

Metamorphosis of a policy to disempower LSCs under small and alternative schools

February 2008

The following is a chronological analysis by Parents United for Responsible Education of CPS policies concerning governance in new, alternative, and small schools. It shows a growing effort to disempower the public and undermine the successful school reform strategy of local school governance in Chicago.

1. Guidelines & Procedures for the Operation of Local School Councils at Small Schools Dated Spring 1998

not currently available online, nor is Board policy 98-0429-EX2, on which this is apparently based.

- ▶ States, “Small Schools have appointed LSCs.”(p.1)
- ▶ (A)LSCs consist of “advocates.” Advocates can be parents, community members, and members of interested organizations. (p.3)
- ▶ Potential advocates apply via the LSC (?) which forwards the names to the Regional Education Officer who then may add other names and forward the list to the CEO. The CEO selects from the list but may add other names and submits the nominees to the Board, which votes to appoint. (p.12) There is no poll or other method of selection for these positions.
- ▶ The (A)LSC has only advisory power in the area of principal selection. (p.4)
- ▶ A member of the (A)LSC can be removed for “Unbecoming Conduct” which is defined broadly. In addition, the Board can remove (A)LSC members for non-attendance as well as all other reasons used to remove LSC members. (p.6)

2. Small Schools Policy (original)

April 2002

02-0424-PO03

“A converting school’s LSC shall retain its governance powers over the converting school until the school is closed at the conclusion of the conversion period.” (III. A. 3.)

“The LSC at the converting school shall be dissolved. Former LSC members from the converting school will be encouraged to participate in any new LSC or other potential governance structures”

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in place at the new small schools occupying the converting school's building." (III. B. 2)

"The Office of Small Schools will assist small schools with the formation of local school councils, or other governing body, in accordance with the time frame utilized system-wide for local school council elections, unless a time period for the installation of a local school council or other governing body is otherwise approved in the Guidelines for Small Schools." (?) VI. B.

3. Orr Conversion Plan

Approve the Small Schools Conversion Plan to Convert Rezin Orr Community Academy High School into Four Small Schools

April 2004

04-0428-EX6

A Transitional Advisory Council will be identified by the interim principal, subject to approval by the Area Instructional Officer. The TAC will operate for approximately 2 years from the opening of the school and advises the principal on school matters. (F. 1)

Following the second year of school operation, "each new small school will be governed by the Board." Then it goes on to say, "The composition of the LSC will be determined as follows:" (III. F. 2).

"The size and composition of the LSC for the Mose Vines....will be an alternative LSC consistent with the Guidelines (etc. 98-0429-EX2)... Notwithstanding the foregoing, at the end of the second year of any of the small schools operation, school and community partners may submit to the CEO a request for the school to have an elected Local School Council. Any such request is subject to approval by the Board." (III. F. 2. b.)

"Following the full conversion of Orr and a Board action to close the school (currently planned for June 30, 2004), the Orr LSC will be dissolved." (III. F. 3.)

4. Policy to Establish Renaissance Schools (original)

September, 2004

04-0922-PO4

"In order to fully effectuate the autonomies and accountability provided through this policy, each Renaissance School shall be governed by a traditional or advisory Local School Council ("LSC") or other diverse governing body." (IV.)

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“For Contract Schools: Upon the request of the school and approval by the Board, a Contract Schools may be designated as an “alternative school” or “small school”... Upon such designation, the contract school shall be governed by a body....” (IV. B.) which is not a traditional LSC.

A DRAFT version states that Performance Schools may request the same designation, with the implication that it will be governed by an alternative LSC. The FINAL version says this: “Upon the request of the school and approval by the Board, a Performance School may be designated as a school governed by an LSC as provided in (the school code 5/34-2.1) or as an ‘alternative school’ or ‘small school’ under (5/34-2.4b). (IV. C.)

In a DRAFT version, these paragraphs appeared which were deleted in the final version:

- ▶ “Nothing in this policy shall be read to prevent a Contract School from seeking permission to hold an LSC election and to be governed by a traditional LSC, so long as the school does not seek designation as an alternative or small school.” (IV. B.)
- ▶ “Nothing in this policy shall be read to prevent a Performance School from seeking permission to hold an LSC election and to be governed by a traditional LSC, so long as the school does not seek designation as an alternative or small school.” (IV. B.)

