

Hearst LSAT Meeting

Thursday, January 22, 2026

Administration/DCPS: Andral Hills (principal), Larin Rottman (assistant principal), Trianna Downing (DCPS), Sharona Robinson (DCPS)

Teacher/staff representatives: Dawn Gray (co-chair), Beth Prince (WTU rep), Skyelar Haith, Timothy Leonard, Latoya Hutchins, Jonyce Cole

Parent representatives: Julia Krahe (co-chair), Andrew Paciorek (secretary), Shari Rose (PTA co-president), Sara Rastegar (PTA co-president), Darria Turner

Observers: Chris Swanson, Sima Gandhi, Claire Cinque, Mia Olsen, Emily McVeigh, Monica Lucas, Will Martin, Rebecca Regan-Sachs, Mike Olsen, Alex Dimsdale, Jocelyn Knauf, Dave Steadman, Mekko Mongeon, and several others online whose names were not visible

LSAT Budget Process presentation by DCPS Community Action Team

- Presented by Trianna Downing, who is community engagement specialist for Ward 3, serving as the liaison between DCPS and individual schools. Also joining, Sharona Robinson, DCPS manager for community affairs and engagement.
- Trianna asked people to let them know about questions and concerns so they can support the school community
- Presentation meant to lay the stage for how LSAT and school community can advise the principal as decisions are made around setting the budget
- LSAT community norms: Bring your best self, go hard on ideas and soft on people, monitor airtime during discussions, accept non-closure, and assume positive intent.
- LSATs are designed to increase transparency and ensure that school decisions are made collaboratively with a diverse group of stakeholders
 - Include diverse voices from the school community, including teachers, parents, staff, and community members
 - LSATs ensure that school decisions are open, inclusive, and community-driven
 - 1 WTU rep, 4 WTU elected members, 4 elected parents/guardians with enrolled students, 1 non-instructional school staff member, 1 (2 for Hearst) PTA leaders, 1 community member
- Budget cycle
 - 1. Enrollment projections
 - 2. Public budget hearing and forums
 - 3. Budget projection
 - 4. School allocations
 - 5. Budget development
 - Currently in phases 2 and 3, LSAT will engage primarily during 4 and 5
- Principal Hills submits the budget; one LSAT co-chair will sign off using special @k12 email address
- During January and February, LSAT should engage with school leaders, hold office

hours, and then work on budget. DCPS is hoping for the budget to come out on time in February.

- Flexibility levels
 - NF1: allocations cannot be changed (principal, special education, e.g.)
 - NF2: allocations must maintain the intended purpose of funds but may be appealed to other uses within the intended purpose
 - F: Flexible allocations may be budgeted at a principal's discretion
- Inputs: projected enrollment, average position costs, policy decisions/legislation, funding to DCPS schools
- Looking ahead at FY27
 - Focus on transparency in budgets. Website (<http://budget.dcps.dc.gov>) has been dramatically improved and is now transparent and easy to understand.
 - Continuing to make budgets more understandable to stakeholders
 - Supporting principals and school communities through budget development
- Initial allocation worksheets can be found on the website once available. They will be available to the public.
- LSAT budget season responsibilities
 - Meeting and engagement. Meet as early as possible before receiving the budget allocation. Continue to hold regular LSAT meetings throughout the budget season. Ensure LSAT chairs sign off on the submitted budget to confirm LSAT engagement.
 - Keep all LSAT conversations confidential, especially discussions about specific staff positions. Respect the opinions of fellow LSAT members and principal—it's ok to disagree.
 - Advise the principal on school priorities and goals. Align LSAT goals with school priorities. Review data on school needs. Be prepared to ask questions, share thoughts, and listen.
- Principal responsibilities
 - Attend LSAT meetings
 - Ensure representation from key stakeholders (parents, teachers, staff, students, community members)
 - Provide copies of relevant materials
 - Share initial budget allocation and final submitted budget with the LSAT
 - Promotion atmosphere of inclusion
 - Discuss impact of new or changing programs
 - Ask the LSAT for recommendations regarding positions to be added or removed
 - Principals must collaborate closely with their LSAT to develop the budget, but principals are responsible for all budget decisions and have the final say.
- Three meetings: January (today), one meeting in February to discuss school priorities before budget comes out, and two more meetings in February with allocation in hand to review and finalize the budget recommendations
- LSAT resources
 - LSAT toolkit (bit.ly/LSATToolkit)
 - LSAT newsletter
 - LSAT guidelines
 - DC LSAT collective

- Community action team is here to help!

