

LaSalle Language Academy

LSC Meeting Minutes

Date: December 13, 2011

In Attendance: Jon Hicks (Co-Chair), Tom Brennan (Co-Chair), Keith Thomas (Secretary), Bart Moy, Dan Conley, Candise Cho, Nancy Maniscalco, Catherine Northup, Janet Matos, Julie Waller, Sandra Lockhart and Elisabeth Heurtefeu

Absent: None

The meeting was called to order at 5:30pm

Tom Brennan made a motion to approve the minutes of the November 8 meeting, Seconded by Janet Matos with 3 typographical corrections – passed unanimously.

Principal's Report:

No questions raised on the report provided by the principal, but in light of the recent announcement that CPS is recommending LaSalle be converted into a neighborhood school to reduce the overcrowding at Lincoln Elementary, we agreed to skip all non-essential reports.

Action Items:

A motion was made by Tom Brennan to allocate funds in the amount of \$4,000 from account 225 for the purpose of compensating LaSalle teachers for tutoring activities for the winter period 2011-2012, seconded by Catherine Northup and passed unanimously.

A motion was made by Tom Brennan to allocate funds in the amount of \$2,000 from account 225 for the purpose of compensating LaSalle clerks for extended hours work during the winter period 2011-2012, seconded by Jon Hicks and passed unanimously.

A motion was made by Tom Brennan to approve the fundraising event "Restaurant Night at Sedgwick's" to be held on January 11, 2012. The event is coordinated by Diana Garay, is sponsored by the Friends of LaSalle and anticipated to generate approximately \$500. The motion was seconded by Keith Thomas and passed unanimously.

A motion was made by Tom Brennan to approve the fundraising event "Giving Tree Campaign" to be held between January and June 2012. The event is coordinated by Diana Garay, is sponsored by the Friends of LaSalle and anticipated to generate approximately \$31,700. The motion was seconded by Nancy Maniscalco and passed unanimously.

PPLC Report:

Minutes were distributed to be read later.

Committee Reports:

SKIPPED

Audience Introductions/Participation:

SKIPPED

Old Business:

SKIPPED

New Business:

Jon Hicks articulated the recent developments in the CPS plan to alleviate the overcrowding problem at Lincoln Elementary by making LaSalle a neighborhood school that would service the area bounded by North Avenue, Armitage, Orchard and the Lake. He then read a statement that had been quickly compiled by the LSC listing some of our concerns and arguments against this proposed course of action.

The floor was then opened to Adam Anderson from the Portfolio Office at CPS. He explained the situation in further detail and went over some of the statistics that his office used to make its recommendation to the CEO. All information in their methodology report will be compiled by the end of the year and made public by 1/1/12. Now that they have made their recommendation based on internal information, they are going out to do further fact-finding and getting community input. Meeting with the LaSalle and Lincoln communities individually tonight is the first step and will continue with an open forum sometime in January. He agreed to take any viable alternatives back to CPS for further analysis. If no change is made to their recommendation, the CEO could take the matter in front of the Board for approval as early as January 25th or more likely, the February 22nd meeting.

He explained that no capital expenditures would be made to alleviate the problem at Lincoln because there were 4,000 seats available in the area and only 1,500 resident students filling those spots. He then said that they would not use any of those available seats at the neighboring schools as that would make some students travel farther than their closest school. This is not a law, but a policy of CPS.

The floor was then opened to the public. A lively discussion ensued and revolved primarily around the following issues:

- The parents and faculty of LaSalle Language academy chose to attend and teach at this school because of its commitment to foreign languages, its exemplary academic achievement and its ethnic and socioeconomic diversity. We see the current plan jeopardizing most, if not all, of what we hold dear.
- By making LaSalle a neighborhood school, CPS is shutting off one of the best avenues for underprivileged families to obtain a high quality education and is eliminating the diversity of the school. While it might not be intentionally racist, this proposal ultimately succeeds in being so.

- We don't understand why, if two of the four schools immediately surrounding Lincoln (i.e. Mayer and Alcott) have available spaces for more students, CPS has decided to pick the only school that is operating at peak capacity to send the excess students.
- It is further questionable when you review the proposed boundaries for LaSalle that Newberry is within the boundary and yet is not being considered as a neighborhood school.
- By only providing 1 year of sibling consideration, CPS is forcing many people to have to go to multiple schools, drop out, or move.
- There is no evidence that making LaSalle a neighborhood school completely solves the overcrowding problem at Lincoln on an immediate, let alone a long-term basis. Rather, it is likely to create an overcrowding problem at LaSalle, (in other words, they are proposing a lose-lose scenario, when a win-win option, namely, sending kids to neighboring schools that have the space, is readily available).
- There are students at Lincoln who do not reside in the current boundaries. Some are there due to the principal allowing them in when the incoming classes were not filled, some are there as part of the French and Pre-IB programs, and others are there because they misrepresented where they actually live. If CPS eliminated these students, a percentage of the overcrowding problem would go away. In addition, moving the French and Pre-IB programs to another school might take students living within the Lincoln boundaries out to a different school.
- The issue of a lack of timely communication from CPS was raised. We would like them to inform us of all upcoming meetings, schedules, deadlines, and votes so that we can plan appropriately.

Mr. Anderson reviewed our main concerns and objections and assured us that they would be taken into consideration as the process moves forward.

Last on the agenda, Ms. Heurtefeu informed us that Ms. Schermerhorn was interested in teaching a gifted writers program for 6th – 8th grades that would meet twice a week for one hour over 10 weeks.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:32pm