



# Life at Lafayette

A Primer for New Families



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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	Welcome .....	2
II.	About Lafayette Elementary School .....	3
III.	Parent Organizations .....	4
	Lafayette Home & School Association .....	4
	Local School Advisory Team.....	4
	After School Advisory Team.....	4
IV.	Communication.....	5
V.	Supporting Lafayette.....	6
VI.	Volunteering .....	7
	In-School Opportunities.....	7
	Community Volunteer Opportunities .....	8
VII.	Calendar of Events .....	9
	Throughout The School Year.....	9
	August/September.....	10
	October/November/December .....	11
	January/February/March.....	11
	April/May/June .....	12
VIII.	Frequently Asked Questions .....	13
IX.	Lafayette Lingo.....	15

## I. WELCOME

Welcome to Lafayette Elementary, home of the Bears! If you are looking ahead to a new school year, it can seem a little intimidating. The Lafayette HSA and school would like to ease your way into our community. While there is a wealth of information about daily life in the school's handbook (<http://www.lafayettehsa.org/student-life/handbook/>), this guide is designed for new families as they navigate and plan for the months ahead. It's filled with information, as well as some tips from individual parents—and some kids—who have stood in your shoes.

Please read it, and keep it on hand for reference. If you have any questions, contact our HSA outreach coordinator ([outreach@lafayettehsa.org](mailto:outreach@lafayettehsa.org)) for help!

Have an amazing year!

## II. ABOUT LAFAYETTE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Lafayette Elementary School is the largest elementary school in Washington, D.C. It serves children from PK4 through 5<sup>th</sup> grade. It was established in 1928 in the northwest neighborhood of Chevy Chase, D.C., to meet the needs of families moving into new residential communities located along the Connecticut Avenue corridor. The current school building opened in 1931. In 2015-2016, the school underwent an extensive modernization to increase the overall area to 120,000 square feet.

**Principal:** Dr. Carrie Broquard (AKA Dr. B)

**School Mascot:** The Bears

**School Colors:** Blue & Gold

**Website:** <http://www.lafayettehsa.org/>

### III. PARENT ORGANIZATIONS

#### LAFAYETTE HOME & SCHOOL ASSOCIATION

The Lafayette Home and School Association (HSA) is just like a traditional parent-teacher organization, but with a different name. The HSA is a parent-supported non-profit organization that exists to enrich the experience of Lafayette students and bring families, teachers and staff together. As the largest parent organization at Lafayette, it raises funds to support educational and enrichment programs for our students and puts on events to bring the community together.

**How can I get involved with the HSA?** The HSA can always use your help. Board members are elected each spring. Outside of that, however, there are many roles, responsibilities and projects that require a variety of skills and varied time commitments. Please see the “Supporting Lafayette” and “Volunteering” sections in this document or to learn more or reach out to [volunteer@lafayettehsa.org](mailto:volunteer@lafayettehsa.org).

#### LOCAL SCHOOL ADVISORY TEAM

The Local School Advisory Team (LSAT) is a group of elected and appointed members that exists for every DCPS school. The team consists of parents, teachers, non-instructional school staff and a community member to advise the principal on school priorities and budgetary issues.

**How can I get involved with the LSAT?** The LSAT team is elected every spring. LSAT meetings are open to observers, with a few exceptions when the LSAT is looking at issues involving personnel.

#### AFTER SCHOOL ADVISORY TEAM

The After School Advisory Team (ASAT) is a group of parents, school administration and aftercare and enrichment providers designed to address after-school needs and experiences. The team meets monthly during the school year to focus on issues related to planning, program offerings and feedback from the parent community.

**How can I get involved with the ASAT?** You can join! Members are self-selecting volunteers who commit to attend at least 80% of the scheduled meetings. All meetings are open to observers.

## IV. COMMUNICATION



**Sign Up:** *The overwhelming majority of school communications is through email – please be sure to join the school’s email list!* Go to <http://www.lafayettehsa.org/sign-up-for-news/> to make sure you are on the list. Contact [webmaster@lafayettehsa.org](mailto:webmaster@lafayettehsa.org) if you run into any trouble.

**Tuesday Bulletin (TB):** This is a newsletter sent via email every Tuesday and the primary communication between the school and parents.

