

May 15, 2009

To Whom It May Concern:

I am pleased to write a letter of support for the Cole Arts and Science Academy's application for innovation status. Catholic Charities has partnered with Denver Public Schools to offer after school programs; engage and teach parents and care givers; and to empower and enable parents to seek out and find resources to meet their basic needs.

Staff at Catholic Charities has implemented neighborhood centers in five DPS schools, and with numerous school administrations. Three of the five schools in which we have offered comprehensive programs have been affected by school closure. We have seen moderate attempts at school reform, and we have seen these attempts fail. Strong measures must be taken in order to give students the resources they need to achieve success. School leaders must have the power and authority to lead, to make the tough and necessary decisions. We are very hopeful that the CASA Innovation plan will be approved by DPS so that the school and community will be able to fully implement the measures within the plan. It is essential that this work begin immediately, so that the 2009-2010 school year can be the beginning of a new phase of education for the CASA students, family and community.

Catholic Charities supports the CASA School Improvement Team and the plan they have created. I am confident that if given the opportunity to create their own team, to ensure that curriculum is appropriate for their students and to create a culture of nurturing and achievement, then they can produce achievement for the students in their school.

We commit to supporting students and families in the Cole community to ensure the success of the Cole Arts and Science Academy.

Sincerely,

Jan McIntosh
Vice President
Office of Family and Children
Catholic Charities

May 14, 2009

Dear Denver Public School Board Members,

As president of the CSC, I and the members of committee feel that in order for Cole Arts and Science Academy to provide the best possible education for the students in our community, we strongly support its transition to an Innovation School. On May 14th, at 4:00 p.m. the CSC met and established our support for the Innovation Proposal. Present at the meeting other than myself were 2 other parents, Jason Janz and Miguel Oxaca. Staff members present were Elena Saenz, parent liaison, Tara Jahn, Resource Advocate, Celesta Cairns, music teacher, Julie Carey, ESL teacher, Jenny Price, AP, and Julie Murgel, Principal.

ON a personal note, in its first year, CASA has exceeded our expectations of delivering a high quality educational experience to our child. With one son just finishing Kindergarten, and a 3 year old who will start at CASA in the Fall of 2011, we will potentially be part of the CASA community for the next eleven years. We believe the combination of a more flexible approach to the academic program combined with the demonstrated dedication and positive results of the staff and faculty in CASA's first year will result in a rich, challenging and rewarding educational experience for our children and the other students who attend CASA.

Allowing CASA to put in place systems to support teachers to achieve the best possible results in the classroom, to engage parent directly in the educational process and to offer students extended times for academics and special programs has a tremendous potential to lead to more positive student outcomes. CASA's culture is one of innovation, exploration and setting high goals. It makes sense to allow the collaborative leadership team already in place at the school more autonomy in decision making, goal setting and resource allocation to support its mission.

Our decision to send our son to CASA came after visiting a number of DPS schools around our neighborhood. When we spoke to Julie Murgel, heard her vision for the school and were encouraged to become a part of the group to set the course for the school at the very beginning, we were hooked. Becoming an Innovation School will require a high level of commitment from the school staff, community partners and the families who are a part of the school. The empowerment that comes from giving some of the decisions about the curriculum, staffing, goal setting to those most directly impacted will serve to engage and motivate the parents and staff who have chosen to be a part of CASA. It is our hope that it will attract other families who are passionate about education and the future of the children in our community.

Together we can make amazing things happen at CASA.

Sincerely,
J.R. Lapierre
C.A.S.A. CSC President



**METRO
ORGANIZATIONS FOR PEOPLE**

May 11, 2009

Dear Members of the Denver Public Schools Board of Education, Superintendent Tom Boasberg and DPS staff:

The Education Committee of Metro Organizations for People (MOP) would like to express our full and unequivocal support for Cole Arts and Science Academy's application for status as an innovation school. MOP has been working closely with Principal Julie Murgel since she was hired 16 months ago and have developed a strong parent organizing committee at the school. We have seen Julie's vision in conjunction with the teachers and staff implemented at CASA in a way that is changing how the community feels about Cole from a place where a number of "reforms" were tried and failed to a school of promise and hope for the community.

As we have stated in our support letters for Bruce and Manual, MOP has long been an advocate of increased school autonomy over budget, staff, curriculum, and school schedules. We were strong supporters of the innovation-autonomy proposals put forth by Bruce Randolph and Manual HS as well as Senator Groff's School Innovations Bill (SB 130). We applaud the board, superintendent and teachers' union for their growing support of increasing school autonomy in schools that are ready and capable of taking this step. MOP believes that autonomy or innovation status promises to increase the capacity of teachers, administrators, and parents to shape a school more closely to the particular needs of its student body. Paired with a student-based budgeting model that is moving towards greater weights for ELL and at risk students and increased funds in the SBB budget; CASA will have a transparent understanding of the funds they will receive and have more autonomy over how to spend those funds to provide the best education for our students.

