

TO: Local School Council Members
FROM: Jauntaunne Byrd, Parent Representative
RE: Academy for Urban School Leadership (AUSL) Tactics to dissolve the elected Local School Council thereby usurping the parental powers and voice in the education of the children of Curtis Elementary

I apologize for not being in attendance at today's (August 25, 2010) Local School Council (LSC) Special Meeting. It has become necessary to attend another meeting deemed more important. On August 19, 2010, after the fact, without prior notice or discussion, I received via the mail, a letter from the Curtis Elementary / AUSL Principal, Mrs. Evelyn Robins, stating that my four children had been transferred out of Curtis on August 17, 2010 due to residency outside of the Curtis attendance area. Enclosed were the transfers into West Pullman, a school that did not meet the state minimum performance standards in 2009-2010. I was not given an opportunity to meet with Principal Robins before the transfer of my children. When I attempted to speak with her face to face after receiving the transfers, she refused to speak with me, choosing instead to stay in her office.

It is my belief that removing my children from the school was a component in a scheme to weaken the position of parents in the restructuring of Curtis Elementary School by dissolving my eligibility as a Local School Council (LSC) member. In a retaliatory, vindictive move against my active involvement as a LSC parent representative the administration recklessly chose to use my children's education and safety as pawns in their plans to operate Curtis School.

Despite my personal opinion of this matter, I think it is very important that we are all clear on the enrollment/transfer guidelines applicable to all students at George W. Curtis Elementary. Below is the list of circumstances that must be taken into account when transferring or enrolling students as per Board Policy.

Regarding enrollment and transfer of students within the Chicago Public Schools:

1. According to the Board enrollment and transfer of a student Policy amended August 24, 2005 (05-0824-P03) As a general rule, children become students of the school in which they are enrolled (home school), and should not be unilaterally transferred or withdrawn by the school principal, unless by procedures pursuant to this or other CPS policies. In the interest of continuity of educational programming, it shall be the Board's policy to limit transfers of students in the Chicago Public Schools to times in which both the students' and schools' disruption will be minimized. Student transfer following a change of residence may be made if the change
 - a. 1) created absent extenuating circumstances (which the transfer is made at the end of the school year); or
 - b. 2) Parents who immediately want to transfer their child(ren) to an attendance area school after moving from one attendance area to another shall be allowed to do so. Seventh and Eighth grade students may remain in the school until graduation if they desire to do so, provided the distance factor does not adversely influence the students' safety, attendance and academic progress. Before any student transfer there must be parent notification and an opportunity for the parent to have a discussion about

the circumstances.

2. Under Chicago Public School Enrollment and Admissions guidelines for Curtis, Enrollment is open to students living in attendance area. If space is available, applicants living outside the attendance area may attend.
3. Curtis Elementary did not meet the Adequate Yearly Progress or AYP in 2009-2010 therefore under the federal No Child Left Behind Section 1116 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, the Chicago Public School is required to:
 - a. 1) develop a public school choice program; and
 - b. 2) provide students at lowest performing schools with the option to transfer to another school that is meeting the standards. Choosing to transfer to another school is not the students only option- they can remain at their current school.
4. According to the Board of Education Reconstitution of Curtis (100224- EX8) dated February 24, 2010 under the turnaround option in the best interests of Curtis School Students No students will be displaced from the school .
5. Under the No Child Left Behind Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program Title VII-B OF THE MCKINNEY-VENTO HOMELESS ASSISTANCE ACT, homeless children and youth are entitled to equal access to the same free, appropriate public education to enable them to meet the same challenging State student academic achievement standards to which all students are held. In determining a child s or youth best interest, a Local Educational Agency must, to the extent feasible keep a homeless child or youth in the school of origin unless doing so is contrary to the wishes of the child s or youth s parent or guardian. If an LEA wishes to send a homeless child or youth to a school other than a school of origin requested by the parent or guardian, the LEA must provide a written explanation of its decision to the parent or guardian, together with a statement regarding the right to appeal the placement decision.

My children were not transferred on the basis of their individual merit nor based upon a parent s request. Principal Robins admitted at a public meeting held August 20th at Orr High School that it was a singular decision that was not applied to any other Curtis student. AUSL Managing Director, Dr. Jarvis Sanford acknowledged at the same meeting that he was aware of Principal Robins malicious actions. It was solely done by Principal Robins and Dr. Jarvis Sanford, as a response to my involvement with the Local School Council.

We know that the Board trusts AUSL to turn Curtis Elementary around but the parents and community are concerned that in doing this, AUSL and Principal Robins are in violation of the laws, rules and code that are in existence. It is cited in the Board s Reconstitution of George W. Curtis (10-0224-Ex8) February 24, 2010 the As Curtis School will remain on probation after its reconstitution, the powers and duties of the Curtis School Local School Council with respect to the School Improvement Plan and the School Expenditure Plan will remain the same after reconstitution. It is also cited in the Management Agreement between AUSL and the Board on March 24, 2010 (10-0324-EX5) that AUSL will assist the principal and the Local School Council to annually develop and implement a School Improvement Plan. Therefore it was not the Board s intentions that the Local School Council be disbanded.

AUSL has failed to involve the LSC with the development of the school improvement plan as

directed by the Board's policy.

AUSL has gone far beyond their management role by attempting to dissolve the Local School Council at George W. Curtis Elementary.

AUSL attempted to silence the voices of the LSC by presenting their own set of bylaws to the members; an agreement that would have removed all LSC powers and relegated the LSC to an advisory council. These bylaws would have invalidated all rights and responsibilities stipulated by the Illinois School Code.

AUSL illegally removed notice of the July meeting called by the LSC as per written policies without putting up a new notice and agenda.

AUSL misused their authority and violated community trust taking over the prescribed LSC meeting, replacing the LSC agenda with their own. The scheduled meeting did not take place due to the fact that AUSL took over the meeting.

AUSL in violation of the Open Meetings Act, has attempted to meet with LSC members for lunches to discuss the coming school year and promote their agenda.

AUSL refuses to listen to the voices of Curtis parents. They have been repeatedly advised since June that parents do not want the expense of changing all uniform colors. They were advised that maintenance of said colors would create a hardship on our parents. They were asked to place those changes on hold until a full LSC board meeting could hold a vote (as the dress code policy comes under the decisions to be made by the LSC.) A request which has been ignored.

The name of Curtis was changed without any notification or input of the parents and community.

As a result of AUSL and Principal Robins' disregard and disrespect of the parents and community, using discriminatory actions, unjustifiably transferring my children in order to compromise my eligibility on the LSC and weaken the LCS, I am taking this matter to the Board meeting today. It is for this reason that I am not in attendance at the Special meeting today. In the interest of all of our children, I am asking for your support in unmasking underhanded tactics of AUSL, the Academy for Urban School Leadership and not allowing them to usurp your rights as parents in the education of your children.

Respectfully,
Jauntaunne Byrd