

Hearst LSAT Meeting

Thursday, February 5, 2026

Administration/DCPS: Andral Hills (principal), Larin Rottman (assistant principal), Trianna Downing (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, Bre Heslin

Observers: Emily McVeigh, Mia Olsen, Jillian Gillespie, and several others

Preamble

- Welcome to Breanna (Bre) Heslin, the newly elected parent representative. Trianna to add her to the back-end LSAT infrastructure.

Budget priorities (personnel)

- Dawn: Budget season is always a challenge, particularly with short timelines coming from DCPS. Focus for today is to look at priorities voiced by families and staff, around staffing, programming etc.
- We want to consider both what to expand if budget allows and what to preserve in the event of tight funding
- LSAT parents circulated a survey to parents and staff over the previous weekend, which received 129 responses (106 from parents and 23 from staff). The top 5 priorities were separately tallied for families and for staff:

Parent/Caregiver Top Five

1. Smaller Class Sizes
2. Reading Intervention
3. Math Intervention
4. Social Emotional Learning
5. Music

Staff Top Five

- Smaller Class Sizes
 - Reading Intervention
 - Social Emotional Learning
 - Math Intervention
 - Additional SPED support
- Top priority from both families and staff is small class sizes. There is never a voice against small classes!

- Both groups listed their second priority as additional reading intervention
- Families and staff listed math and SEL as their third and fourth priorities, albeit in the opposite order
- Priority five from families: music. Julia suggested those responses represented a prioritization of inner core subjects generally, rather than just music
- Shari: There has been chatter about what music and other inner core classes would look like if school continues to expand, in terms of logistics and scheduling.
- Bre: Do we feel like we know what is meant by “small” class sizes?
 - Julia: Could go back and look at data from the questions about the maximum class size respondents felt comfortable with, without a partner teacher.
 - District allows for up to 25 kids per older classrooms, with a target of 20 for K-2
 - Question: What are the targets for Hearst?
 - Principal Hills: We are still working through the formula to see what is reasonable
- Enrollment survey data (AP Rottman)
 - 269 responses, almost all of which say they are returning to Hearst with certainty
 - 4 are moving schools, 7 are moving out of area, 9 were unsure
 - Projected classroom numbers *at this point, based on limited data*: Two pre-K (as always), two K (but without including likely new in-bounds families who were not in pre-K), three 1st, two or three 2nd, two 3rd, three 4th, two 5th
 - Shari to ask room parents to message their classes, asking for all parents to respond even if they are unsure whether they will return
 - Can try outreach to Communikids, NCRC, St. Columba’s pre-K programs, as well as BCDC (daycare)
 - All in-boundary pre-K students got into Hearst for 2025-2026
- LSAT members noted the usual tradeoff of small classrooms with only one teacher vs larger classes with partner teachers
 - Andrew: Moving from two large K classrooms last year to three smaller 1st grade classrooms this year seems to have been well received by parents, including some who were concerned in advance about not having partner teachers in the classroom
 - General agreement that partner teachers in K are still a top priority for Hearst
- Trianna: Mann is a comparable size and has a partner teacher in every classroom
 - This is accomplished via major funding from Mann PTO
 - Trianna to put Shari in touch with Mann PTO leader and will follow up with DCPS about what’s allowed, as Dr. Chen had received mixed messages in the past
 - Funding even one or two partner teachers would require a major investment relative to the Hearst PTA budget
 - Hearst PTA typically covers as many non-personnel expenses as possible to take burden off of the school budget
- General agreement that having partner teachers who float across classrooms is not helpful
- Shari requested an update on how Hearst manages substitute teachers
 - Schools can hire a building substitute out of their budget, which Hearst does (1 slot)
 - Used for known absences, with need for additional subs covered through central DCPS system

