

Neighborhood Council of Westchester/Playa Education Committee



NCWP Education Committee Members

Michele Cooley Strickland, M.Ed., Ph.D. – Chair
Grace Yao – Co-Chair Matthew Teclé
Andrew Kamm Heather Tuttle
Denny Schneider John-David Webster
www.ncwpdr.org/Education Bryan Williams



DRAFT - Meeting Minutes – October 26, 2016

Westchester Municipal Building Community Rm, 7166 W. Manchester Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90045

1. 6:34pm Meeting Called to Order – Dr. Michele Cooley Strickland
2. No meeting minutes to approve – There was no September meeting.
3. Community Announcements from Local Education Group Representatives
 - a. Otis College of Art & Design Art Gallery – Open daily to the public except Mondays
<http://www.otis.edu>
 - b. Visitation School Carnival – October 28-30, 2016 – Visitation School
 - c. Westport Heights School Carnival - October 29, 2016 – Westport Heights – 11-3pm
 - d. Teacher Mini-Grant Applications Due – November 4, 2016 - LAX Coastal Chamber
<http://www.laxcoastal.com/>.
 - e. Open House – November 5, 2016 - St. Bernard High School – 11am-4pm
 - f. Los Angeles World Airports (LAWA) Day of Discovery – November 6 – 12-3pm - LMU
 - g. Los Angeles World Airports (LAWA) Aviation Career Day – November 9 – 9am-12pm
 - h. State of LAX – November 16, 2016
 - i. Gateway to LA – November 22, 2016
 - j. Teacher WISH Lists Due (Office Depot classroom supplies) – December 4, 2016 - LAX Coastal Chamber <http://www.laxcoastal.com/>.
 - k. Rotary Santa Tour – December 13, 2016 – 5-8pm
 - l. 20th Annual Rotary Teacher Mini-Grants Awards Breakfast – January 18, 2016 – 8am, Whiskey Reds

Action Item: UPDATE on the LAUSD Local District West Middle School Plans for Westchester/Playa del Rey/Playa Vista

This is an ongoing issue in which the NCWP Education Committee has been engaged for quite a while. The discussion focused on how to best liaise with the community and LAUSD and LMU to assist in their successful Fall 2017 opening of LAUSD-LMU New Middle School Academy, ideally as a resident community school that serves the families of Westchester, Playa del Rey, and Playa Vista.

Public Comment (2 minute maximum) was received from 13 of the over 30 community members present, primarily on the issue of Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) in partnership with Loyola Marymount University (LMU) planning a new Middle School serving Westchester/Playa del Rey/Playa Vista and surrounding communities to be opened in 2017-2018. There were representatives from both LAUSD and LMU to hear the public's comments:

- LAUSD Local District West – Karen Long, Director

- LAUSD Local District West – Dr. Williams, Instruction Director

- 1 Our NCWP Education Goal: *To engage the Westchester/Playa del Rey/Playa Vista community in support of advancing the success of the local elementary, middle, and high schools, as well as that of the local colleges and universities, manifested by enhancing: i) School resources; ii) students' educational experiences; iii) parental involvement; and/or iv) community partnerships.*

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- LMU School of Education - Dr. Manny Aceves – Associate Dean, Strategic Partnerships and Educational Effectiveness

Ms. Long provided a brief update on the status of the proposed New Middle School Academy. The District is in the process of collaborating with LMU in an extension of the laboratory demonstration model that exists at Playa Vista Elementary School into a middle school that will be located on the campus of Westchester High School. It will open in 2017-2018 for 6th-7th grade students and 2018-2019 for 6th-8th graders.

The following is a summary of the public comments:

1. Shirley Ashe – Marina del Rey Middle School parent asked how will this new school impact other existing middle schools (i.e., do not want a new school that takes students away from existing Westside public middle schools and erodes their stability).
2. Rebecca Cunningham – Playa Vista Elementary parent and Westchester resident said there was **a lot** of community excitement with the announcement of this new community middle school. Partnership with LMU is what makes this new school highly appealing. Thanks to LAUSD for “thinking outside the box” and offering a laboratory school that is creative and different that serves our local community.
3. Gwen Vuchsas – Two questions from this long-standing and active community member and Playa del Rey resident: If students don’t come out of Playa Vista Elementary School, can they still attend this new middle school? Facilities question: Why was Westchester Secondary Charter School repeatedly denied co-location on the Westchester Enriched Sciences Magnets High School campus and why is this new middle school allowed to be located there? WISH and other schools are nervous about how this new middle school may impact their schools, including facilities demands. Where will charters potentially be relocated, if needed? Facilities issue needs to be dealt with in a holistic manner.
4. Duran Curis – Goethe International Charter School parent and school board member. Shared background about Goethe International Charter School as an introduction to the request for nominations for new board members, ideally those from the local community. Goethe has been open since 2009 and serves TK-5th grades, is an International Baccalaureate school co-located at Marina del Rey Middle School, and plans to expand to middle school.
5. Michele Levin – Parent of children at a school where a partnership with LMU fell apart. Why do we need this new middle school? Why aren’t we doing this at Wright STEAM Magnet? Is the plan for these new junior high students to continue on at Westchester High School? Question about English learners and how they will be accommodated.
6. Cheryl Hertz – Palms and Goethe parent of 2nd and 5th grade students. Works at LMU part-time. She is “elated” about this new high quality middle school in our area. Hopes the new middle school will have three math tracks (including accelerated and highly accelerated) and other programs available like at Palms. Concerned because the priority for children of part-time LMU faculty/staff no longer exists for

