



DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Office of Communications and Engagement

School Year 2019 – 2020

# Local School Advisory Team Guidelines

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## A Message from the DCPS Communications and Engagement Office

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Dear DCPS Community,

District of Columbia Public Schools' (DCPS) mission is to ensure that every school guarantees students reach their full potential through rigorous and joyful learning experiences provided in a nurturing environment. To carry out that mission, strong partnerships between families, school staff, principals and communities are essential.

In the fall 2017, DCPS strengthened its commitment to these partnerships by making “Engaging Families” one of our five districtwide strategic priorities. Through this priority, DCPS and its schools are expected to “ensure communication and deepen partnerships with families and the community.”

An important body that DCPS will increasingly rely on for facilitating these partnerships at each school is the Local School Advisory Team (LSAT). The LSAT is a team of parents, teachers, non-instructional school staff, and community members who meet monthly to advise the principal on matters that promote high expectations and high achievement for all students at their school. This team advises the principal on topics including, but not limited to, school priorities and initiatives, the development of the Comprehensive School Plan, and the alignment of school goals with broader DCPS goals.

LSATs are mandated to exist at every DCPS school and principals are expected to strongly consider LSAT advice. In order to support LSATs in carrying out their mission, DCPS provides this Guidelines document along with additional resources on the DCPS website at [bit.ly/dcpslsat](http://bit.ly/dcpslsat). Staff from the DCPS Communications and Engagement Office (CEO) are also available to answer any questions about LSATs and provide individualized supports. Please feel free to reach out to them by email at [ceo.info@k12.dc.gov](mailto:ceo.info@k12.dc.gov) or phone at 202.719.6613.

We look forward to continued and strengthened engagement with all of our school community stakeholders!

Thank you,

Shanita Burney  
Officer, Communications and Engagement Office  
DC Public Schools

## What is a Local School Advisory Team?

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A Local School Advisory Team (LSAT) is a group of elected and appointed members that shall exist in every DCPS school, is constituted according to these guidelines, and conducts the business outlined herein. The team consists of parents, teachers, non-instructional school staff, a community member, and in some cases students, to advise the principal on matters that promote high expectations and high achievement for all students. The Local School Advisory Team was previously called the Local School Restructuring Team (LSRT); LSRTs were established by the Superintendent of DC Public Schools in collaboration with the Washington Teachers' Union in 1992. These teams were established, as the initial guidelines stipulated, ". . . to serve in an advisory capacity to the principal for the purpose of improving student outcomes." The continuing achievement of DCPS students is the goal of all Local School Advisory Teams.

The purpose of this LSAT Guidelines document is to provide procedures for LSATs to follow in order for them to effectively carry out their work.

### The Purpose of Local School Advisory Teams

#### Primary Responsibilities

Local School Advisory Teams have primary responsibility for the following:

- Working with the principal on initial development, regular monitoring and continuous refinement of the local Comprehensive School Plan (CSP) (school goals), including the supporting budget;
- Advising the principal on school priorities;
- Reviewing data in order to be informed about school needs and trends;
- Using assessment results to develop specific strategies for research-based school improvement;
- Promoting a positive school climate through respectful discourse;
- Complying with the requirements of the District of Columbia Open Meetings Act and the Freedom of Information Act;
- Alignment of strategic and specific goals and objectives of DCPS.

In the course of carrying out these responsibilities, all directed at improving student achievement, Local School Advisory Teams shall discuss and advise the principal on matters such as:

- Budget decisions;
- Organization of the school;
- Curriculum options, including special or supplementary course offerings and specialized research-based instructional strategies;
- Allocation of school resources;
- Priorities and considerations for staffing patterns and the selection of personnel;
- Monitoring overall student progress;
- School culture, and
- Family engagement.

In addition, Local School Advisory Teams carry certain responsibilities regarding the excessing of DCPS job positions, according to the Collective Bargaining Agreement between the WTU and DCPS as quoted in part below:

4.5.2.2 When DCPS determines an excess is necessary, the Local School Restructuring Team (LSRT) shall make a recommendation as to the area(s) of certification to be affected.

4.5.2.8 When the Supervisor's final decision departs from the recommendation of the LSRT, as to the area affected, the Supervisor shall prepare a written justification. A copy of the justification shall be provided to the Chancellor and the President of the WTU. Upon the request of the WTU President, the justification shall require the approval of the Chancellor, or the Chancellor's designee prior to implementation of the excess at that school.