In the following paragraphs, the word “traditional” was deleted, leaving this wording in the final version:

“Additionally, any governing body of the Contract School may request, after a period of two years from the date the school is formed, that the Board permit the school to hold an LSC election and establish a (deleted: traditional) LSC under” (5/34-2.1). (IV. B.)

“Additionally, any governing body of the Performance School may request, after a period of two years from the date the school is formed, that the Board permit the school to hold an LSC election and establish a (deleted: traditional) LSC under” (5/34-2.1). (IV. C.)

5. Adopt a New Policy to Establish Renaissance Schools (revision of 9/04 original)

October 2005

05-1026-PO2

Revises the formation of the TAC, putting them firmly under the control of the CEO; new language: “TACs are formed and operate at the discretion of the CEO” (III. 5.)

Puts control of the request for designation of a Contract School as a school governed by an LSC

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or as a small or alternative school, and the request of the Board for a traditional LSC after two years in the hands of the “non-profit provider” rather than the school or the schools’ governing body. (IV. B.)

Clarifies that a Performance School requesting to be designated as an alternative or small school will be governed by “an Alternative Local School Council (‘ALSC’).” (IV. C.)

6. Another New Renaissance 2010 Policy (revision of 10/05 revision)

December 2006

06-1220-PO1

Did not change governance provisions.

7. South Shore Conversion Plan

Approve the Small Schools Conversion Plan to Convert South Shore High School into Four Small Schools

January 2007

07-0124-EX5

Recaps what has happened at South Shore during the conversion. “The interim principal identified the members of the Advisory Council.” (G. 1.)

“In June 2006 the Board shall establish an appoint (sic) LSC” at each school. The following Board reports are referenced: 06-0628-RS83, 06-0628-RS96, 06-0628-RS97, 06-0628-RS98).

“These councils shall operate in accordance with the Board’s policy and procedures on appointed governing bodies at Alternative and Small Schools.” (G. 2)

“...in June 2005, the South Shore LSC ceased to operate and no new council was elected in 2006.” (G.3.)

8. New Policy on the Governance of Alternative and Small Schools

Amends 1998 policies and guidelines, guidelines for alternative LSCs (00-1025-EX), and guidelines for military academy governance.

January 2007

07-0124-PO2

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States that the LSC law does not apply to alternative or Board-created small schools. Does not acknowledge the exception for schools in buildings with LSCs. (I.)

The policy does not apply to schools managed by a third party. In that case, the CEO and the third party will determine the form of governance. (I.)

The Board also reserves the right to decide on any other form of governance for these schools. (I.)

Makes a distinction between a “council” which governs all alternative and small schools except for military schools, and a “board” which governs military schools. (II., last paragraph). For our purposes, we will focus on councils.

All councils shall have 13 members (elementary) or 14 members (high school), of which less than half will be parents. Two Advocate members must be added to any council that does not already have them. (IV.)

Parent members will be appointed by the Board after a non-binding poll of parents. (VI.) Community members will be appointed by the Board on recommendation of the CEO. (VI.) The principal and existing council may submit nominations for community residents. (VI. 4.)

Council members may be removed for “unbecoming conduct,” as in the original guidelines. (VIII. v.) The Board no can longer remove a member for missing meetings; that power is reserved for the council.(VIII. 2.)

Powers and Duties of the council:

The council is advisory only on issues related to the principal’s contract. “The selection of principals... shall be under the sole authority of the CEO and the Board.” (X. 1).

Councils can only participate in advising the CEO on principal selection if they have previously received training by the CPS Office of Local School Council Relations. (X. 1. I.)

Principals, not councils, are responsible for reporting to the community on progress and problems implementing the School Improvement Plan. (X. 2. I.)

Councils may only transfer funds if the transfer is approved by the principal. (X. 2. iii.)

9. Another new Policy to Establish Renaissance Schools (amends December 2006 policy)
June 2007
07-0627-PO4

Deletes statement that Performance Schools “are governed by a Local School Council or other body.” (II., last paragraph).

Deletes the possibility that any Renaissance school will be governed by a traditional LSC or that any school or body can request a traditional LSC. Instead, these schools will be governed by a structure decided on a case-by-case basis “based upon a recommendation by the CEO.” (IV. first paragraph)

Deletes the possibility that a Contract school will be governed by anything but “an advisory body.” (IV. B.)

Deletes the possibility that a Performance school will be governed by anything but “an Appointed Local School Council (‘ALSC’). (IV. C.)