**Website:** [Lafayettehsa.org](http://Lafayettehsa.org) is your go-to source for most everything about Lafayette.

**Social Media:** Follow Lafayette on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

**A-Z Directory:** The HSA produces a printed and online Family Directory each fall with contact information for all Lafayette families. This is how parents get info for birthday party invitations and arrange playdates! Sign up at <https://atozconnect.com/>

**Backpack Express:** Each student is given a folder for notes for parents, homework and special announcements. Be sure to check your child’s backpack every day and look in their folder. You can also use this folder to send in a note for the teacher.

**Email:** Contact your child’s teacher or any member of the staff through email. Addresses for teachers can be found at <http://www.lafayettehsa.org/resources/teacher-and-staff-directory/> and for HSA board members at <http://www.lafayettehsa.org/hsa/board/>.

**Shutterfly Websites:** Most classes have website set up through Shutterfly. These serve as portals for communication among your child’s teacher and the class families. Your teacher will tell you more.

**Robo-Calls:** Occasionally Dr. B or DCPS will make phone calls directly to homes informing parents about events or schedule changes at school.

## V. SUPPORTING LAFAYETTE

Through the Lafayette HSA, parents help fund a slew of programming from the Peace Program to the recess coach to science night. We also help address some school costs so that Dr. B can focus the bulk of her budget on teachers and student learning.

*But we can't do it without your help.*

**What am I expected to donate?** The HSA asks that families directly donate as to the Bear Fund at the beginning of each school year. The HSA spends more than \$400 per student each year. Suggested amounts include:

- \$2,500 -- pays for professional development opportunities for teachers
- \$1000 -- pays for a quarter of art supplies for our incredible art program
- \$500 -- supports field day activities
- \$150 -- helps Lafayette students-in-need participate in activities and field trips
- \$40 -- pays for one student's Peace instruction for one year

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*The Peace Program is hugely important and differentiating for our school and our children. Donate and keep it going!*

*- Sheri Lockwood, parent of Graham & Caswell, (classes of 2024 and 2025)*

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**That seems like a lot of money!** It is— but it goes to support all the programs that make Lafayette special and a sought-out school in D.C. We recognize that not everyone can give at the same level and encourage you to consider a gift appropriate to your family's budget.

**How does the HSA raise funds?** We raise most our funds through direct donations and fundraising events. Recognizing that we don't want to wear out our families, the HSA tries to keep its financial asks to a minimum throughout the year. Over the course of the school year, you can expect to be asked to support the school:

- Through the fall fundraising drive
- Through two major events: the Fall Festival and the Auction
- Through annual sales of personalized bricks and Grizzly Gear (Lafayette t-shirts etc.)
- Through twice-per-year sales of partner business Galley Foods and Potomac Pizza.

**How do I donate today:** Go to <http://www.lafayettehsa.org/support-hsa/>

## VI. VOLUNTEERING

Like many public schools, Lafayette relies heavily on its parent community to help bring out the best in our classrooms and community. As new parents, you may be overwhelmed by the number of requests for volunteers. We've listed the most common requests below – we suggest you take a look at the list and think about where you can contribute that will suit you and your family. You don't need to do everything! But if everyone pitches in just a little, our kids and community will benefit. Contact [volunteer@lafayettehsa.org](mailto:volunteer@lafayettehsa.org) to learn more!

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*Lafayette offers a lot of volunteering opportunities. I suggest pacing yourself and not burning out in early grades. Save some energy for the later grades when they really need more parent help.*

*-- Lori Finch parent to Anna (2018), Kate (2020)  
& Amelia (2025)*

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### IN-SCHOOL OPPORTUNITIES

**Room Parent:** Every classroom typically has 2-3 room parents who serve to communicate with parents about special class events or projects, organize class parties, set up the class potluck for parents and collect class funds for teacher gifts and special activities.

**Parent Reader:** In the younger grades, parents are asked to select a book from home and read to students. It's a wonderful way to spend time in the classroom, and your child will beam with pride.

**Party Volunteer:** Class parties, which happen several times a year, generally require 3-5 parents to help organize and supervise. Parents are usually asked to supply food and drink as well.