39.5 When DCPS determines a RIF, Abolishment, or Furlough may be necessary, the LSRT shall explore alternative ways to address the required budget reductions prior to making a recommendation that affects a reduction of personnel. If the Supervisor's final decision departs from the recommendation of the LSRT, the Supervisor shall prepare a written justification. A copy of the justification shall be provided to the Chancellor and President of the WTU. Upon the request of the WTU President, the justification shall require the approval of the Chancellor, or the Chancellor's designee prior to implementation of the RIF, Abolishment, or Furlough at the school.

For more information on the role of LSATs within the Collective Bargaining Agreement, please reference the [full text of the Collective Bargaining Agreement](#). Please note that the term "LSRT" is still used withing the Collective Bargaining Agreement, although the term has been replaced with "LSAT" by DCPS.

## Membership

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Each Local School Advisory Team will have the following members representing their constituencies:

- 1 WTU Building Representative or designee
- 4 Teachers, elected by the ET-15 and EG-09 teachers
- 4 Parents/guardians *who have a student enrolled in the school*, elected by the parents
- 1 Parent Group Leader (of PTA, PTO, PTSA, HSA, or other such group) or designee *who has a student enrolled in the school*
- 1 Non-Instructional Local School Staff Member, elected by non-instructional school staff
- 1 Student (recommended in high schools, and optional at other levels)
- 1 Community Member who is a resident of the local school's boundary, works within the school's boundary, or is a member of one of the school's official partner organizations (optional)

If all members of the Local School Advisory Team and the principal agree that an additional member(s) is essential, they may include additional members on the team. Possible additions could include:

- A parent position in order to ensure the team reflects a diversity of perspectives linguistically, racially, socioeconomically, or otherwise;
- A parent from one of the school's feeder schools or its destination school;
- A teacher of a specific discipline;
- A parent of a student in the incoming, youngest class, to be chosen at the beginning of the school year.

Any additional member(s) are appointed to the Local School Advisory Team through a consensus of its members. The maximum number of members for a Local School Advisory Team is fifteen (15). LSATs wishing to include additional members beyond that maximum must apply for a waiver from the DCPS Communications and Engagement Office by emailing [ceo.info@k12.dc.gov](mailto:ceo.info@k12.dc.gov).

## Roles and Responsibilities

### **Role of the School Principal or Principal's Designee**

Since the purpose of the Local School Advisory Team is to advise the principal, the inclusion of the principal as a member of the Team would put that individual in the odd position of advising one's self. Therefore, the principal is not a member of the Local School Advisory Team itself but is essential to the Local School Advisory Team's work and is expected to strongly consider LSAT recommendations.

Principals or their designees must play essential roles in the work of their Local School Advisory Teams in terms of participation, responsive listening, and respectful dialogue. Principals will be held accountable to their Instructional Superintendent and the Chancellor for successful execution of this role.

The principal or their designee will attend all monthly Local School Advisory Team meetings. At each of these LSAT meetings, the principal and LSAT shall discuss the local Comprehensive School Plan, in addition to any other agenda items and topics that relate to promoting high student achievement.

The principal or their designee shall:

- Attend all monthly Local School Advisory Team meetings;
- Work with the Chair on logistics, meeting planning and agenda creation;
- Ensure elections are held during the election window time period;
- Provide copies, in as timely a manner as possible, of all material -- data, budgets, DCPS school policies and mandates -- to the LSAT, necessary for the team to make an informed recommendation to the principal. (Individual student data or personnel information shall not be shared as it must be kept confidential);
- Use school communication channels to support LSAT activities and elections;
- Ensure that all school stakeholders (parents, teachers, students, and community members) are respected and made to feel welcome to participate on the Local School Advisory Team, and
- Promote an atmosphere of inclusion, with dialogue focused on successful research-based approaches that benefit all students.

#### **Role of Local School Advisory Team Members**

Effective members work with the principal and DCPS central office in professional development sessions to understand data, current challenges, and multiple perspectives in order to better understand the needs of the students and the local school. It is not the role of the Local School Advisory Team to pass resolutions, but rather to advise and inform the school leadership team.

Members are encouraged to attend all meetings in person. Team members cannot be represented at meetings by a designee or a proxy. If a member of the Local School Advisory Team is unable to be present for three consecutive meetings or the other members come to a consensus that the conduct of a member is detrimental to the effectiveness of the team, then the LSAT Chair may inform the member in writing that their membership is not in good standing and list the restorative actions that need to be taken by the member. If the LSAT Member in question does not take all appropriate steps required to address such restorative actions, the LSAT may hold a vote to remove that member. The vote to remove a member must pass by a 2/3 majority. The LSAT Secretary must keep a written record of the removal process of any LSAT member.

