

LSAT Candidates for SY 2015-2016

We have eight wonderful parents who have decided to run for the four Local School Advisory Team representative positions. Please take a moment to read through their statements in preparation for the election at our next General Meeting on Thursday, June 11 at 7:00 pm.

Katie Burke

I would be honored to serve as an LSAT representative for Lafayette. I've been a Lafayette parent for six years now, and will be here for another six. This year I have four children at Lafayette, in Pre-K, 1st, 3rd and 5th grades. Lafayette is a special place where I've watched my children grow and thrive in the classrooms of many amazing teachers. I've been a room parent for at least one class (usually more) for the past five years, I've coordinated the Walk and Bike to School Days for the past three years, I helped establish a community service club, and I find myself at school most days happily volunteering in some capacity or another. I've thoroughly enjoyed gaining a deeper understanding of elementary school life and administration from the perspectives of the children, the teachers, my fellow parents and the administrators alike.

I have an undergraduate degree in public policy, an MBA and a Master's of Regional Planning, all of which reflect my interest in researching and enacting sound policy, enhancing and supporting important community assets like our school, and making the best use of limited resources. My interest in school policies, decision-making and best practices has grown each year that I've had school-aged children. It's important to me that Lafayette continue to be an excellent place for children to learn and explore the world, and I believe there is always room for improvement.

If you elect me to be an LSAT representative, you can be confident that I will be committed to participating fully, and that I will keep the goal of excellence at Lafayette foremost in my mind. I want our children to have the very best elementary school experience possible, and if you elect me to the LSAT, I will work diligently to play a helpful and substantive part in ensuring that they do.

Kavita Chambery

Hello, I am a new parent in the Lafayette community. My daughter, Nandini Chambery, starts kindergarten this fall at the school. For the past two years while she was at Lowell School I was an active parent in the school and enjoyed my time volunteering both as a group parent and as a representative for the Pre-Primary (PP) division (approximately 50 students) on the Lowell Parent Council (LPC). I work in international development and support USAID funded programs in South/SE Asia and Africa. We have lived in the Washington DC area for over a decade and are looking forward to starting at Lafayette this fall. If selected I hope to serve as voice for pre-K and K classrooms on the LSAT to ensure that our concerns are heard and addressed. Similarly, things that working in the classroom are also highlighted so that the principal is equipped to make the best decisions she can with the information that she learns from the representatives on LSAT. Thank you.

Jared Cohen

I am running for a second term as a member of the Local School Advisory Team (LSAT). I have one son in first grade and another son in Pre-K. I serve as President & CEO of the Parkinson Foundation of the National Capital Area. Previously, I served as Executive Director of a small non-profit organization that led the U.S. Department of Education-funded D.C. Parent Information Resource Center, an effort to increase student academic achievement through effective parental engagement practices and policies. In this role, I supported the development of DCPS's system-wide Student Handbook, which was distributed in 2013. In my current role on the LSAT, I serve as a strong voice and advocate for parents about issues that impact the education of our children in my regular discussions with teachers, staff and fellow parents. I served on the board of the Lafayette I during the 2013-2014 school year. Additionally, I facilitated the Lafayette School Boundary Working Group, for about 18 months starting in May of 2013. The group consisted of more than 30 Lafayette parents and future parents who met regularly to monitor the school boundary/feeder pattern revision process. I hope to have the honor of continuing to represent you on the LSAT.

Dave Gessert

I'm a parent of two Lafayette students (4th and 1st grades) and am a product of DC public schools myself. At Lafayette I've been engaged in supporting classroom activities and on issues affecting the broader community, like the school boundary review. I have a background in law (JD, University of Georgia) and policy (MPP, American University), as well as experience in business planning, needs assessments, and program design and evaluation. Prior to life at Lafayette, I spent 7 years on the board of directors of my daughters' daycare, Broadcasters' Child Development Center. Of that I served 4 years as Chairman and 3 years as Treasurer.

I believe my familiarity with Lafayette, local knowledge of DCPS and broad base of experience can be an asset to the LSAT and would like to contribute to the continued health and vitality of our school.

Tammy Horn

I am the mom of two boys – Cole Ingram, a fourth grader, and Gabriel Ingram, a kindergartner. Over the past six years, I have been an active Lafayette parent volunteer, serving as a room parent, helping in the classroom, and working on the school's annual fundraising auctions. I would welcome the opportunity to continue to serve the Lafayette community as a member of the LSAT. Lafayette is going through many changes and parental involvement and input is more important than ever. I am dedicated to making our school the best place it can be, and believe I can bring a well-rounded perspective to the LSAT as the parent of both an older and a younger child at Lafayette.