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*If you think you can't be a room parent because you work, think again. The parents here are so active, it won't all be on you. There's a lot of help available.*

*– Amy Joyce, mom to Sam (2018) & Jonah (2021)*

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**Field Trip Chaperone:** 3-5 parents asked to shepherd the class to the zoo, a theater or a museum.

**Career Day:** In late fall, parents are asked to talk to our students about their interesting career fields.

**Field Day:** In June, dozens of parents are asked to help out with one of the most fun days of the year- field day!

**Informances:** Some grade-level informances require parent volunteers.

**Ad-hoc:** Classes or grade levels will often need volunteers for individual events, like writer's workshop or the second-grade bike ride.

**Art Room:** Help our art teacher in the art room with special projects throughout the year.

**Library:** Help the librarian throughout the year.

**Book Sales:** Volunteer for one or more of our book sales held throughout the year.

**Drop-off line:** Parents are asked to help children exit cars.

## COMMUNITY VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

**Parent board positions:** Run for a position on the HSA or LSAT board, or volunteer for the ASAT board. These can be more time-consuming roles, but are critically important to the well-being of our school.

**Fall Festival:** All hands on deck! This fun family event takes an army of volunteers to do everything from party planning to staffing rides to selling baked goods. All parents will be asked to help make the fun happen.

**Auction:** If party planning, creative design and fundraising is your thing, this is the volunteer opportunity for you!

**Communications:** Great writers, editors, WordPress wizards and tech geniuses are always needed to help with general and event-specific communications.

**Ad-hoc:** Help with one-off events like science night or picture day.

## VII. CALENDAR OF EVENTS

We are a large and active school, so naturally we have a large and busy schedule! There are many events for parents, families, students and teachers as well as countless irregular weeks for DCPS.

See the DCPS calendar here

<https://dcps.dc.gov/page/dcps-calendars> and the

Lafayette calendar here

<http://www.lafayettehsa.org/calendar/> (DCPS dates are included on the Lafayette calendar as well.)

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*Download and embrace the DCPS calendar at the beginning of the year! There are a number of full and half days off throughout the year that can surprise you if you're not planning on it.*

*-Annie Linehan, mom to Joe & Kiki (classes of 2021 and 2024)*

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Below are some of the key events throughout the year. It make take some time to get to know them all. *Pace yourself!*

\* Parent help required for event.

### THROUGHOUT THE SCHOOL YEAR

**HSA General Meetings:** The HSA holds a General Meeting several times during the year. All parents are invited and encouraged to participate in these meetings. HSA Members (those who have paid membership dues) may vote on any issues being voted upon at the meeting.

**HSA Board Meetings:** Meetings of the HSA Board are held monthly. HSA Members are welcome to observe.

**Classroom Parties\*:** (Examples: Halloween, winter, end-of-year, etc.): Each classroom and/or grade hosts a simple party in the classroom with games and treats. Typically, the teacher will discuss the plans with the Room Parents who will then relay information to the parents. Volunteers are usually requested to help out at the party or provide supplies/food for the party.

**Parent-teacher conferences:** DCPS sets aside three days a year as parent-teacher conference days. You will have a one- on-one conference with your child's teacher for about 10-15 minutes. Note, your children do not have school on these days.

**Spirit Weeks:** Sponsored by the student council, spirit weeks generally include fun and funny attire for kids throughout the week.

**Informances\***: Each grade level embarks on unique learning projects and special presentations called informances that are shared with parents and/or the school community at different points throughout the school year. Some require parent volunteers. For more info on informances and other Lafayette traditions, see <http://www.lafayettehsa.org/academics/lafayette-traditions/>.

## AUGUST/SEPTEMBER

**Back-to-School Huddles**: Optional meetings the week before school starts where families have the chance to review site logistics and our game plan for the first day of school. Kids are welcome!

**Popsicle Social**: Welcome party held the weekend before school starts.

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*It feels like FOREVER between the first day of school and back-to-school night when you get to meet the teachers and see the classroom. Try to take a deep breath and relax (hard as I know that is!) Lafayette is filled with amazing teachers who are spending those first two weeks focusing on getting to know your kids. They're in good hands."*

— Katie Burke, mom of Agnes (2015), Ginger (2017), Julia (2019), & Rocky (2021)

**First day of school K-5th grade**: K-5<sup>th</sup> begins school with full days. Info and logistics are made available close to the start of school.

