

LSAT Meeting Notes

February 2015

Attendance

Keith White, Chair
Jamie Miles, Principal
Nicole Pethtel, Teacher Representative
Robyn Brooks, Staff Representative
Nicole Pethtel, Staff Representative
Eve Lotter, Parent Representative
Jim Elliott, Parent Representative
Aeva Doods, Parent Representative
Carl Bergman, Community Representative
Mark Pattison, Supplemental Member
Kesha Pendergrast, Supplemental Member
Clarence Lusane, PTA Education Committee
Erica Turnipseed-Webb, Parent
Gwen Washington, Parent

Minutes

Minutes from the January LSAT meeting were approved.

Mad Science

Principal Miles provided an update on Mad Science. She said that the PTA had agreed to provide funding for the program. The cost will depend on whether instruction is provided for each grade level or for the entire school. The cost per grade level is \$170, or \$1,020 for all 6 grade levels, whereas the cost for the entire school is \$800. There was a general consensus among LSAT members that the per grade level option was preferable. Mad Science is tentatively scheduled for the last Wednesday in May prior to Memorial Day (May 20).

Keyboard Proficiency

Principal Miles also reported on a new typing education program called Type to Learn, which has been purchased by the PTA and distributed to teachers. It is very important that Shepherd student develop typing schools, in part because the PARCC assessment test will be conducted on computer via a web-based testing application.

Members of the LSAT then discussed several issues related to keyboard proficiency and the PARCC, including:

- *Cursive writing education.* Cursive writing is not currently part of the Shepherd curriculum and there was discussion about whether and how it might be incorporated.
- *Keyboard use/availability at home for practice.* Keisha Pendergrast agreed to develop a survey of parents to identify families that do not have keyboard access at home.
- *Who will take the online PARCC.* Students in grades 3-5 will take the online version of the PARCC. Students in grade 2 will also be tested but will not with the electronic version of the text. The test will take 75-90 minutes per session, one session per day.
- *PARCC readiness.* Principal Miles said that Shepherd had already pilot tested the PARCC and was continuing preparations to administer it but that there would likely to be hiccoughs in the first year, as there always are with new initiatives such as this one. Luckily the first year scores will not count.

Science Fair

Principal Miles provided an update on the Science Fair. She said students in grades 3-5 have already presented their projects. Students in these grades were required to develop projects, and all but 5 students ultimately participated. The projects were generally of good quality but the judging was somewhat rushed due to weather-related school day shortening. Students in lower grades will present their projects at the end of April. Participation is strongly encouraged, although not required as it was for the upper grades. Volunteers from NOAA have again agreed to judge the projects, and all participants will get an award of some kind. The citywide Science Fair will be held in late spring.

Parent Communication

Members of the LSAT then discussed various issues related to parent communication.

- Principal Miles said she received some feedback that parent communication was not clear or strong enough but that she was working to improve this.
- The Shepherd mid-week email blast is good but the timing may need to be adjusted.
- The PTA is working to improve its communications and has assigned a PTA member to head up this effort.
- A calendar is now being sent at the beginning of each month with a list of important upcoming dates.
- General notices should be posted on the Shepherd Park listserv.
- Principal Miles has asked teachers to use the Remind APP to communicate with parents. Some teachers have developed alternative systems.
- The Mustang comes out every two weeks and includes link to downloadable calendar.

- Unfortunately, all of the documents linked to the Shepherd website have been lost and Principal Miles does not have copies on her computer; however, it's possible others may have copies.

Budget

Keith White and David Trimble attending a DCPS budget meeting held at Coolidge High School on January 22. Keith briefed LSAT members on what happened at that meeting and on the DCPS budget process. The budget for each school is based on the number and mix of students, and there is very little discretionary funding available. A specific date for when the draft budget will be transmitted to the school has not been identified; however, it may come sometime in March.

Above Grade Level Students

In the context of budget priorities, LSAT members discussed the need to better support students who are above grade level. DCPS used to have a gifted and talented program but it was discontinued. A Student Enrichment pilot program has recently been established at West Education Campus, and Deal has an Advanced Placement (AP) program.

School Improvement Team

Keith White provided an update on the School Improvement Team's efforts. He said the team was pursuing to \$8.2 million to pay for a variety of renovations, including a ground floor art center.

Parent Concerns

Members of the LSAT then discussed several concerns raised by Shepherd parents.

- Black History Month isn't as visible as it should be.
- There is an overemphasis on standardized tests.
- Test-based awards are not appropriate and may discourage students.
- Awards for attendance are not appropriate, since parents are usually responsible if students are tardy.
- Issues related to bullying and violence at Shepherd are not adequately handled or communicated to parents.
- There is a need to take a deeper look at the culture at Shepherd and the values the school is hoping to engender in students.

Next Meeting

Wednesday, March 11 (subsequently changed to March 18 or 19).

Meeting notes prepared by LSAT Secretary, Jim Elliott

