

# Neighborhood Council of Westchester/Playa Education Committee



## NCWP Education Committee Members

Michele Cooley Strickland, M.Ed., Ph.D. – Chair  
Grace Yao – Co-Chair                      Matthew Tecele  
Andrew Kamm                                  John-David Webster  
Denny Schneider                              Bryan Williams

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## Meeting Minutes – November 30, 2015

Westchester Municipal Building Community Rm, 7166 W. Manchester Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90045

1. Members Present: Michele Cooley-Strickland (Chair), Grace Yao (Co-Chair), Andrew Kamm, Denny Schneider, Matthew Tecele, John David Webster; Absent: Bryan Williams
2. The meeting was called to order by Dr. Michele Cooley-Strickland at 6:30pm.
3. The Committee unanimously approved the Minutes from the September 30 and October 21, 2015 meetings.
4. The Committee welcomed guests attending today's special meeting, including:

Dylan Benefield, Carla Isabel Castro, Tracy Thrower Conyers, Rebecca Cunningham, Shawna Draxton, Juan Flores, Karen Folette, Rashad Gover, Marion Hogue, Rafael Jimenez, Diane Kaiser, Lynn Kataoka, Jacqueline Martin, Janet Maza, Patrick Meyer, Peter Mikhail, Allys Pagan, Karen Schaffer, Shari Siegler, Christy Skura, Alex Stein, Gwen Vuchsas, Christina Wantz, Heather Ward, and James Ward

5. Announcements from Local Education Group Representatives included:
  - a) LMU Community Relations – Grace Yao announced:
    - i. This Friday, December 4<sup>th</sup> at 6pm at LMU's Regents Terrace is their **annual Christmas Tree Lighting event** for students and community members. There is a "snow storm," hot cocoa, and other freebies (like LMU mugs, while supplies last). Fun for the whole family.
  - b) Otis College of Art and Design – Matt Tecele announced:
    - i. Through December 6<sup>th</sup> - Art Collection, "Exquisite Beauty" (Otis College of Art and Design; Ben Maltz Gallery) 90+ piece ceramics exhibit featuring renowned artist Ralph Bacerra. Bacerra was a Los Angeles-based artist known for his innovative approach to surface embellishment. Learn more at: <http://www.otis.edu/ben-maltz-gallery#sthash.gWymfshC.dpuf>
  - c) Others – Michele Cooley-Strickland announced:
    - i. December 1 at 6:00pm: LAUSD will hold a meeting for the community on **Venice High School's Major Modernization Project**. Venice High School is one of 11 schools selected by LAUSD to receive \$60M-\$100M in major renovations. Feeder schools for Venice High School include: Beethoven, Braddock Drive, Broadway, Charnock Road, Clover, Coeur d'Alene, Grand View, Mar Vista, Playa del Rey, Playa Vista, Short, Stoner, Walgrove, Westminster, Marina del Rey, Mark Twain, Palms, and Webster. The meeting will be at Venice High School in the Student Cafeteria (13000 Venice Boulevard, Los Angeles 90066). For more information, call Jose De Paz, FSD Community Relations (213)241-4141.
    - ii. December 7 from 5:30-7pm: LMU's School of Education and Family of Schools will hold a community dialogue entitled, "**From Girls to Gamechangers: Women in STEM and the development of a pipeline for girls and young women.**" This meeting is open to the public. For more information or to RSVP, see <http://SOE.LMU.edu/CommunityDialogue>

New Business – The Committee voted unanimously to adjust the order of new business because the vast majority of the approximately 40 meeting attendees were primarily interested in Action Item Three. These Minutes reflect the actual order of discussion.

- 1 Our NCWP Education Goal: *To engage the Westchester/Playa del Rey/Playa Vista community in support of advancing the success of the local elementary, middle, and high schools, as well as that of the local colleges and universities, manifested by enhancing: i) School resources; ii) students' educational experiences; iii) parental involvement; and/or iv) community partnerships.*

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## 6. Action Item Three: Discussion and Response to the LAUSD Proposed Educational Facilities Plan for Playa Vista/Westchester/Playa del Rey Areas.

