

**STEM Magnet Academy
Local School Council
Regular Meeting Minutes**

November 5, 2014

I. Call to order

Mrs. Langston called to order the regular meeting of the Local School Council for the STEM Magnet Academy at 5:30pm on November 5, 2014 at the STEM Magnet Academy gymnasium.

II. Roll call/Establish Quorum

Mrs. Langston conducted a roll call. The following persons were present:

Jeremiah Abiade
Maria Amoruso
Deborah Bonner
Deana Caccavale
Deidra Harper
Sadika Langston
Jeff McCarter
William O'Neill (left at 7:28pm)
Gretchen Brinza
Lindsay McGrane
Zakiya Libby-Williams
Maria McManus

Quorum was established.

III. Review and Approval of Agenda

Mrs. Langston moved to change agenda item 8 (Public Participation) up to follow guest speakers. Mrs. Langston moved to approve the agenda with the amendment. The motion was seconded.

Vote: 12 in favor

IV. Review and Approval October 7, 2014 Meeting Minutes

Mrs. McGrane presented LSC members with copies of minutes from the October 7, 2014 meeting. Mrs. Langston moved that the minutes be approved. Mr. Abiade seconded the motion.

Vote: 12 in favor.

V. Guest Speakers

-- Marcus H. Pittman (Senior Compliance Facilitator, Office of Local School Council Relations) on Principal Selection – Mr. Pittman stated that the role of his office is to provide support and training to Local School Councils. Principal selection is a mandatory training module (2 hr. training) that Local School Council members are required to complete as part of their training. Mr. Pittman shared the legal requirements for the principal selection process. The process begins with a vote by the LSC to begin the principal selection process. All Local School Councils are required to advertise the principal position in the CPS eBulletin for at least 10 business days or 2 full weeks. The LSC will then be required to screen all resumes. Mr. Pittman shared that the CPS Talent Office conducts an eligibility process that principal candidates are required to complete in order to become principals at CPS schools. It is mandatory that the LSC vote to approve beginning the process of principal selection and advertisement. Mr. Pittman shared that the Office of LSC relations always recommends that interviews be conducted after the LSC reviews resumes, though it is not required. Mr. Pittman shared that it is typical for Local School Council to hold a forum with top candidates. Mr. Pittman stated that 7 affirmative votes are required to offer a new principal a contract. Mr. Pittman shared that LSCs may also elect to advertise outside of the eBulletin, such as in newspapers, but that CPS does not cover the cost for these advertisements. Mrs. Amoruso asked when the principal selection training module would become available. Mr. Pittman stated that the principal evaluation module is not yet available, but all other modules will be available in November. Mr. McCarter confirmed that the LSC is the body that goes through this process and clarified that a motion must be made to begin this process. Mr. McCarter asked what the Office of LSC Relations recommends as best practice in terms of a timeline for having a contract principal in place. Mr. McCarter asked specifically about the amount of time that a newly contracted principal would need to be prepared for the upcoming school year. Mr. Pittman suggested that the interview and school visit segments of the principal selection process should be conducted before the end of the school year. Mrs. Langston asked if the principal selection module should be completed prior to beginning the process. Mr. Pittman stated that the training is not required for the LSC to initiate the principal selection process. Mr. Joyce asked if the interview process is required or if there is a way to offer a contract without interviewing candidates. Mr. Pittman stated that it is possible to offer a candidate a contract without conducting an interview as long as that candidate is in the pool of principals candidates approved through the eligibility process. Mrs. Marolda asked about the evaluation process that LSCs conduct to determine whether to retain a principal. Mr. Pittman stated that evaluations are only required for contract principals and that the interview process and resume submission would be how the LSC would evaluate and select principal candidates. Mr. Pittman stated that there have been some

