

Larchmont Charter Schools
MINUTES
Regularly Scheduled Board of Directors Meeting
815 N. El Centro Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90038
January 11, 2011

OPEN SESSION

- The meeting was called to order at 6:15 P.M. by Danny Corwin, Chair.
- Names with “X” indicates present:

| Board of Directors: | | | |
|-----------------------|---|----------------------|---|
| Dragon, Kriste | X | Francis, Marya (Sec) | X |
| Straub, Gene | X | Loeb, Gabi (Treas) | X |
| Boylston, Heather | X | Wright, Richard | X |
| Cade, Carl | X | Young, Amber | X |
| Corwin, Danny (chair) | X | | |

| Larchmont Schools & ExED Staff: | | | |
|--|---|---|---|
| Brian C. Johnson (Executive Director) | X | Kristin Droege (LCW Principal) | X |
| Dolores Patton (LCS – Head of Elementary School) | X | Rick Esquivel (LCS – Head of Middle School) | X |
| Joe Meza (ExED) | X | Rebecca Bailey (Deve. Associate) | X |
| Myra Salinas (Assist Principal) | X | | |

- **Quorum:** Yes

1. Governance- Approve Nomination of Alicia Lara to the Board

- Gene Straub motioned to approve Alicia’s nomination to the Board; Marya Francis seconded. Alicia was unanimously nominated to the Board.

2. View Larchmont Schools Video

- Brian presented a video created by LCW Founding Parent Mark Feuerstein that showcases Larchmont Schools and its unique impact on education in Los Angeles county.

3. Approval of the December 7, 2010 Minutes

- Carl Cade motioned to approve the minutes; Gene seconded. The minutes were approved unanimously.

4. Finance

Approve November 2010 Financials

- Brian presented the Development Update, noting that as of the morning of January 11th, all expected CAO cash, including grants from the Carson and Parson Foundations, has been received. The Central Admin Office has exceeded its fundraising goal for the 2010-2011 school year by 45%.
- Joe Meza presented the November 2010 Financials to the Board. Schools continue to manage their budgets well and are projected to end the year with net incomes higher than the Board approved budget.
- Gabi noted that LCS will have a low cash balance at the end of the fiscal year.

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- Brian noted that while school leaders have managed their budgets excellently, the low cash balance is a result of extremely delayed state payments.
- Joe stated that LCS has a few line of credit options lined up if the school were to need them at the end of the year.
- Joe noted a decrease in health and welfare costs at LCW for the year.
- Brian stated that CAO received a \$50,000 grant in late December for general funds.
- Gabi motioned to approve the November 2010 financials; Gene seconded. The financials were approved unanimously.

Approve ConApp

- Joe presented the Consolidated Application, which provides federal funding to Larchmont Schools.
- Brian noted that Larchmont Schools goes through 7th grade and not 6th grade.
- Gene and Myra Salinas asked that the figures be corrected.
- Brian stated that the application must be submitted by January 31, 2011 but that it is contingent upon Board approval.
- Danny Corwin requested that Brian review the corrected ConApp along with Gene.
- Kriste Dragon motioned to approve the ConApp on the condition that the low income and free and reduced price lunch (FRPL) figures be corrected. Amber Young seconded. The ConApp was approved unanimously.

Approve CAO to hire a facilities consultant

- Brian stated that Larchmont Schools need the assistance of a facilities consultant to review the current space and the potential for finding extra space at the LCS Elementary campus, finding space for 4th and 5th grades at the LCW campus and developing a site for the high school.
- Brian requested that the Board approve an additional \$40,000 for the facilities consultant position.
- Heather Boylston asked how long the consultant contract would extend, and what type of strengths the consultant would need in order to review the space issues.
- Carl and Brian stated that the consultant would have a multi-dimensional role and that the first phase would be business planning.
- Marya asked where Larchmont Schools stand currently with facilities planning.
- Brian stated that we have been already working with a team of three and now need to move forward by hiring a specialist to manage facilities.
- Gene asked that the vote for approval take place after the Review of the 3 Year Growth Plan.

5. Review 3 Year Growth Plan

- Brian noted that the Larchmont Schools has already committed to growth and that our focus now is how we grow.
- Brian stated that we need to outline our plans in three main areas; talent and leadership, facilities and adding the high school.