*Background:* On November 16, 2015 at Wright Middle School STEAM Magnet, Mr. Steve Zimmer (LAUSD School Board President and District 4 Representative) and Ms. Cheryl Hildreth's Office (Instructional Area Superintendent for LAUSD Educational Service Center - West) held a town hall meeting with Q&A for the Playa Vista, Westchester, and Playa del Rey communities about the potential educational facilities plan they have for Playa Vista/Westchester/Playa del Rey. The NCWP Education Committee helped to widely publicize this meeting via local school principals, emails, and social media outlets.

LAUSD's proposed changes would likely affect Playa Vista Elementary School and its rising middle school students, Wright Middle School STEAM Magnet, WISH Charter, Emerson Adult Learning Center, and potentially Westchester Enriched Sciences Magnet High School among others. At the end of these Minutes are photos of the three primary summary slides presented by LAUSD.

This proposed plan was submitted to the Bond Oversight Committee on November 19<sup>th</sup> for approval. It will next be presented to the Board of Education (BOE) for approval on December 8, 2015. The NCWP Education Committee discussed the potential educational community impacts after reading an emailed statement from LAUSD Board President Zimmer received just prior to tonight's meeting ([see below](#)) and hearing public statements from 14 community stakeholders (i.e., students, parents, administrators, and community members; [see summaries below](#)). The Education Committee *voted* unanimously to submit a Motion to the NCWP Board requesting that a letter we drafted would be sent to Board President Zimmer and cc'd to Ramon Cortines (Superintendent, LAUSD), Michelle King (Chief Deputy Superintendent, LAUSD), Cheryl Hildreth (Instructional Area Superintendent, LAUSD Educational Service Center –West), and Mike Bonin (LA City Councilmember, District 11). The letter suggests that:

*a collaborative engagement LAUSD Playa Vista/Westchester/Playa del Rey Educational Facilities Project Advisory Working Group is formed. This would be a collaborative partnership between LAUSD and the stakeholders from each of the vested and potentially affected schools (i.e., administrators and parent representatives) to participate in discussions on next steps related to the operationalization of the facilities plan or any future decision-making process that may impact the aforementioned school and community stakeholders.*

The Motion and Letter are [attached](#) to the Minutes.

UPDATE 1: The Motion to send the letter to Board President Steve Zimmer was approved by the NCWP Board via unanimous vote on December 1<sup>st</sup>. The letter – with the summarized public comments -- was emailed to Mr. Zimmer on December 2<sup>nd</sup>, with copies emailed to Ramon Cortines (Superintendent, LAUSD), Michelle King (Chief Deputy Superintendent, LAUSD), Cheryl Hildreth (Instructional Area Superintendent, LAUSD Educational Service Center –West), and Mike Bonin (LA City Councilmember, District 11).

UPDATE 2: The Board of Education will meet at 11:30am on December 8<sup>th</sup> at 333 South Beaudry Avenue, Board Room. This issue is Agenda item #13 (see <http://laschoolboard.org/sites/default/files/12-08-15postOB.pdf>).

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**13. Board of Education Report No. 181 – 15/16** Facilities Services Division (Components of the Playa Vista Area Enrollment Growth Plan: Amendment to the Facilities Services Division Strategic Execution Plan to Approve Project Definitions at Two School Sites and Authorize Feasibility Studies at a Third Site) Recommends approval of an amendment to the Strategic Execution Plan to define and approve project definitions at Playa Vista Elementary School and Orville Wright Middle School to support the Playa Vista area enrollment growth plan for a combined budget of \$10.25 million.

