

**April 17, 2024, Agenda Review Committee Meeting Written Comments  
Received between Monday, April 15<sup>th</sup> and Thursday, April 18<sup>th</sup> Submitted via  
Written Comments Form**

1	<p>I am a parent of two CPS students (4th and 2nd grade) who attend LaSalle Language Academy. I am writing to you about my shock and concern upon hearing about the recent CPS budget and the negative impact it will have on LLA and similar schools.</p> <p>Despite messaging from CPS that no magnet or selective enrollment schools will be affected, the actual budget tells a very different story. What can we do to solve this? I have a number of concerns on which I am hoping you can provide clarity:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. For LaSalle specifically, initial estimates are that the new budget would provide funding for only 1 world language teacher (we currently have 8). How does this align with CPS's commitment to world language programs, which was made in 2020? Why has CPS seemingly decided to stop investing millions in world language magnets overnight? This would devastate our school and cannot be allowed to happen.</li> <li>2. Publicly, CPS has stated that the new plan will have no negative effect on magnet + specialty schools (including LaSalle) who serve students from all over Chicago, while the funding tells a very different story. Where does CPS stand on the issue of removing the magnet + specialty funding from the budget?</li> <li>3. How does the new funding plan support CIWP goals of magnet schools generally, and speciality language schools like LLA?</li> <li>4. This new plan, which reduces funding to magnet + specialty programs, was delivered with little to no time to fundraise and plan on the school level to continue meeting CIWP school goals. This leaves LSC's in a very difficult position when being asked to vote on budgets in the coming days. Why is CPS putting schools, principals, and LSCs in this position?</li> <li>5. What is the message and plan for the magnet and selective enrollment school teachers whose jobs will be eliminated as a result of this budget?</li> </ol> <p>Thank you very much for your time and attention to this matter.</p>
2	<p>I strongly disagree with the recommendation for shifting budgets away from magnet schools. We chose LaSalle Language Academy because of the global and cultural education the World Language program provides to all LLA students. My children have been immersed in global citizenship since Kindergarten and we already see the immense impact this program has made on them in broadening their understanding of cultural differences in their school and beyond. Reducing appropriate funding from our magnet schools will have broad ranging, negative impacts across the city and for our children.</p>
3	<p>My daughter is in first grade at Lasalle Language Academy. She is learning Mandarin. Her access to language is critical to her education. It challenges her every day, gives her a space to use a different part of her brain, and is central to our decision to send our daughter to Lasalle instead of our neighborhood school, Lincoln Elementary. Lasalle cannot lose its language program. It is part of the fabric of the school, it draws children from all over the city, and it is a shining example of city and global diversity.</p>
4	<p>I am a parent of two children who are currently enrolled in LaSalle language academy. We are so impressed with the language magnet program at the school and all the experiences the children are exposed to through that. The staff is wonderful and dedicated and the language program structure really makes the school experience unique. It also allows students from all over the city to come to and we feel Chicago as a</p>

city is very well represented in the school demographic. Our children are truly learning what their city is all about while learning about the world and instills a deep sense of pride in them to be Leopards (school mascot). It would really be a tragedy to cut budgeting to these unique programs within the public school system that make CPS such a dynamic ecosystem. Please strongly consider the richness that these programs bring to the CPS system and allow our children to continue having these opportunities. Best regards from a CPS mother and a pediatrician.

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5 LaSalle Language Academy world language program is the nucleus of the school and has offered so many children with the opportunity to have another essential tool to sustain our multi cultural world. This program has enriched so many families throughout the years and has brought diversity to the school's community giving families a sense of belonging. The children learning these languages become more confident and it helps to create a more positive learning environment for them as they age, go on to high school and college where the language is a requirement and now these language courses are a breeze.

I chose LaSalle Language Academy for their language program as it is the essence of the school and it's diverse culture. Let's keep enriching these children and help to save our world language program please!

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6 With regards to taking funds away from specialty programs for magnet schools, my fear is that you will be taking away funds from the programs that differentiate these schools from the neighborhood schools and provide the greatest value add for the families attending Chicago's Magnet schools, for example my child's school LaSalle Language Academy whose specialty language program is an essential part of every single school day, (1hr of language class every day).

Magnet schools also bring in kids from many neighborhoods and provide some of, if not the most, diverse group of children together in the city, when I compare LaSalle Language Academy to my neighborhood school of Lincoln elementary the diversity and opportunities for my children to learn and be impacted by a diverse school is incomparable, here again the specialty programs are a key part of our magnet schools that help create our schools with the most diversity and great outcomes for students from all across our city.