instances in which a principal and LSC agreed to allow the LSC to evaluate the principal's performance prior to offering a contract to a principal candidate. Mr. Weedon asked if it is possible to create a list of qualifications that are desired of principal candidates. Mr. Pittman shared that all principal candidates go through the principal eligibility process. Mr. Norris asked if there were nationally recognized best practices when it comes to vetting a principal candidate. Mr. Pittman shared that Chicago LSCs are unique in their ability to offer contracts to principal candidates, so there is not a national model available. Mr. Miranda asked about the typical term for a principal contract. Mr. Pittman shared that principal contracts are for 4 years. Mrs. Haddad asked how the LSC could become qualified to select a principal when they are not required to complete the training module on principal selection. Mrs. Brinza asked if there is a metric that the LSC could use to compare candidates and clarified that it is possible for the STEM LSC to develop a tool to compare candidates. Mr. Pittman shared that we can use the LSC Reference Guide to help with this process, but stated that each LSC can use its own discretion to come up with desired qualifications. Mrs. Gulley asked if surveys could be conducted to solicit feedback from staff, family, and community members about the principal selection process. Mr. Pittman shared that surveys must be submitted to and approved by the CPS law department. Mr. Pittman also shared that if the surveys are distributed within the school, the principal must approve the distribution process. Mr. Weedon asked what the timeline is like for the principal eligibility process. Dr. Bonner shared that there is a schedule for the eligibility process. She stated that the eligibility process includes a "day in the life" of a principal, during which time candidates are presented with scenarios that a principal might encounter and asked how they would respond. After this day, candidates are informed whether or not they were determined to be eligible. Mrs. Langston asked what the criteria are for principal evaluation. Dr. Bonner shared that data, climate and culture, communication, community involvement, attendance, parent participation are all factors that are considered in principal evaluation. Dr. Bonner shared that the CIWP must be monitored and should be discussed relative to principal evaluation and principal selection. Dr. Bonner shared the other tool available to the LSC is the school data. Dr. Bonner stated that STEM is a great place, but that there is a need to look at the data and support the students who still need support. Mr. Pittman shared that every school has a profile page on the CPS website and that school data is available on this page.

-- Jimm Dispensa (Office of Strategy Management, CPS) on Facilities and Expansion -- Mr. Dispensa manages school planning and strategy management. Mr. Dispensa shared that often times, when new schools are opened with limited student enrollment, like STEM, classrooms that are not in use tend to be allocated for ancillary use. Mr. Dispensa said that space concerns begin to be felt much more acutely as a school takes

on more students, as we have seen as STEM has grown. Mr. Dispensa stated that there are currently about 30 neighborhood elementary schools that are dire straits when it comes to over crowding. These neighborhood schools that are required to accept students within their boundaries are the schools that CPS focused on when it comes to making adjustments to accommodate growing populations. Some solutions for these schools include redrawing boundaries, creating modular buildings, and building additions. Mr. Dispensa shared that when space issues become a concern for a magnet school, like STEM, CPS considers that there are no set number of students who are guaranteed enrollment in the school (unlike neighborhood schools). Space issues are not focused on as intensely when they come from a magnet school. Mr. Dispensa shared three separate possibilities for addressing the space concerns at STEM. Option 1. Commit yourselves to maintaining the current 2 classrooms/grade level model and take 4 classrooms over the next years to accommodate new classrooms. This would mean identifying 4 classrooms that are not being used as homerooms and making them homerooms. Option 2: Having 1 incoming kindergarten class rather than 2 in order to have fewer homerooms. With Option 2, STEM would accept a single incoming kindergarten class (rather than two) some years in order to have fewer than two homerooms per grade level some years. Option 3: These are the building/moving options that tend to be very expensive and disruptive and don't always succeed due to scarce resources. Mr. Dispensa shared the example of using a currently empty CPS building. Mr. Dispensa shared that there are relatively inexpensive ways to solve the space issue and that expensive options, like moving, creating a second campus, or building an addition to the existing building are not likely to be approved. Mr. Abel suggested the possibility that the school wasn't big enough to support a STEM model when the building was opened in 2011. Mr. Abel stated that these ancillary rooms are an essential part of the STEM model. Mrs. Havilland asked if these "specialty" classes were considered when planning. Mr. Dispensa suggested that the STEM community could work with CPS to prioritize ancillary rooms to come up with a solution. Mr. Miranda asked if it would be possible for STEM families to determine how the expansion would go if the families were able to secure funding. Mr. Dispensa stated that there are virtually no examples of a time when a group was able to secure funding to expand a school. Mr. Miranda asked who was in charge of determining a dollar amount required for expansion to be completed. Mr. Miranda asked whether an addition would be required to use a CPS approved builder. Mr. Dispensa shared that additions would need to be approved by CPS and use a CPS approved contractor. Mr. Langston asked about the possibility of commissioning a study of the use of space at STEM and asked who would be responsible for paying for such an inquiry. Mr. Dispensa shared that CPS has their own approved vendors who would have to be used for this purpose. Mr. Benton shared that he has been in contact with an architect and had examples of resources that the architect had put together to secure funding for

