



MAGNOLIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Board Of Directors

Board Agenda Item #	II I
Date:	February 11, 2016
To:	MPS Board of Directors
From:	Caprice Young, Ed.D., CEO & Superintendent
Staff Lead:	Caprice Young, Ed.D., CEO & Superintendent
RE:	Response to 20 th St. Elem. Schools Parent Trigger Action

Proposed Board Recommendation

I move that the board allow the staff to respond to the 20th Street parent trigger charter Request For Proposals to open in 2016-17 and to delay opening of other new 2017-18 schools as needed to ensure the success of existing current schools and 20th Street elementary.

Background

As we discussed regarding the Palm Lane trigger action, the California Parent Empowerment Act (“parent trigger”) allows parents of students in the chronically lowest performing schools in the state to bring forward petitions signed by a majority of parents to compel the district to make the changes they seek. They also have the authority to select a charter school to take over the operations of their school based upon criteria they devise. While the Anaheim Palm Lane trigger action continues to be held up in court, the parents of 20th Street Elementary School in downtown Los Angeles have moved forward.

The 20th Street parents' campaign to transform their school during the 2014-2015 school year concluded with a negotiated agreement with LAUSD. This agreement was captured in a multi-page plan with the major promises being: 1) an articulation pipeline to the NAVA middle school; 2) comprehensive teacher professional development; and, 3) specific administrative support from the district.

Unfortunately, this fall, the parents found that LAUSD and 20th Street staff were not living up to their end of the bargain. Administrative personal was pulled from the school. The new principal stated that he "did not want to ruffle any feathers" in improving the school. Parents met with former Superintendent Cortines to express their concern. They finally lost confidence at a November meeting at the school when they were once again presented with a professional development plan, which was to have started in August, but had not, and which contained no commitment to further dates of implementation.

Over the last two months, the parents re-circulated a new parent trigger petition requiring the district to allow them to select a charter to take over the school. Until Saturday morning, there had been no opposition to the petition drive. On Saturday, in compliance with the Zimmer resolution, parents held a public forum to discuss the reasons for and intention of the campaign.

According to Parent Revolution, on February 1, they turned in petitions representing 58 percent of the students. See the attached for the letter that parents gave to Superintendent Michelle King along with their petitions. This letter summarizes a lot of the information and the parents' perspective about the school situation. The success of this kind of parent empowerment requires high quality school operators who value the efforts and drive of parents and are willing to respond to their call.

We anticipate that the RFP may become available prior to the next board meeting and wanted to gauge your level of support for our moving forward. Because the school would not require student recruitment efforts or facilities development, our team would be able to focus efforts on a deep collaboration with parents and teacher recruitment. The structure of the school's budget is financially viable in year one and would have the effect of strengthening Magnolia as a whole.

Background on 20th Street Elementary

- * Last year, only 19% of the students were at grade level in English
- * Last year, only 20% of the students were at grade level in Math (ELA and math [results listed here](#))
- * The school's last API score was 746 (from 2013, when the state last calculated new scores). In the entire 14-year history of the API score, the school has never met the state's target score of 800.
- * The last time new API scores were calculated (in 2013), 20th Street was ranked in the bottom 20% of elementary schools in the state, and the bottom 30% even for schools that have similar demographics ([CDE data here](#))

Demographics of 20th Street Elementary

- * The school currently has 595 students.
- * Last year's demographics: 94% Latino, 4% African-American ([data here](#)), 92% low income, 49% English Learners ([data here](#))

This [video report from Al Jazeera America](#) and [this article from the Hechinger Report](#) both provide good coverage of last year's original Parent Trigger campaign at the school.

Budget Implications

The structure of the school's budget is financially viable in year one and would have the effect of strengthening Magnolia as a whole. Some start up work would be required during 2015-16 prior to the opening of the school.

