



## LSAT Meeting Notes - Watkins Elementary September 5, 2017

**Attendees:** Allyson Kitchel, Ebon McPherson, Kris Comeforo, Elena Bell, Mercedes Salazar, Valerie Jablow, Kip Plasted, Jessica Pannett, Harolyn Brown, Nakisha Winston, Israel Jean Holland, Samah Norquist, Deborah Baker, Brandie Sasser, Allison Black, Jennifer Soderman, Katherine Moxley, Tom Guglielmo, Jeff Seltzer, Ann Brigioli, Elizabeth O'Donnell, Coriel Dickinson, APs Croft, Jackson & Angry, Carmen McLean, Eric Miller, Dr. Angela Chapman, Beth Hayden, Sharon Vasquez, and Sherry Trafford (and about 5-10 more parents)

### **Administrative matters**

The back of the agenda contains an excerpt from DCPS guidelines that defines LSAT's role as an advisory body to Principals.

### **Old Business - Valerie Jablow - Feedback based on LSAT's August meeting**

Had concerns about Brandon Best's comment "it's hard to be productive with many people in the room" is not an inclusive statement. Also disagreed with prior request that parents refrain from interviewing teachers who have left Watkins about their reasons for leaving. Feels these are private conversations between adults so why would anyone at our school be trying to shut down conversations.

**Ebon** – The comment was made not to suggest not to have those conversations but to be sure those aren't used against the school and are respectful of staff's personal lives/decisions. Be thoughtful - teachers might not feel comfortable.

**Samah** – Those conversations referenced in August were specifically about the staff that left the school. It is our obligation to find out what happened, these are our teachers and we should explore why.

### **Stuart Hobson - Principal's Comeforo's Updates**

#### 1. Enrollment

- SH is 96% enrolled w/6<sup>th</sup> grade being the largest class
- A few seats are being offered off the waitlist
- Post meeting update - 5th & 6th grade teachers meet to discuss individual student needs. Teachers found it very helpful.
- Post meeting update - 61 of Watkins 77 5th graders enrolled at SH. Of those who left, 3 students are attending Hardy, 2 at Jefferson, 3 at PG County Public Schools, 2 attending charters and 4 various other LEAs/Schools.

#### 2. Staffing

- The Attendance Counselor, Ms Williams, left for a promotion and an internal candidate has been offered the Attendance Counselor position.

#### 3. Town Hall Meetings

- Occur during advisory time, giving students time to lead the meetings as the year progresses.
- Awards are given for PRIDE, students of the month, and demonstration of core values.

#### 4. School Climate Initiative



- Share-outs from parent representatives
- Progress is tracked through: walk through scorecards (two - three times per year) and student satisfaction surveys.
- Last year, overall student satisfaction with school was scored at 60% -- how can we increase?
- Goal is to significantly increase this number through town halls, award ceremonies, talking and not just listening in the classroom.

#### 5. Middle Grade Initiatives

- DCPS set a goal that all students participate in one extracurricular activity per year.
- Afterschool All Stars will begin September 18<sup>th</sup>; currently surveying students on activities they would like to see; surveying staff to see what is possible/feasible to host internally.
- Comeforo announced SH quarterly grade-level field trips, meaning trips should occur four times per grade, each year.

#### 6. Social Emotional Academic Development Team (SEAD)

- Social Worker, Ms. Smith, is out on maternity leave. An interim person is in the building on Tuesdays and Thursdays.
- SH is promoting social-emotional development through Developmental Designs and Second Step curriculum.
- Post-meeting update - We are still working with Central Office to identify the social work provider for students with 504 plans. Students with IEPs are being seen per the requirements of their plan by Ms. Toossi, an itinerant social worker with DCPS.
- While Ms. Smith is on maternity leave, Ms. Turner is serving as 504 coordinator.

#### 7. PARCC Analysis

- SH scores have increased by 15% for ELA and 6% in Math  
*Summary of group conversation:*  
**Nakisha** – What about Achievement Gap?  
**Principal Comeforo** - Without having the exact numbers, we are closing the achievement gap with English, but it widened in Math. This is race-based data only and does not take into account socioeconomic status or gender – need to drill down more with the data. Based on number of Level 1 students, DCPS is giving SH an opportunity to secure \$55K in additional funding. Focus on these students by working with teachers to develop an individualized/detailed plan as possible.
- Principal Comeforo handed out a draft Communications Plan document he is developing, with an overall goal of delivering accurate, timely, and consistent information.

