

Upcoming LSC meetings:

Tuesday, July 30, 6pm – Special Meeting to discuss and update the school’s strategic plan

Tuesday, August 20, 4pm – the first LSC Meeting of the new School Year

Waters LSC Budget Update

There’s no question that CPS is under an unprecedented budget crisis. Yet, the current resolution – composed of simultaneous budget cuts and a new budget system that promises principal autonomy but actually causes schools to sacrifice either staff or materials – is patently unfair.

Coming after a deeper understanding of the budget assigned to Waters School, this letter explains Waters’ losses, the administration and LSCs strategies for maintaining our core elements, and suggestions on how you can help our school and other schools to get what our children deserve.

Under the new budget system, our budget for FY14 is projected at a total of \$4,343,125, of which \$3,008,304 is from the new “Student Based Budgeting” (SBB). This is the per-pupil amount that’s being implemented by CPS and has been reported on in the news. Under the SBB system, schools are allocated \$4,429 per student in grades K-3 and \$4,140 per student in grades 4-8. The remainder of the budget comes from a mix of Federal and State aid, such as the Supplemental General State Aid (SGSA) and Title II Supplementary Funds, among other sources. **Our initial total budget was approximately \$113,268 less than last year.** *The cuts included the loss of one Magnet Cluster position and reductions in our Bilingual positions, which we were able to restore by moving money out of materials and supplies, and the loss of \$15,000 which the LSC has in recent years allocated to the Ecology Program.*

Since the new SBB attaches money directly to our number of students, our enrollment makes a huge difference to our budget. Our assigned FY14 budget (with the aforementioned deficit of \$113,268) is based on CPS projections that we will have a total student enrollment of 625 (316 students K-3rd, 309 students 4th-8th). *This projection is significantly higher than our internal projections of 602 total students.* **If we don’t close the gap between 602 and 625, it will cost us a further deficit of \$92,276, for a total of \$209,544 in budget losses.**

On top of the deficit, we face the additional challenge that many items formerly covered by Central Office must now be covered by our school budget, effectively worsening the deficit. For example, we now have to cover all janitorial materials (~\$7700) and substitutes (~\$35,000). Most significantly, we must now cover the total cost of each teacher’s salary, pension and benefits rather than having CPS cover the expense of whomever our administration hires for the position. This makes it more costly to maintain experienced and motivated teachers, which is a high priority for the administration and our community.

Updated Budget: In more positive news last week **we received an additional \$9,937 in SGSA funds that would normally have been allocated in September and a one-time \$100,000 grant from CPS to offset the losses of the Magnet Cluster and Bilingual Positions.** You may have heard about both of these additions in the local media – the LSC voted unanimously to accept these funds at our July 16 Emergency Meeting. **Our projected budget deficit is therefore now \$99,607 minus however many students we**

continue to add up to the CPS projection of 625. Again, we are currently at 602 students, but we will probably add additional students between now and August 26 so that number should go down some. We encourage any neighborhood families who have not registered but intend on attending to complete their registration so they may be counted towards our enrollment totals.

Teaching Staff and Class Sizes: By moving money out of materials/supplies, **we were able to maintain all our existing teaching positions, including all our specials -- Art, Drama, Music, Technology, PhysEd, and Ecology (which is largely funded by parents)**. The current budget allows us to have two kindergartens, three classrooms each in 1st-3rd grade, two 4th grade classrooms, three 5th grade classrooms, and two each in 6th-8th grade. With 61 kindergarteners currently enrolled, the administration and the LSC are concerned about kindergarten classrooms with 30 or more students. Therefore, we unanimously passed the following motion on July 18: “The LSC allocates up to \$100,000 for the hiring of a third kindergarten teacher should the administration deem the position necessary. Any excess funds from hiring a teacher whose total cost is below \$100,000 will be allocated to the supply budget line. If a third kindergarten is not required, the LSC will revisit the budget allocation at its September meeting.” This gives us the flexibility to use part of the \$100,000 grant we recently received to hire a 3rd kindergarten teacher if the numbers continue to warrant it. *No decisions on sibling kinders can be made until the second week of August when we know more about final neighborhood enrollments and final budgets. We will keep you posted.*