Name of Staff Originator:

Caprice Young, CEO & Superintendent

Attachments

Letter to Michelle King

20th Street Elementary Parents Union
1427 E.23rd St.
Los Angeles, CA 90011

February 1, 2016

Michelle King
Superintendent
Los Angeles Unified School District
333 S Beaudry Ave.
Los Angeles, CA 90017

Dear Superintendent King,

We, the 20th Street Elementary Parents Union, believe that our school is failing to give our children the education they need and deserve. We know this is true because for more than 15 years our school has failed to meet the state's expected API score of 800, and according to the most recent 2015 CASSPP results over 75% of students are below grade level in English Language Arts and Mathematics. These results are alarming and concern us as parents.

In response to these statistics and our own experiences at the school, we the 20th Street Elementary Parents Union, decided last year to collect petitions under the California Parent Empowerment Law. After the start of last year's petition campaign, LAUSD leadership came to us and proposed their own school turnaround plan, and encouraged us to support their plan instead of submitting our Parent Empowerment petitions. After much negotiation, we agreed to work in good faith with the District and support their plan, and we discarded the petitions we had already collected representing a majority of families at the school.

Unfortunately, the Plan that the District promised to implement at the beginning of this 2015-2016 school year has not been faithfully implemented. Among the important promises that have been broken are:

- **School turnaround leadership:** Parents were promised that Tommy Welch, a principal with a strong track record in our community, would oversee the turnaround effort at 20th Street Elementary. When that didn't work out, parents were then promised that Mr. Hugo Carlos, another principal with a strong track record in our community, would oversee the turnaround effort. Shortly after the start of the school year, the principal informed parents that now Mr. Hugo Carlos was removed from this assignment. No further information has been provided.
- **School leadership:** Parents were promised that a strong and experienced school leader would take over the school. Instead, the District gave us a first-year principal with no prior experience leading a school turnaround effort. Parents

were never allowed to interview principal candidates or be part of the process in any way.

- **Professional Development:** We were promised that teachers would get professional development before the start of the 2015-2016 school year. This never happened. Parents were also promised ongoing professional development for teachers to help them improve. Neither the school nor the district has made any commitment to when this will actually start, despite our repeated requests for information.
- **School climate:** Parents were promised a new and renewed school climate. Many parents still report feeling disrespected and unwelcomed at the school. At school meetings, the Principal and the District talk of upcoming events and activities, instead of focusing on the academic progress of students.
- **Sense of urgency:** Parents were promised that the District would implement its plan with a sense of urgency and with the full buy-in of school staff. Instead, the District refused to even acknowledge that the plan was finalized until three months into the school year.

Because of the broken promises and lack of any meaningful improvement at the school, we the Parents Union, are disappointed and have lost faith in the school District's ability to effectively implement the Plan with the urgency that our children need. We are now almost halfway through the school year and we have had been staying involved and asking hard questions of the school and the District. It has become clear that right now, there is no plan to improve our school and implement the promises that were made to us. Our children and their families have been silently waiting for far too long. When we put aside the petition and placed our trust in the District, we were hopeful that we would see a big change for our children. Unfortunately the District has not kept its promises to us and to our children.

This year, in order to ensure that our children have access to a high quality public education soon rather than later, our Parents Union voted to circulate a second "Parent Empowerment" petition with the Restart Model as our selected option. This will give us the option to select a high quality public charter school that can transform 20th St. Elementary and meet our children's needs.

We are therefore submitting these petitions from parents representing 57% of the students at 20th Street Elementary School. We will be launching a Request for Proposal (RFP) process immediately as the first step to solicit and select a partner to run our school.

The lead petitioners submitting these petitions are Guadalupe Aragon and Omar Calvillo and can be reached at (213) 493-1006 and (213) 359-2602 respectively. They will be your point of contact for the 20th Street Elementary School Parents Union. To reach us by e-mail, please contact 20thstreetparentsunion@gmail.com.

Our children deserve the best education and we, as parents, must work towards ensuring our school improves.

Sincerely,
Guadalupe Aragon, Coordinator
Omar Calvillo, Secretary
20th Street Elementary Parents Union