



February 19, 2016

Delaware Department of Education
The Townsend Building
401 Federal Street, Suite 2
Dover, DE 19901-3639

Subject: Completing the Record re Academia Antonia Alonso (La Academia) and the CEB

We were disappointed to learn of Academia Antonia Alonso's decision to request approval to relocate from the Community Education Building (CEB). We understand La Academia's leadership feels the building is not conducive to their vision for the school. While we have no desire to stand in the way of La Academia receiving your approval to relocate, we feel an obligation to our community to complete the record regarding allegations made by La Academia about the quality and safe environment provided by the CEB.

First and foremost, at CEB the safety and security of the children, the faculties and the staff are paramount. When apprised of a potential problem, we take prompt action to investigate and, where possible, remedy the situation.

We remain focused on our mission of transforming urban K-12 education through collaborative partnerships. Students attending schools in the building will have closed the achievement gap by 2020 and be prepared for success in college and/or careers in a global arena.

La Academia comments on the following in their modification request:

The Playground:

The playground is a block and a half from the school. When not in use, the playground is secured. Each morning prior to any children visiting the playground, CEB has a custodian inspect the facility and ensure any debris that may have accumulated there overnight is removed.

La Academia has never alerted us about allegedly finding syringes or broken glass or any other hazardous materials in the playground, nor have any of the faculty or staff from CEB's other two tenant charter schools. One time, they did notify us of a damaged fence, which was immediately repaired. Our custodian visits the playground several times a day to make sure it remains safe and to make sure the equipment the schools have requested to use is available and set up. No hazardous materials have ever been found on these inspections.

The playground is more than a block from the school building. Walking children from one location to another via public sidewalk is a common practice among urban schools around the country, and requires the close attention of the school's staff. To manage in such an urban setting, proper



supervision and staffing levels must be provided by the tenant schools. The other two schools in the building do not share the same level of concern as La Academia.

Transitioning Time:

La Academia occupies the 4th floor of the CEB Building. They were fully aware of the space they would occupy when they negotiated their lease. Though transition times are affected by their location, this is something they should have foreseen before moving in.

Food Service Scheduling:

Food service schedules were decided by representatives of the three tenant charter schools over the course of the summer, in concert with CEB's foodservice staff. La Academia's prior leadership team approved these schedules then. They were then approved by the State. The CEB cannot unilaterally adjust them.

We do agree with La Academia that CEB's foodservice operation encountered some menu problems early in the school year, which, when brought to our attention, were fixed immediately, as La Academia acknowledges in their application.

Stuck Elevator:

Earlier in the year, two elevators did get stuck, on different days. The problem was caused by a failure of certain Delmarva Power and Light equipment. DPL fixed their equipment and we have not had a similar service issue since.

Bus Transportation:

The City of Wilmington denied a variance to allow us to close part of French Street to vehicular traffic during school bus arrival and departure times. However, the City does permit us to control the flow of traffic. Therefore, we have hired additional security and crossing guards and implemented tactics to ensure the safety of the children, the schools' busses and other traffic during this particularly congested period.

We will continue to work with the City of Wilmington and other interested parties to manage the drop off and pick up of children.

To be clear, the CEB does not own or contract for the busses. Bus service is the responsibility of each of the tenant schools. CEB has no control over arrival and departure times or any other concerns about the busses.

Access to the Building:

Originally, as agreed to by the tenant schools, the CEB building was open to faculty and staff from 6 a.m. until 7 p.m. Monday-Friday. At the request of the schools, we extended the time until 8 p.m. this year.

All school leases clearly state that any costs incurred by the CEB after regular operating hours will



be borne by the organization causing the expense. We invoice all tenants if their scheduled activities require CEB to incur additional security staffing or operating costs.

La Academia was fully aware of these terms when they agreed to become tenants.

The Lease:

La Academia entered into the lease for space in the CEB building with full knowledge of the benefits and challenges the multi-tenant building and urban location represented.

Assuming La Academia's application to relocate is approved, we fully expect them to live up to the remaining terms of the lease as they prepare to depart. In particular, the lease requires the tenant to reimburse CEB for any damages to the physical property they leased, beyond normal wear and tear.

Conclusion:

When La Academia first indicated in December that they might want to relocate, CEB was disappointed but cooperative. We granted La Academia extra time, beyond the required December 31 lease renewal deadline, to explore their options and make a decision. We committed to working with La Academia to make the transition, if approved, as smooth as possible. And we intend to honor that commitment. In short, we understand that the CEB building may not meet the needs of the La Academia leadership team and we recommend approval of their application so they may pursue their vision as we pursue ours.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Aretha Miller", is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Aretha Miller
Chief Executive Officer