

PURE Tips & Updates for LSCs

Winter 2005-06

2006 LSC election may determine LSCs' future

The April 2006 LSC election is going to be a critical test of community support for LSCs. It has become clear that the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) have turned their back on LSCs and that a successful election is up to us!

CPS history

Of course, this does not come as a big surprise. While CPS is legally responsible for organizing and carrying out the election and the mandated LSC training, ever since the mayoral takeover in 1995, CPS has taken an increasingly casual attitude towards these responsibilities. But then, democratic participation has never been one of our Mayor's favorite things.

Funding scarce

What is different this time is that private funding for community election outreach work has nearly dried up at the same time as CPS has cut the community mini-grants to a ridiculous \$500-\$1,000. PURE spends that much buying paper for one "Campaign Help" day. See our LSC Election Help schedule for more about that....

Not on our watch!

Community Partners for LSCs, a new coalition of independent groups, has pledged to harness the efforts of its members to recruit and support enough LSC candidates to make sure the April 19-20 election is successful.

You can help, too

LSC members can do a lot. Make sure there are at least enough candidates to fill your LSC. CPS can take over running your school if you do not elect enough members for a quorum - 6 in

elementary schools and 7 in high schools. Contested elections are always better since they encourage debate and discussion about your school which can lead to improvements.

Ways to get people to run:

- ▶ Invite your entire school community to **attend an LSC meeting**, and make a short presentation on what the LSC does and has done for the school. Have candidate application forms ready for people to fill out (get them from the school).
- ▶ If you are not eligible to run again (or for some reason have decided not to run again – and we hope it's a really good reason!) **replace yourself** by signing up at least one candidate.
- ▶ **Talk about the LSC election** with your friends, at your places of business and worship, in clubs, park programs, etc. and be sure to have some candidate forms on hand.
- ▶ **Know the basics:**
 - ✓ The nomination deadline is March 17.
 - ✓ The election is April 19 in the elementary schools and April 20 in the high schools.
 - ✓ People need two forms of ID to vote including one with a picture.
 - ✓ Non-CPS-employed parents (including non-citizens) can run and vote at any school their children attend; non-CPS-employed community members can run and vote in any school whose attendance boundaries they live in.

All of this information is available on our web site www.pureparents.org. Click on LSC Resources for the PURE LSC Election Manual or call the PURE Resource File, 312-491-9101.

Look inside for PURE's election workshop schedule

March 17 is the LSC candidate nomination deadline

Reports shed new light on Chicago school reform Schools with LSCs show dramatic improvement

According to "The Big Picture," a 2005 report by Designs for Change, 144 schools which were low-performing in 1999 but escaped CPS intervention and maintained LSC decision making have improved from an average of 20% to 50% in the percent of students scoring at or above national norms in reading on the ITBS. Improvements in math have been even greater. (See graph, ▲ "Substantially Up" schools, next page.)

The report compares those 144 successful schools with 113 other low-performing schools which did not escape CPS intervention and whose LSCs were no longer allowed to make key decisions for the school. These schools have failed to make much progress over the years and most remain stuck on probation. Their achievement test scores remain far below the minimum standards required to meet district, state, or federal goals. (See graph, ■ "No Trend" schools, next page, and full report at www.designsforchange.org.)

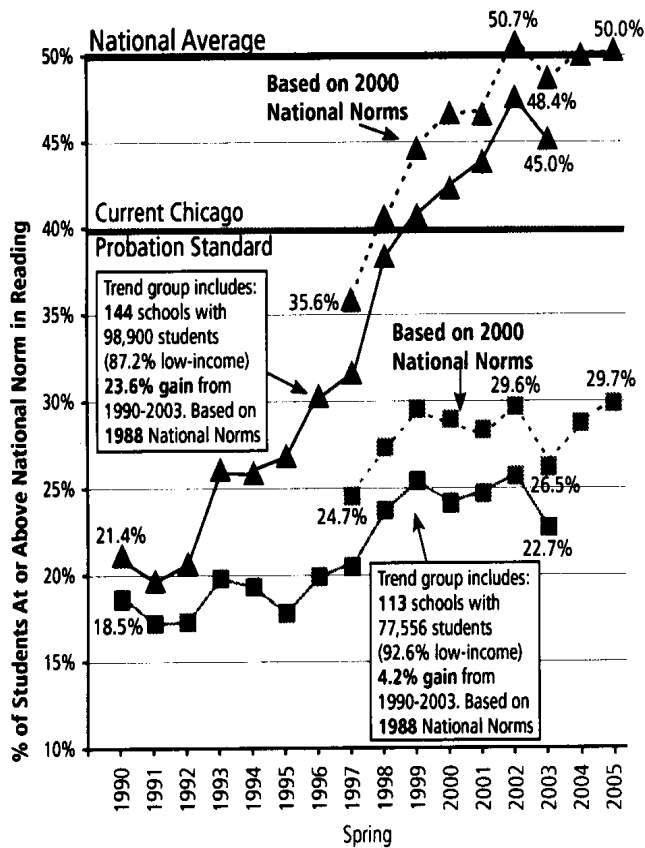


Chart by Designs for Change

Two recent PURE reports also challenge CPS's rationale for Renaissance 2010:

In "Renaissance 2010 Hype," we showed that overall, CPS charter schools have not outperformed regular CPS schools. CPS bases the claim of superiority on their own internal analysis using unreliable hypotheticals. In fact, in 2004, 12 out of 16 charter schools failed to meet adequate yearly progress under NCLB.

