



Capitol Hill Cluster School  
*Where Every Child Achieves*

Peabody | Watkins | Stuart-Hobson | A DC Public School

**LSAT Meeting on Tuesday August 1, 2017 at Stuart Hobson, 6 pm**

Attending: Ebon McPherson, Allyson Kitchel, Tom Guglielmo, Kip Plasted, Katherine Moxley, Devon Howard, Tiffany White, Samah Norquist, Lona Valmoro, Jeff Seltzer, Brandon Best, Elena Bell, Kris Comeforo, Harolyn Brown, Nakisha Winston, Valerie Jablow, Mercedes Salazar, Carmen McLean, and Sherry Trafford

Note: Three additional parents from Peabody/SH.

**Brandon Best – Family Engagement Lab**

- Lab process is an opportunity for school leaders, teachers and families to come together to solve a problem at a school - those experiencing issues on a daily basis are in the best position to solve.
- Our problem – communication was not consistent across grade levels.
- An average of 10 people attended each session.
- Principal Bell is creating a template for weekly communication from the teachers. Working Group members/room parents/administration will evaluate this weekly communication in November.
- Teachers will collect accurate grade level parent information – emails, cell phone numbers. The goal is to obtain 80% of all information.
- Fall Engagement Lab Session is open to the public, encouraging people to help with outreach, participants and planning.
- Principal Bell will give teachers the enrollment information the first week of school so teachers aren't starting from scratch.

**Updates -- Principal Bell**

- Peabody is 98% enrolled and Watkins is 93% enrolled
- At Watkins, 392 current enrolled students, we are short 32 seats. Lottery opened. Limited seats offered at each grade level with goal of roughly 22 students per class. Max of 25 students. Enrollment translates to funding - if

we enroll no additional students at Watkins, likely face a budget cut next year of roughly \$400,000.

- Families will still have 5 days to accept a spot offered. Emerald (DCPS) is concerned that we are not going to reach our projections since we froze our wait list in response to community concerns.
- There is not one DCPS school that has had 100% of enrolled students show up on day one.
- SPED position still open.
- Mr. Patterson left for a job outside of DC at charter school. Vacancy leaves options for how to allocate his salary. Principal Bell has proposed two scenarios to reprogram his salary – fill his position OR reprogram the position, rehire an aide and use the remaining funds to supplement the loss of Title 1 funding.
  - Playworks – last year, cost \$16K. Right now, we have zero funding with the loss of Title 1 funding.
  - If we restore an aide position, we would hire Coach K back. He would be in the classroom in the AM but go to recess duty primarily during the day.
- Carmen McLean asked if a scenario three was considered where we add two aides back at Watkins. Principal Bell said she had considered it but financially not feasible - two aide salary exceeded funds available. Group discussion about how school budget can be re-arranged and also supplemented by PTA to allow two aids to be rehired. Principal Bell was in favor - agreed to discuss with PTA ASAP.
- Responsive classroom – We have ordered new materials and Ms. Dickinson will be supporting new teachers and those that need extra training. Reaching out to teachers who are strong at RC helping those that are in extra need.
- Bus – actively working on the situation. Plan A with the bus being worked out by August 1<sup>st</sup>. Plan B with a backup for other options including a possible staggered start at Watkins.
- Issue raised by a few teachers to Principal Bell - said to her they were uncomfortable with parents who have reached out to them asking questions about why they have left Watkins. Bell asks that parents leave the “exit interview” process to the DCPS HR process.
- Unpacking plan will be sent out via Sign up Genius – need help August 14<sup>th</sup> through the weekend. August 15<sup>th</sup> at 6 pm community meeting to be held about transition back to Watkins. Meeting is currently at Peabody, optimistic that it will be at Watkins. This meeting will be live streamed and

PowerPoint will go out as well. School ribbon cutting is tentatively the first day of school.

### Update – Principal Comeforo

- We are tied for District’s highest middle school retention rate (86%) retention rate with Johnson MS and 6<sup>th</sup> grade class is the largest at 99% capacity.
- Comeforo is going to replicate a communications plan similar to Watkins at SH, including frequency, content, streamlining, etc. Survey going out to SH parents to gauge how parents would like to receive information.
- Handout – Welcome to SH Newsletter with new staff biographies.
- Honors Programming – SH will have an honors program again this year.
  - Two elements have to be established over the next year – we need clear entry criteria with a reasonable matrix. DCPS has not created academic expectations for middle school honors.
  - Also need development of an honors curriculum. DCPS has none for middle school. There is a “pre AP” curriculum in high school. That needs to be broken down in lower grades, i.e. “what do we teach 8th graders so they will be prepared to succeed in 9th grade pre-AP?”
  - Parent question – SH is 87% African American but the honors classes did not reflect that. Principal Comeforo said he noticed the same thing and will be making intentional decisions to open more gates to honors courses. Likely two sections of honors classes per content area.
- Extra-curricular programming (formerly known as aftercare) -- Goal/hope to maintain similar classes as in year’s past. Aggressively seeking outside funding through several channels. PTA has been instrumental in grants too. The start date will be on or before October 1<sup>st</sup>.
- Still a partnership with After School All Stars.
- Zero Period and 9<sup>th</sup> Period will be starting week two or three.
- Substitute teachers and long term subs – last year was an anomaly. Principal Comeforo said he looked at the situation carefully and feels it was endemic of larger issues. It will be addressed through climate initiative and teachers will be supported. Wants everyone - teachers/students - to be excited to spend their day at SH.
- Physical issues – handled by Devon Howard, the new Director of Logistics. Outside garden area – involving PTA in a comprehensive outdoor plan for the garden areas. Mice mitigation throughout the building.

- LSAT reminded Devon of the auditorium issues due to water/leaking - he agreed this is in his bucket. DGS has been in the building and he has the issue flagged for follow up every two weeks.

#### Discussion -- Key Areas of LSAT focus for the Upcoming School Year

- LSAT Co-Chairs ask LSAT reps to engage with their communities and solicit feedback. Want LSAT to engage with administration substantively regarding areas of importance to strengthening our school. Asked group to brainstorm topics worthy of a year long discussion.

#### Comments provided in response:

- Nakisha – Achievement gap needs to be addressed at SH
- Jeff – Should we see how things evolve, like communications, and then address
- Principal Bell - supporting instruction is the crux of her job and LSAT should focus there
- Sherry – SH newsletter succinctly identifies two goals: rigorous instruction and positive relationships. Suggests we discuss these two themes monthly.
- Allyson – reach out to your respective parents/teachers and focus on personal outreach. If we're having successes or failures in these key areas we should address them openly. Encourage constructive communication not complaining.
- Ebon – creating a safe space for teachers to voice their issues even with superiors in the room. Possible anonymous element. We need to go back to the Cluster feeling like a family. Focus on retention from Kindergarten to Watkins.
- Tom G – dissuade parents from reaching out to teachers who have left the Cluster.
- Carmen – hard to have rigorous instruction without strong communication.
- Chairs agreed to work to frame these topics as an agenda item monthly

Meeting adjourned at 7:48pm.