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Playa Vista Elementary School. Hopes that won't be the case for this new middle school so that LMU affiliates and part-time faculty will be given equal access to the middle school as when PVES opened.

7. Karen Wolfe – Parent of Venice High School students who previously attended Marina del Rey Middle School questioned the justification for creating a new middle school when the existing Westside schools have declining enrollments. Superintendent King said in an interview that schools with struggling and declining enrollments would be considered for closure. Are there any schools in this area that would be closed? Would the new middle school accelerate their closure? Ms. Wolfe also expressed a gentrification concern: Seems that LAUSD is making a decision that new, wealthier whiter communities get new schools, but students of color don't get anything. How is this going to be addressed?
8. Lesley Weldon – Parent of Playa Vista Elementary School students who said she is “thrilled” about a new middle school. It provides an excellent “opportunity to bring a **neighborhood** together, a neighborhood coming together to do the best for their kids.” Can't see the negative in this.
9. Alison Franzen – Long-time Westchester parent who is “excited” about the prospect of new **community** middle school. Question: How many non-Playa Vista Elementary School students do you anticipate having space for in 2017-2018?
10. Christina – Wants assurances that Westchester and Playa del Rey will be part of the MOU to ensure that families residing in our community can attend this new school.
11. Julie Fong – Playa del Rey resident who is very excited about this new school. She said she's known 5 different neighbors who have moved from Playa del Rey because they didn't see good secondary public school options for their children. Ms. Fong said her child plays soccer in Westchester for AYSO, but each of the children on the team is enrolled in different schools. Ms. Fong said, “Wouldn't it be great to **walk** to school? We want a **community** school.” She expressed some skepticism, but wants to believe it will open. She does not want a charter school because she doesn't want the e-choices because she wants assurances that she and her neighbors' children may attend the new community middle school.
12. Mark Franzen – A Westchester resident wrote several questions regarding the new middle school academy, including: Number of students? Teachers hired? Transportation? Sports? Who is eligible? How different than Wright STEAM Magnet? How different from WISH Charter? Why can't Wright be fixed after 40 years of decline? Westchester High School is a broken system for 6-12th graders.
13. Josie Gonzalez – A Playa Vista Elementary School (PVES) parent who wrote that: I am a staff member at LMU and am able to take advantage of the tie-in program with Playa Vista Elementary School. As a staff member at LMU, not living within LAUSD, I am limited to middle schools in the area. The new middle school academy would enable my children to continue attending school in a location where I am able to be actively involved due to my work schedule. Prior to attending PVES, my children attended school in IUSD. Due to my work schedule I relied heavily on others to get my children to and from school, and often missed the opportunity to attend school meetings and programs. I am in

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support of the new middle school academy. I fear that without the new middle school academy, my children would be forced to return to IUSD.

The public comment period was closed, and the discussion began among the NCWP Education Committee members, the LAUSD Local District West representatives (Ms. Long and Dr. Williams), and Dean Aceves from LMU School of Education. Among the statements:

Director Karen Long stated that:

- Part of the process in developing the new middle school is to hear from the community; information gathering is crucial.
- Who the school is opening for and why:
 - Opportunity to extend the laboratory school focus
 - STEM instructional focus
 - Understand that students come to our programs but leave the LAUSD; have reviewed the results of the NCWP Education Community Survey and the Pathways Working Group.
 - A new pathway versus a new school: It is difficult to layer a new program on an existing one.
- The proposed new middle school will be open to all students in the Westchester, Playa del Rey, Playa Vista area, but there will be a to-be-determined enrollment process (i.e., e-choices) because there are a limited number of seats. They will take into consideration LMU faculty and staff.
- There will likely be attendance boundaries.
- Ocean Charter and The Incubator School will remain on site at Westchester High School.
- Optimally, there will be 100-150 students per grade in the initial years of the new middle school.
- There will be a broader community meeting, tentatively set for November 29, 2016.