Individuals wishing to speak at a Board meeting must sign up at the meeting. For more information call (213) 241-7002. Alternatively, live video stream may be available during the meeting at:

[http://lausd.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?publish\\_id=2](http://lausd.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?publish_id=2)

7. **Action Item One: Updates on Westchester Innovative School House (WISH) Charter Middle School Kentwood Community Relations** were provided. *Background:* Concerns were expressed by Kentwood community residents at the August 26<sup>th</sup> and September 30<sup>th</sup> 2015 NCWP Education Committee meetings regarding the then newly co-located WISH Charter Middle School at Cowan Elementary School (previously co-located 0.3 mile away at Wright Middle School STEAM Magnet, 6550 W. 80th Street, 90045). At our September 30<sup>th</sup> NCWP meeting, Marc Paez (LAUSD Local District West Lead Operations Coordinator), Fred Sutton (Councilmember Bonin's Field Deputy), and WISH Charter, Cowan Elementary, and Wright Middle School principals were present to help address the concerns.

Michele Cooley-Strickland provided an update on the actions taken by LAUSD Local District West Lead Operations Coordinator, Marc Paez. Mr. Paez reported to her that he submitted a request for the LAUSD school traffic police to assist with the traffic/safety challenges in the WISH Charter/Cowan Elementary School area. He will follow-up with them on December 1st. Also on December 1<sup>st</sup> he will submit a request with OAHs for a crossing guard in that area and will contact Michele Cooley-Strickland with an update.

Dr. Shawna Draxton (Director of WISH Charter Schools) reported that she has checked in with several of the previously disaffected neighbors. She said they each reported good things and had no complaints. Dr. Cooley-Strickland concurred in that she had not been notified of any WISH/Community Relations challenges in a couple of months. Nonetheless, the NCWP Education Committee will continue to monitor this issue in the interest of enhancing student safety, reducing community traffic/parking, and building positive community relations.

8. **Action Item Two: Post-meeting Discussion** and next steps regarding our "**Westside Public Education Community Meeting**" featuring **Elected Officials and School Representatives on October 26, 2015 from 6:30-8pm** at Wright Middle School STEAM Magnet (6550 W. 80th Street, Westchester).

*Summary:* The NCWP Education Committee organized the "*Westside Public Education Community Meeting*" to provide an opportunity for multiple Westside communities to hear directly from our education representatives and elected officials about their plans and vision for strengthening our local publicly-funded schools. There were approximately 400 attendees comprised of parents (with and without school-aged children), teachers, students, administrators, and stakeholders interested in improving our local schools.

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This meeting represented an unprecedented collaboration between five Los Angeles Neighborhood Councils: Westchester, Playa del Rey, Playa Vista, Del Rey, Mar Vista, Venice, and Westside Village. Program panelists included LAUSD Chief Deputy Superintendent Michelle King; LAUSD Instructional Area Superintendent Cheryl P. Hildreth; LAUSD School Board President and District 4 Representative Steven Zimmer. Representatives from the following elected officials were confirmed to attend: Senator Benjamin Allen (Fernando Morales); Councilperson Mike Bonin (Fred Sutton); Assemblymember Autumn Burke (Odysseus Bostick). Dr. Michele Cooley-Strickland (Chair, NCWP Education Committee) served as moderator. Panelists were asked questions that had been prepared in advance as well as questions that had been emailed and hand-written that evening by the audience. Those 99 audience questions have been typed up and categorized and submitted in their entirety to the panelists.