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- Brian stated that in order for Larchmont Charter Schools to become a k-12 school and to guarantee that our students can matriculate, we must have 1 charter under state law.
- Kriste asked how other schools deal with the charter issue.
- Brian noted that most schools do not have this issue on the same scale because there are fewer students on their wait lists.
- Brian stated that the key questions are: can we afford a high school, and can we find suitable facilities?
- In order to establish a high school, we need outside support and a capital campaign.
- Brian stated that the growth question for LCS is about size, while it is about timing for LCW.
- Brian noted that our high school model will be very unique and that it is difficult, but not impossible, to help students catch up to the constructivist model.
- Brian noted that there is detailed information on the growth models in the appendix of the PowerPoint presentation.
- Brian noted that there are four growth models to consider: the first is that LCS and LCW continue steady growth, the second, LCS maintains steady growth while LCW adds a 7th grade in 2012. In the third scenario, LCW grows steadily while LCS develops a bigger middle school. The fourth growth model includes rapid acceleration to a high school.
- Brian noted that there is a growth scenario summary on slide 105.
- Danny asked Kristin to reflect on the growth options for LCW.
- Kristin stated that there are two questions to review when considering the models; what does the school look like throughout each phase and what are the changes that occur in community and leadership?
- Kristin noted that from an education standpoint, either model works well, but that from a faculty and community view point, the school might do better to expand more quickly and establish the school community early on.
- Brian asked Rick to discuss the difference between adding 2 and 3 classes at grade level.
- Rick noted that adding a third middle school class would allow the school to find and keep credentialed specialists for many of their new needs versus growing in piecemeal segments, and that this would develop a strong sense of community within the school.
- Rick stated that there is a collaboration aspect to growth that would allow the students and teachers to develop strong communities through the process of change.
- Dolores noted that the benefits of adding additional classes are already realized at the LCS elementary campus with the 4th and 5th grade.
- Brian stated that he would like significant input from teachers even though the decision on how to grow rests with the Board.
- Brian presented the ideal facilities at each campus and noted that this would include, among other specifications, 30 square feet of space per student, outdoor space, office space for administrators and full time access to a library.

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- Brian stated that over time, we will need to hire a facilities manager or a long term facilities consultant to manage facilities planning.
- Brian review the need for talent and leadership support, citing that the central administrative office at Larchmont Charter Schools is understaffed when compared to other moderately sized high performing charter school networks in our area, like KIPP, Bright Star, and Camino Nuevo; however, central admin has been able to accomplish a great deal with fewer available resources.
- Brian stated that despite a massive decline in per-pupil revenues from 2007-2010, we have been able to keep most state and county cuts from the classroom.
- Brian stated that in order to sustain our growth, we need technical leadership, an HR department and a facilities specialist.
- Amber asked how much time these three needs take away from school leaders' ability to focus on instructional impact.
- Dolores shared that people who have defined roles in school leadership are taking on additional roles in HR, special education and other areas in order to meet the needs of the school, but that there is concern that these needs are not being met fully.
- Kristin stated that all three campuses need constant maintenance and that if there were to be any HR related problems, the valued teachers and school leaders we have today may be less likely to stay with us in the long term.
- Rick commented that the middle school needs stability and a way to provide for the school's short and long term needs, however small or large scale they are.
- Brian noted that our school leaders are central to all growth plans and that they are the link between instructional leadership, technical and operation leadership and the Executive Director.
- Brian stated that in order to provide the schools with the talent and leadership needed to support growth, the schools will likely pay more from their budgets to the Central Admin Office in the next few years than they are paying this year.
- Brian presented two financial models of what investing in the central admin might look like.
- Kriste asked if the CAO costs are spread over 1 school or if the figures reflect spreading costs over all campuses.
- Brian noted that we do not want to build a growth budget that assumes outside funding in order to avoid potential mid-year cuts.
- Brian noted that we can no longer shelter our schools from the impact of state budget cuts by under-investing in the central admin capacity and consequently, deny the schools the support they need.
- Brian noted that by making hard choices now, we can help transform the public education scene in Los Angeles and give opportunity to our students.
- Brian suggested that we move forward by submitting a high school charter, hiring a facilities consultant and drafting a CAO budget with additional capacity this month and that we begin to form a high school advisory committee and create a budget.