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7 To Whom It May Concern, I am a 20 year Chicago Public Schools Veteran Educator, having served as former Assistant Principal of a Northwest side High School, as well as an English Teacher on the high school level with a TRACK RECORD OF SUCCESS! I am also a parent of LaSalle Language Academy! I'm writing on behalf of LaSalle's Parent community to advocate for the preservation of LaSalle's World Language Program! To do away with funding LaSalle's Language Program is to undo nearly 40+ years of successful & impactful efforts & future learning experiences. The World Language Program is what sets LaSalle's school community apart from all other CPS Schools. Its unique emphasis on making students participants in the Global Community helps to make a lifelong difference within the lives of all students, past & present! I have witnessed, first hand, how the World Language Program brings children & families together, provide a sense of exposure, instills a sense of pride in kids, & promote academic excellence in students, through engaging in its rich program. Students & families begin to take ownership over the language they are a part of, & matriculate into the Language & Culture of the country of study, over the course of 8 - 9 years! Upon graduating from LaSalle, students enter advanced Language courses in High School, many of which place out & skip to college level courses on the high school level. My personal story is this: my eldest, who is now a 1st year College Student at Columbia College in downtown Chicago, was able to graduate from Lincoln Park High School with

recognition from the State of Illinois as now being Bi-Lingual in the Language of French! She earned the State Seal of Bi-Literacy, which affords her this recognition. She can show this to employers & it provides an edge for her! As a 9th grader, coming out of LaSalle's World Language Program, she was placed in French 3 with Juniors (11th graders) & Seniors (12th graders), along with a few other students who had graduated from LaSalle's World Language Program. They were the only students able to hold conversations with Lincoln Park's French Teacher, during class. Can you imagine being a 9th grader in a class of upperclassmen & you're the person able to help out! This was such an amazing accomplishment, showing that her 9 years of engagement in LaSalle's World Language Program had benefited her in the long run! By their Senior year, my daughter & peers were able to take AP French, which is a college level course offered in High School. She graduated with a full scholarship for 4 years to Columbia College. Today, I look forward to the same opportunities for my 1st grader at LaSalle. I already see her love & excitement for her Language: Italian! She has been flourishing & the teacher is so encouraging & supportive that we both can note the growth within my youngest child, academically & personally! The fact that the teachers come from the countries of the languages taught at LaSalle make the learning & engagement that much more conducive to the students' successful matriculation within its program! LaSalle places an emphasis on community! It is the school's heritage, & to do away with the program is an awful decision! I was born & raised near LaSalle Language Academy! As a child, I attended the neighborhood Catholic school. My friend lived across the street from LaSalle. I recall running home to ask my mother why I could not attend LaSalle, where kids get to learn a foreign language & travel to the country of study! Since childhood, I always promised myself that if I had children, they would be sure to attend LaSalle, for this very reason: to get the opportunity to learn a World Language & be a world participant someday! I was able to be a part of the school community for 9 years & witness the benefit of the Language Program! I look forward to seeing the impact for the next 7 years! I ask that you disband the World Language Program!

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8 Please do not cut our language budget at LaSalle Language Academy! We commute over an hour every day just to send our kids there specifically for the language program and because of the diverse student population. This budget will likely strip the school of both. It would be a tragedy to the legacy of LaSalle. Please consider a budget that maintains the language program at our school.

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9 Dear CPS Board,

La salle Language Academy is a special school where Kids can feel themselves while receiving an education adapted to their learning level. I have two daughters who were able to attend the school after being chosen by the lottery and it gave them the opportunity to experience the diversity of Chicago. La salle is not a neighborhood school so it represents the diversity of Chicago and exposes kids to different culture. The language program is so special in the sense that it creates a better community while exposing the children from day one to other cultures. This is one of the best program in the city even better than in some private schools and it gives the opportunity to many to be exposed to other learning methods. La Salle drives a wide range of kids and the community is very tight. By cutting down on budget funds the school will not be able to support all kids from the city the same way. There should be a reward for schools who thrive while enforcing diversity and many programs to help the kids grow in many varied area such as STEM, language. Success should be a factor to drive budget to continue to support the effort made by CPS teachers and principals. The kids make friends very fast and learn from each other. It is sad to hear that CPS wants to stop something that works. The model of La salle should be recognized as a model for other schools to improve and