**First Week of School for PK4**: PK4 classrooms have a special calendar during the first week of school to ease the transition from home or daycare. Info and logistics are can be found here:

[https://www.lafayettehsa.org/wp/wp-](https://www.lafayettehsa.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/PreK.FirstWeek.SY20.docx)

[content/uploads/2019/04/PreK.FirstWeek.SY20.docx](https://www.lafayettehsa.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/PreK.FirstWeek.SY20.docx)

**Back to School Night**: This is a big night – so big, in fact, that it's been divided into three nights by grade. Dr. B introduces all the teachers and the HSA will give a brief presentation. Then you'll head off to your child's classroom to meet your teacher and hear about what to expect for the upcoming year.

**5th Grade Overnight**: The 5th graders travel and spend the night on a special excursion. The trip is chaperoned by Lafayette teachers and staff – no parents allowed!

**Class Potlucks\***: Most classrooms organize a potluck dinner early in the school year as a way for the parents to meet each other. It is usually held in the evening at one family's house. Some classes opt for potlucks and some choose to have food delivered.

**Dot Day:** A celebration of creativity, courage and collaboration. It is inspired by the book, “The Dot” the story of a caring teacher who dares a doubting student to trust in her own abilities by being brave enough to “make her mark.” Children are encouraged to wear polka-dots to school.

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*The class potlucks are fun to host. You meet interesting people, get to know your child’s teacher and—most importantly—you don’t have to cook.*

*-Tim Hanrahan, dad to Clementine & John  
(both 2021)*

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## OCTOBER/NOVEMBER/DECEMBER

**Picture Day:** Photographers from Freed Photography will come to the school to photograph our children both individually and as a class. You will be given the opportunity to purchase these photos and a percentage of your purchase will be donated to the HSA.

**Fall Festival\*:** On a Saturday in October, the HSA organizes and hosts the Fall Festival – our first big fundraiser of the school year. There are rides and games for the kids, face painting, a bake sale, food vendors, etc. Parents are encouraged to help with the planning, and each classroom will be asked to provide parent volunteers to assist with different events.

**Halloween Parade:** If school is in session on Halloween, the parade takes place on Halloween day after lunch. Children dress in costume and process through the school and park grounds and follow with a party back in their classroom.

## JANUARY/FEBRUARY/MARCH

**Family Fun and Fitness Night:** A health and fitness event for all Lafayette students and their families

**Auction\*:** This is the HSA’s biggest fundraiser. There is a lot of planning involved, which begins when the previous year’s Auction wraps up and continues until the following spring. The Auction is a fundraiser and A PARTY! It’s a fun excuse for Lafayette parents (and teachers!) to get together, eat, drink, dance and raise money for the school. There is both a live and silent auction.

**Summer Camp Expo\*:** The HSA’s annual camp expo.

## APRIL/MAY/JUNE

**Teacher Appreciation Week:** A week of teacher love with an activity or treat every day. Parents are usually asked to do things like help their child make a card for their teacher one day, bring in a dessert another and supply a single blossom on a third to create a bouquet from the class. The HSA also provides treats some days.

**Arts Night(s):** This special event is split between two evenings to accommodate the large number of parents and students. On your child's evening, they will perform in the school's cafeteria, and every child will have a piece of artwork displayed in the school. Band members perform, and refreshments are served.

**Field Day(s)\*:** A day of three-legged-races, hula hoop contests, relays and popsicles for all. PK-K field day is separate from 1<sup>st</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> field day (with age-appropriate activities for each).

**Pre-K End-of-Year Celebration:** One morning in June, Pre-K students say goodbye to preschool with a special ceremony in the cafeteria. After the ceremony, there's a small celebration back in the Pre-K classrooms. Note that this is NOT the last day of school for Pre-K students—they will continue until the last official DCPS day.

**5th Grade Day Trip:** 5<sup>th</sup> grade celebrates the end of their days with a trip to an amusement park or similar.

**5th Grade Promotion Ceremony\*:** Two or three days prior to the last day of school, the 5th grade students celebrate their Lafayette accomplishments during a special ceremony with cake and punch to follow.