The following are downloadable at the [www.NCWPdR.org/Education](http://www.NCWPdR.org/Education) webpage:

- a) Westside Public Education Community Meeting Program Handout – pages 1 and 2
- b) 99 Questions Hand-Written by the Audience, Emailed in Advance, and Prepared Questions: Westside Public Education Community Meeting

See local media coverage:

- a) page 7 of November 2015 issue of *The Hometown News*  
<http://issuu.com/westchesterpdrhometownnews/docs/finalhtnnovember2015web1> and
- b) November 4, 2015 issue of *The Argonaut* “Don’t Judge a School by its Test Scores”  
<http://argonautnews.com/dont-judge-a-school-by-its-test-scores/>

Michele Cooley-Strickland announced that Board President Zimmer’s Chief Deputy, Claudia Vizcarra, said that Mr. Zimmer will be responding to a sampling of the 99 questions from the meeting. LAUSD Instructional Area Superintendent Cheryl Hildreth has communicated that she will work to answer questions as well. Michele Cooley-Strickland has a follow-up meeting with LAUSD Chief Deputy Superintendent Michelle King on December 17<sup>th</sup>. The NCWP Education Committee will continue efforts to serve as a meaningful liaison between our Westside stakeholders and LAUSD in partnership to strengthen our publicly funded schools.

The next NCWP Education Committee meeting is Wednesday, December 16, 2015 because of the holidays. Regularly scheduled meetings on the fourth Wednesday of each month will resume in January 2016.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:10pm.

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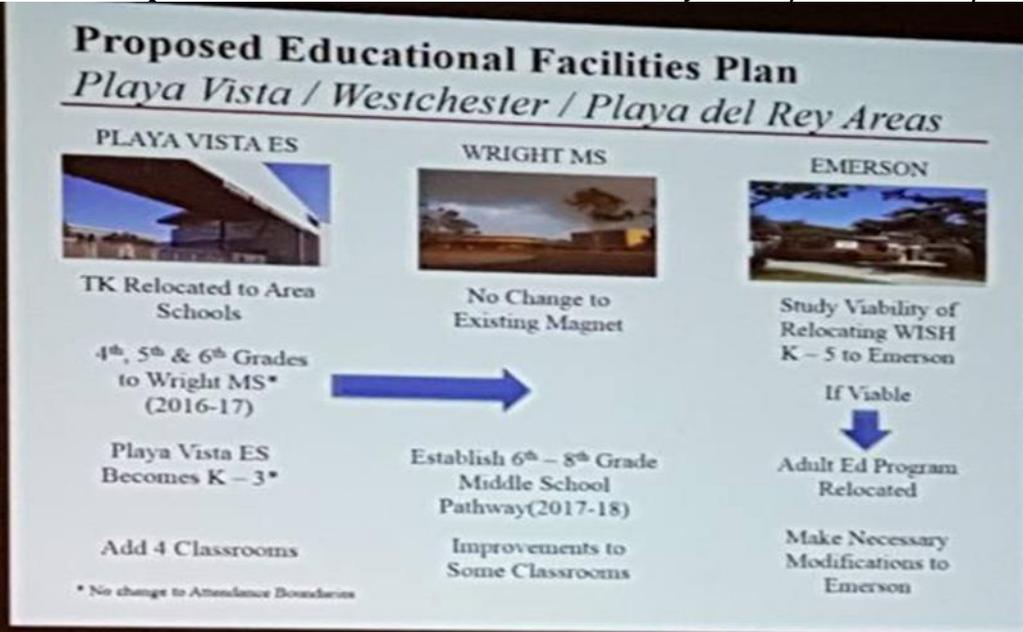
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## 11-16-15 LAUSD Proposed Educational Facilities Plan for Playa Vista/Westchester/Playa del Rey Areas



Done

- Board of Education Approval – Dec. 8

- Project Definition to include:

- Add 4 new classrooms at Playa Vista ES
- Provide improvements at Wright MS
- Evaluate the viability of moving WISH K-5 to Emerson

- If Approved Initiate Environmental Reviews, Planning and Design - Q1 2016

- Convene Parent Reps from Feeder Elementary Schools to Jointly Plan Instructional Pathway for the Middle School Program