	reach certain goals. Chicago needs to shine and support all kids, academically and with dedicated programs at all levels. La salle does that and more.
10	My kids go to a language magnet school. We chose it at that my kids could connect with their heritage, culture, and familiar language, but also to be in a school that has a truly diverse student population. Kids come from all over the city and join together as one, united student body through the languages. Events are held throughout the year where families can get together to learn, eat, and celebrate together. If funding for the magnet program isn't there, these things will not happen. Students will not graduate 8th grade and be able to test into 2nd or 3rd year high school Spanish. Students will not come from all over to be in an inclusive, and high performing school. Families from a multitude of zip codes and socio-economic backgrounds will not become friends. The students will not interact with nearly as many students from different backgrounds. Homogeneous schools hurt inclusion. Removing funding for a long running language magnet school will damage an important part of CPS's past and future. More families will leave CPS. More students will stay in lower performing neighborhood schools. Hurting a vibrant school community in the name of equity is ridiculous.
11	It is our sincere hope that CPS budget changes does not affect our community. The language component is the main reason we attend this school and we value it so much that we travel more than 45 minutes to get there. LaSalle Language Academy in my opinion is already short changed and we fund raise a lot to be a publicly funded school. As a strong community of caring and involved parents we all agree that our budget needs an increase.
12	<p>I am writing to emphasize the critical importance of sustaining the world language program at Lasalle Language Academy and the significant impact it has on our diverse student body.</p> <p>At Lasalle, we are fortunate to have a strong parent group dedicated to supporting students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. This group plays a vital role in ensuring that all students, regardless of financial constraints, have access to enriching opportunities provided by the world language program. We currently have 31% of students categorized as low income.</p> <p>Through generous scholarships, this parent group facilitates language exchanges, enabling students to visit other countries and deepen their language proficiency. Additionally, they provide essential support for acquiring the required language software, ensuring that every student can participate fully in the program.</p> <p>However, if funding for the program is cut, the burden will shift onto our community support network, jeopardizing our ability to provide these invaluable opportunities to students who need them the most. Without sufficient resources, we risk depriving our students of experiences that enhance their education and broaden their horizons.</p> <p>Therefore, I urge you to continue supporting the world language program at Lasalle. Your investment not only benefits individual students but also strengthens our community as a whole by promoting inclusivity and equity in education.</p> <p>Thank you for considering this urgent matter.</p>
13	I am concerned about the recent changes and budget cuts affecting LaSalle Language Academy and other schools in the Chicago Public School (CPS) district. My frustration is palpable, especially when considering the impact on both students and educators.

The disparity between the promotion of magnet and language academies and the actual funding allocated to support them is a troubling contradiction. LaSalle Language Academy, with its unique language program, seems to embody the kind of educational excellence that should be celebrated and supported, yet it's facing budgetary challenges that threaten its very existence.

While striving for equity in education is noble, it should not come at the cost of dismantling programs that have proven to be successful and beneficial for students. It's disheartening to see dedicated educators facing uncertainty about their positions and the potential loss of valuable programs that have enriched the lives of students.

Retention issues among students, families, and teachers are indeed exacerbated by such changes. The loss of these programs not only affects the immediate school community but also has broader implications for the district's reputation and its ability to attract and retain talent.

I am advocating for equitable solutions that prioritize the needs of all schools and communities is essential. It's about ensuring that every student, regardless of their school's location or designation, has access to high-quality education and resources that empower them to succeed.

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14 I am the parent of a 1st grade student and two incoming Kindergarten students at Lasalle Language Academy. We have been so impressed and excited by our daughter's experience with their World Language Program. She is excited to learn and share the French language and its culture. The unique experience of this daily language exposure has set her education apart from her peers in other schools. We are committed to our long term relationship, engagement, and support of LLA because of this language program. I have also seen the benefits of this program in action, as I have several friends that are graduates of LLA that have gone on to have impressive careers utilizing their foreign language skills, including in the foreign service. Please allocate the necessary financing to allow LLA students to continue to engage at this level the World Language Program, as this program is critical to keeping LaSalle as a preeminent language magnet school.

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15 Our daughter's language-focused magnet, LaSalle Language, has opened a world to her, learning about culture, countries and language in a more immersive and meaningful way. Through this, she also is finding new areas of connection with her classmates and the wider world. The dedicated teachers and administration give us focused, timely feedback and suggestions to improve our students' learning and communication. LaSalle brings together a diverse community of students from across the city, opening up connections for students and families that might not exist otherwise. We hope that the language programs can continue to be funded to provide this critical opportunity to children from across the city.