## VIII. FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



**Where do I find out when the school day starts and ends, how to sign up for hot lunch, the carpool drop off line, and all those nuts and bolts?**

We can't print it all here, but everything you need to know is available through the online Student Handbook at: <http://www.lafayettehsa.org/student-life/handbook/>

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*"If you think you can drop your kid off at the car drop-off line at 8:41 a.m., think again. The doors on Northampton close at precisely 8:40 a.m. and anyone arriving after that has to walk around to the front door. So leave yourself extra time!"*

*-Laura Meckler, mom to Luke (2020) & Alexander (2024)*

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**When will I learn what class my child has been assigned to?** Dr. B sends out class assignments in early August via email, so make sure you are signed up on the distribution list.

**How do I get on the email list?** Please sign up here: <https://www.lafayettehsa.org/sign-up-for-news/>

**What equipment does my child need for the first day?** Students generally need a refillable water bottle, lunch box (if bringing lunch) and a backpack large enough to fit a 9X12 folder and lunchbox. There will be more communication about supplies and spare clothing closer to opening day.

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*Check out the school lunches. Sometimes you might get lucky and it's maple syrup and pancake day. It doesn't happen often—but it's the best!*

*-Gryffin (2021)*

**Where do I sign up for hot lunch?** Students may buy lunch or milk from the cafeteria. Sign up for an account and pay at [myschoolbucks.com](https://myschoolbucks.com).

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**When can I meet my child's teacher?** Back-to-school night is all about meeting your child's teacher and finding out details about the year ahead.

**My child speaks a language other than English at home. Where can they get help?** Families should contact the Language Acquisition Division at (202) 671-0750 to make an assessment appointment. Students who qualify for additional support in English may receive instruction from one of Lafayette's English Language Learner (ELL) teachers.

**What is the first day procedure?** Children in K-5th will line up in designated areas starting at 8:20. At 8:40 students will head inside with their teachers – parents must stay outside. PK students join Lafayette in a graduated schedule over the course of the week. More logistical details will be made available in August and at the back-to-school huddles. For more info including drop-off and pick-up procedures, see the student handbook.

**What is the Class Activity Fee?** The school asks for one-time payment of \$100 from each child in the classroom to pay for teacher-organized field trips to locations like Mt. Vernon, the Smithsonian Environmental Research Center, and the National Zoo. The fees also fund end-of-year parties and field day shirts in each class. Though the fee is paid through the HSA's online system for ease of use, this is not a donation to the HSA and is not tax deductible. *Please consider donating to the HSA as well as paying your field trip fee.*

**What aftercare and extra-curricular activities are available**

**for my student?)** Aftercare options are available on the website at <https://www.lafayettehsa.org/student-life/before-and-after-school/>. Enrichment activities are

available in a variety of ways. Older students can take advantage of Lafayette's many sports teams and clubs (see

<https://www.lafayettehsa.org/student-life/clubs-sports/>). Flex Academies is our provider of after-school activities at Lafayette (see the before-and-after school website page above). They usually offer a wide variety of sports, arts and academic classes for all ages. In addition, CLS, the on-site aftercare providers, offers activities and classes for students enrolled in their program. Outside school, many students join a Lafayette soccer team with their classmates through Stoddert Soccer or baseball and softball through Capitol City Little League. Some join a Lafayette Boy or Girl Scout troop for their class or enroll in music lessons or other activities around the city.

*There are lots of fun after-school programs like Tae Kwon Do and Notebusters. And the teachers teach you a lot!*

*-Aidan (2021)*

**How can I get to meet other families?** We encourage you to attend the Popsicle Social in

August to meet new families and other new students. If you would like to set up a playdate with other new or existing students (particularly if your child is entering an older grade) before the start of school, please contact the HSA Outreach Coordinator at [outreach@lafayettehsa.org](mailto:outreach@lafayettehsa.org).

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*Make the effort to attend the parent dinner for your class and the other parent/family events to meet people, these are the folks that your kids are going to be asking you to schedule play dates and sleep overs with for years to come.*

*-Brian Oliver, dad to Madeline (2021) and Emma (2024)*

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**I am interested in getting involved in the school activities, where should I start?** We love your enthusiasm and we need your help! Please see the volunteering section of this guide or email [volunteer@lafayettehsa.org](mailto:volunteer@lafayettehsa.org).