Dean Manny Aceves stated that:

- The community's feedback is very important, as community engagement is very critical. There will be soon a broader community meeting.
- In answer to the question of why another new school: They've examined our context [at the LMU School of Education]:
 - There is a need to address a national teacher shortage.
 - Strong university commitment to social justice.
 - Develop programming to share locally, regionally, and beyond.
 - In a demonstration laboratory school model it is important to integrate student teachers from the beginning because it takes a different type of relationship/understanding between faculty/staff and student teachers, as well as parents.

The NCWP Education Committee:

- Was unanimous in its enthusiasm for the opening of a new demonstration laboratory Middle School Academy that is a collaborative partnership between LAUSD and LMU and serves the families and stakeholders of Westchester, Playa del Rey, and Playa Vista.

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- Expressed concerns about the facilities:
 - Impacts on co-location at Westchester Enriched Sciences Magnets High School campus that may affect:
 - the existing co-located schools (Open Charter, The Incubator School), such that they should not lose space on the campus
 - residents living near Westchester High School (additional traffic, parking, students, parents)
 - other charter schools that had attempted to obtain space on the Westchester High campus but were denied citing space unavailability (e.g., Westchester Secondary Charter School, WISH)
 - The sub-standard and/or outdated condition of some of the Westchester High campus infrastructures (e.g., buildings, classrooms, auditorium, cafeteria, sports courts and fields).
- Fiscal concerns: Where/when will the necessary capital infusion take place to add a new school to the campus and – importantly -- sustain it in the long-term without draining resources from extant middle schools.
- The Committee discussed and voted on a Motion that unanimously passed:
 - **DISCUSSION:** The Committee believes this collaborative education event is timely and meritorious, and will provide a forum to enhance the larger community's engagement and investment in our local publicly-funded schools. We would be able to involve Westchester, Playa del Rey, and Playa Vista families and stakeholders beyond those currently enrolled in the LAUSD feeder middle schools.
 - **MOTION:** Subject to the approval of the NCWP event budget, that the Neighborhood Council of Westchester/Playa co-host with LAUSD and LMU a Westside Community Meeting on the proposed LAUSD-LMU New Middle School Academy in November or December of 2016 for Westchester, Playa del Rey, and Playa Vista parents and stakeholders to have Q&A with their local education officials to understand plans associated with the formation, location, and sustaining of the new middle school on the campus of Westchester Enriched Sciences Magnets High School.

UPDATE: This Motion was taken to the NCWP Board and unanimously passed at the November 1, 2016 meeting. Please see the attached LAUSD flyer advertising the Community Meeting on November 29, 2016 at 6pm in the Westchester High School auditorium.

NCWP Education Committee plans to conduct school tours in furtherance of our understanding of the current new middle school issue:

- i. Westchester Enriched Science Magnets High School
- ii. The Incubator School
- iii. Ocean Charter School
- iv. Playa Vista Elementary School

Action Item: Other Issues

- The Committee discussed and voted on a Motion that unanimously passed:

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- **DISCUSSION:** The Committee successfully hosted an education forum for our community in October 2015. Through outreach and collaborative endeavors, our understanding of the need for an LAUSD District 4 Board of Education candidate event has evolved into one proposed for this winter. This collaborative education event will provide a forum to enhance the larger community's engagement and investment in electing and supporting our education officials responsible for our local publicly-funded schools.
- **MOTION:** Subject to the approval of the event budget, that the Neighborhood Council of Westchester/Playa co-host a Westside Community Meeting with LAUSD Board of Education District 4 Candidates in the Winter of 2016-2017 for Westchester, Playa del Rey, and Playa Vista families and stakeholders -- and neighboring Westside communities -- to debate and have Q&A for the community at-large to understand their plans for our local publicly-funded schools.

(UPDATE: This Motion was taken to the NCWP Board and unanimously passed at the November 1, 2016 meeting).

Action Item: UPDATE on Past Month's NCWP Education Committee Activities

- a. LAX Chamber of Education 3rd Annual School Expo – October 18, 2016 – Well attended by the community; the NCWP Education and Outreach Committees staffed a booth (Denny Schneider and Michele Cooley-Strickland), gave away NCWP materials, pens, and reusable bags.
- b. Venice High School Modernization Project Advisory Group – Michele Cooley-Strickland is a member of this advisory group; it had two meetings over the past month:
 - i. LAUSD Modern School Design Tours – October 15, 2016
 - a. David Starr Jordan High School
 - b. Fremont High School
 - ii. Venice High School Modernization Project
 - a. Project Advisory Group Meeting – October 25, 2016
 - b. Community Meeting (open to public) – November 29 @ 6pm (Cafeteria) – See attached flyer

UPDATE: Next meeting – Originally scheduled for November 23, 2016 at 6:30pm, it has been canceled in lieu of the Thanksgiving holiday.

Meeting adjourned at 8:04pm.