Budget and enrollment discussion

- Continuing discussion from prior LSAT meeting
- Questions around impacts of enrollment
 - Final enrollment number is 395, about 10 more than at present
- Currently three first grade classes; will need three second grade classes in 2026-2027. Would mean three classes for every grade except pre-K and 5th.
- Shari Rose question: What do we know about family return plans?
 - Principal Hills: Family intent-to-return survey will be next order of business
- Shari question: What is the ideal class size for each grade?
 - Principal Hills: We love small classes.
 - 68 third grade students
 - AP Rottman: Average class school-wide is around 19-20 kids, highest is 24
 - [After the meeting, Latoya noted that her 5th grade class has 26 students.]
- Dawn Gray: For next year, there are likely to be two additional classrooms. Then in the following year, there will likely be a need for fifth grade to go to three classes. Does the building have space? Do we have the ability to manage that?
- Principal Hills: At some point we would need to cap, but expansion is important to make the budget math work. If the budget doesn't come in as expected, Hearst would have to cut staff if we don't expand.
- Shari: What about in-boundary kids who start in K, rather than pre-K?
 - Ms. Cole: Some of them we already know are coming, and we have a very large waitlist
- Julia Krahe: There have been long-term community discussions about trying to get a second floor on the trailers. Is there a way to put in that request? Space is at a premium.
 - Principal Hills: That would be great.
 - Skyelar Haith: More smaller spaces on second floor would be better
- Dawn: Lots of demand. We added a SPED teacher and already have hit capacity there.
- Latoya Hutchins (in chat): "Having 3 classes in 3rd through 5th grades will affect how we organize our departmentalized instruction. What plan is in place for scheduling? What data points are we using to see the effectiveness in 3rd grade of departmentalized instruction? Will this mean additional inner core teachers?"
- Trianna: Good discussion, important to discuss these concerns. But you don't want to get ahead of budget allocations.
- Julia: Important to discuss a set of priorities, not exact plan.
- Sharona (in chat): "Budgets as it relates to building additions/modernizations is not in the same bucket of money we are talking about as it relates to this budget conversation. Those funds come from the capital budget."
- Dawn: What are the implications of that growth? More specialists? More SPED teachers?
 - Principal Hills: There have been more referrals to special education, which will impact hiring decisions in upcoming school year.
 - Julia: How would we accommodate that, if the budget allocation were basically flat?

- Principal Hills: That's when we petition hard, given the data to justify the need.
- AP Rottman: SPED and ML teachers are in non-flexible pool, so we could be allocated more given the growing population and need.
- Hills: We have the space, want the budget to reflect the space. Several classrooms are offices right now.
 - Julia: If we don't have space for small-group pull-outs, where would they do that?
 - Hills: Small group model is to do pull-out instruction in the classroom. Pull-out testing is a different ball game.
 - Julia: Where would pull-out testing happen?
 - AP Rottman: We've already been using Dr. Leonard's classroom, conference room, etc.
 - Julia: We'd need even more?
- [After the meeting, Julia clarified that she was talking about Tier 3 supports, which she understood are typically provided outside of the classroom, rather than Tier 2 supports, which can be provided in the classroom.]
- Alex Dimsdale (in chat): "2nd grade classrooms feel tight. As a mom of 2 Hearst kids with IEPs I have seen their years go way more smoothly when the classroom is not overcrowded and the special ed team have enough bandwidth to help them."
- Darria Turner (in chat): "As enrollment grows, I'm interested in how the school is planning to monitor staffing capacity and adjust supports over time to ensure CES students continue to receive consistent and appropriate services."
- Principal Hills: It's a Catch 22. We have to grow to keep adding staff to accommodate students and have to prioritize students and classroom instruction. Building audits inform space to grow. Will have another one done. Some of the spaces being used as offices are actually classrooms and that should take priority.
 - Julia: I hear you talking about offices as spaces that do not support students. My experience is that a SPED teacher with space was the greatest support for my kid.
 - Dawn: I'm in a room in the wings and do small-group instruction, but it's the size and space of a classroom. And it's already shared. It's a challenge to do that work without those rooms.
- Sharona (in chat): "If being honest, with the current landscape I think budgets will likely be flat"
- Shari: What about inner core? Do we need 2 PE teachers? How do we adjust art and music staffing? We have talked about staggering inner core (students wouldn't have art, music, etc. every week) and that will be a big adjustment if that happens.
 - Hills: Look to other schools for guidance and get creative. It comes down to scheduling. We have ways of using our master schedule.
 - Julia: Have you seen specific ways that other schools have handled it?
 - Hills: We have a plethora of principals in the cluster to talk to. This isn't unique to Hearst. I'm confident that we will find a way to meet the needs.
 - Julia: Parents will be really engaged in and care about that issue. When do you think you'll have thoughts on how to accommodate it?
 - Hills: Everything starts with the budget. Master scheduling begins in the spring.
- Shari: What if it's more than 10 additional kids in the upcoming school year, given the need for additional classrooms in older cohorts, which will need to be filled? We don't know about the needs of students who come in off the waitlist.