Materials: Because our budget was cut and because we prioritized teaching staff and class sizes, **we are short \$30,762 in janitorial supplies, textbooks, software, and other materials compared to last year’s expenditures**. Further, the amount we spent in materials last year was only for 597 students, and this year we will have between 602 and 625 student so we will need to spend even more on materials/supplies than we did last year. *An increase in the student school fees for next year will probably be necessary to partially offset this deficit. Details forthcoming.*

Moving Forward: We hope to make-up the current shortfall of approximately \$99,607 in several ways. Firstly, any additional enrolled students will lower that deficit. Secondly, we have approximately \$70,000 in “rainy day” reserves that we need to maintain in case of emergencies like the broken window last year, but which could help offset some of the remaining deficit. Thirdly, we anticipate the afore-mentioned increased student fee to cover some of the losses in materials and supplies. Lastly, we may have to make other adjustments to how our prep times are covered by the teaching staff allocated for the “full day.” This is a possibility that could affect how we run some of our arts programs, but we will do everything in our power to minimize the impact on instruction.

We have heard that budgets won’t be final until August, but CPS has been less than forthcoming about requests for more details. Advocacy groups across the city including IL Raise Your Hands, GROW47 (Ald. Pawar’s 47th Ward Education Caucus), and Commonsense: Coalition of LSCs for Fair Funding have been pushing for a TIF Surplus, Pension Reform, and a change to the State Income Tax. **The TIF Surplus would be a one-year fix**, but pension reform and/or

income tax reform are essential to preventing this crisis from repeating itself next year. *The LSC is actively working with Alderman Pawar and Commonsense to advocate for a TIF Surplus that may put additional money back into the budgets of every CPS school.*

What can you do? We need your help. By sticking together as a community we can not only weather this crisis, but we can forge even stronger bonds with one another as believers in our terrific school and public education in general. School-based cuts are being felt across CPS, and many, if not most, schools are experiencing much more profound reductions than Waters.

1. Contact your local and state representatives to let them know you are unsatisfied with the amounts budgeted to Waters and other CPS schools in the city. Our Fine Arts classes are central to our mission and were only saved by redirecting funds away from textbooks, classroom supplies and janitorial supplies and asking more of our community fundraising efforts.
 - Alderman Amaya Pawar, 47th Ward, <http://www.chicago47.org>
 - John Cullerton, Illinois State Senator, 6th District, <http://www.senatorcullerton.com>
 - Anne Williams, Illinois State Representative 11th District, <http://www.repannwilliams.com>
 - Greg Harris, Illinois State Representative 13th District, <http://www.gregharris.org>
 - John Fritchey, Cook County Board of Commissioners, <http://www.fritchey.com>
2. Get informed: read the media coverage on DNAinfo.com and in the Tribune and Sun-Times. Attend rallies in support of public education. You may also choose to follow www.ilraiseyourhand.org and <http://cpsapples2apples.wordpress.com>, which provide alternative points of view.
3. Attend LSC meetings and let us know your thoughts. We can be reached at waterslsc@gmail.com
4. Volunteer with Waters Today, our 501c3, and assist in their fundraising efforts that will be even more essential in the years to come.
5. Volunteer with Waters Works, our parent volunteer organization, which will be mobilizing a book drive to collect gently used books to supply our awesome new literacy program for K-2 that is being rolled out in Fall 2013 but whose book supply is threatened by the budget cuts.

We promise to keep you informed and updated in as timely a manner as possible and hope to see you at a special July 30 meeting at 6pm when we will talk about the School's Strategic Plan – the CIWP, or Continuous Improvement Work Plan – and on August 20 at 4pm for our next full LSC meeting. If there are any additional Emergency Budget Meetings we will keep you posted.

-- The Waters LSC
waterslsc@gmail.com