



Capitol Hill Cluster School  
*Where Every Child Achieves*  
Peabody | Watkins | Stuart-Hobson | A DC Public School

## LSAT February Meeting Minutes

February 2, 2021

6:00 – 8:00 pm

Zoom Meeting

**LSAT Member Attendees:** Ramona Burton (Parent Co-Chair), Kimberly Griffin (Teacher Co-Chair), Katherine Antos (Secretary), Shannon Russell, Ebon McPherson, Annie Slattery, Pamela Dickerson, Henri Rowe, Kimberlynn Jurkowski, Monique Sullivan, Steve Sweeney, Gerty Johnson, Vernastene Black, Kate Fiske, Karen Gordon, Bethany Rosera, Clara Hargrove, Lona Valmoro, Rachel Houghton, Tatiana Sheppard, Beth Dewhurst, Brittney Prophete

Principals MScott Berkowitz and Eric Fraser; APs Boisvert and Hollis, Instructional Superintendent Stover

Approximately 90 parents, teachers and community members in attendance

**Meeting recorded** and available at <https://youtu.be/ftYdOn0i1sY>.

### **Term 3 Reopening Updates –**

#### Peabody/Watkins:

Watkins walk through was completed February 2.

- Participants included Katherine Antos (LSAT), Lona Valmoro and Mila Venugopalan (PTA), Rachel Houghton (Peabody teacher and WTU rep), Coreil Dickinson (Watkins teacher), Principal Berkowitz, AP Boisvert, DSL Montgomery, Cinthia Ruiz (Deputy Chief, Strategic School Operations), 2 parents. Walk through participants met with nurse, health aide, custodial team. Walk through was streamed live, and approximately 30 families and teachers joined virtually.
- Principal Berkowitz reported that participants agreed met [Building Readiness checklist](#), allowing school to open to In-Person Learning (IPL) on Thursday, February 4.
- Katherine Antos, LSAT parent rep at the November and February walk throughs, confirmed today's walk through met the checklist and thanked the Watkins team for offering solutions to address additional issues identified during the walk through.
- Ms. Sheppard raised that because Watkins WTU rep was not there in person (she participated virtually), the walk through did not count.
- IS Stover confirmed that MOA between DCPS and WTU states walk through teams shall include 12 members including school leaders and representatives from LSAT, PTA, teachers, and WTU reps. These representatives should be encouraged but are not required to attend, so school may reopen on 2/4.
- Principal Berkowitz offered to provide another walk through to any teachers or WTU representatives before school reopens on Thursday. Noted that offered and have conducted walk throughs for teachers and instructional aides previously. [*Post-meeting note: Conducted a*

walk through on Wednesday, 2/3, with WTU field representative, bringing total number of walk throughs this school year to 4.]

- Concerns were raised during the walk through about heating and cooling not working properly on 3<sup>rd</sup> floor. Documentation provided to walk through participants confirmed HVAC work orders had been submitted, but issues with HVAC did not affect ventilation. To address heating concerns, space heaters were installed on 3<sup>rd</sup> floor and work orders will be filled before school switches to cooling in the spring.
- To address teacher concerns, Principal Berkowitz agreed to move 2 classes on 3<sup>rd</sup> floor up to 4<sup>th</sup> floor. Also agreed to add hand sanitizer to a few classrooms that met hand sanitizer requirements with sanitizers in the hallways rather than the classroom.

#### HVAC concerns:

- Mr. Elmusa raised that HVAC has been broken for over year and not fully fixed. Concerned that does not meet DCPS standards. Feels that before today, issue was treated as acknowledged, minimized, treated as solved though it was not. Now wondering what other issues are being acknowledged, minimized, but not solved
- IS Stover: Got certification that ventilation addressed. Consistent with MOU and meets HVAC system requirements and therefore criteria for health and safety of students and staff
- Response Principal Berkowitz received from DCPS Chief of Operations: “The building is served by multiple types of units that do different things. Heating and cooling at Watkins is done through a Variable Refrigerant System (VRV). Fresh Air and ventilation are brought into the building through Energy Recovery Units (ERU). The issue on the third floor is impacting the VRV units only, which is why there is a heat issue and NOT the ERU’s, which are working fine. Per the MOA we are to install MERV-13 filters or HEPA filters. We are providing both. This was an intentional redundancy to ensure that we always have a system in place for clean air even if a system goes down. And to be crystal clear, the issue on the third floor does not impact ventilation, just heat.”

#### Number of students coming back to Peabody/Watkins:

P3	13
P4	14
K	18
1	14
2	19
3	21
4	21
5	10 (has been bouncing. Only have 1 teacher for now; 2 <sup>nd</sup> teacher (Ms. Bell) will join in-person 2/16. Will be teaching virtually until then)
<b>Total</b>	<b>130</b>

#### Equity concerns:

- Principal Berkowitz noted that while the goal was to center equity in reopening plan, not sure the intent was met in every grade.
- Started by offering IPL seats to students furthest from opportunity first. This included students who met the criteria defined by DCPS (students who are experiencing homelessness, receive special education services or are English Learners, designated as At-Risk), as well as students he appealed to be included based on teacher/school data showing which students were not accessing and/or engaging as well in virtual learning. Together, these groups can be considered “high need” students.

