

May 20, 2009

Dear Drummond Parents, Teachers and Staff:

Attached please find a letter the Local School Council has written on behalf of our school to Ron Huberman, CEO of Chicago Public Schools.

As you know, Mark Neidlinger was selected as principal in the 2007-08 school year. Since that time, Mr. Neidlinger has been acting as our Principal on a day-to-day basis. I think we are all thankful for his leadership of the school and for the extraordinary partnership he has forged with Ms. Espada.

However, a number of hurdles have arisen which stand in the way of Mr. Neidlinger's taking over as Principal, including a new Principal eligibility process, announced last December and just now being implemented by CPS.

Another hurdle is an unfortunate and unduly harsh disciplinary action taken by CPS against Mr. Neidlinger, which we have discussed with Mr. Neidlinger in closed session. Although the details of the disciplinary action are confidential, we feel the action taken by CPS is unwarranted and the outcome inappropriate. On behalf of Drummond School, the attached letter expresses the Local School Council's full support for Mr. Neidlinger and his leadership of our school. It asks Ron Huberman to overturn the disciplinary action and allow Mr. Neidlinger to continue his tenure at our school unscathed.

We know that the parents, teachers and staff also support Mr. Neidlinger's leadership of Drummond School and join us in expressing dismay at the recent action taken by CPS. We are confident our letter will help those at the highest levels of CPS to understand how our children have (as our letter states) "thrived in an environment that reflected the care, attention and dedication of Mark Neidlinger."

On May 29, 2009 at ^{7am}~~7:30am~~, we will hold a Special LSC Meeting to answer your questions. Childcare and breakfast will be provided. We hope to talk to you then about our future options with Mr. Neidlinger.

The Drummond LSC

Nicole Cantello, Sabrina Craig, Miriam Espada, Jonathan Goldman, Connie Grunwaldt, Mike Hannon, Mark Kwiatkowski, Mike Walther, Mary Wheatley and Jonathan Zielinski

**BY FACSIMILE TO 773/553-1501 AND BY REGULAR MAIL**

May 20, 2009

Ron Huberman
Chief Executive Officer
Chicago Public School
125 S. Clark Street
Chicago, Illinois 60603

Dear Mr. Huberman:

The Local School Council of Drummond Montessori Magnet Magnet School respectfully requests that you rescind the results of a disciplinary action taken against Mark Neidlinger, our Montessori Director and the recently selected Principal candidate of Drummond School. Because this is a matter of great concern to the students, faculty and parents at Drummond, we further ask that you meet with us to resolve this matter prior to putting at risk the hard-won progress made by our school.

Mark Neidlinger is an important architect of Drummond School's recent success. His knowledge of the Montessori curriculum, his inspiration of teachers, staff and parents, and his leadership of all Montessori programs in Chicago Public Schools demonstrate that he is a highly effective leader who CPS should retain at Drummond School.

In 2004, Drummond became the first public school in Chicago to adopt the innovative Montessori philosophy of education in all grade levels. Guided by Mr. Neidlinger and his skilled Montessori teachers, our students work independently to achieve academic goals.

It took a monumental effort to implement the new Montessori curriculum at Drummond. Mr. Neidlinger, appointed as Montessori Director a few months before the school reopened, worked rapidly from June-August 2004 to transform traditional classrooms to Montessori work areas. The transformation, in which Mr. Neidlinger oversaw the retraining of staff, the running of a lottery and the procuring of classroom materials, provided a new framework for the academic achievement at the school.

For the last 5 years, Drummond has proven that the Montessori curriculum produces impressive academic outcomes for all students. Since 2004, the school has made steady progress in reading and math Illinois State Achievement Test (ISAT) scores at all grade levels, exceeding each goal set for the school by CPS. In 2009, Drummond was named an Illinois Honor Roll School for three years of steady improvement in ISAT scores. Currently, 80.6% of our students meet or exceed state standards in Reading and 74.8% in Math. Our attendance rate is 95.7%. Our

program is highly prized by parents- for magnet schools, we rate among the top 10 in the number of applications received.

Our administrators, teachers and staff have thrived under Mr. Neidlinger's supervision and have shown extraordinary dedication to our students and our innovative program. Mr. Neidlinger ensures that all Montessori faculty members actively participate in and complete a 500-hour training program and that each teacher attains dual certification in Montessori and traditional education.

In addition to providing leadership at Drummond, Mr. Neidlinger has blazed a trail for all four Montessori schools started by CPS, coordinating professional development and administrative problem solving for Chicago's public Montessori schools. Mr. Neidlinger also partnered with other private and public Montessori schools in the Chicago area and the state to ensure that the Montessori method is faithfully implemented at Drummond.

Because we believe Mr. Neidlinger is the most effective leader for our Montessori school, we selected him as Principal of Drummond School in the 2006-07 school year. A number of hurdles have kept him from being approved by the Board of Education for that position in 2008-09. One of those hurdles is the unnecessarily harsh disciplinary action taken by the Board, in which Mr. Neidlinger was given the choice to resign or to be fired for an offense that, even if valid, could hardly merit such a disproportionate result. Mr. Neidlinger immediately notified his direct supervisors and the Drummond LSC of the circumstances surrounding the personnel matter when it was first raised- and tried to work with the Law Department to resolve the matter, to no avail.

We believe our children have thrived in an environment that reflected the care, attention and dedication of Mark Neidlinger. We ask to meet with you to discuss overturning the disciplinary action taken by CPS and ensuring that Mr. Neidlinger may return to his position as Montessori Director at Drummond and participate in the process of becoming Drummond's contract principal. To set up a meeting, please contact Nicole Cantello, Chair of the Drummond LSC at cantello.nicole@epa.gov.

Thank you for your consideration of this issue. We look forward to meeting with you.

Sincerely,

The Drummond Local School Council
Nicole Cantello
Sabrina Craig
Miriam Espada
Connie Grunwaldt
Michael Hannan
Jonathan Goldman
Mark Kwiatkowski
Scott Trotter
Mike Walther
Mary Wheatley
Jonathan Zielinski

Cc: Mayor Richard J. Daley (312/744-8045)
State Senator John Fritchey (773/871-4012)
Alderman Scott Waguespack (773/248-1360)
Alderman Manuel Flores (773/278-2541)
Cook County Commissioner Roberto Maldonado (773/395-0146)
Michael Scott, President, Board of Education (773/553-1601)
Barbara Eason-Watkins, Chief Education Officer (773/553-1501)
Lynn Moore-Nelson, Chief Education Office (773/553-1501)
Patrick Rocks, Chief, Law Department (773/553-1701)
James Ceisel, Attorney for Chicago Public Schools (773/553-1701)
Flavia Hernandez, Instructional Officer Elementary Education (773/553-2151)
James Cosme, Area 6 Area Instructional Officer (773/535-5891)
Luz Lopez, Area 6 LSC Relations (773/553-1401)
Parents and Teachers of Drummond School (via backpacks)
Mark Neidlinger