- AP Rottman noted that, after a certain DCPS allowance for subs, costs have to come out of the school budget and thus crowd out other spending
- Principal Hills: Luckily we have lots of subs who love Hearst and are happy to come here
- Shari: PTA has put a lot of money into blended learning, which could have a bigger impact than a single partner teacher.
- Members noted that there was some concern about too much screen time expressed in the parent survey
 - Mrs. Haith noted that too much screen time has been a particular concern in 4th grade ELA
- Members expressed concern about staffing for special education and noted the need for additional support next year given the number of kids with special ed plans at Hearst (504s and IEPs)
 - AP Rottman said she expects more resources from DCPS for SPED based on the number of kids needing intervention
 - Currently there is one reading interventionist for K-5 and one joint math interventionist/coach for K-5, as the budget did not allow for separate positions. AP Rottman does the other half of coaching for math and has had to pick up some intervention duties in the absence of a DCPS approved partner interventionist
- Some families in the survey were seeking more enrichment/intervention for advanced students
- The school recently administered an intent-to-return survey for staff. Principal Hills said that she expects to need roughly 5 new teachers next year.
- Members noted that even at Hearst's current size, it is already challenging to have 2 PE classes per week (mandated by DCPS) with only 1.5 PE teachers, which are not specially funded and have to be covered by the school budget

Budget priorities (non-personnel)

- Shari asked the administration to think about possible new asks for the PTA, since the PTA is currently planning its budget for 2026-2027
- DCPS is supposed to offer swimming this year, but there has been no news on when
- The administration does not expect any information about DCPS priority items and special funding for next year until later in 2026. For example, the swimming program was announced late in the last school year.
- One possible ask for the PTA would be more devices for the lower grades, which are not provided by DCPS on a 1-1 basis before 3rd grade
 - Shari said the PTA could likely help out with tech needs

Follow-up from January meeting

- Maintenance: Dawn noted that the wings (trailers) are getting quite a “beat down” from use this year.
 - There is a toilet that can't be used in the boys' bathroom in the wings
 - Leaking faucets in wing bathrooms since last year
 - Also a leaking toilet in pre-K

- Ms. Prince noted that her sink runs non-stop. Hearst staff were able to fix it once, but it has continued to leak since.
- Trianna offered to flag all work orders for DCPS operations, once they are submitted. AP Rottman confirmed that work orders had been submitted already.
- Trianna: There was a recent budget event with middle- and high-school students and the Chancellor, Deputy Chancellor, etc. Biggest concern from students was the state of DCPS bathrooms.
- A discussion followed on concerns about school communication and engagement, as expressed in responses to the survey administered by the LSAT parent representatives earlier in the week
 - The survey questions were largely copied directly from the surveys from the past two years to maximize data comparability
 - A total of 129 people (106 parents and 23 teachers) completed the survey. Data on communication and engagement was based on n=146 (since parents with multiple children replied to that section once per child).
 - Perceptions of feeling informed about the classroom have dropped somewhat. Open-ended comments praised specific teachers for excellent, routine communication, while some respondents requested more proactive communication from teachers
 - The survey results also indicated that there were sizable declines in the fractions of parents who felt well-informed about the school and who felt that the school responds to their concerns, relative to two years ago
 - The official DCPS Panorama survey should go out in March
 - Trianna expressed concern about combining the budget component of the survey with questions about communications and leadership. She suggested separating the budget and other issues in the future.
 - Some members responded that Hearst practice has been to combine surveys to maximize the number of responses.
 - Principal Hills expressed concern that she had not had an opportunity to help craft the survey questions
 - Julia stated that there had been a late decision to send out a very similar survey to prior years, because the administration hadn't sent one out in January (as in past years) and the results are needed to consider budget priorities.
 - Andrew: Regardless of any issues with the precise survey questions, there were substantive concerns about communications and engagement in the responses that are worthy of consideration
 - Principal Hills repeated her concern that crafting the survey had not been a collaborative effort. She requested grace as a new principal still learning the ropes.
 - Trianna to assist with communication tactics and techniques, and connect with Principal Hills and LSAT co-chairs to continue the discussion
- Andrew expressed appreciation for Hearst teachers and staff, as reflected in overwhelming positive feedback for most of them in the survey responses.

Next meeting

- Trianna: There is concern that Congressional action to override DC legislation regarding

taxes could negatively affect timing of DCPS budget, but there is no clear information yet

- The plan is to have the next LSAT meeting when the Hearst allocation is received, to consider petitions to DCPS, followed by an additional meeting once those petition responses are returned
- For now, the LSAT set aside February 12th, 17th, 19th, and 26th for possible closed meetings.
- LSAT members expressed willingness to adjust schedules as much as possible to accommodate budget season.