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16 The proposed new formula for CPS school year 2024 to 2025 does not take into consideration of magnet language schools where languages are taught as core subjects v additional holistic classes. Under the new formula, LaSalle language academy are only allocated 19 core teachers ( we have a 18 classes) and 4 holistic teachers (where art and PE must be offered) leaving us only 2 positions for language teachers. We cannot offer daily instructions for 4 languages (core subject) with only 2 teachers. We ask CPS to correct this situation by allocating additional core teacher positions . Additionally, the opportunity index unfairly use the zip code of the schools location in the formula. As a magnet school that serves the entire city of Chicago, our school student body has more

	<p>than 30% in low income segments, we ARE not a neighborhood school so our location should have no bearing on the opportunity index and as such our allocation of positions should be higher than currently allotted.</p>
17	<p>I am a parent of a kindergartener at LaSalle Language Academy. We applied to LaSalle and enrolled our daughter here because of the world language magnet and the unique opportunities that affords children, as well as the racial, socioeconomic and regional diversity of the school. She currently is learning Italian and receives instruction 5 days a week. This is incredibly!</p> <p>In hearing of the new budget system, I am thrilled to hear neighborhood schools are fully funded - however, this will mean drastic cuts at LaSalle. It seems to be gutting and getting rid of the world language magnet. I drive through crazy traffic each day to afford my daughter the opportunity to learn language and be with a diverse student population - both of which are opportunities not afforded her at our neighborhood school. Our neighborhood school is fine, but not at all diverse and that is hugely important for my husband and I. Chicago can be a very regionally segregated city, and we made the choice and effort to bring our child to a school where she will meet and befriend people different and alike to her.</p> <p>If this budget cut goes through and the language program is cut at LaSalle (because this new budget is a cut of the program. Having 1 language teacher where the school currently has 8 in 4 different languages IS a cut of the program!), many families will leave LaSalle. It will become another neighborhood school; not diverse, and not the magical place it is.</p> <p>I think of the older students, who are in 5th or 6th grade who have taken French or Mandarin or Italian everyday for the last 6 or 7 years. With this new budget they would have maybe Spanish once a week? How is this equitable? If the new budget formula must take place - because I do agree with finding a new solution the problems of Student Based Budgeting - it should be slowly phased in. Having students and staff jobs upended so rapidly is not in the best interest of our children.</p> <p>I urge the board to rethink how this budget will play out in magnet schools and to fully fund magnet schools.</p>
18	<p>LaSalle Language Academy is an amazing community. By cutting our funding, you are not just cutting numbers, but people. People that care about this community and that make it thrive. How can we call ourselves a language academy when languages are being cut? Our school has one of the most robust language programs in the city, it makes our school unique and our school community unique. Taking that away is only a disservice to the children.</p>
19	<p>I was shocked and outraged to hear that the school district is planning a sweeping budget cut for Magnet schools. Magnet schools provide diverse educational options for children throughout the city and offer children from underdeveloped communities a more diverse environment for growth and access to learning resources. I am extremely indignant about the district's proposal.</p>
20	<p>Dear CPS BOE,</p> <p>I am writing to you as a parent of children attending LaSalle Language Academy in Chicago, IL. I was saddened to learn that the budget for the upcoming school year will be severely reduced to where the school will no longer be a "language academy." I completed my research for available elementary Chicago schools including parochial schools that would be a "good fit" for us prior to enrollment. LaSalle Language Academy</p>

had all the characteristics I was looking for in an elementary school 1) World Language Program 2) Diverse student enrollment 3) Excellent faculty and staff and 4) Community of supportive families.

Learning a second language at a young age has its benefits specifically greater understanding of other cultures, enhanced ability to focus, stronger vocabulary, improved memory and listening skills, expanded social skills, better written communication skills, increased confidence of learners, and confidence to learn more languages in the future.

Given that improved focus, memory, listening, vocabulary, and written communication skills will be supported from an early age through this world language program. These benefits may also lessen the future need for students to require specialized services such as speech-language therapy, reading support, etc. Therefore, keeping the World Language Program at LaSalle Language Academy may save CPS' resources in the future. I respectfully implore that you reconsider the school budget allocation for LaSalle Language Academy at 1734 N. Orleans St. Chicago, IL.

Sincerely,  
LLA Parent

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21 As an 8 year LaSalle Language Academy parent, I would like to write in on behalf of the LaSalle parent community to advocate for LaSalle to remain a Language Academy and preserve our world class language program. As a magnet school LaSalle is offering students from across all socio economic groups within the city the opportunity to receive instruction in a foreign language without compromising on academic excellence in core subjects. We are building citizens of the world at this school and teaching our children to celebrate diversity and gain international exposure right from their Kinder classroom to 8th grade without having to travel the world. Our students and their families are dedicated to language instruction and students continue to nurture their passion and fluency by studying their world language in advanced high school courses and beyond. Removing world language instruction would not only remove the foundation of our school as a Language Academy but would be a great detriment to the city as a whole as we are trying to nurture Chicago's place on the international stage as a world class destination. I fully support the board's mission to bring a world class education to all students, but I don't agree that should be done at the detriment of LaSalle Language Academy. On the contrary, we are a diverse student body whose graduates represent all the neighborhoods in the city and go on to attend top high schools and colleges; our model should be emulated no denigrated. Thank you for your time and consideration.  
Sandhya Ehle  
LaSalle Language Academy Parent since 2016