### Advantages of the Educational Facilities Plan

- Allows Students to Attend Neighborhood Schools – no multi-track, capping or change to attendance boundaries
- Successful District programs at local elementary schools now have an additional pathway at Wright MS
- Reestablishes a middle school for Playa / Westchester families at Wright MS
- Maintains and grows relationship with LMU at all Westchester schools
- Maintains Playa Vista ES as the resident school for K-3 students in the Playa Vista development
- Maintains successful existing STEAM magnet program at Wright MS
- If viable, provides alternative site for WISH K - 5 program at Emerson

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## Statement from LAUSD Board President Steve Zimmer to the Westchester Playa Community Vizcarra, Claudia [claudia.vizcarra@lausd.net]

You replied on 11/30/2015 6:05 PM.

**Sent:** Monday, November 30, 2015 5:52 PM

**To:** [Cooley-Strickland, Michele](#)

To the Westchester/Playa Community:

I apologize I cannot join tonight's meeting of the Education Committee of the Neighborhood Council of Westchester/Playa. I have a meeting related to the Superintendent Search that I cannot reschedule. Chair Strickland-Cooley has been in regular contact with myself and my staff and will update me following tonight's meeting.

I want everyone to understand what is and what is not happening at Tuesday's LAUSD Board meeting. On Tuesday the Board will consider three actions to address overcrowding issues at Playa Vista Elementary School.

- \* The first action is to add four classrooms to the Playa Vista campus to accommodate enrollment growth by the end of construction in 2020.
- \* The second action upgrades classrooms at Orville Wright Middle School to become science laboratory facilities, which would be completed by the fourth quarter of 2018.
- \* The third action is to authorize a feasibility study to begin to explore if the current Westchester Emerson Community Adult School facility could be used to house elementary school students in the future.

Although there is a "background" section attached to the report, the Board is not adopting or formally authorizing anything beyond the actions listed above. I am still listening to all voices in the community and considering the implications to any and all plans proposed.

I want to be very clear about two of the many issues brought up by the overcrowding at Playa Vista.

First, I will not support any plan that does not allow the services of the Emerson Community Adult School to remain intact and accessible to present and future adult students.

Second, I will not support plans that force a reduction in non-resident permits from the historic feeder patterns of Westchester area schools. Superintendent Cortines and I agreed to this when Westchester High School and Orville Wright Middle School transitioned to full school magnets. We will honor these agreements. While non-resident permits at Playa Vista Elementary School may be reduced because of overcrowding, this will not

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affect our ability to serve all students who have been part of our feeder school patterns at other Westchester area campuses.

I know that there are many concerns and fears as we attempt to address the many challenges ahead. I am excited, however, about the many possibilities that are also emerging for all students in our community. I do believe that if we come together as a community we can improve public education outcomes for all our students and become a model for the rest of the district.

Thank you for your engagement in this process. I will continue to listen to your voices and think about what is best for all children as we move forward together.

Steve

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## NCWP Education Committee Meeting November 30, 2015 Summary of Public Comments

### Patrick Meyer (Emerson Adult School - Teacher)

A teacher at Emerson Adult School for 28 years, Mr. Meyer congratulated the large number of Emerson students who were present at the meeting and taking an active role in the facilities process. Most of them are graduating therefore their efforts will help future adult school students. Many of his students work East of Sepulveda. Emerson Adult School is a wonderful community benefit, primarily getting the students on the right path (i.e., work, college). Mr. Meyer chronicled the numerous facilities changes the adult school has experienced over the past several decades, including Amnesty. When they were located at Westchester High School, it was disastrous. He emphatically does not support the relocation of Emerson Adult School anywhere: A relocation would detrimentally affect the students' transportation, put adults in close proximity to children, and disrupt a very successful program.

### Shari Siegler (Emerson Adult School - Teacher)

Ms. Siegler wrote that Emerson Adult Center does not want to relocate – transportation problems, mixing of adults with children, not best situation; viable programs/successful programs should not be scapegoats to potential growth in other areas. Nowhere to expand if we are relocated to a small area. Ms. Siegler asked, Why is it us that has to move? We are in the business of educating. We have adult students of all ages, including a 94-year old student who cannot walk the ¾ mile from the bus stop to Westchester High School. He – and others like him – would simply stop going to school.