It's more accurate to compare charter schools with non-selective magnet schools which also require an application process. Charters do much worse in that comparison, with an overall 2004 performance of 41% meeting state standards compared with the magnets' 65%.

In "Renaissance 2010 Hoax," we reported that most children in schools slated for closing in the fall of 2006 will not be sent to better schools. The truth is that only Beethoven, the receiving school for Farren, shows significantly higher achievement levels for African-American students.

In another Renaissance 2010 change, CPS plans to hand Sherman

school over to a private contractor which has a decent track record in one middle class community but much less impressive results at Dodge, which like Sherman is nearly 100% African-American.

The full reports are available through the PURE Resource File or on PURE's web site, www.pureparents.org.

PURE parent survey

We're making progress with our parent survey. This project started in the summer of 2004 and was designed to get a better understanding of the state of parent involvement in CPS. We surveyed 92 schools, an equal number of traditional schools with LSCs and non-traditional schools without LSCs. The surveys did not go out until August of 2005, and we have just completed the data collection and the preliminary analysis. We're hoping to have a report out this spring. We'll continue to keep you posted!

Oppose SB2979
Bill would override current cap on CPS charters, allow faster expansion of Renaissance 2010

The expected move by CPS to exceed its current charter school cap of 30 has happened- Sen.

Martin Sandoval has filed a bill, SB2979, to leave the number of charters statewide at 60 but remove all the caps.

This only affects Chicago since the other charter caps are far from being met. The collar counties and downstate each have a charter cap of 15, but there are only 7 charters outside of Chicago, and those districts are not very interested in having more - in fact most are hostile to the idea because charters take public funds away from their existing schools.

If passed, SB2979 would most likely allow CPS to move quickly to grant new charters, taking up most of the remaining 23 slots. It's a clever way of avoiding having to ask for their cap to be raised. This bill will allow CPS to move faster on Renaissance 2010.

Charters not living up to promise

The reason charters exist, according to state law, is to provide models for lagging public schools, yet, as mentioned in the previous article, too many charters are performing poorly themselves. There have been too many charter school disasters such as the Choir Academy Charter, whose leaders called it quits in 2005 saying that they should never have been allowed to run a school. CPS responded by offering the school to a wealthy liquor distributor.

With Renaissance 2010, CPS has chosen the reckless path of closing dozens of schools, forcing students and staff to move out, and then handing the buildings over to a patchwork quilt of private and other independent school operators who often have no connection to the communities. It's

irresponsible to expand a program that has not proven itself to be a better choice, especially when we know that moving children from one school to another sets them back academically. We oppose SB2979 which will only lead to more reckless experimentation on our children.

Instead, let's use some of the 144 effective CPS neighborhood schools from the Designs for Change study as our models. Why not call your state representatives and suggest that?

PURE's LSC election resources

PURE has prepared an updated LSC Election Manual in English and Spanish which can be downloaded from our web site, www.pureparents.org, or mailed to you if you call us at 312-491-9101.

This manual breaks down for you the basic information about the LSC election, what you need to know about the rules and guidelines to make sure there is a fair election at your school.

PURE can answer your questions about the election throughout the nomination and campaign process and on election day.

Three important dates to note:

March 17 – Deadline for nominations

March 24 – Deadline for filing a pre-election challenge, if you think someone has put their name in but is not eligible; call CPS or PURE for challenge forms.

April 28 – Deadline for filing a post-election challenge, if you think there were election problems that may have influenced the outcome of the election; call CPS or PURE for challenge forms.

PURE LSC election workshops

PURE provides two kinds of LSC election workshops.

- ▶ **LSC 101** presents the nuts and bolts of being on an LSC, and is designed for people who have not been on an LSC – but who are thinking about running – or for any

veteran who wants a refresher course!

- ▶ **Campaign Help** includes help designing a flyer and writing a campaign speech, and limited copying of flyers (see details in schedule).

Workshop schedule

The following sessions are in English. To schedule a Spanish workshop, call Ismael Vargas directly: 773-416-5407,

All these sessions will take place at the PURE office, 100 S. Morgan Street, rear (by parking lot). There is limited free parking.

1- LSC 101

Saturday, March 18, 10 am - noon

Wednesday, Mar.22, 10 am - noon

Tuesday, April 4, 10 am - noon

Registration is required for LSC 101 sessions (call 312-491-9101 or e-mail pure@pureparents.org).

2- Campaign Help

Drop in any time between 10 - 3 on:

Saturday, March 25

Saturday, April 8

Tuesday, April 11

Thursday, April 13

New rules for this service due to PURE's limited budget:

- ▶ All participants must be current PURE members or join PURE at the LSC member rate of \$10.
- ▶ Bring your own paper or purchase paper at cost from PURE (appx. \$5 per 1,000 sheets).
- ▶ Using that paper, we will make copies of your flyer for free. Limit one flyer per person per school.