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22 My daughter is in the 2nd grade and has attended LaSalle Language Academy in Old Town since kindergarten. It recently came to my attention that there are potential budget changes to LaSalle's funding that may impact and even cancel the language program from the curriculum. As someone who grew up in a suburban Florida town, but who has now lived in Chicago for the last 15 years, one of the main reasons, my wife and I have chosen to stay in Chicago are the programs offered by CPS and schools like Lasalle. We have been overwhelmingly pleased with Lasalle's quality of education, the community our magnet school engenders across a set of people who are socially, culturally and economically diverse, and the unique opportunity the language program provides. As residents of Old Town, the diversity of the school's students and families provides our child the opportunity to befriend and learn with a student body that truly reflects the make

up of Chicago - something that we would not necessarily have with our neighborhood school. Furthermore, one of the key reasons we have chosen to stay in Chicago vs moving to the suburbs is the unique opportunity CPS provides our children, not only because of LaSalle's language program, but the programs available in upper schools as well. I would ask that the school board reconsider the proposed budget that eliminates funding for programs such as Lasalle Language Academy's world language curriculum.

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23 I am a parent of two students at Franklin Fine Arts Center, a CPS magnet school. I am providing comments to the recent news outlining changes to CPS' budget process, and specifically the notification that budgets for magnet schools will likely be decreased under the new budget process.

One thing that concerns me is the lack of provided details and lack of transparency surrounding the announced budget changes. Franklin is a wonderful school community that pulls students from around the city to create a diverse learning environment. The programs offered at Franklin expose students to a wide array of fine arts which supplement the academic curriculum. My concern with the new budget announcement is that magnet schools will lose the ability to provide the programming that provides the support for students to excel both inside and outside the classroom.

Additionally, I am concerned with the significant changes the new budgeting process will bring to not just magnet schools, but all schools within CPS. I understand that change occurs and often is inevitable but in this case I would like to voice my concern over making significant changes without providing details of the impact these changes will cause.

I look forward to learning more about CPS' plans for the future and how these plans provide our students the best chance at future success.

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24 Dear Members of the District Board,

I hope this letter finds you well. As a parent of two students at Lasalle Language Academy, I am deeply concerned by the recent proposal to withdraw funding and disband the world language program at our school. This program is more than just a curriculum to my daughters and their classmates—it's a gateway to the world and a foundation for their future.

1. Personal Impact on My Daughter: Watching my daughters come home excited to share new words and cultural insights they have learned in their French and Italian classes is profoundly heartening. These lessons enrich their understanding of the world and foster an inclusive and empathetic worldview. The thought of them losing this valuable part of their education is not only disheartening but feels like a step back from preparing them to thrive in a multicultural world.

2. Community and Cultural Connection: The language program at Lasalle Language does more than teach children new languages; it connects diverse communities. It has brought us, parents, together with cultural festivals and language nights that are highlights of our school year. These events are vital for building a strong, inclusive community spirit that helps our children learn respect and appreciation for cultures different from their own.

3. Future Academic and Career Opportunities: In today's global economy, bilingualism is an invaluable skill. Disbanding the world language program would disadvantage our

students by limiting their future academic and career opportunities. For many students, including my daughters, these classes are their first step towards becoming global citizens. This program equips them with skills that are increasingly crucial in nearly every field, from business to healthcare.

I urge you to consider the lasting impact that the world language program has on our children's lives. It's not just a subject but a crucial part of their growth into well-rounded, culturally aware adults. Please don't take away this precious opportunity from them.

Thank you for your time and for considering this heartfelt plea to keep the world language program intact at Lasalle Language Academy. I am hopeful that together, we can find a way to continue offering these invaluable lessons to our children.

Warmest regards,

B.M

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To whom it may concern,  
Dear CPS Board Members,

I am writing to express my concern over the potential cessation of funding for the world language program at my daughter's school, Lasalle Language Academy. This decision would not only impede our students' ability to compete in a globalized world but also adversely affect the dedicated world language teachers who have committed themselves to our children's education and cultural development.

These teachers do much more than teach languages; they open doors to the world, broadening our children's horizons and preparing them for global citizenship. Removing funding from this program risks losing skilled educators and diminishes the quality of our school's educational offerings. I urge you to maintain funding for this essential program, thereby supporting both our children's futures and the careers of these invaluable educators.