### Dylan Benefield (Emerson Adult School - Student)

Mr. Benefield, a graduating student at Emerson Adult School, gleefully said, This school is amazing! There are amazing teachers, they give more time and support so that he is tremendously successful. He said, We have a beautiful campus. I love the students. I love this LAUSD program for the future. Mr. Benefield supports the Emerson Adult School remaining at its current location so that other adult students will continue to greatly benefit.

### Alexander Stein (Playa Vista Elementary School Parent & PV Resident)

Mr. Stein represented Playa Vista Elementary (PVE) School. He stated that the community is growing and is experiencing an influx of young families. PVE has reached its absolute capacity. Even if the school does not enroll another student, there are immediate space/facility issues. Our campus is full. The 2020 plan will not meet our immediate facilities needs. There are rising 5<sup>th</sup> grade students who need to be accommodated. The PVE parents are not thrilled that their 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders will have to be bussed to a separate campus. The expansion and extension of the PVE program would be beneficial but poses a cost to everyone too. There are expected to be 60 new Kindergarten students and there is no current PVE space for them. Potential options posed by LAUSD include mandatory bussing or adopting a year-round calendar, neither of which is acceptable to the PVE parents.

### James Ward (Playa Vista PHASE II Resident)

Mr. Ward attended with his wife; both are Playa Vista Phase II residents. They moved to Phase II two months ago from the original section of Playa Vista. Mr. Ward said that they are textbook Phase II residents with young children. There are hundreds of angry residents who will soon move into PV Phase II, angry because they purchased homes with the specific understanding that their children would attend Playa Vista Elementary School. The Wards have two children: A TK student at PVE who is absolutely thriving, and a 3 year old child who should be in TK at PVE next year. However, with the facilities challenges, they do not know where she will go to school. There is much uncertainty, stress to say the least, and scariness regarding the public school choice options for their family and other residents in Playa Vista. What happens if the proposed plan doesn't go forth?

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### Janet Maza (Kentwood Elementary School Parent & Westchester Resident)

Mrs. Maza wrote, I have concern about the planning, which seems to have focused on serving Playa Vista families. I'm interested in hearing about a plan to improve education for the entire community. Mrs. Maza said that she used LAUSD e-choices to enroll her 5<sup>th</sup> grader into the magnet school and three days later became aware of impending changes. She asked, Where is the enforcement of the developers' commitment to the community? The messaging from LAUSD is problematic, such that it seemed to have been cooked up in secret then rolled out to the community. The whole presentation on November 16<sup>th</sup> was focused on Playa Vista having a need, but she requests that the LAUSD facilities plan is one that is data based and empirically driven. Everything is changing in Westchester/Playa Vista/Playa del Rey. The resultant plan should be holistic and meet the needs of all of the changing demographics [in Westchester/Playa Vista/Playa del Rey] across the age span.

### Juan Flores (Emerson Adult School - Student)

Mr. Flores expressed his gratitude for the opportunity to speak. He stated that he understands the issues, but that kids should be with kids, teens with teens, and adults with adults such that adult school students should not be co-located with elementary or middle or high school students. He expressed that everyone has to give, but no one wants to. However, having listened to the other stakeholders, he believes that we should all cooperate and support each other. He said, I could bend my heart to understand [the needs and challenges for the other students]. Mr. Flores is studying government and economics at Emerson Adult School. Relocating the school would create tremendous transportation hardships for him and his fellow students. He said he just wants education, and he knows classmates who won't even try to go to school if they are moved.