another project. Mr. Benton asked whether matching funds might be available through CPS. Mr. Dispensa said that it might be a viable option. Mr. Benton asked whether there were examples where this has been done. Mr. Dispensa said that matches have been proposed, but that he doesn't know of a time when these projects have moved forward. Mr. Rosen asked about the status of the Montefiore building on Ashland and stated that it is his understanding that it is drastically under enrolled. Mr. Dispensa stated that the program housed in Montefiore is unique and because of the nature of the program at Montefiore, there is not a great possibility of sharing the space. Mr. O'Neil stated that the original proposal for STEM was to be an expansion of Andrew Jackson and stated that he felt that this school might be something that falls a bit outside of the typical discussion of expansion with CPS. Mr. O'Neil stated that he felt that it was possible for the community to work so that the issue of expansion for STEM is not overlooked. Mr. O'Neill also asked about the status of Simpson. Mr. Dispensa stated that, like Montefiore, Simpson is the only example of this type of program. Mr. Dispensa shared the example of Wildwood, who advocated for an addition for 8 years. Wildwood was successful in receiving an addition only after years of classes being conducted in the hallways at the school. Mr. Dispensa stated that the example of Wildwood was a very long haul and stated that STEM may require additional rooms before this solution would be viable. Mr. Dispensa shared the concern with growing populations in neighborhood schools in our area like South Loop, Skinner West, and Ogden. Mr. Dispensa suggested it might be in STEM's best interest to advocate for a solution that addresses the growing population of central area schools in general. Mr. Dispensa suggested that we might need to take option 1 or 2 for the short term, but can continue to advocate for other options. Mr. O'Neil suggested that we could address this issue with an engaged community. Mr. Dispensa said that it is important to make sure that no one at the board thinks you're confusing over crowding with an educational space issue. Mrs. Amoruso pointed out the issue of community space, including the gym and the lunchroom, which can only accommodate 60 students at a given time. Mrs. Amoruso shared her concern that, even when additional homeroom spaces have been identified in the existing building, that community areas will not be able to meet the demands of a larger population. Mrs. Amoruso asked, in terms of Option 3, what the timeline would be to have expansion approved by CPS. Mr. Dispensa stated that he has not seen many of these Option 3 scenarios been approved. Mr. Dispensa shared that everything that is going to be approved for the fall of 2015 has already been approved. This type of approval always requires at least two years. Mr. McCarter stated that the Facilities Committee had discussed the need for more data and more information. Mr. McCarter asked about working with Mr. Dispensa and Ms. McManus on vetting space. Mr. McCarter shared some of the options discussed by the Facilities Committee. Mr. McCarter asked about the time frame for Option 2. Mr. Dispensa stated that there are some schools that follow this model, accepting a single