**Where can I get a Lafayette t-shirt or magnet?** Grizzly Gear (our name for all Lafayette swag) can be purchased by emailing [grizzlygear@lafayettehsa.org](mailto:grizzlygear@lafayettehsa.org).

## IX. LAFAYETTE LINGO

Soon your child will be coming home excitedly talking about SAMM tickets, Gigi and what’s going on in Polka-Dot Base. Here’s a handy Lafayette dictionary!

**Arts Night** ..... A music and arts celebration with grade-wide performances and displays for each student at the school

**ASAT** ..... The After School Advisory Team– Parent group that advises the school’s administration regarding aftercare and enrichment programs at Lafayette

**Bear Facts** ..... The Bear Facts, Lafayette’s student newspaper, contains news, interviews, features, columns, art and photos

**Bear Fund**..... The HSA’s fundraising campaign

**Class Activity Fee** ..... A one-time fee to cover field trips and the end of year party. Paying this fee is not a donation to the HSA.

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*Do STMath. It’s fun and don’t quit.  
Sometimes it’s a little complicated.*

**CLS** ..... Capitol Language Services– Onsite before-and-after care provider

*-Andrew (2023)*

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**Coach Bell** ..... Our beloved recess coach who organizes games for maximum recess fun!

**“Color” Bases** ..... Referring to PK and K classes by a color base (Red Base, Gold Base, Rainbow Base, etc.) was developed to make it easier for our littlest learners to remember their classroom name

**Cub Facts**..... The hard-copy magazine designed for Kindergarten and Pre-K students and created by Lafayette 4th and 5th graders

**Dot Day** ..... An artistic celebration of the power of creativity, courage and collaboration (and kids are encouraged to wear polka dots)

**Dr. B** ..... Principal Dr. Carrie Broquard

**ELA** ..... English-language arts

**ELS**..... Early Learning Support– Lafayette’s self-contained classroom serving students in grades K – 2 with a variety of disabilities

- ELL** ..... English Language Learner
- Flex Academies** ..... Outside provider of after-school enrichment
- Flex time** ..... Flexible time during the school day where students can select their activities
- Gigi** ..... The penguin mascot for the online program ST Math
- HSA** ..... Lafayette’s Home and School Association (Lafayette’s parent-teacher organization)
- HSA Board**..... Board members elected by the HSA membership each spring
- Images** ..... Annual publication including an illustration and writing sample from every student
- Informances**..... Grade-wide learning projects and special presentations that are shared with parents or the school community
- Lafayette Gives Back** ..... Our community-service program, which provides our students and families with hands-on volunteer opportunities
- LSAT**..... Local School Advisory Team. Parent body that gives non-binding advice to the principal on school priorities and budgetary issues
- Mindfulness** ..... A core tenet of the Lafayette community
- Mindful Moment** ..... Twice daily breaks for mindfulness held in every classroom
- PARCC** ..... Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers – the DCPS assessment test for grades 3-5
- Peace, or Peace of Mind** ..... Social/emotional learning program to teach Lafayette students to calm themselves, focus and pay attention, empathize with others and solve conflicts peacefully
- Peace Club** ..... The recess program at Lafayette for students who need a smaller alternative to the playground. Peace Club requires all students who come to make a promise to treat everyone else with kindness and respect and to make sure conflicts are worked out peacefully and everyone is included.

- SAMM** ..... Speak Mindfully, Act Mindfully, and Move Mindfully – Lafayette’s school-wide, positive behavior support structure
- SAMM Tickets**..... Kids win SAMM tickets for positive behavior choices
- Six-Day Schedule** ..... Our schedule has six days to allow our students to access all of our many special subjects. See more at <https://www.lafayettehsa.org/student-life/handbook/#SixDaySchedule>
- SLS** ..... Specialized Learning Support – self-contained classroom serving students in grades 3 – 5 with a variety of disabilities
- Spirit Week** ..... Sponsored by the student council, students dress with a theme each day
- ST Math**..... An online visual learning program for math
- WIN Time** ..... Daily differentiated academic instruction
- WLES** ..... The student-produced online news channel