### Watkins/Peabody - Updates from Principal Bell

#### 1. Enrollment

- Peabody is 100% enrolled



- ❑ Watkins is 100% enrolled -- 434 students, 10 students over projection.
- ❑ Five students have left 4<sup>th</sup> grade since the start of the school year.
- ❑ Our efforts have been to meet our projection of 424 students which was proposed by DCPS.
- ❑ Just because we have 20 students exceeding our enrollment projection, does not **necessarily** indicate the need for an additional position (ie teacher, etc).
- ❑ First, DCPS will look at the actual (registered students) enrollment compared to the projected enrollment by grade and for the school overall. By grade Central Office looks at how average classroom sizes are changing due to the over-enrollment. If we see significant pressures on the average classroom size and you don't have any significantly under-enrolled grades then this raises a flag for that an additional staff resource might be needed.
- ❑ Based on the count of registered students per grade and the teacher allocations per grade at Watkins, the average classroom sizes seem to be inline with other schools and the comprehensive staffing model. We are around average class of 21-22 which is below the district max class size of 25 students.
- ❑ Therefore although we have exceeded our student enrollment projection (by 10 students), we would not be deemed a school that is overenrolled to a degree where funding additional staff would be considered.
- ❑ Finally when asked about whether we should increase our enrollment numbers now, Ms. Bell's response was no. As of now, we have exceeded our enrollment projection by 10 students. Enrollment decisions must be made thoughtfully and strategically overtime to ensure that we have the adequate resources to support the students.

*Summary of group conversation (note that these minutes capture some but not all questions)*

**Community question** - What happens if we become over-enrolled?

**Principal Bell** - There is additional space in the building that could be used if needed; open area space could be considered new classrooms if we need to expand. A large over-enrollment could lead to additional resources.

**Sherry** – We are not pushing to expand the student numbers, but now that school has started, can you tell us what staff you feel are impacted?

**Principal Bell** - Yes, the .5 positions and being down one aide.

**Community question** - Can you speak to the “trigger” DCPS uses to reevaluate funding and how it gets used in schools?

**Dr. Chapman** – We had a school that overenrolled a certain grade level – they really didn't want another teacher, but they wanted aides, so they took the price of the teacher and put it towards aides. Each school is a nuanced situation and we monitor that District wide.

*Note: LSAT is not meeting again until after October 1<sup>st</sup> enrollment deadline.*

## 2. Staffing and Specials Time

- ❑ Ms. Toor has been offered the Art position and should start next week (week of



9/11).

- ❑ Foreign Language is a DCPS requirement – we have interviewed French candidates because our part-time partner school for Spanish fell through and we have not yet found a part time Spanish teacher to hire. We continue to interview <sup>1</sup>.
- ❑ Library is not considered a weekly special this year. ELA teachers integrate library into curriculum. This is actually a standard practice - most schools do not treat library as a special.

*Summary of group conversation*

**Samah** – Can we drop the .5 language position and move this to a full time librarian?

**Principal Bell** - No. A foreign language is a DCPS requirement.

**Carmen** -- Can we appeal this to DCPS? Students cannot learn a language in 45 minutes a week.

**AP Jackson** – Art, PE, Music and Technology are full time specials with foreign language pending. The Librarian comes full-time but only every other week and Library time is structured within the literacy block - not dropping off at the library.

**Lona** – Can you share with us the update on the aides at Watkins? What is the schedule?

**Principal Bell** - Coach K is finalizing DCPS onboarding. Aides will not necessarily be divided evenly among classrooms. Instead, Aides' schedules will be based on students' needs.

- ❑ Reprogrammed funds – 45 K was reprogrammed in August. We used \$28K to hire Coach K and \$17K Playworks, blended learning and “administrative premium,” which compensates teachers for extra services provided, i.e. PARCC academy.
- ❑ Principal Bell handed out a draft communications plan and point-of-contact responsibilities.