### Peter Mikhail (Wright Middle School Parent and Westchester/Playa Stakeholder)

Dr. Mikhail is the PTO President for Wright Middle School and a physician with two private practices in Westchester/Playa so he is a committed community stakeholder. He expressed the following concerns: The dollars Playa Vista invested in the community, the District, and the developer [Brookefield] got it wrong and need to be held accountable. Everything has occurred covertly. Collaborative action must be taken to prevent the psychological impact on the children. Bussing. Separate but equal. Parents do not know how they will discuss these issues with their children. An injunction will be the next step. The process of how the facilities plan was developed and shared was poorly done. What's needed is everyone at the table. The [Playa Vista] developer should build a new school.

### Gwen Vuchsas (Playa del Rey Resident and LAX Coastal Chamber Education Committee Chair)

Mrs. Vuchsas said, The messaging of what happened threw everyone. There are ugly threads, although we're all in this together. The [Brookefield] developer shouldn't be pounded on directly because LAUSD mitigated their plan. She recommended that folks go to the Playa Vista developers to get the whole history. LAUSD has been meeting with Playa Vista, whereas the other schools haven't been integrated into the facilities discussions. I think the District leaders should meet with the affected schools and our community leaders affected by this thing. There are lots of empty seats in our schools; we need to work out the puzzle. We can't let people downtown make decisions for us locally when they aren't intimately aware of the issues our community is facing.

### Karen Follette (Wright Middle School Parent & Kentwood Stakeholder)

Ms. Follette said the administrators and teachers at Wright Middle School STEAM Magnet are doing an amazing job and having huge successes. Wright is a community school for Westchester, Baldwin Hills, and others. Thank goodness for the NCWP. We need to slow this process. There are other resources heretofore underexplored that may help with the facilities challenges in our community. We need to dot all the "I's" and cross all the "I's" to get the community behind the plans that affect us all.

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### Karen Schaffer (Westchester Resident)

Mrs. Schaffer wrote, “1) How many students are at Emerson; 2) What kind of classes?” Mrs. Schaffer is a long-time community member who helps with the Community Garden at Wright Middle School. She invited the Emerson Adult Learning Center faculty and students to participate in the Community Garden. Mrs. Schaffer asked the NCWP to coordinate an opportunity for stakeholders to get more input to LAUSD instead of decisions just being handed down.

### Rebecca “Becky” Cunningham (Westchester Resident)

Mrs. Cunningham has been a Westchester resident since 2003 and fell in love with it. Her husband is a LMU alumnus. When she was employed by LMU, hers was among the first families to enroll her child in Playa Vista Elementary School. There was a lot of uncertainty and stress in those initial years, but the school quickly thrived (e.g., API of 900). With the current facilities plan and the way it was shared with the community, there has been quick aggression on social media, which she has tried to address. There was originally a lot of excitement among families in Paseo del Rey, Kentwood, and Westchester about another school choice. However, there are no more permit options, including no more sibling permits – even if your older child is already enrolled in Playa Vista Elementary. It is for residents only.

### Christy Skura (WISH Charter Parent Leader)

Ms. Skura has two children enrolled at WISH elementary in the 1<sup>st</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grades. There is a great deal of uncertainty for WISH Elementary to Middle School. Where will they be? WISH has a unique educational model that has received awards. Their student population is 15% special needs (i.e., children with moderate to severe disabilities) and 18% gifted. Their parents are concerned about the proximity to the airport. 80-90% of WISH’s student population is from Westchester and Playa del Rey. They have a solid partnership with LMU and it is vital that WISH remains in close proximity to LMU.

### Dr. Shawna Draxton (Director, WISH Charter)

Dr. Draxton said that WISH Charter is fortunate to be co-located. They have wonderful relationships, a strong administrative team and teachers. We are a neighborhood school. We are very happy where we are located. They are very concerned for the Emerson community. A big parent group at Cowan Elementary school is apparently exploring moving to Windsor Hills Magnet. Regarding the facilities process, it would be best to have all stakeholders at the table. There needs to be accountability.

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