If the members of the LSAT find that the LSAT Chair is operating in a manner that is detrimental to the effectiveness of the LSAT, those members may address their concerns with the DCPS Communications and Engagement Office (CEO). Concerns may be shared verbally, but shall also be submitted in writing. Staff from CEO will then meet with the LSAT Chair and discuss suggested restorative actions that the Chair must take in order to remain in the position of LSAT Chair. If the LSAT Chair does not take all appropriate steps required to address such restorative actions, CEO staff may convene a vote of the LSAT to remove the LSAT Chair. The vote must pass by a 2/3 majority. The LSAT Secretary must keep a written record of the removal process of any LSAT Chair.

In the event of a vacancy of a team member position, the constituents of that member shall conduct an election to fill the vacancy as soon as possible while still ensuring proper notice is given to the school community. For example, if there is a parent vacancy, the parent organization will hold an election for a new parent member. If there is a teacher vacancy, the teachers will hold an election for a new teacher member. Until an election takes place, an interim teacher team member may be appointed by the WTU building rep or WTU President. Until an election takes place, an interim parent team member may be appointed by the leader of the local school parent organization. Notification of any vacancy shall be provided in writing to the DCPS Communications and Engagement Office and the WTU.

#### **Role of the Local School Advisory Team Chair**

- The Local School Advisory Team Chair is elected by the team from among its members by a simple majority secret ballot vote.
- Facilitates the LSAT meetings
- Prepares and disseminates meeting agendas
- Must be a current school staff member or the parent/guardian of a current student. The Local School Advisory Team may decide to elect co-chairs, one parent/guardian and one teacher or non-instructional staff member.

The Chair is the primary liaison to the principal and is the principal's point of contact for the LSAT. The Chair:

- Shall convene meetings of the Local School Advisory Team;
- Works with the principal on logistics, meeting planning, and agenda development;
- Encourages other members to attain the knowledge necessary to participate meaningfully which may include identifying internal or external resources;
- Serves as liaison between the Local School Advisory Team and DCPS central office, specifically the Communications and Engagement Office (CEO), distributing key information from the central office as well as requesting information from, or voicing concerns to, the central office;
- Participates in meetings and professional development sessions for chairs and members.

#### **Role of the Local School Advisory Team Secretary**

- The secretary is elected by a simple majority from among team members by secret ballot.
- The position of secretary may rotate during the year in order to distribute the responsibilities of the position over the course of the school year. This may be done by a simple majority vote.
- The secretary takes meeting minutes that are to be emailed to the team members and the principal within 1 school day of every meeting to ensure accuracy and transparency.
- Personnel and other confidential information will be omitted from minutes at the discretion of the principal. Otherwise, meeting minutes will reflect the discussion accurately.
- After receiving the draft meeting minutes from the secretary, LSAT members and the principal shall notify the secretary in writing within 1 school day of any discrepancies in the minutes. Failure to respond to a request to approve minutes shall be taken as assumed consent.
- The secretary shall make a copy of the minutes publicly available- on the school website or another site or listserv routinely used by members of the school community within 3 school days of the LSAT meeting.



- In addition to the requirement to post meeting minutes within 3 school days, a full record of the meeting, including any existing electronic recording of the meeting, must be made publicly available within 7 school days of the meeting.

*Note: Electronic recordings are not required to be proactively posted. However, if someone requests an electronic recording of a meeting, it must be made available no later than 7 school days of the LSAT meeting.*

- Once approved, and not later than 7 school days after the meeting date, the secretary must also send the meeting minutes, or provide notice that they were publicly posted, to the DCPS Communications and Engagement Office by email to [ceo.info@k12.dc.gov](mailto:ceo.info@k12.dc.gov).

## Elections

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Local School Advisory Team elections are held annually between May 1 and June 30. If there are extenuating circumstances where this fails to happen, schools shall hold elections as soon as possible after the new school year begins, no later than September 30, and with a minimum of three weeks' notice to the school community. The DCPS Communications and Engagement Office must be notified of any elections not taking place within the May 1 - June 30 window.

### Terms and Length of Service

Terms shall begin July 1 and end on June 30 of the following year. If individuals wish to serve on the LSAT for more than one year, they must go through the election process each time. If all members of the Local School Advisory Team and the principal agree that electing members to two-year staggered terms is essential, they may apply for a waiver by emailing the DCPS Communications and Engagement Office at [ceo.info@k12.dc.gov](mailto:ceo.info@k12.dc.gov) to adopt this length of service.