The world language is what makes Lasalle Language Academy unique and its in the DNA of the school.

Thank you for considering the profound impacts of this decision.

Sincerely,

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While my family fully supports a more equitable and transparent approach to school funding, I respectfully disagree with the new budget methodology and severe budget cuts to magnet and selective enrollment schools as a result. We should not be lifting up certain schools at the expense of others. While the framing of these cuts have been sold as being away far away from the classrooms, that is exactly what is occurring at the negatively impacted schools. With these significant budget cuts to magnet schools, many positions are no longer being funded, which will create larger class sizes and remove essential classes such as PE. There is now a lack of sufficient resources to purchase school materials and pay for substitute teachers. Magnet schools have a tremendous responsibility to their diverse student body to create an enriching learning environment and a strong sense of culture and community at a school that educates students from almost 60 different zip codes. If CPS is truly not trying to end magnet and

selective enrollment options, their mission and the required funding should not be depleted to support and elevate neighborhood schools only. Further, if CPS wanted to demonstrate true transparency with this new approach, the full calculation methodology, as well as the underlying data used to calculate each school's opportunity index score, should be shared publicly so there can be no questions around intention. I would also argue that multiple indicators under the 'Demographics' bucket are essentially the same and therefore compound and skew the statistical data at the detriment of magnet schools. I can fully appreciate that many neighborhood schools need critically more support to uplift the student body, but the sacrifice should not have to come from students who, like my children, travel willingly every day to attend a school where they are thriving and (currently) receiving a strong public school education. I implore the Board to revisit the methodology and spend more time to better understand the (hopefully) unintended consequences this new budget has on the magnet schools and the families all over the city who support them.

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Hello Board,

Thank you for your time to consider my comments.

I am a parent of a 3rd grader and Kindergarten student at LaSalle Language Academy. Both my girls are learning Italian there with an Italian class everyday. This opportunity for them is so rich and special.

The school and it's staff and teachers, the community and parents of LaSalle have created a unique environment that provides to success to all.

I hope the Board reconsiders the budget for LaSalle so that this can be preserved.

Regards,  
Rishi Bhatia

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Subject: Urgent Support Needed to Preserve Funding for LaSalle Language Academy's Programs

Dear Chicago School Board

I hope this message finds you well. I am writing to express my deep concern regarding the potential budget cuts to the programs at LaSalle Language Academy. As a parent of a second grader who is currently benefitting immensely from the school's renowned language programs and its diverse cultural environment, I am particularly alarmed by the impact these cuts could have on our children's education.

Choosing LaSalle Language Academy for my son was a decision deeply influenced by its commitment to providing a rich, diverse language education that goes beyond the standard curriculum. The program's unique approach to fostering an understanding of various cultures through language is not just educational, but a vital component of our community's ethos.

The thought of these programs facing financial constraints is distressing, as it threatens to strip our children of the opportunity to learn in an enriching, inclusive setting that prepares them to be global citizens. It is crucial that we prioritize maintaining, if not expanding, the budget to support the continuation of these educational experiences that many families, including ours, specifically chose LaSalle for.

I urge you to consider the long-term impact of these budgetary decisions and to find ways to preserve the funding necessary to sustain these invaluable programs. Our children deserve the best opportunities we can provide, which include uninterrupted access to a high-quality language and cultural education.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. I am hopeful that together, we can find a solution that continues to support the diverse needs and aspirations of all students at LaSalle Language Academy.

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29 LaSalle Language Academy has been my daughter's school since Kindergarten in 2020 - a COVID-marred school year, where through the support of incredible teachers and strong administration, she flourished in spite of all the obstacles in her path. In that year, she learned to read and began to learn to speak and read Italian. It is well established that language acquisition years (early elementary) are the easiest time for students to learn a second or third language. We felt so lucky to be able to start her academic journey at this extraordinary school, where not only were the fundamentals so strong, but where they also have a world languages curriculum. She has thrived at LaSalle and each year has gotten better for her and for our family.

I am so saddened and angered by this board's decision to eliminate funding for these incredible programs for inexplicable reasons. Schools like LaSalle are a jewel in the crown of the Chicago Public School system. By decreasing the resources available to these programs, you reduce the opportunities available to everyone in the district by depriving students of any opportunity to enjoy the special programming that suits their interests and developmental needs. It doesn't serve the city well - many families may opt to relocate, since tuition for private schools is prohibitively expensive, and the CPS system will no longer offer enriched curricula for any city students. I don't know what duty you think you're fulfilling with this, but it's embarrassing to me to have voted for this administration that is so directly depriving my daughter and her classmates, and students around the city of the extraordinary public education options this city has offered for so long.

