Though the new Maury building opened in August 2019, the last SIT meeting was held in May 2019. At Maury, our experience has shown that without a SIT in place, there was difficulty in ensuring accountability for issues directly related to the renovation.

Without a SIT, the LSAT became the forum for renovation-related concerns by default, but with no clear line of communication or accountability back to DCPS/DGS. While nominally the school still had a project coordinator at DGS, as well as a master contractor on site coordinating all of the subcontractors for a time, Maury staff spent countless hours following up on warranty issues and punchlist items. Even after punchlist items were converted mid-year into DGS work orders, Maury staff continued to have to spend significant time on these items, because orders were often closed without resolution and had to be re-entered.

Additionally, it was never made clear when the building warranty expired, which made regular building maintenance a challenge. For example, months and months went by without a simple fix for a downspout that was a few inches short and thus eroding the cement foundation beneath it. Though the leaking downspout was reported to the school on an almost daily basis, maintenance staff could not fix it without fear of violating the building warranty. It took over six months of constant follow-up by Maury staff to get it resolved. While that effort was not a good investment of time or money, it had the potential for terrific waste had the foundation been eroded and the interior of the building flooded.

A proposal: Keep the SIT intact through the first year. The complexities of a project don't disappear when the building opens; an issue like the downspout could have been easily and quickly resolved had a SIT been in place for the first year of the new building. With a SIT in place, monitoring punchlist items would not require the constant vigilance of already busy school staff, but could be conveyed to the DCPS/DGS project coordinator,

who is already familiar with the project and better equipped to handle warranty issues and subcontractor performance. Regular SIT meetings—whether on a monthly, quarterly, or even ad hoc basis—would provide accountability to the community that issues are being addressed and assurance to DCPS and the city that a significant capital investment is being well maintained. Finally, when a SIT is dissolved, it should be clear how any large-scale maintenance or renovation updates will be communicated to the school moving forward.

The Maury community is proud and thankful for our beautiful new building and playground, and excited for the other neighborhood schools across the city that are undergoing renovation. We hope that our experience highlights the need for ongoing communication, support, and accountability for the first year of a new building, and the way the SIT could be used to achieve that.

With regard to the playground renovation, we respectfully request that DCPS/DGS staff follow up with Principal Helena Payne Chauvenet at (202) 698-3838 or helena.chauvenet@k12.dc.gov as soon as possible.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Maury Elementary School
Local School Advisory Team

cc: Chairman Phil Mendelson
Councilmember Charles Allen
Councilmember Robert C. White, Jr.
Ward 6 Public School Parent Organization