

May 20, 2009

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

Dear Mr. Huberman:

We, the teachers and staff of Drummond Montessori Magnet School, are writing to express our deep concern regarding the possibility that our current principal elect, Mark Neidlinger, will be forced to resign or be terminated at the end of this school year. We feel that Mark Neidlinger is the most qualified person to serve as principal of our school and request that he be allowed to continue to serve in that capacity. He is an invaluable member of our staff who commands our respect, understands our needs and inspires us to be the best teachers in Chicago.

If a school is defined by its leader, the definition of Drummond would be unique and without equal. After an exhaustive search by our school's LSC, Mark Neidlinger was the only candidate that satisfied the criteria we required. He was chosen not only for his leadership skills and familiarity with our school's population but, most importantly, because of his blend of Montessori training and traditional administrative knowledge. How else could a Montessori school be managed, except by a trained professional, someone who understood the guiding principles, the rationale and the curriculum? He was, and still is, the best and perhaps only person for the job.

Drummond is many things to many people: the magnet school their child attends, the school in the neighborhood that they live in, the school at which they work but, most importantly, Drummond is a Montessori school in the Chicago Public School system. Like any school, students, parents, teachers and administrators, are all invested in making this the best school it can be. What makes us unique is a combination of our special talents and our unique needs. We are a staff of committed professionals. In addition to the standard teaching credentials, masters degrees and continuing education that you would expect from the teachers in any school, Drummond's Montessori teachers have committed to an additional 500 hours of coursework. We share a common vision and philosophy which is carried out by a unified curriculum. This, combined with Mark Neidlinger's strong leadership has made us a model for the future of public Montessori schools in Chicago and the country.

Since he has been the principal-elect, our school has thrived, in academics (our test scores have improved), in enrollment (top ten in magnet school applications), in fundraising (we have more resources than ever, despite the expected dips in funding) and most importantly in overall school morale. He has very high expectations of every teacher and he gives us the opportunities to achieve those goals. As an example, our school was recently invited to join the Chicago Literacy Initiative Partnership with National Louis University, in which teachers commit to a 24 semester hour/3 year endorsement program. In each school that participates, they hope to get 4 teachers to make this commitment. 11 Drummond teachers (we have 11 total classrooms) voluntarily signed on in a unified endeavor to improve our practice by creating a reading curriculum that is consistent across grade levels.

At Drummond, we are proud to be teachers. We have faith in Chicago public education. We believe that Montessori can work in a diverse, urban setting and we are making it possible. We tell everyone who comes asking that we are incredibly fortunate to have the support of CPS, OAE and everyone else from downtown. Removing Mark Neidlinger from his position will undercut much of this support. If you are interested in

doing what is best for the parents, teachers and, most importantly, the children of Drummond. Mark Neidlinger should be allowed to remain in his current position.

Sincerely,

The teachers and staff of Drummond,

Ferry Parker

Jonathan Zedinski Amy Austin

[Signature]

Ulma Bell

Douglas W. Miller

Kenneth Zak

Juan Miranda

Juan Gonzalez

Alicia Hernandez

Mary Wheatley

[Signature]

[Signature]
Johnna J. Andrade

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Cc: James Cosme, Area 6 AIO
Luz Lopez, Area 6 LSC Relations
Flavia Hernandez, Chief Instructional Officer for Elementary Education
Head of Law Department

Azma Roman

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Korean R. Webauro

Jeanne Barford

Christine Bonkoski

Linda L. Johnson

Martha Codrus

Celia M. Melendez

Rosette C. Gray

Kathleen M. Heber