When we went through the CPS lottery, she was offered seats at a STEM magnet, two fine arts magnets, a regional gifted center, and an IB school, along with LaSalle. What an amazing array of options and there were plenty of other stellar citywides/magnets/selectives that we also tried to get into. We didn't ask any favors or pay any special fees to have these opportunities available to us--they exist for all in the city. If anything, we should be growing programs like these, rather than eliminating them. I cannot imagine why you would choose to hobble our public school system by getting rid of all of these options for students across the city. How will this improve education? How will this serve our children? How will this serve our community? I see no upside and an immense amount of downside for all involved. Is there any evidence-based reasoning for this decision? Can you point to a single other major school system that has undertaken a similar change with positive results? I haven't been able to find any.

I hope you will reconsider your decisions before inflicting this harm on the children and families of this city. If not, I would expect to see a sharp decline in support and enrollment for many of the city's schools and I have to wonder what good that serves for the city in the long run.

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## **ATTACHMENTS**

A letter for the CPS Board of Education members from a parent of two CPS students and voluntary member of the CPS Parents for Buses:

I would like to bring to light all the actions taken by the CPS Parents for Buses since the beginning of this school year:

1. We created a Facebook group for all CPS parents and caregivers who were impacted by the sudden cutting of transportation 3 weeks before the first day of school.
2. We advocated for our students at EVERY SINGLE agenda and board meeting. As we continue to do right now.
3. We gathered data from CPS and ISBE to develop actionable solutions to the crisis – Short term solutions AND long-term solutions.
4. We had discussions with ISBE to help us better understand and navigate state governed rules and guidelines, to ensure that our proposed solutions are well grounded within the framework of equity.

ALL that within the first 3 months! Yes, we were ready with solutions back in November 2023. But were you listening?

5. We met with CPS COO Mr. Charles Mayfield monthly, to share our solutions and monitor CPS's willingness to pursue them.
6. We participated in Special Education committee meetings and Budget and Planning Round table discussion meetings.
7. We met with other parent advocacy groups.
8. We discussed our solutions with alder persons as well as unions such as CTU and SEIU.
9. We met with Illinois state representatives.
10. We organized a protest on February 6<sup>th</sup> to inform the general public as well as all of you Board members of the plight of the 5,500 students struggling daily, specifically the 85% within this group of elementary school students who are from low-income households.
11. We got 27 alderpeople from across the city of Chicago advocating for all our proposed solutions via a letter directed to you, the Board members as well as the mayor.
12. We set up meetings with the mayor's office as well as with the secretary of state. Both meetings were held last week.

Which of these meetings did you accept invitations to? None! What actions have YOU as CPS Board members taken? None!

April 18, 2024

I am a parent of two children at CPS schools and writing to voice my concerns at CPS planned budget cuts to Magnet and SEHS. I will focus on proposed cuts to **LaSalle Language Academy**, a Magnet Elementary School in the Oldtown neighborhood of Lincoln Park, a community that my family has been part of for 13 years.

LLA is an outstanding institution, and its long standing and now famous language program is recognized throughout the city, most notably with the school winning a Blue-Ribbon Award in 2015. My earliest memory of the school was on a kindergarten visit in 2011, when the then principal encouraged 5<sup>th</sup> graders to speak in their foreign language to the touring parents. Kind of scary for an 11-year-old but they pulled it off. I was sold!

Language Arts at LLA is not just speaking and writing but also offers children an opportunity to immerse themselves in the culture of their language. Our eldest daughter, now in 12th grade, studied French. She travelled to France, with her cohort, visiting Normandy beaches, WWII cemeteries, The Caen Memorial Museum, and the city of St. Malo, a town made famous by the book, *All the Light We Cannot See*, which was a mandated read for students before their trip. In the classroom, French projects included research of French speaking nations from Belgium to Senegal that encouraged discourse on colonization and politics, French recipes were tested and watching French movies was a Friday treat. Another significant highlight is the annual *Le Grand Concours /National French Contest*, where students compete with children nationally for medals. A speaker is invited to present prizes in June every year before a breakfast of croissants and chocolate bread. No surprise that our child tested into "French 3" in 9<sup>th</sup> grade, did AP French in junior year, earning a 4 on the test (even native French speakers find this difficult), and received a Seal of Biliteracy. Our younger child is in 7G at LLA and is also taking French and is submerged in many of the same activities and looking forward to the French trip next year.

Other language classes run an in-depth curriculum too. One of the highlights of the LLA calendar is the annual "La Posada", an event organized by Spanish class that celebrates Mexican narratives of the Nativity. The event is a staple in the Old Town community in mid-December each year, after which students return to the cafeteria for tamales. Recent additions to the language curriculum include Mandarin, which offers students a glimpse into non-western culture with events and projects around Chinese calendar, such as Dragon Festival and Lunar New Year. The annual school show features students signing songs native to their foreign language.