### Election Procedure

Members, except the community representative, are elected by secret ballot of the group they represent. The community representative is appointed to the Local School Advisory Team through a consensus of its members. Staff from the Communications and Engagement Office are available to support and oversee elections upon request.

#### Teacher Representatives

- All ET-15/EG09 personnel employed at the school and included in the Washington Teachers' Union (WTU) bargaining unit, are eligible to run as teacher representatives and/or vote for teacher representatives on the Local School Advisory Team.
- The WTU Building Representative at each school conducts the election of ET-15/EG09 staff.

#### Parent Representatives

- Parent elections shall be conducted by the school parent organization.
- Three-week notice of nomination and election of parent representatives must be given to all parents who have children enrolled in the school. Parent organizations at middle and high schools should also notify their feeder schools so that potential incoming parents may be nominated.
- Only parents, custodians, or guardians of children currently enrolled in the school are eligible to vote in the election and serve as a parent representative. Membership in the school parent organization is not required in order for a parent to serve on the Local School Advisory Team.

#### Non-Instructional School Staff Representative

- The principal will facilitate a meeting of the non-instructional staff for the purpose of electing the staff representative. All non-instructional staff assigned to the building are eligible to vote and to serve as the non-instructional staff representative.

### **Student Representative**

- If there is an elected student government president in the high school, that individual will serve as the student representative on the Local School Advisory Team or designate their Vice President to serve. If there is no Student Government Association (SGA), the student representative may be designated by the principal until an SGA Chapter is organized.

### **Certifying Elections**

After elections have taken place and all team members have been identified, their names and contact information must be submitted to the DCPS Communications and Engagement Office in order to certify the Local School Advisory Team election. This information should be submitted by email to [ceo.info@k12.dc.gov](mailto:ceo.info@k12.dc.gov) or online at [bit.ly/lsatinfo19-20](https://bit.ly/lsatinfo19-20).

## Operating Principles and Practices for Local School Advisory Teams

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### Consensus

Local School Advisory Teams should strive for consensus in all matters. Driving to consensus is a strong foundation for the kind of active, focused discussion in which every LSAT should be engaged. There may be times, however, when consensus cannot be reached. In those cases, the principal will benefit from diverse points of view. These differences in opinion are no less helpful to the principal than a single opinion. Presenting and discussing diverse points of view in this way mirrors other organizational structures, such as the U.S. Supreme Court, in which majority and minority opinions plainly and openly co-exist.

### Trust and Confidentiality

Particularly when discussing school budget implications, Local School Advisory Teams occasionally have the need to discuss sensitive and confidential personnel information. The principal will set clear expectations at these junctures and explicitly inform team members when discussion topics must be kept confidential. At these times, team members must abide by the principal's judgment to operate as a closed meeting and keep the discussion confidential. In cases where Local School Advisory Teams include students, there may be additional sensitivity around certain topics. In some instances, the high school student may be asked to excuse themselves from the meeting. Sound judgment and respect for those who may be impacted by decisions being discussed are imperative for all team members.

Certain kinds of highly confidential personnel information cannot be shared with the Local School Advisory Team. Personally identifiable information about students and employees must not be disclosed to or discussed by Local School Advisory Teams.

Before holding a closed meeting, the LSAT must first meet in public and vote in favor of conducting a closed meeting and the subject of the closed meeting must be made publicly available.

### Transparency of Local School Advisory Team Meetings and Meeting Minutes

With the exception of matters like those described in the previous section on confidentiality, Local School Advisory Team meetings are open to observers, and all minutes will be posted on the school's website or otherwise made available to the school community within 3 school days following the meeting. Observers may attend meetings in a non-voting capacity and are allowed to participate in meetings at the discretion of the Local School Advisory Team. An observer may be asked to leave a meeting if their behavior is deemed by LSAT members to be inappropriate and/or disruptive.

LSATs must publish a schedule of their meetings at the beginning of the year, and must provide as much advance notice to their school community as possible, but not less than 48 hours or two business days, whichever is greater, before every meeting. Notice of the meeting schedule and individual meetings must be made publically available by physically posting notices in the school, electronically posting

notice via the school's website or listserv, and publishing in the District of Columbia Register (DC Register). The DCPS Office of the General Counsel will provide instructions on the process for publishing meeting notices in the DC Register. **When feasible**, LSATs shall electronically record all meetings whether open or closed. Detailed meeting minutes and/or electronic recordings shall be retained for 5 years.