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- Danny stated that growth is exciting but also can create anxiety for school leaders, and that the Board would like to walk with our school community as we move forward in our growth plan.
- Carl motioned to approve the use of \$40,000 for a facilities consultant in Central Admin this year; Heather seconded. The motion passed unanimously

6. Public Comment

- 5th grade LCS teacher Sandra Alamo stated that from an educator's perspective, she wonders how rapid growth in to a high school would influence current teachers at LCS and the facilities issues we now face.
- LCW parent Robert Campbell emphasized that it is the curriculum that creates the opportunity for our students to attend the nation's top colleges and asked if this is the Board's main focus in decision making.
- LCW parent Kimberly Canter asked if the material revision to the charter would apply to LCS and LCW and asked if there any potential problems in joining the two schools at 9th grade.
- A parent of both an LCW and LCS student commented that outside space is very important to the student's well being and growth and asked if the Board could find ways in the budget to maximize outside space on our campuses.
- An LCS parent asked if it is possible to merge LCS and LCW together at the middle school level as opposed to the high school level.
- LCW parent Moon Moonie asked why members of the Board were not directly responding to the public's questions.
- An LCW mother asked if other charter schools have moved through a similar 3 year growth plan that includes the opening of a new high school, or if Larchmont Charter Schools is unique in its growth plan.

7. School Updates

A. LCW

- a. Kristin Droege stated that LCW has been focusing on its community groups, which is an opportunity for students to develop a broader sense of community outside of their individual classroom.
- b. Kristin noted that in observance of Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, all grade levels have discussed dreams and how once can make them come true by voicing them and taking action towards achieving them.

B. LCS Middle School

- a. Rick Esquivel noted that the middle school held a nationally participated in event called No Name Calling Day, but that the school extended the observance to a week-long event in order to emphasize the importance of respect and equality.
- b. Rick noted that the middle school is currently publishing poems and skits as a part of their creative writing studies and that some classes have been blogging as a way to combine creative writing with technology.

C. LCS Elementary School

- a. Dolores Patton stated that the elementary school recently held the World's Fair, an annual event that celebrates different nationalities, and that this year, the 5th graders worked some of the booths.

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- b. Dolores noted that as part of their winter program, the last Morning Sing before winter break showcased school wide learning results and focused on the students as growing guardians of the world.
- c. Dolores stated that the 4th and 5th grade classes have been focusing on developing their literary responses and that the 5th graders are now writing structured feedback on what they read in literary response journals.

8. LCS Student Achievement Benchmark I

- Brian stated that quality assessments drive the student achievement process and that LCS will be able to move from “good to great” by using high quality assessments to look at where students are falling short and how teachers and the school can change their practices.
- Brian noted that 7th graders who scored below grade level in English Language Arts skills in September significantly improved by November, but that the school needs to push students who are at grade level to reach higher.
- Carl stated that the student achievement update is transparent and that it is helpful to informing non-educators of the academic process.

9. Diversity & Enrollment Update- Lottery Update

- Brian stated that there was a large increase in FRPL diversity among kindergarteners
- Dolores stated that LCS elementary is in high demand; she held a tour of LCS of the school on Saturday and 125 people showed up
- Brian noted that there are already 87 students in the 6th grade lottery pool
- Gabi asked when the lottery closes.
- Brian noted that he and Kristin need to work on increasing the number of students in the 5th grade lottery pool for LCW.

10. Community Update- Plan for surveying parents

- Brian stated that these surveys are designed to measure parental satisfaction with the schools. He shared that full results from parent surveys will be available at the March board meeting. In the meantime, he and the school leaders have already had one on one conversations with each LCS 5th grade family. In addition, they are also working on developing an anonymous online survey to gauge LCS 5th grade family intentions for next year.

11. Personnel- Approve Agreement with Executive Director

- Danny stated that Brian’s public office ambitions do not risk our school’s 501c3 status and that his campaign does not put our resources at risk.
- Brian noted that the agreement just clarifies what is already in his contract.
- Carl motioned to approve; Gene seconded. The agreement was unanimously approved.

12. Executive Director Comments

- Brian stated that John Deasy was recently appointed as LAUSD Superintendent and that he is reform- minded and pro-charter.

13. Board Chair Comments- there were none.

14. Closed Session to discuss personnel issues. There were no actionable items to report.

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15. New Business – there was no new business.

16. The meeting was adjourned at 10:10 P.M.