



November 6, 2018

Dr. Mark Bedell
Kansas City Public Schools (KCPS), Superintendent

Dear Dr. Bedell:

At this critical juncture, its important that we give our families and supporters a timeline for approval and re-opening of Southwest High School. To this end, we have included a response to all the items of concern listed in the KCPS LOI response dated May 1,2018. Whenever possible, we have listed our understanding of KCPS/USW talks up until this point to provide a moment in time snapshot of where we are today. For clarity, we have listed our responses in the same order they were sent to the USW board in the LOI response.

1. Financial Sustainability – We have incorporated KCPS feedback into the USW site budget. While we maintain that USW students would be KCPS students and should receive equitable resources, we have presented a self-sustaining budget that requires minimal philanthropy investments beyond year 3 with a reduced student pass through from KCPS. KCPS presented USW with a financial impact model that showed a negative financial impact to KCPS from the launch of USW students even though most students would be newly recruited or retained KCPS students that would have likely selected a non-KCPS secondary option. USW requests that a third-party be consulted to define the financial impact to KCPS for USW launching as a partnership school, KCPS opening and operating a south middle school independently and if USW launched as a separate LEA to better understand what the investment of KCPS for USW would be, if any. The scope of this review shall include a short-term and long-term analysis. We request that a firm timeline be set for this review so that we can continue progress to community engagement.

2. Ensuring both diversity and equity – USW is committed to developing a welcoming environment for all students. Very early in talks, USW and KCPS representatives agreed to a working understanding of diversity targets being the makeup of the population south of Brush Creek. This suggested a student population of roughly 50% white, 38% Black and 12% Latino. We anticipate enrolling an amount of free-reduced lunch students reflective of the population south of brush creek as well. We have also acknowledged KCPS desire to minimize the impact of USW to other secondary KCPS programs. Therefore, we have recommended using an enrollment boundary and priority zip codes, as needed, to facilitate a diverse program as early as the first year. The USW board would also welcome DEI trainings and would partner with Charter Board Partners to ensure that our governance, goals and priorities center diversity, equity and inclusion. Further, we would participate in trainings afforded to other charter and district boards by invitation. School design planning will prioritize culturally responsive teaching and the governing board is committed to setting and monitoring DEI targets including but not limited to: opportunity gap amongst students, discipline rates, student and staff diversity.

3. Operational Capacity/Expertise – As written in the KCPS response, the USW board is a strong, diverse board representative of multiple fields of expertise and backgrounds. We can add up to six more board

members and plan to do as the project progresses. We are prioritizing parents, candidates from diverse backgrounds, residents of the south corridor and educators. To be clear, USW is a non-profit board and wishes to find the best candidates. As mentioned in the LOI response, its key that we have a strong board to create a strong school.

4. Community Involvement/Proposed Timeline and Engagement – USW has and will continue to remain committed to community engagement throughout the design, launch and operation phases of the school. We request that community engagement be a priority for both USW and KCPS so that we can bring more perspectives to the table. Since the LOI was accepted, conversations have existed only amongst USW board members and a few designated members of KCPS cabinet. While we think we have established a baseline understanding between these two groups for most of the concerns captured in the LOI response, elevating this conversation to the community and other stakeholders as soon as possible is paramount to USW being a community-based school. We have attached a community engagement timeline to this memo for clarity of all parties involved.

5. Commitment to Collaboration/Trust – USW has remained steadfast in commitments made to KCPS leadership from the beginning of our collaboration talks. This has included: filtering new content communication through the KCPS communication team, directing concerns to the KCPS point of contact and limiting community dialogue until we can present information together. To continue keeping our stakeholders engaged in this community-based project, we would like to institute a routine, joint communication update to increase transparency to the community. We suggest a bi-weekly email blast that can also be uploaded to KCPS and USW websites. We also stand ready to participate in town halls, community events and other engagements to elevate the USW/KCPS talks to a diverse audience.

At the time of this memo, the USW movement will be entering its third year. It is not lost on us that if we open in 2020 or 2021, we will have missed an entire high school class of students. Our supporters, stakeholders, funders and board members are committed to getting an innovate, rigorous and welcoming secondary program opened and operating for families in the south of Brush Creek. They are counting on us to provide them a timeline to opening so that they can plan accordingly for their children's future.

Yours in partnership,

Phyllis Williams

Board Chair, Uniting at Southwest