

February 14, 2010

TO: Commissioner Mitchell Chester
FROM: Allen Scheier
RE: Actions Taken for Transformational Educational Change at LCCPS

We request that the recommendation to close Lowell Community Charter Public School be withdrawn and the School be granted the opportunity to demonstrate the transformational change requested. We believe we have made decisions which will allow the School to demonstrate that transformation within 2-3 years.

We acknowledge and fully accept that the Board has failed in its responsibility to ensure continuous student achievement for all its students.

Transformational

At the time you recommended non-renewal of the charter, you noted the possibility of reconsidering your recommendation if there were ***transformational change*** at the school. That change would have to be reflected in the school leadership and the academic program.

Over the course of the past two months the board has worked with staff, parents, state legislators, the Charter School Association, Lowell Public Schools, community representative, school management companies, consultants, and others to craft a plan for transformational change. We believe that we have such a plan. We seek your concurrence and approval to implement this plan.

Transformational change is a shift in the culture of an organization resulting from a change in the underlying strategy and processes that the organization has used in the past. A transformational change is designed to be organization-wide and is enacted over a period of time.

We believe the following plan and actions demonstrate our understanding of transformational change.

- We have accepted the resignation of our Executive Director
- The Board has voted to enter into negotiations with Renaissance School Services (RSS) to manage the academic and administrative programs for the school

- Upon favorable consideration of the charter renewal request, Renaissance School Services will undertake recruitment and hiring of an executive director who will work to improve instruction and learning
- The Board of Trustees has engaged Mr. John Tarvin , Executive Director Massachusetts Center for Charter Public School Excellence (MCCPSE) to form a transitional board of five members and to recruit an entirely new Board of seven to nine members by August 2010

We believe these significant and dramatic changes will result in a stronger, more vibrant school focused on improving student achievement through standards-based education.

Renaissance School Services

The School is especially pleased at the opportunity to partner with Renaissance School Services, a leading service provider in school turnaround, charter school operations, and research. This partnership will bring leadership and management to the school that will focus on academic expectations and accountability; teachers and the learning environment; and parent and community involvement.

We believe RSS, with their proven record in school turnaround, can guide the School to significantly improved student performance and to transform LCCPS into a leading charter school in the Commonwealth.

Rich O'Neill, a founder of RSS, serves on the board of Mass Insight.

Executive Director

The school is currently being led by an interim executive director. It is the intent of the board that RSS will begin the search for a permanent executive director upon approval of this plan and the charter renewal application. The individual recruited for this key position will be well grounded in their understanding of improving student learning and achievement; education principles and practices; urban schools; diverse, multicultural populations; teamwork; community interaction and pride; and exhibit high expectations for classroom behavior and social interactions.

RSS will ensure that the individual hired meets the appropriate state DOE / DESE requirements and can work collaboratively with RSS.

Board of Trustees

LCCPS has entered into agreement with Mr. John Tarvin to interview the individual board members and to reduce the current Board from the present

eleven to five. These five will hold the charter as required by Commonwealth law. A search to create a strong local Board with strong educational credentials and involvement and influence in the City of Lowell will be complete by August 2010.

It is anticipated that working in conjunction with RSS, the new Board will provide the necessary leadership and oversight to ensure that there is a clear vision of student achievement which will be the top priority of the Board, staff, and community. This will be done in conjunction with the board fulfilling its legal and fiduciary responsibilities as well as promoting the School's charter, mission, and helping secure funds.

The new Board must be diligent in its responsibility of oversight and ensure a stable environment for instruction and learning that supports continuous student achievement.

Conclusion

LCCPS is by some measures a large school. There are over 900 students enrolled in grades K-8. The students represent families from more than two dozen different countries that now live in Lowell and its surrounding communities. The students speak many languages and dialects. This multiplicity of languages and cultures represent a part of the uniqueness of the school. Indeed, it is part of preparing students to be successful members and contributors of 21st century society.

The school's arts, cultural programs and performances, before and after-school programs, athletics, and Spanish and Khmer language programs also contribute to the uniqueness of the school.

All of the qualities and unique features of the school are laudable. However, if student achievement as measured by the state is not being achieved, Commissioner Chester is correct in his call for either transformation or non-renewal. We hope that the actions taken and planned will enable the Commissioner and DESE board to reconsider the initial recommendation for non-renewal.

It has been said that LCCPS is too big to fail. While the matter of school size may be debated, there is absolute agreement on the fact that this school cannot fail. More importantly, it will not fail. It will not fail the students, their families, or the communities it serves. We are asking for a 2-3 year period to demonstrate that this school will be transformed.

“Good-to-great transformations never happen in one fell swoop... There is no single defining action; no grand program; no one killer application; no solitary lucky break; no miracle moment...it takes a lot of effort to get things moving at all, but persistent pushing over a long period of time builds momentum, eventually hitting a point of breakthrough.”

Jim Collins, 2001, Good to Great

We believe that actions described will propel LCCPS to the breakthrough needed to prepare students to be successful academically and socially for the 21st century.

LCCPS is a vibrant school with many strengths. The Board has failed to lead and enforce focus on the educational requirements of a charter school. We request that you allow Renaissance Services and a new Board to lead this school to the transformational change which will make LCCPS the important part of education in Lowell which is crucial to the future of our children and the City.

Allen Scheier

Chairman, Board of Trustees

Lowell Community Charter Public School