- Remainder of spots were assigned randomly. Decided not to stop offering spots after high need offers made so that others in school community would have option of IPL so long as room in 2 classes/grade
- As can be seen in data compiled by Principal Berkowitz, percent of IPL spots filled by “high need” students varies significantly per grade: PK3 92%; PK4 50% (note there will not be an IPL PK4 class due to teacher availability; K 59%; 1st 86%; 2nd 32%; 3<sup>rd</sup> 86%; 4<sup>th</sup> 43%; 5<sup>th</sup> 80%
- In particular, majority of IPL spots in 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade are not filled by high need students, though high need students were offered spots first.
- Parent raised and Principal Berkowitz agreed there are cases where students with greatest need either cannot (for various reasons) or choose not to come back
- Parent: Concern that there is not more focus on support for virtual learning
  - Berkowitz willing to work with parents and teachers who feel virtual or IPL is not working
- How come all grades have 2 classes? Could have kept teachers departmentalized and still had just one class. In particular, PK3, 1st, 3rd are only grades with more than 11 high need students. Couldn’t those grades have been just one class?
  - IS Stover: Approved Peabody/Watkins IPL enrollment b/c looking to 1) serve students with highest need and 2) serve demands of community
- Are there options to go back to all virtual for Term 4 or add more students in to IPL in Term 3 or 4?
  - IS Stover: Need to maintain cohort in Term 3 to get started. Could revisit in Term 4.
- What is being done to support high need students who are continuing to learn virtually and are now in larger classes that may make it harder to learn? What is being done to minimize their learning loss? What is being done to support teachers who are remaining virtual and have larger classes? Noted importance of providing small group time in particular.
  - Principal Berkowitz: Encourage aides to lead small groups; doesn’t just have to be teachers. Haven’t mandated this as may not be able to due to contract language
  - IS Stover: DCPS is hiring hundreds of staff that will then deploy to support schools, including large virtual class sizes and/or schools where couldn’t get more students to go back in person due to not enough teachers for IPL. Will consider data on number, % of high need students who are remaining virtual and experiencing large class sizes so can prioritize them for support
- Principal Berkowitz willing to work with LSAT to develop FAQ about virtual and IPL

#### Stuart-Hobson

- Number of Stuart-Hobson students in-person: 6th - 13, 7th - 19, 8th – 10
- Middle schools had more flexibility to define high-need students. Used variables based on Title 1-eligible students, ANet, grades, progress during school year based on 1<sup>st</sup> term report cards
- Offering am and pm sessions for a total of 22 spots per grade. 7<sup>th</sup> highest (19), others lower. Seems almost full based on verbal commitments and just waiting on vaccination documentation
- Will reconvene RCC later this month to discuss how IPL is going and if possible to grow program (which depends in part on staff willingness to come in)
- Because IPL only on Wednesdays, not changing schedules or class assignments on M, Tu, Th, F. 6 teachers who are coming in all opted to come in.
- Will know in a week or so how regularly students who opted for IPL are actually showing up

#### Public Comment

- Co-Chair Ramona Burton summarized the comments submitted in the chat:
  - Mostly related to virtual. Concern about high need students remaining virtual

- Concern about large virtual class sizes – need support for teachers and students
- Why does it seem that Cluster having more difficult time with this than other schools?
- Will DCPS rethink in Term 4 if disastrous in Term 3? Concern that such large amount of resources (50%) going into small number (20%) of kids, many of which aren't high need
  - Principal Berkowitz: Yes. Need to be careful before changing course, but will rethink
  - IS Stover: Agree willing to revisit approaches to virtual and IPL in Term 4 if students becoming less engaged
- In addition to academics, also SEL impact on students. We need more discussion on what is being done to fix this.
- Will there be a meeting soon to discuss what's being done to support virtual?
  - Principal Berkowitz: Want to know if teachers will consider small groups on Wednesday. Teacher response: Some teachers already doing this. However, cuts into PD and collaboration time
- Teacher: Concern materials recovered from Peabody not safe for teacher and student use given that had sign a waiver before picking them up. Note these are school materials, not teachers' personal materials
  - DGS environmental specialists checked all materials and anything offered to teachers were found to be safe
  - DGS specialists assessed risk; Office of Risk Management (ORM) required waivers
  - If do not want to use anything, don't have to. Will take a little time to get replacements, but willing to provide.

**Meeting adjourned 8:10 pm.**

**Remaining 2020-2021 Meetings**

2020-21 Meetings	Location
March 2	Virtual
April 6	Virtual
May 4	Virtual
June 8	Virtual
July 6	Virtual