Not only would the budget cuts erode the language programs that LaSalle uniquely offers to all Chicago students, but they would also devastate what many believe is a model for integrated education in the city. In its 50 years, LaSalle has garnered a following of devotees, and for good reason, because diversity and inclusion is one of its primary merits. In fact, LLA was DEI before the term was coined. It owns DEI. 30% are low income; 69% are minority and students from low socio-economic zip codes sit with Ivy legacies. It's shocking to think CPS naively paints a broad

brush over the demographics of the school under the auspices of a zip code—the reality is that only a fraction of the students lives in 60614.

The CPS budget cuts to one of the most beloved schools in the city is shocking. I understand that revisions to the network are needed, and I support these but not when it means negatively impacting schools that are successful academically, and positive models for equity and inclusion. At the scale of the city, the budget cuts on all Magnet and SEHS schools will have major ramifications, setting the city back 40 years, to a story that we have already played out: a two-tier society, where wealthy families remain in the city and go to private schools, the middle class leaves for the suburbs and lower income families are left in educational ghettos because they have no other option.

CPS is missing the main point: If our schools go south, the city goes with it. Don't sell out our students, don't sell out our schools, don't sell out our city.

Clare Lyster

Chicago Board Members,

I'm writing this letter on behalf of my two children who attend LaSalle Language Academy.

I'd like to start off by saying I support providing access to the best possible education and services for all children in Chicago. A citywide educated future citizen is invaluable to not only our city but our world as a whole. Every child has the potential to do great things and as their advocates, it is our responsibility to provide them with every opportunity to ensure a bright future. I wholeheartedly support providing all Chicago children with everything in our power to an impactful education. An educated society is a great society that can perform at full potential.

LaSalle Language Academy is a special place for so many families that believe in providing an enriched education but also a diverse community for our children to be raised in. We are a world language school. The values behind raising our children to become citizens of the world provide great benefits to not only our children but to Chicago as a whole. LaSalle aids Chicago by putting us on the map in producing top tier Chicago citizens who contribute to our workforce, economic health, international relations, diversity inclusion and society. These kids will continue to make Chicago one of the leading players on the world stage as our graduates have already proven.

Six years ago, as a first-time mother with a child in school, I remember vividly realizing what community my children and I had become part of when joining LaSalle. Like so many families at LaSalle, my family commutes 3 hours every day to give our children that opportunity. Per the tier system, our children are being raised and building impactful relationships with students from all over our great city. This is a great uniting factor that can't be overlooked. Many of us make great sacrifices to provide our children with a diverse upbringing. I feel incredibly fortunate that my children are exposed to families from all over the city and not just the environment of our neighborhood. We are Chicago. We are diverse. We need to be united and not segregated by what part of the city we live in. This core value of LaSalle is what we should hope for the City of Chicago. LaSalle embraces diversity; it is literally what a world language school represents. This niche community that is being produced will continue to bring much value to our work and community sectors. Chicago needs these kids. Our world needs these kids.

In a perfect Chicago, every child would have access to an educational environment as beneficial as LaSalle. I hope the city can find ways to implement more niche learning curriculums rather than take them away. Our children deserve nothing less. As The Board allocates funding to all schools, I strongly encourage they consider the severity of taking away these programs and the impact that it will have on Chicago. We produce a substantial

amount of the world's top talent. Let us continue to be part of the international dialogue. We will not be able to do so if we take away these opportunities for the future generations. They are imperative and we have an obligation to our city and to our children for greatness.

Let's set our standards high and do the impossible. Let's bring higher education to all of Chicago rather than take it away. Grow our city on the foundation that so many magnet schools have worked so hard to build. Cutting funding to international relations does not help anyone. It will negatively affect everyone, and no one wins from that scenario.

We need to provide more opportunities like LaSalle for all Chicago kids. The competitive lottery system proves that there are so many families that want and believe in this educational format. Cutting these programs would be a great blow to thousands of families who take great stride in providing the best possible education for their children. We need to stand up to the challenge and create more magnet schools rather than take them away.

I'm proud to represent LaSalle Language Academy and the possibilities that it fosters. When trying to provide for the Chicago student population, please remember there are so many families who want the opportunity that our magnet schools offer. They don't want to be on a waiting list or to inevitably drive halfway across the city to provide the best education for their children. We are Chicago and we want these options and opportunities. Most importantly, our kids deserved them.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Hilary Jursa,

LaSalle Language Academy Parent