

May LSAT Meeting Notes 5/20

Key Outcomes:

- **New LSAT Members:** Teacher, WTU Representative, Non-Instructional Staff Rep and Parent Members of the 2026-2027 LSAT were welcomed. The PTO and Community Representative have yet to be selected.
- **Enrollment:** Shepherd enrollment stands at 60% as of May 20, 2026; last year at this time Shepherd was at 75%.
- **Staffing:**
 - **Soft offers** had been made for:
 - Special Education Inclusion Teacher
 - Physical Education Teacher
 - STEM Teacher
 - School Librarian
 - **Ongoing interview process** for:
 - Manager of Specialized Instruction (MSI)
 - Instructional Math Coach
 - Additional **expected vacancies**
 - 2 classroom teachers
 - 2 special education aides
 - A significant portion of the meeting focused on parent concerns about the loss of beloved librarian Ms. Scott, who was not offered the librarian position, leading to discussions about trust issues and the need for transparency in decision-making processes. Principal Russell agreed to host a follow-up community discussion with concerned parents.
 - Parents who feel that their concerns have not been addressed by the Admin team or those who want to advocate for greater transparency may email IS Larkin at kathryn.larkin@k12.dc.gov and cc pto@shepherd-elementary.org
- **Education Technology:** the LSAT also convened a **discussion about education technology** usage at Shepherd and within DCPS where parents raised concerns about iReady, YouTube usage, and the need for clearer policies around technology implementation. Parents were concerned about overall screen time and screens being used for calm down time, movement breaks and the viewing of Disney movies and other recreational content. Questions around what programs are accessible at what grade and whether Admin can share a by grade level look at how much time students spend on-line.

- The LSAT voted to establish an Education Technology Working Group to further address these issues. Interested
- If you are interested in joining this working group please reach out to kateasnyder@gmail.com; working group volunteers include Anne Godoy, Rebecca Livengood and Brett Anitra Gilbert so far.

Points for follow Up

- **Principal Russell will:**
 - update the community regarding the status of the soft offers vacant position and other pending staffing/vacancy updates.
 - Schedule and participate in a separate conversation with interested parents to discuss the decision-making process around the STEM/STEAM/performing arts positions and broad; the rationale for staffing and hiring decisions.
 - Look into whether current device/program monitoring tools provide data on student screen time by grade or student, and report back to the LSAT/parent community.
 - Work with staff to compile and share a holistic overview of technology use at each grade level, including types of technology, frequency, and specific platforms (e.g., iReady, YouTube, etc.) being utilized in instruction.
 - Continue development of school-level policy/guidelines regarding educational technology use, including YouTube/video approval protocols, and update the community as policies are drafted.

More Detailed Summary

LSAT Enrollment and Staffing Update

The meeting welcomed the 26-27 LSAT members and provided an enrollment and staffing update. The new LSAT will include teachers, a WTU building representative, parent representatives, and a non-instructional staff member. The PTO will select their representative, and the community representative will be identified by the new LSAT.

Student Enrollment Status Update

Ms. Offor reported that current enrollment stands at 60% with 256 students, noting that many forms were returned to families due to missing residency documentation or errors. She explained that the team is being thorough with form reviews to ensure accuracy for DC audits and funding calculations, with most communication happening through parent portal emails. Ms. Offor also reminded families that every student must be re-enrolled for the upcoming year and requested information about students leaving Shepherd to facilitate record transfers to their new schools.

Staff Hiring Updates

Principal Russell provided updates on hiring, noting that offers have been made for a STEM teacher, librarian, PE teacher, and SPED inclusion teacher, while some positions remain vacant including the MSI and math instructional coach roles. The school anticipates two upcoming vacancies for special education educational aides and two classroom teacher positions due to internal movements.

School Staffing Concerns

Parents expressed concerns about the lack of a contingency plan for activities previously managed by Ms. Scott, who was not offered the librarian position. They questioned the administration's trust and communication, citing past broken promises and the recent change from "STEAM" to "STEM" teacher discussions. Principal Russell acknowledged the concerns and promised to provide updates once hiring decisions are finalized, likely before the end of the school year.

Education Technology Working Group Formation

Parents raised questions about technology usage in classrooms, particularly regarding iReady and YouTube, with specific concerns about content appropriateness and lack of clear policies. The LSAT voted to form an Education Technology Working Group to address these issues, with the working group tasked to examine current technology usage across grade levels, gather best practices from other schools, and potentially engage with DCPS-wide policy changes regarding educational technology. Interested parents and educators should reach out to kateasnyder@gmail.com

Upcoming Meetings

- **Next LSAT Meeting:** June 17, 3:45-4:45 PM
- **Topics moved to May:** Insight survey results (summary of trends if available); Enrollment, Hiring and staffing updates

Additional Research shared by parents: Ed tech may be hindering student learning.

1) Ahn J. Exploring the Negative and Gap-Widening Effects of EdTech on Young Children's Learning Achievement: Evidence from a Longitudinal Dataset of Children in American K-3 Classrooms. *Int J Environ Res Public Health*. 2022 Apr 29. One noteworthy result from this study "indicates quite robustly the causal relationship between the excessive use of EdTech in the classroom and children's lowering achievement scores—beyond a mere correlation. In that sense, it can be considered as evidence for a potential adverse effect of EdTech on young children's learning achievement."

Full study available at: <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC9104322/>

2) Clinton, V. (2019) Reading from paper compared to screens: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Journal of Research in Reading*, 42: 288–325. This study involved a systematic

literature search of reports of studies comparing reading from paper and screens was conducted in seven databases and found that reading from screens had a negative effect on reading performance relative to paper.

See: <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9817.12269>.

3) Salmerón, L., Vargas, C., Delgado, P., & Baron, N. (2023). Relation between digital tool practices in the language arts classroom and reading comprehension scores. *Reading and writing*, 36(1), 175–194. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11145-022-10295-1>.

This study concluded that data from Data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) 2017 “reveal that generalized use of digital technologies in education (here, in reading classrooms) appears susceptible to making the traditional mistake of adopting digital innovations without relying on evaluations of their effectiveness (Salmerón & Delgado, 2019). Our analysis suggests that many of the digitally-based activities performed in language arts classrooms in the US, particularly in lower grades, could well be hampering student reading development.”

4) In recent written testimony before the U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation, Jared Cooney Horvath, a neuroscientist and educator, referenced the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) as showing that frequent in-class computer use correlates with significantly lower math and science performance among fourth and eighth graders across both high-income and middle-income countries.

See

https://www.commerce.senate.gov/wp-content/uploads/media/doc/Horvath_Written%20Testimony.pdf