September 8, 2016

Dear South Loop Families,

I hope that the first week of school has started off on a great note. We have had some amazing back to school and community activities happening around the school. We are thrilled to have such a positive jumpstart on our year!

While we are confident that our students and teachers will have a great school year, it is important that we address you with our current budget status and concerns. We know that it can be daunting to want to support CPS and public education, especially with this current state, but we encourage you to continue to stay committed to South Loop School.

As we continue to deal with a CPS budget crisis, we have done our best to keep you updated on how this affects South Loop School specifically. We have had some challenges, but have also been able to make minimal sacrifices in order to maintain the quality programs and resources we offer at our school. Much of this is due to saving and planning ahead, as well as the fundraisers we’ve held each year. Unfortunately, this could only serve as a temporary solution. Now, we are relying heavily on our Student Based Budget (SBB) for all critical funding, including support teacher positions, instructional materials, and instructional programs.

With our current budget, we already had to make tough, but mindful, adjustments that would be the best for South Loop School. These decisions were not easy to make, but they were based on what would be most beneficial for our school and our students. These decisions included:

* Closing our preschool program to accommodate space
* Closing 2 assistant positions
* Closing 1 resource teacher position
* Combining 5th grade classrooms from four classes to three (note: Yes, we have enough desks and chairs for all of our students ☺). This decision was based on multiple factors such as:
  + Space- we could not accommodate an additional classroom, even after closing our PreK program
  + Scheduling purposes- condensing classrooms ensured that all students would receive the required minutes in all subject areas. Having an additional room may have shortened their minutes.
  + The budget did not allow for an additional position, and our teachers would have had to take on additional subjects, disrupting our middle school model.
* Spending cuts for some school wide events such as the Back to School picnic- we saved $7000 by asking families to bring their own picnic lunches.

The Student Based Budget is determined by the number of students enrolled at the school. The budget is given based on a projected number for enrollment, but then reevaluated on the 10th and 20th day of school. Each enrolled student earns the school $4,000. Our projected enrollment for this year was 827 students. Currently, we have 792 enrolled. Therefore, if our enrollment stays the same, after the 10th and 20th day, we will have to return $145,000 to CPS. This will be an extremely detrimental cut to our funding, especially considering we have already had to make numerous sacrifices.

As you can see, we are in a true budget crisis. We must work together to prevent even more sacrifices. When we reach out for fundraisers and for school fees, we are doing this so that we can be prepared and make decisions that will be least detrimental to our students’ learning.

The best way you can help is by paying your school fee. If 600 families paid the school fee, we would have at least $45,000. You can also contribute by participating in our fundraisers, starting with Oktoberfest. If we can have all school fees paid, we can use those fees, along with money reserved from Friends and Family, to pay back CPS and keep the teacher and instructional resources we have in place for this school year.

We appreciate and value the time and support you have already dedicated to our school, and hope that you understand how essential your continued support is in providing quality education for your children.

Yours in Education,

Ms. Shelton