kindergarten class for 1-2 consecutive years to create the need for fewer homeroom classes. Mr. Abiade asked about the suggestion to cap STEM at 6th grade. Mr. Dispensa stated that the problem with this is that students who expected to be in this building would not be in this building and that this is a major concern for families of these students. Mrs. Brinza stated that she doesn't want to lose the integrity of the program because of poor planning. Mrs. Brinza stated she felt that in order to accurately address the space issues at STEM, you have to have an understanding of how these ancillary classrooms are used and how they act as part of the curriculum as a whole. Mrs. Brinza shared that the kind of programming that happens in her room requires a dedicated space that supports the type of learning students do in her room. Mrs. McGrane suggested that Option 2 (enrolling only one kindergarten class) was a concern because it may mean that not all siblings would be accepted. It was clarified that all siblings would be accepted (as long as the number of siblings could be accommodated in a single classroom), but that this option would drastically limit the number of seats open to non-siblings. Ms. McManus shared the budgetary implications of accepting only one kindergarten class, as schools are currently funded on a per-pupil basis. Mr. Weedon asked if it is possible for CPS to collaborate with the LSC on the capital project. Mr. Weedon asked how much face time the STEM community can expect in collaboration with CPS. Ms. Lohitsa shared her concern about staffing for kindergarten teachers. Mr. Dispensa stated that he and his team would visit STEM to evaluate current use of space and make suggestions for alleviating the space concerns.

VI. Public Participation

Mrs. Marolda encouraged the LSC to be trained on principal selection and urged that they survey the community to get feedback for the principal selection process.

VII. Principal's Report

-- Bank statement not available for October 2014, but will be made available for the December LSC meeting.

-- Scholastic – Ms. McManus made a motion to write a check to Scholastic for \$5538.82. This is the percentage of book fair proceeds due to Scholastic. Mrs. Harper seconded the motion.

Vote: 12 in favor.

-- Yearbook – Ms. McManus met with a group of parents and representatives from the school picture company to begin the process of creating a yearbook. Ms. McManus shared that parents will work on helping to create a STEM yearbook.

-- Student Council – Will begin second semester, with Ms. Treasure giving

leadership to the Council.

-- Homework Help After School Program – Homework help will be offered once per week to students in grades 3-6. Permission slips coming home the week of 11/17. This program will be conducted on an as-needed basis and will be open to students who are invited to participate.

-- 2013-2014 attendance rating – STEM received a banner recognizing an attendance rate of over 95% last year. The banner is hanging just outside the main office.

-- Student Demographics – Ms. McManus shared the most recent student demographics.

-- Current attendance rate - 98.1% - Dr. Bonner commended the school for this high attendance rate.

-- Medical Exclusion – Letters will be sent home with students who will be medically excluded to inform them of the documentation that needs to be provided to the school.

-- Concerns

– Hand sanitizer dispensers will be located at the entrance to the lunchroom door.

– Ms. McManus shared that some parents expressed concerns with the music selection for Chicago Children’s Choir. Mr. Bruno reached out to those parents and addressed the concerns about religious music being taught.

- Morning Drop Off – parents are still concerned with people who do not follow procedures.

- Athletic teams – This year, STEM will be offering athletic teams. Students must maintain appropriate grades in order to participate in athletic teams.

- Late pick ups – continuing concern.

Mrs. Amoruso asked about whether emails might help to address concerns with drop off. Mr. Abiade suggested using a slip of paper to hand to parents who do not follow drop off procedures. Mrs. Amoruso felt like a slip of paper would be helpful. Ms. McManus offered to resend the email to parents. Mr. Abiade asked if there had been any discussion about getting a mascot for the school. Mr. Abiade also asked if there was any discussion about starting a PTO, outside of the fundraising mission of FOS. Ms. McManus shared that PTA is a national organization that requires dues to be paid to the parent organization. Ms.

McManus shared that Friends of STEM is considered STEM's PTO. Mr. Benton stated that Friends of STEM has a volunteer committee and that organizing volunteers is part of their mission. Mr. Abiade suggested that some STEM community programs be headed up by the PTO/FOS. Ms. McManus stated that she has been talking to parents about hosting an event to take the place of the Harvest Festival during the spring semester. Mr. McCarter stated that he finds it really important to have a cohesive environment and that collaboration among school, FOS, and LSC is very important.