Registration is not required for Campaign Help sessions.

CPS LSC election budget

CPS has budgeted almost \$1.5 million for the LSC election with little to show for it. At the January 2006 school board meeting, PURE's Wanda Hopkins raised a concern about

this situation and President Michael Scott ordered James Deanes to provide PURE with the budget so that we could tell him how to spend that money better.

That was easy. We were able to free up half a million dollars in questionable or unexplained spending (\$140,000 for consultants, \$45,000 for "judge placement"?) which could be used to supplement the paltry \$20,000 CPS has currently set aside for community outreach.

We're waiting for CPS to respond to our recommendations.

New SIPAAA format and process

We're glad to report that CPS has made major improvements in the SIPAAA process and format which look a bit like what we were doing ten years ago.

Central to the changes is a renewed emphasis on broad participation and input. This is the law, but more recently it seemed that fewer and fewer people were actually participating. The new process goes step-by-step through a more inclusive process. It also provides materials in Spanish.

The new document also reflects what we then called the Five Essential Supports, now called the Five Fundamentals for School Success. This framework makes it clear that school improvement is not just about raising test scores but strengthening all key areas of the school.

We're pleased to learn that these changes were spearheaded by two veteran LSC members, Larry Stanton, a former parent representative on the Ray Elementary LSC, and Heather Anchini, a former teacher rep on the Goldblatt LSC. They now work at the CPS Office of Planning and Development. They modeled much of the process on their experiences with school improvement planning on the LSC.

Parents United for Responsible Education (PURE)

100 S. Morgan Street Chicago, IL 60607-2619

PURE is a parent-run, parent-organized group formed in 1987 to promote a strong parent voice in improving education in the public schools.

Executive Director - Julie Woestehoff

Assistant Director - Ismael Vargas

Senior Advocate/trainers - Johnny Holmes and Wanda Hopkins

How to contact us: Phone: 312/491-9101 Fax: 312/491-9404

e-mail: pure@pureparents.org Web site: www.pureparents.org

More training for LSCs

The Illinois Poison Center offers free training to local LSCs and community leaders interested in becoming certified poison prevention educators. The live training takes about 2 hours and entitles the participants to access their free on-line ordering system which includes an unlimited supply of handouts, stickers, magnets, chip clips etc. They can also download activity books for kids and even download step by step training manuals to train others from preschoolers to seniors.

For more information, contact Pamela A. King, (312) 906-6126 or <http://www.mchc.org/ipc/>

Schools and medication

State and federal law forbid harassment of parents or guardians for refusing to give their children psychotropic or psycho-stimulant medication often used to treat attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (AH/HD).

In fact, a law was passed in 2002 requiring the Illinois State Board of Education to develop rules to prevent such harassment, and establish training every two years for administrators on current best practices for identifying and treating AH/DH. ISBE has not done so.

PURE member Audrey Davis reports that 141 Illinois parents have complained to her over the last year of such attempted coercion and harassment, and that 96 percent were minority parents. To contact Audrey, call 773-984-6982.

NCLB Updates

Local news

The central office management of NCLB parent involvement programs continues to be a disaster. Decisions about the use of those funds are a local school decision by the LSC based on the PAC recommendation. CPS has no direct authority over these funds, so it should not take weeks for "approval" by a CPS bureaucrat. Yet schools report that they are still waiting for the parent involvement funds to go on line. Programs should be up and running by now and CPS should not be imposing itself in this way.

If you have concerns about your local PAC or CPS actions in this area, you can file a formal complaint and send it to the

Illinois State Board of Education
Office of the General Counsel
100 N. First Street, Springfield, IL
62777-0001

Your complaint must at least identify the agency or agencies that violated NCLB, indicate the specific regulation that has been violated (in this case, part A of Title 1, section 1118), and state the facts that demonstrate the violation. You have to sign the complaint. Include your address so that they can send you their report.

They have 60 days to investigate, and another 14 days to notify you of their findings.

National news

Sixty-five national education and civil rights organizations have signed on to the "Joint Statement on No Child Left Behind Act," which proposes significant changes in NCLB. The project was carried out by the national education advocacy group FairTest, which has been a long-time PURE partner.

The statement calls for an end to labeling and punishing schools based on test scores and replacing that with programs that we know actually help children learn. It includes 14 recommendations for improvements to NCLB including better assessments using multiple measures, higher standards for assessment and instruction, more staff development and adequate resources for all schools.

The full statement and list of endorsers is available on the Fair Test web site, <http://www.fairtest.org> or the Resource File.

PURE

Resource File

Call PURE at 312/491-9101

for this free information.

- ▶ "Renaissance 2010 Hype"
- ▶ "Renaissance 2010 Hoax"
- ▶ PURE LSC election guide 2006 (Eng/Sp)
- ▶ LSC Pre-election or Post-election challenge form
- ▶ Joint Statement on NCLB

For Designs for Change report, "The Big Picture," call DFC at 312-236-7252.

