

Working with Your Principal Before and During Budget Season

The DC Public Schools (DCPS) annual budget development season is a time to reflect on the past year's accomplishments, re-assess system needs and budget priorities, and reinvest in our schools and students. As part of this annual process, DCPS solicits feedback from its school leaders, educators, families, and communities to provide suggestions on budget priorities. These suggestions arrive through a variety of channels, including meetings with Local School Advisory Teams (LSATs) and through the EngageDCPS.org interactive website. As an LSAT chair or member, all of this means you should begin working now with your principal if you have not yet started. (Note: The LSAT should not just work with the principal on the budget, but it should also meet over the course of the year to address a variety of school goals.)



PREP

The LSAT chair on file with the Office of Family and Public Engagement (OFPE) will have access to the school's online budget sign-off page. To ensure OFPE has the correct and most updated information, LSAT chairs should send current rosters of LSAT members to ofpe.info@dc.gov and copy the principal. Please review the LSAT guidelines, FAQs, and other resources available on the DCPS website at <http://dcps.dc.gov/page/local-school-advisory-teams-lsat>. An email will also be shared with LSAT Chairs by the beginning of December and will include enrollment projections. There will be a telephone number and email address to contact the appropriate central office division with questions.



KEEP CONVERSATIONS CONFIDENTIAL

Although the budget discussions are about academic goals and programs, there are times when specific staff are impacted and it's easy to identify who they are. It is important to keep these and all conversations of this nature confidential. You will be trusted to use your personal judgment and discretion when items like this arise. It is the principal's decision when and how to notify impacted staff.



GET TOGETHER IN DECEMBER, JANUARY, AND/OR FEBRUARY

The LSAT chair should request an LSAT meeting with the principal to receive an update on the school's progress-to-date. The purpose of this meeting is to receive information that establishes a context for how the school's academic progress will influence the upcoming year's budget. This is an important meeting for all LSAT members to attend. Prior to this meeting, the LSAT chair should meet individually with the principal to discuss the agenda, what information will be shared, and the desired outcomes for the meeting. The team may learn about the school's academic goals for the current school year and possible academic goals for the upcoming school year. This information has and will continue to drive the budget. Some of the data the principal provides may include information about various school benchmarks, both academic and non-academic (e.g. in-seat attendance, truancy rates, suspensions, participation in after-school activities).



WORK WITHIN THE BUDGET WINDOW

You may have a short time frame in which to view, discuss, and comment on the final school budget. Principals are encouraged to notify you when the final budget allocations are available and suggest possible dates for an LSAT meeting to share budget considerations. We encourage evening meetings, which is typically the most convenient time for most parents.



IT'S OKAY TO AGREE TO DISAGREE

You may disagree with your principal on certain decisions made about the budget. Remember, the purpose of these discussions is to consider information around factors influencing budget considerations, including school data, identified budget priorities, and the Chancellor's mandated goals for schools. Present your point of view using concrete examples and data, if available. Do your best to listen to your principal if there is a disagreement and understand the reasons your principal has made a certain decision.



YOUR VOICE IS IMPORTANT

Principals need you to participate in brainstorming and problem solving, to make sure that families' voices are included in the conversation, and to support a budget that has strong outcomes for all students. The purpose of the LSAT is to provide school leadership with suggestions on ways to achieve the school's academic goals. You are a sounding board for and thought partner with the school principal. Your charge is to surface some of the general concerns and suggestions of the school community and to take a broader look at numerous issues that impact the school.