VIII. Chairperson's Report

- Training – Mrs. Langston shared that an email was sent to LSC members regarding upcoming training dates and modules.
- Visitors to STEM Magnet Academy – Mrs. Langston was part of a group that hosted visitors to STEM of October 28th. Mrs. Langston shared that this group of visitors also visited highly regarded charter school in Chicago. Mrs. Langston stated that students in the high school they visited were doing the same learning that 6th grade students were doing during their visit to STEM. Mrs. Langston highlighted the rigor of the STEM curriculum. She also shared that the high school students were working on keyboarding in their technology class.
- PARCC – Mrs. Langston shared that Barbara Byrd Bennett (CEO of CPS) is trying to get a waiver on rolling out the PARCC. Mrs. Langston also shared that Raise Your Hand for Illinois Public Education is putting together a petition called Park the PARCC, urging the State Board of Education to seek a waiver for implementing the PARCC this school year. Ms. McManus shared that when she took a sample of the PARCC, she found the test confusing and intense and thought that it would difficult for children to manage. Ms. McManus shared that she thought that it might be a good idea for LSC members to try the practice PARCC test. Ms. McManus shared that you cannot opt out of NWEA. Mrs. Als Delgado, a parent and member of Raise Your Hand, stated that Dr. Byrd-Bennett is arguing that the NWEA that CPS students already take is aligned to the Common Core State Standards, so it should be sufficient to meet federal requirements for funding for education. Mrs. Als Delgado also shared that Raise your hand would be conducting training on the PARCC on November 18th in Pilsen. Mrs. Als Delgado also shared that other states have requested a federal waiver for administering the PARCC. Mrs. Als Delgado stated that currently there are several other Illinois districts that are requesting waivers for administering the PARCC this year.

Mrs. Amoruso asked if LSC members felt like would be helpful to do group trainings for the required modules. Mrs. Langston stated that Mr. Pittman would be able to accommodate us to train us in a group setting at STEM.

IX. Public Participation

X. Committee Updates and Reports

-- Facilities – Mr. McCarter shared that the Facilities Committee talked about assembling more data to gain an understanding of how the space at STEM will be used in the next two years. Mr. McCarter suggested that it is important to explore all three options mentioned by Mr. Dispensa. Mr. McCarter stated that the Facilities Committee would work with the LSC and Ms. McManus to consider different solutions. Mr. McCarter feels that it would be important for the committee to have some data to react to. Mr. McCarter will communicate with community at large to engage other members. Mr. McCarter stated that the goals of his committee are to be inclusive, transparent, productive, positive, and solutions based.

-- Budget – Budget meeting to be held in month of December.

-- Bylaws – Mrs. Amoruso asked for comments on bylaws. Mrs. Amoruso also needs the PPLC roles to complete the bylaws.

-- Friends of STEM organization – Mr. Benton stated that FOS has no new fundraiser requests and shared that Ms. McManus approved annual appeal letter with suggested edits. Mr. Benton stated that this year the FOS will be encouraging recurring gifts. Mr. Benton also reiterated that FOS is a volunteer group. Mrs. Langston asked for update on welcome supper. Mr. Benton shared that FOS identified 2 new committee chairs through the event.

-- PPLC

XI. Public Participation

-- Mrs. Als Delgado stated that seven people from Raise Your Hand would be certified trainers for Local School Council. Mrs. Als Delgado stated that in her experience, outside organizations provide richer training experiences for LSC members. Mrs. Als Delgado stated that 35 additional trainers would be available to train LSC members after these trainers have completed their own training through CPS. Mrs. Als Delgado also shared experience of principal selection at Skinner North and the process that they conducted to review resumes and offer a contract to their current principal.

XII. CIWP/Budget Amendments (optional)

XIII. Closed Session (optional)

XIV. Announcements

-- Next Regular Meeting date December 2, 2014 at 5:30pm in the STEM Gym.

XV. Adjournment

Mrs. Langston moves to adjourn the meeting at 7:36pm. Mr. Abiade seconded the motion.

Vote: 11 in favor.

Minutes submitted by: Lindsay McGrane

Minutes approved: 12 in favor 12/2/14