



DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Office of Family and Public Engagement

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Local School Advisory Team Guidelines: School Year 2010-2011

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What is a Local School Advisory Team?

Local School Advisory Teams are bodies that exist in every school. They are made up of parents, teachers, non-instructional school staff, a community member, and in some cases students, to advise the principal on matters essential to high expectations and high achievement for all students. Advisory teams of this kind previously were called Local School Restructuring Teams; they were established by the Superintendent of DC Public Schools in consultation 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.

Since 1992, there have been many changes within DC Public Schools as well as in the federal laws that govern education. In response to requests from many LSRT members and principals across the city, DCPS initiated a project in 2009 to rethink and update existing LSRT guidelines. All were looking for clarity around the roles and responsibilities of the LSRT and its members. This year-long, consultative process has included comprehensive community engagement with parents and teachers across the city, as well as the designation of a Governance Committee according to the existing LSRT guidelines, input from the Governance Committee, and consultation between DCPS and the Washington Teachers' Union. These new guidelines—and a new team name—reflect the wisdom and direction gathered from those sources.

The Purpose of Local School Advisory Teams

Every District of Columbia public school must have a functioning Local School Advisory Team that is constituted according to these guidelines, and that conducts the business outlined herein. The Local School Advisory Team is the foremost advisory body at each school. At this writing, the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act requires each Title I school to have a School Improvement Team. The Local School Advisory Team in each DCPS Title I school serves as its school's School Improvement Team. This has been deemed acceptable and in compliance with the ESEA by the DCPS Office of Federal Grants and Programs.

Primary Responsibilities

As they have since 1992, Local School Advisory Teams have primary responsibility for following:

- advising the principal on priorities and goals;
- working with the principal on developing the Comprehensive School Plan, including the supporting budget;
- reviewing data in order to be informed about school needs and trends;
- monitoring and assessing the implementation of the Comprehensive School Plan, and
- using assessment results to develop specific strategies for school improvement.

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

- allocation of school resources;
- organization of the school;
- curriculum options, including special or supplementary course offerings and specialized research-based instructional strategies;
- budget decisions;
- 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 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.

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Membership

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

- 1 WTU Building Representative or designee
- 4 Teachers
- 4 Parents *who have children currently enrolled in the school*
- 1 Parent Group Leader (of PTA, PTO, PTSA, HAS, or other such group) or designee *with children currently enrolled in the school*
- 1 Non-Instructional School Staff Member
- 1 Student (in high schools, and optional at other levels)
- 1 Community Member who is a resident of the school's catchment area

Additional members may be named if, in the judgment of team members and the principal, the above composition does not adequately represent the school community in full. If all members of the Local School Advisory Team and the principal agree that an additional member is essential, they may include additional members on the Team. Possible additions could include adding a parent position in order to ensure language diversity that reflects the school's diversity, or adding a place for the parent of a student in the incoming, youngest class, to be chosen at the beginning of the school year. The maximum number of members for a Local School Advisory Team is fifteen (15).

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 her or him as a member of the Team would put the principal 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.

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 the Chancellor for successful execution of this role.

The principal or her/his designee will attend all Local School Advisory Team meetings. The principal is expected to use the Team authentically and regularly (once a quarter at minimum) as a think tank or sounding board on topics significant to the school's Comprehensive School Plan and in the life of the school. While the principal is not required to follow recommendations from the Local School Advisory Team, she or he is required to engage members in rich and meaningful discussion. The principal or his or her designee:

- attends all Local School Advisory Team meetings;
- works with the Chair on logistics, meeting planning and agenda creation;
- ensures elections are held during the election window time period;
- facilitates the use of necessary resources for outreach efforts;
- ensures all parents feel welcome to participate on the Local School Advisory Team;
- listens well and respectfully, and promotes an atmosphere of responsible, student-focused dialogue.

Role of Local School Advisory Team Members. Each Local School Advisory Team member represents a group with interests larger than his or her individual ones. For the purpose of the Local School Advisory Team, for example, teachers represent the concerns, ideas and opinions *of all teachers* in the school, and parents represent the concerns, ideas and opinions *of all parents* in the school. Effective Local School Advisory Team members are focused on student achievement and engage in regular outreach to those whom they represent. 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 school.

Members are encouraged to attend meetings in person. On occasion, members may attend a meeting by telephone if physical attendance is not possible. With the exception of the WTU building representative and parent organization leader, Team members cannot be represented at meetings by a designee or a proxy.

In the event a member is unable or unwilling to participate productively on the Local School Advisory Team, and other strategies have been exhausted, the Team may, by a simple majority, vote to remove a member from the Team. In the event a member is removed from the Team, DCPS' Office of Family and Public Engagement should be provided with documentation of the issues that led to removal.

Behaviors that may lead to removal include:

- Chronic absenteeism;
- Disruptive behavior that prevents productive discussion, and
- Breaching confidentiality, in violation of the guidelines specified below.

Note: A member cannot be removed from the Local School Advisory Team for disagreeing with the majority.

Role of the Local School Advisory Team Chair. The Local School Advisory Team chair is elected by the team from among its members, and leads the Team. She or he must be the parent of a current student, or a current teacher or non-instructional staff member. The Local School Advisory Team may elect two co-chairs, one parent and one teacher or non-instructional staff member.