LSATs shall establish rules for open meetings and for dispersing information on meeting discussions in order to create transparency and trust within the school community. Options include but are not limited to:

- Setting aside a portion of the meeting time to take comments and/or questions from observers;
- Regularly including a report on the most recent Local School Advisory Team meeting on the agenda of the parent organization's general meetings; and
- Holding quarterly community meetings in order to provide an update for the larger school community.
- See *Taking and Approving Minutes* below for further guidance on publishing meeting minutes.

### LSATs and Compliance with the Freedom of Information Act

Since LSATs operate as an extension of DCPS, all documents created and maintained by individual LSATs are subject to release pursuant to the District of Columbia Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). LSAT Chairs and members shall cooperate with DCPS Central Office staff in providing any LSAT records that are responsive to a FOIA request. To facilitate the production of documents in response to a FOIA request, LSAT Chairs should ensure that a copy of all LSAT documents are provided to and retained by an LSAT member who is also a DCPS employee. With the exception of meeting minutes, LSAT documents shall be retained through the end of the current school year or until no longer needed by the LSAT.

### Meetings of the Local School Advisory Team

The Local School Advisory Team meets to review data, assess needs, work on the local Comprehensive School Plan, and work on the school budget.

#### **Scheduling and Frequency**

The team shall meet at least once a month. Meetings will be scheduled so that as many members as possible can attend. If a meeting is cancelled, notice of the cancellation shall be made to the school community along with a reason for the cancellation.

#### **Setting the Agenda**

The Chair has the responsibility to set a meeting agenda collaboratively with the principal and in consultation with the team members. The Chair provides notice of meetings to all members and to the larger school community.

#### **Conducting Official Business**

In order for a Local School Advisory Team to conduct official business, the presence of the principal, a teacher representative and parent representative from the LSAT is required.

### Taking and Approving Minutes

- The secretary keeps minutes for each meeting.
- Within 1 school day, the secretary distributes minutes to team members and the principal.
- Within 1 school day of receiving the minutes from the secretary, team members may comment on the minutes to improve accuracy. Failure to respond shall be taken as assumed confirmation of the accuracy of the minutes.
- Within 3 school days of the meeting, after approval by the LSAT members and principal, the minutes will be posted on the school's website and/or otherwise made available to the school community.
- Minutes may also be distributed via school newsletter, listserv, or other means that the Local School Advisory Team deems fit.
- Minutes, or notice that they were publicly posted, must also be provided to the DCPS Communications and Engagement Office by emailing them to [ceo.info@k12.dc.gov](mailto:ceo.info@k12.dc.gov).

Minutes must be detailed enough to provide a full record of a meeting. However, confidential information shall not be included.

### Recommendations for Effective Meetings

Building positive relationships is key to being able to collaborate. Local School Advisory Teams should set themselves up for success by ensuring there is a healthy culture of respect, group decision-making, and people connecting with each other.

Operating transparently is integral to ensuring that the Local School Advisory Team is trusted by the school body. As such, LSATs should make sure everyone knows when and where meetings take place, how the decisions are made, what is expected of members, where they can go to find more information, and other opportunities to participate.

Providing information in a way that is accessible and comprehensible is an important part of making sure that all members can participate in the discussion. Consider the formatting of information, the possibility that background information or explanations will be needed, the use of acronyms, and whether translation or interpretation services are needed.

## Role of DCPS Central Office

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### Oversight and Support

The Communications and Engagement Office (CEO), working with other DCPS offices as necessary, will provide individualized support to all Local School Advisory Team members and to principals. These sessions may include an overview of new guidelines, expectations, information on budgeting procedures, and upcoming events.

In turn, Local School Advisory Teams should request professional development and other kinds of training from CEO on specific topics as needed. Examples of such topics are using and understanding data, an overview of assessment practices, and creating and monitoring the local Comprehensive School Plan.

In order to promote responsible collaboration within schools and exchange of information and best practices among Local School Advisory Teams and their respective school communities, DCPS' Communications and Engagement Office shall:

- Ensure that principals, in as timely a manner as possible, have the necessary material -- data, budgets, DCPS school policies and mandates -- to share with their teams;
- Communicate with Local School Advisory Teams consistently through an [LSAT Newsletter](#)
- Provide access to LSAT-related resources, including meeting and elections templates, through the [LSAT Toolkit](#);
- Maintain a [list of all Local School Advisory Team chairs](#) in order to encourage collaboration; and
- Will provide access to live and [pre-recorded online trainings](#). For information on these trainings and additional supports, contact your [Community Action Team](#) member.

Questions concerning the interpretation of these guidelines and/or questions on specific topics not covered within the guidelines should be addressed to the Communications and Engagement Office at [ceo.info@k12.dc.gov](mailto:ceo.info@k12.dc.gov).