

Highlights from the 2/23/23 CLIC Parent Town Hall

On Thursday, February 23, from 6-7 pm, City Charter School Leadership Held a Live Town Hall for CLIC Parents. Here is a recap of the meeting:

- Presenters:
 - **Meredith Esarey** - board chair of City School, board member for 8 years, and involved in public education for 13 years
 - **Maria Gabriel** - board member and CLIC parent, 3rd and 5th grade, board member for 6 years
 - **Paulina Lopez** - board member and CLIC parent 3rd and TK, board member for 6 years
 - **Kim Reppa** - Director of Business and Operations Systems and with City since 2019
 - **Robert Vidaña** - Executive Director and with City for 8 months (served in school administration or worked within a CMO for the past 13 years)
- The town hall was conducted live via Zoom so everyone had a chance to participate
- Some questions were submitted in advance and addressed during the meeting. Members of the audience also asked questions via the chat, which were answered live.

Highlights of the Town Hall:

Leadership shared their excitement about the partnership for multiple reasons, including:

- CLIC has an opportunity to create a K-8 pathway for students after the closure of The City School; New LA is a high-performing middle school *in the same community as CLIC*
- It creates sustainability for CLIC; single-site models are not sustainable; we didn't want to close TCS and not create a sustainable pathway for CLIC students
- In addition to being located in the community, New LA has an excellent CMO staff, and is a synergistic partner that believes in the same social justice, constructivist, project-based learning environment as CLIC
- Compliance work happens at the CMO (Charter Management Organization)*, and when you don't have a ton of staff in that arena, the site administrators bear the weight of that administrative load

Why this partnership with New Los Angeles Charter Schools and how did we get here?

- The board is a governing entity
- It is responsible for organization as a whole
- It directs the executive director in finances, strategic direction, but does not control who the teachers are or what the curriculum is
- The board works with the executive director to determine budget
- Raul primarily makes the decisions, the board doesn't get into the nitty-gritty
- The board has been looking at sustainability, finances, and enrollment for the last few years and working through the pandemic
- There is a funding cliff where COVID money will no longer be available, and we couldn't see the numbers working out over the next few years

- The board began having conversations after Valerie's departure in more earnest, but Valerie did engage in conversations with New LA before we made the decision
- We were starting to explore opportunities with other charter schools
- When the board started engaging in those conversations, we started asking who the best partner would be for CLIC to remain CLIC
- If we were to partner with a larger CMO with tons of sites, CLIC would get absorbed
- Once we started looking at the logistics, New LA became a partner that would be able to take over financial obligations for real estate
- New LA also created a material revision for TCS students to have a preference for their middle school
- They want to keep CLIC exactly the way that it is and Raul will continue to make decisions

*What is a CMO (Charter Management Organization)?

- A CMO is the how charter schools are managed, and they make policy along with the principal and handle much of the finances and operations
- A good CMO is in the background, and you don't even know they are there
- Kim previously worked in center operations in the federal government prior to working at City. With her background in engineering, she handles the operations side of the schools, including technology needs, legal compliance, meal vendor, and other suppliers.
- The CMO allows the teachers and principals to focus on the mission of the organization, which is educating and addressing the needs of the whole child

Is the CLIC location staying the same?

- Yes, CLIC owns its own building

Will CLIC adopt New LA's curriculum?

- No

Will the dual-immersion program change?

- No. If anything, both CLIC and New LA hope to expand it into middle school

What is the status on the preference for the middle school students?

- Depends on the material revision. LAUSD has not yet given us a date to present our requests to the LAUSD board.

Will New LA continue Spanish curriculum?

- Not immediately, but we hope they will in the future. New LA is interested in adding some Spanish immersion curricula to the middle school program.

Will New LA be taking over the middle school building only or also the CLIC building?

- They will be absorbing the debt of \$12.5 million, and they will manage the building
- They are in negotiations with the Bahai to move their elementary school there

The footprint of the New LA middle school seems pretty small. Is there any plan to move or add space?

- New LA is on a private site, and they have a mid-300 capacity, similar to TCS.
- Their classrooms are large; there is outdoor space, and a huge gym. [Please take a tour!](#)

Will this change be implemented this year? Will 5th graders move forward to New LA Middle? When will this change be finalized?

- We expect to present our requested material revisions to LAUSD during the last week of March or early April. If approved, CLIC students will get preference to New LA's middle school for Fall 2023.

What are the chances of sustainability for CLIC if it cannot create a dual immersion pathway?

- Our students will be able to go TK-5 in dual immersion, 6,7,8 at New LA may grow into dual immersion, but when the partnership is formalized, that's a process of developing a curriculum.
- When you have a single-site charter, it must absorb all of the administrative back-end management that Kim and Robert do at the site. Who will handle all that work? We need to partner with another CMO so it can pick up that work.
- Having an elementary to middle school pathway is important because families are more likely to stay through the program.

Will this board be the same or will there be a new board?

- A couple of members of The City School board will join the New LA board. They have a terrific board, and we encourage you to check out the board members who are currently serving at New LA. It's unlikely that we will know who from the CLIC board will join the New LA board before this summer.
- Paulina encourages parents to join the board and get involved
- For anyone interested in applying to be on the board, reach out to TCS current Board Chair Meredith Esarey at mesarey@citycharterschools.org

Is New LA part of LAUSD or is it a charter?

- New LA is a public charter school authorized by LAUSD

How will the lottery work with New LA Elementary and CLIC for New LA's middle school?

- New LA Charter School's middle school has enough room to take all matriculating 5th grade students from both CLIC and New LA Elementary. These students will be given admissions preference.

How will the branding or the identity of the school change if at all with the merger?

- CLIC's branding and identity will not change. CLIC will remain CLIC, with New LA Charter Schools as its CMO.

How is it really a K-8 pathway if there are two elementaries feeding into one middle?

That seems like a bottleneck?

- New LA's middle school has room to accommodate all 5th graders from both schools. Having a high performing CMO is a better model for CLIC's long-term sustainability. Furthermore, students from two small schools coming together into one middle school infuses new diversity into the student body, enriches the learning environment for all, and provides the opportunity for new friendships.

How are teacher's concerns being handled?

- Once the announcement was made, TCS held meetings similar to this one with staff; CLIC staff have met with New LA in a similar fashion; Robert is also working with CLIC teachers to discuss any ongoing concerns and answer any questions.

Will there be another town hall?

- There is not one scheduled, but we are happy to engage in another one, likely after the board vote in March.