### 3. PARCC Analysis

- ❑ Going forward, priorities are “Relationships, Rigor, and Differentiation = Success for All”
- ❑ Watkins increased student performance in Literacy by 12%
- ❑ Watkins increased student performance in Math by 9%
- ❑ Watkins narrowed the achievement gap between Black and White students by 10% in Literacy
- ❑ Watkins narrowed the achievement gap between Black and White students by 7% in Math
- ❑ The 10 percentage point gain in ELA for African-American students translates into an improvement of nearly 50% and the 7 percentage point gain in Math represents a 23% improvement.
- ❑ Most student groups made gains in both content areas (math and literacy): race,

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<sup>1</sup> Post-meeting update: Spanish teacher was hired.



- gender, economically disadvantaged with the exception of Special Ed students
- In just one year, our team has narrowed the achievement gap significantly.
- All student groups showed gains (except for Special Education)

#### 4. General Programming

- Student-Centered Instruction and Differentiation happens during small group instruction, through Response to Intervention (RTI), and through enrichment programs
- Standards-aligned and rigorous curricula include Eureka Math and DCPS Literacy Units
- Strong relationships are built using Responsive Classroom, Positive Behavioral Incentive and Support (PBIS), and School Climate Initiative

#### Responsive Classroom Presentation by Ms. Dickinson

- Responsive Classroom focuses on the link between academics and social emotional learning. It specifically focuses on engaging academics, positive community, developmental awareness, and effective classroom management.
- The areas of focus at Watkins for this school year are (1) Morning Meeting, (2) Responding to Misbehavior, and (3) Teacher Language.
- PBIS and Responsive Classroom (RC) -- RC says teachers' positive, reinforcing language should be enough as an intrinsic motivation, but PBIS believes you can continue positive, reinforcing language and intrinsic motivation while also providing students additional incentives.
- Training - experienced teachers are doing advanced reading on RC. New teachers are getting hands on support (from Ms. Dickinson) with a focus on RC language.
- We are using some PBIS reinforcing tools, like Panther Paws and getting rewards from the "Paw Mart" rolling cart.

*Summary of group discussion:*

**Nakisha** – Is there a School Climate Initiative at Watkins?

**Dickinson** - Yes, our first official meeting is in two weeks. Watkins was chosen to participate. We have not identified our two student reps and our two parent reps.

**Samah** – Are we doing Student Advisory Panel?

**Ms. Dickinson** - Yes, we are doing three things -- Student Advisory Panel, Peer Advisors, and Student Safety Patrol

#### Watkins Math & Science Plans Presentation - AP Jackson

- Provided handouts detailing schedules for math block and science block.
- First in Math will be used again this year with a more intentional roll-out. Last year the subscription expired and the late roll-out was admittedly not good.

*Summary of group conversation*

**Nakisha** – Can First in Math be more aligned with curriculum?

**AP Jackson** - No, First in Math is more for kids to choose. Other programs, like Reflex Math, are more aligned with the curriculum.

**Allyson** - Can you talk more about how differentiation happens in the math blocks?



**AP Jackson** - Small groups. Kids spend 50 minutes every day in their small groups doing work keyed to those student's needs - may be direct instruction from teacher, small group activity, etc.

- ❑ Science Lab – Each student will go to the science lab once per week. It is mandatory for each student. This year, students in younger grades also get to use the lab.
- ❑ Principal Bell noted teachers will share more details about these programs at Back to School night and Panther Progress Night. More information is forthcoming.

*Summary of group conversation*

**Beth** – Is the math intervention program (PTA grant) being introduced?

**Principal Bell** - It has not yet been purchased. We want to setup Eureka first and manage the change back into the building.

**AP Jackson** - We have had lots of challenges with laptops. Interactive software and hardware for Smart Boards is missing from some of the classrooms. Working with DCPS to fix these issues before rolling out additional programs.

***Meeting adjourned at 7:50pm. Next meeting will be held October 3, 2017 at Northeast Branch Library, 6 - 7:45 pm. (We are testing whether the library is a viable meeting space - late meetings result in overtime expenses when meetings are held on campuses.)***