- AP Rottman: Even after budget process, based on enrollment, there can be some adjustments.
- Hills: In the 395 calculation, the extra students will be in higher grade levels, including 3rd. We shouldn't get into the numbers until we actually have students enrolled. In the 11th hour, if we're short a few kids, we will take off the waitlist.
- Sharona: Effects of higher enrollment depend on how they're spread across grades.
- Dawn: Budget is based on 395. If we wind up over that number, we just have to make it work within the existing budget.

Community communication

- Dawn: Can we correct the misunderstanding about enrollment already being open?
 - Principal Hills intended to say lottery, not enrollment, was open.
 - General agreement to combine that communication with the re-enrollment survey. Also push out to room parents.
- Dawn: Questions at both PTA and LSAT around communication, in particular the level of communication and engagement relative to what families and community were used to. It would be helpful to tell people what communication norms will be.
- Julia: One thing that came up was the emergency vehicles at the school. Parents have traditionally gotten some general communication so they can talk with their kids. Parent engagement is a key strategy as part of CSP goals.
 - Principal Hills: The good news is that the DCPS comms department tells me what to communicate in these situations. DCPS is very clear on what is said and who it's told to.
 - Trianna: DCPS is responsible for these communications, not Principal Hills.
 - AP Rottman: The most recent incident (involving emergency vehicles at school) was different than some in the past.
- Julia: There have also been issues with sharing information about staffing changes. Lots of questions, not much information shared this year.
 - Principal Hills: One of the things we have to remember is that it's a personnel issue. Human resources knows the specifics, and some things can't be shared/announced. All families in those classrooms have been notified (kindergarten, 2nd grade, etc.)
 - Julia: Changes in non-homeroom teachers also make a difference.
 - Hills: Second-grade classrooms were well-informed. Parents in the classroom were notified of the 3rd grade teacher absence last year. Not announcing the temporary replacement for that 3rd grade class was an oversight on my part. There is a learning curve when coming in as a new principal.
 - Sima Gandhi (in chat): "As a second grade parent comms are clear"
 - Julia: What are points at which parents should expect to be notified?
 - Sharona: These issues put principals in an awkward position, because they have to wait until official notification from labor management/employee relation teams. Notifying the community prior to that could be in violation of CBA. Principals trying to play a big game of tetris. They want to give answers sooner rather than later, but oftentimes systems prevent them from doing that.
 - AP Rottman: Previous principals got around this by allowing staff members to

- share their own information. That has been different this year.
- Julia: That difference is what people have been noting.
 - Sharona: Some of this might be solved by norming. Principal Hills is new, moving into a new space. Might be good to meet in the middle. We can help with that.
 - Latoya (in chat): “That sounds like a great idea. This is such a close school community.”
 - “Yes, Sharona’s support may be helpful to guide/support the community.”
 - Dawn: We appreciate Sharona’s willingness to come back and facilitate.
 - General agreement on this point

Maintenance Issues

- Andrew Paciorek: Regarding the many problems on the playground, DPR has not been very responsive to emails, although Mark Thomas from DPR did come out for a walkthrough. Friends of Hearst Park has an agreement with DPR to make improvements and repairs, but does not have funds for these things. Would it be possible for FOHP to team up with the PTA, which may have funds?
 - Andrew to send email to Allison Koester (Hearst parent and FOHP member) and PTA co-chairs, to discuss the possibility of using PTA funds, either from the existing budget or via a special budget amendment vote among parents
- Principal Hills: There have been plumbing issues in the school, sulfurous smells, but it usually doesn’t recur when DGS comes to inspect. Running water helps. The situation has been better with cold weather.

Election

- Only three of four parent slots on the LSAT are filled after a departure. Julia to take the lead on organizing an election among the parent community as soon as possible, to fill the seat before budget season.

Next meeting

- February 5th will be an open meeting for priorities, then the 12th and 19th for closed meetings once the Hearst allocation is available. We will push back if the budget isn’t available on time.