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

- may 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 external resources or distributing information on relevant DCPS professional development sessions;
- serves as liaison between the Local School Advisory Team and DCPS central office, specifically the Office of Family and Public Engagement, distributing key information from the central office as well as requesting information from, or voicing concerns to, the central office;
- participates in mandatory meetings and professional development sessions for chairs and members.

Role of the Local School Advisory Team Secretary. The secretary is elected from among Team members. 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. The secretary takes meeting notes that are to be emailed to the team members within a week of every meeting to ensure accuracy and transparency. Personnel and other confidential information will be omitted from notes at the discretion of the principal. Otherwise, meeting notes will reflect the discussion accurately. The principal and chair must approve notes before they are posted on the internet—on the school website as well as on dcps.dc.gov. Notes must be posted within two weeks of the meeting date.

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Elections

Local School Advisory Team elections are held annually, between May 1 and the last day of school.

Terms and Length of Service

Terms shall begin July 1 and end on June 30 of the following year. Individual Local School Advisory Teams may vote to elect members to one or two year staggered terms to ensure that school knowledge, experience, and expertise carry forward. . Individual LSATs may vote to adopt term limit guidelines, limiting the number of terms that Team members may serve.

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.

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 Building Representative at each school conducts the election of ET-15/EG09.

Parent Representatives

- Parent elections may be conducted by the Local School Advisory Team, parent organization or the principal. This decision will be made at the school level.
- Three-week notice of nomination and election of parent representatives must be given to all parents who have children enrolled in the school.
- 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 support staff representative.

Student Representative

- If there is an elected student government president in the high school, she or he will serve as the representative on the Local School Advisory Team. If there is no student government, the student representative will be designated by the principal.

Certifying Elections

After elections have taken place and all members identified, contact information for all Local School Advisory Team members must be submitted to the DCPS Office of Family and Public Engagement as part of the principal's school year close out work, and in order to certify the Local School Advisory Team election. This information should be submitted to lsat.help@dc.gov by both the principal and outgoing Local School Advisory Team Chair by June 30 every year.

Filling Vacancies Between Elections

If a vacancy arises between elections, a majority vote of the Team will fill the vacancy by appointment .

Operating Principles and Practices for Local School Advisory Teams

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 Local School Advisory Team 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

From time to time, Local School Advisory Teams 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. Team members must abide by the principal's judgment. 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 himself or herself 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. Information about individual students is not subject to disclosure to or discussion by Local School Advisory Teams.

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 within two weeks of the meeting date.

The Local School Advisory Team should establish rules for open meetings and for dispersing information on meeting discussions. 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 business meetings, and
- holding quarterly community meetings in order to provide an update for the larger school community.

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.

Meetings of the Local School Advisory Team

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

Scheduling and Frequency

At minimum, the Local School Advisory Team meets at least four times a year. Meetings will be scheduled so that as many members as possible can attend. Parents are given preference in deciding meeting times to ensure that meeting times do not overlap with their work hours.

Setting the Agenda

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

Taking and Approving Minutes

1. The secretary keeps minutes for each meeting.
2. Within one week the secretary distributes minutes to team members and the principal.
3. Within one week of receiving the minutes from the secretary the principal and chair must approve the minutes.
4. Within one week of receiving the minutes from the secretary team members may comment on the notes to improve accuracy.
5. Within two weeks of the meeting, after approval by the chair and principal, the notes will be posted on www.dcps.dc.gov and in the front office of the school.
6. Minutes may also be posted on the school's website and distributed via school newsletter or other means that the Local School Advisory Team deems fit.

Minutes will include a general overview of issues discussed during the meeting including any difficult or contentious ones. Confidential information shall not be included.

Role of the Local School Advisory Teams System-Wide Governance Committee

The Governance Committee must include, but is not limited to, the following members and representatives, and will meet twice yearly to review the guidelines, recommend improvements, and determine appropriate evaluation procedures:

Chancellor or designee	Appointed by Chancellor
4 Parents	Appointed by Chancellor
4 WTU Members (must include 2 teachers)	Appointed by WTU
2 CSO Members	Appointed by Council of School Officers
2 Principals	Appointed by Chancellor
1 Instructional Superintendent	Appointed by Chancellor
2 Community Members	Appointed by Chancellor

Role of DCPS Central Office

Oversight and Support

The Office of Family and Public Engagement (OFPE), working with other DCPS offices as necessary, will provide orientation and on-going professional development 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. These sessions will be mandatory.

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

In order to promote collaboration and exchange of information and best practices among Local School Advisory Teams and their respective school communities, OFPE will:

- maintain a web presence that encourages the exchange of information among Local School Advisory Teams;
- maintain a list of all Local School Advisory Team chairs and their contact information to distribute to all chairs and members in order to encourage collaboration, and
- host an annual meeting or conference for Local School Advisory Team chairs, members, and their principals.

Questions concerning the interpretation of these guidelines and/or questions on specific topics not covered within the guidelines should be addressed to the Office of Family and Public Engagement at lsat.help@dc.gov.