I have lived in Washington, DC since the 1990's, and moved to the Chevy Chase neighborhood in 2005. I am a member of the Chevy Chase Citizens Association ("CCCA") and am a contributor to the CCCA newsletter and the Northwest Current. I also am global trade counsel at IBM Corporation. I look forward to the possibility of continuing to serve the Lafayette community as a member of the LSAT. Thank you for your consideration.

Marek Gootman

With three years as HSA Board 2nd Vice President and nine years as a parent to three Lafayette students (one with two more years to go), I decided to transition off the HSA to enable fresh long-term leadership, but then was motivated to apply my accumulated knowledge and perspective through the LSAT. My combination of budget, policy, and operational involvement with Lafayette and DCPS, institutional knowledge, and parent experiences in all seven Lafayette grade levels can offer substantive insights for LSAT advisory tasks.

With regard to LSAT input on school resource allocation, budget decisions, curriculum, and staffing, my HSA VP responsibilities included contract, legal, and compliance issues, as well as executive officer functions for initial budget development; in both roles, I focused on changes intended to strengthen spending justifications and performance metrics that demonstrate links between funding efforts and scholastic needs. For example, activities included supporting launch the pilot Lafayette Enrichment Program with project definition / policies and legal agreements; completing shifts of HSA-funded activities to independent contract status reducing HSA costs and liability while aligning with school interests; advancing performance assessment or evaluation standards for contract services; and increasing spending accountability. I also participated in HSA policy and funding debates and decisions around augmenting options encompassing science, language, recess, music, and mindfulness. Finally, I served as HSA co-liaison to and on a core working group of Lafayette parents that addressed DCPS school boundary revision proposals, contributing to and executing on messaging, coordination, and direct outreach.

While I considered shifting HSA volunteer time outside of Lafayette, I felt my experience would be useful continuity during a bridge year for topics such as DCPS reconsideration of its student assessment practices; spending and use decisions related to new school facilities; review of curriculum changes like World Language and artist-in-residence; return on increased expenditures for central administrative staff, science resources, and instructional coach; expansion of in-school and after-school enrichment options; and impact of Fair Funding Act formula implementation. Having familiarity with most of these topics and nearly a decade of historical context, I can make a particular contribution in representing Lafayette parent views on academic, student, and community priorities.

Odell McCants

Greetings Lafayette parents! It is with great enthusiasm that I submit myself as a candidate to serve on the LSAT. I am a native Washingtonian and my wife Margaret and I have resided in the Lafayette community for more than twelve years. We loved this neighborhood and school so much that we moved here seven years before being blessed with our son Brandon, currently in Kindergarten.

As parents of a kindergartener (Brandon), my wife and I have enjoyed an amazing experience at Lafayette. Pre-K and Kindergarten have not come without challenges. Brandon has had some difficulty in class the past two years but we could not have asked for a more professional, attentive and dedicated staff and leadership than what we have at Lafayette. There is no way we could have made it through the past two years without them. This is the reason I want to serve on the LSAT.

Professionally, in addition to managing my own athlete representation agency, I also serve as a business development consultant to an educational products trade association whose membership includes leading manufacturers and publishers of school equipment, furniture and educational books, toys and games. I believe this experience helps me add perspective and information to the group during this important time of school renovation.

Am excited for this opportunity to serve the entire Lafayette family and community by giving back what we have experienced as parents and ensure a broad scope of perspective is represented on the LSAT. Thank you for your time. I ask for your vote and look forward to working with you.

Carrie Willimann

As a former DC Public School (DCPS) teacher (Teach For America corps member, 1996), former DCPS student, current DCPS parent and fourth generation Washingtonian, I feel a strong commitment to promoting high expectations and high achievement for all students at Lafayette.

I am an involved school community member through my role as a Room Parent and a Girl Scout Daisy Troop leader (for the past two years). Both of these roles bring me into the school on a frequent basis with direct engagement and interaction with teachers, parents and students.

I have over 15 years of experience working in the international development education sector, which requires a deep understanding of what it takes to create a positive school environment that supports all teachers and staff, engages all families, and ultimately improves student learning outcomes.