We would encourage the board and administration to provide the conditions and ongoing support necessary for innovative-autonomous schools to succeed, well into the future. MOP, the district and many in the community have staked a claim that autonomy and innovation status will be one successful feature of the DPS reform plan going forward. A commitment towards providing autonomous schools the support they need to succeed is critical to ensuring and evaluating this reform.

We have reviewed a draft of CASA's application and believe that it strongly reflects the key elements of autonomy and innovation that MOP has consistently supported.

We believe CASA is well positioned to prove the efficacy of becoming an innovation school.

We encourage your support of CASA's innovation school application.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

On behalf of the MOP Education Committee:

Jennifer Gonzalez

Nola Miguel

Steve Kennedy

Martha Carranza

Karla Loaiza

Frank Tapy

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Organizing communities for change

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A MEMBER OF THE PICO NATIONAL NETWORK



Neighborhood Ministries

EMERGING LEADERS

HARAMBEE

SUMMER ENRICHMENT

Ted Travis, President

May 13, 2009

To Whom it May Concern,

As community residents who have served youth in northeast Denver through Neighborhood Ministries for 30 years, we strongly urge Denver Public Schools to approve Cole's request to become a DPS innovation school.

Shelly and I have played an active role in supporting the youth of our community. All three of our children have been involved in the public school system, having attended Mitchell Elementary (when it was a Montessori school), Cole Middle School when it housed Denver School of the Arts and Manual high school, through numerous experimental educational models including Manual's three small schools. We were very involved in trying to keep the Mitchell Montessori School in the neighborhood, and were active participants in Manual High School from the time it was three schools through the process of it becoming what it is today. Shelly served as a parent on both Mitchell and Manuals School Improvement Committees. We were both a part of the restructuring committee for Manual High School. In addition, we have led Neighborhood Ministries, a Christian-based youth development program that has worked alongside families and the school system to promote healthy development among our youth. We have advocated with families to help them get the best education for their children. Finally, we have been very active with MOP (Metro Organization for People) in the fight for better education in the near northeast quadrant of the DPS district.

It is our conviction that providing C.A.S.A. the freedom to control its educational programs, staffing and environment is essential for maximizing staff leadership and student success. We have seen the negative impact the demands of a central bureaucracy place on the ability of teachers to provide proper leadership in the classroom. And we have personally watched numerous students get "pass through the system" by skilled but de-motivated leadership. We believe the freedom inherent in the innovation school model, along with the responsibility that comes with it, will ensure greater success in preparing our young people for the future.

Another essential element of the innovation model is the collaboration with the community. Denver Public Schools has hopefully learned by now that no school is an island. As we learned through the Manual High School restructuring process, the northeast Denver community is rich in assets and information vital to public school success. We believe the innovation model will give C.A.S.A. the ability to not only hear from those assets but act on the wisdom and advice given. We strongly support the Mission Statement – its goal, vision and belief statements – of the innovation proposal.

For these reasons we heartily recommend Denver public schools grant Cole's request to become an innovation school.

Sincerely,

Ted & Shelly Travis

May 18, 2009

Dear Members of the Denver Public Schools Board of Education and Superintendent Tom Boasberg,

I write to enthusiastically support the innovation proposal for Cole Arts and Science Academy and in particular its goal of developing a successful school in the Cole Neighborhood, where every student will have a life-transforming educational experience.

As a Denver native, successful businessman, and board member on the Denver Public School Foundation, I am an advocate of Senator Groff's School Innovations Bill (SB 130) which grants increased school autonomy over budget, staff, curriculum and time.

I had the great pleasure of touring Cole Arts and Science Academy and meeting the principal, Julie Murgel, and two parents from the school CSC, J.R. Lapierre and Jason Janz. When I spoke with the team, I was inspired to hear them speak and realized that the school administration, staff, and community were ready and capable of taking on autonomy with accountability, much like a small business. Thus, I believe that innovation status will increase the capacity of Cole Arts and Science Academy teachers, administrators, and parents to have more autonomy over how to spend funds, manage their resources both people and time to provide the best education for students.

Currently, I am ready and prepared to contribute to an Innovation school like Cole Arts and Science Academy. I am hoping that a future contribution will help educators to help their students achieve a level of competence and understanding that is beyond even the most ambitious expectations.

I encourage your support of Cole Arts and Science Academy innovation school proposal.

Sincerely,

Tom Gamel

Denver City Council District 8
Carla Madison

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May 18, 2009

Kevin Patterson
Board of Education
Denver Public Schools
900 Grant Street
Denver, Colorado 80203

Dear Kevin,

I am writing this letter in support of Cole Arts and Science Academy to receive school autonomy and/or innovation status from Denver Public Schools.

As your mission states, *"to provide all students the opportunity to achieve the knowledge and skills necessary to become contributing citizens in our society"*; this status will enhance on the successes and high academic level of achievement we want for all students in the district.

Please consider the request by Cole Arts and Science Academy – along with my commitment for students of City Council District 8.

Every Day, Every Child!

Sincerely,



Councilwoman Carla Madison
District 8

Cc: Superintendent, Tom Boasberg

