#DropTheSuit April 28, 2016 Community Meeting Questions and Answers

Thank you very much for attending the April 28th Community Meeting! We appreciated the great turnout, concern and passion charter public school parents have for their children’s school and the many excellent questions. We hope the responses to questions asked that evening will be helpful to you.

Two Key Facts:
1. There are 35 charter schools in the City of St. Louis, serving 10,500 students. This represents 30.0% of the public school students. Charter schools’ student body is 70% African American and 82.0% Free and Reduced Lunch.
2. On April 11, 2016 the St. Louis Public Schools Special Administrative Board (SLPS SAB) filed a motion against the State of Missouri seeking restitution for alleged overpayments to the charter schools in St. Louis. SLPS is seeking from the State of Missouri full restitution of all monies they challenge have been overpaid to charter schools (estimated by SLPS at $42.5 million for 2006-2015 and an additional $8.8 million for this year) AND a change to charter school payments removing the inclusion of ‘desegregation’ sales tax money. If SLPS prevails, future St. Louis charter school payments from the State would be reduced.

The Most Important Question:
Does this mean my child’s charter public school will not be here next year?
NO! The lawsuit will take some time before any final judgments are made. The final result could be devastating to the charter schools but it should not affect next year. We encourage families currently enrolled and those considering enrolling in a charter public school NOT to give in to fear. You chose your children’s school because it was the best fit for them and you! Don’t give up that choice because of an unwarranted lawsuit! Stand up for your right to choose your children’s school by working with your children’s school and the charter school community to find a solution!
What is the real reason behind this lawsuit?
This is an interesting question and no one knows the answer besides the St. Louis Public Schools Special Administrative Board (SLPS SAB). Is it because charter public schools currently serve over 30% of the public school students in St. Louis and this increases every year? Is it an effort to bring in more money? Only the SLPS SAB can answer that question.

Does the SLPS SAB have an obligation to pursue this? Do they have a viable claim?
This appears to be what the lawsuit asks and the Federal Court Judge will have to decide. We believe there are other avenues to finding this out without filing a lawsuit that could bankrupt charter schools! MCPSA and the charter schools in St. Louis maintain the belief held for over a decade - ALL public school students should be equitably funded and ALL public school entities should be working TOGETHER toward this goal.

The SLPS SAB says this is NOT a dispute between SLPS and charter schools. Is that true?
The action by the SLPS SAB was fully controlled by SLPS and could only move forward if the SLPS SAB voted for the lawsuit to be filed. SLPS and the SAB are well aware of the results of the court cases from illegally withholding money from public schools. State Law requires any overpayment made to charter public schools to be paid back in 12 months the following year. If the SLPS SAB prevails, there is NO OTHER COURSE OF ACTION the State can take but to:

Reduce the per student payment to charter schools by approximately $800 per student (10% of a charter school’s budget).
Return $42M by withholding over 12 months the total received by each charter school since 2006.

Their dispute may not directly be with the charter public schools but the outcome of their dispute will negatively impact every charter public school in St. Louis.

Many, many charter school parents just supported the St. Louis Public School District tax levy even though we heard our school wouldn’t receive the increased funding for two years. Why didn’t they say anything?
We don’t know why the SLPS SAB chose to move forward without ever sharing the concern with charter public schools. Over the last few years, charter schools have sought ways to partner with SLPS. Most recently, SLPS requested the support of the charter schools in St. Louis to pass their tax levy increase. The charter schools in St. Louis overwhelmingly supported the tax levy and encouraged parents to vote in favor. This occurred although the charter schools knew their portion of the tax increase would not be received for at least two years.
On Tuesday, April 5, SLPS passed the tax levy and on Monday, April 11, St. Louis Public Schools filed their motion. Was this a coincidence?

Charter public school students already receive over $10,000 LESS per student every year? How much does SLPS receive vs the $8100 charter schools receive?

According to data from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), the Saint Louis Public School District spent $14,779 per pupil in 2015 in operating expenses and $18,476 per pupil when you include the cost of debt and capital projects.” This data comes from a recent report from The Show Me Institute analyzing how much St. Louis area schools spend per year. In comparison, for the current school year the charter public schools in St. Louis are receiving an average of $8,170 per student. This is a difference of over ten thousand dollars per student. Charter public school students are NOT worth less than other public school students - ALL public school students should be equitably funded!

If the charter schools have to pay back the money is there a legal way to defer payments?

If the SLPS SAB prevails the State would need to pay the District nearly 50 million dollars AND every one of the nearly 10,500 charter school students and all future charter school students in the City of St. Louis would have their annual funding reduced by over $800. Legally the State can demand repayment from the charter schools within in 1 year [MoR.S.160.415.2(3)] Charter public school students already receive over $10,000 less per year and this would increase the gap. Charter public school students are NOT worth less than other public school students - ALL public school students should be equitably funded!

Is this an all or nothing prospect? Does it have to be a zero-sum game?

We do not believe public education funding should ever be an “all or nothing prospect”. We believe that ALL public school students should be equitably funded and ALL public school entities should be working TOGETHER toward this goal. We do NOT believe filing a lawsuit placing public schools against one another makes any good sense at all.

Worth Repeating: Does this mean my child’s charter public school will not be here next year?

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What can we do to help?

There are many ways you can help! Here are some suggestions:

- Use social media to let others know of the St. Louis Public Schools Special Administrative Board’s egregious behavior!
- Contact your local City Officials and State Officials. Let them know what is occurring and your opinion!
- Sign the petition for the SLPS Special Administrative Board asking them to Drop The Suit at: [https://www.gopetition.com/petitions/dropthesuit.html](https://www.gopetition.com/petitions/dropthesuit.html). Share this with parents and encourage them to voice their concern and sign!
- Organize a parent or community group who would be interested in learning more about the District's actions and potential impact on your charter school? We are pleased to provide information and/or attend a meeting to present, discuss and answer questions. Email dthaman@mocharterschools.org with details.
- Attend the Thursday, May 19th SLPS Special Administrative Board's monthly meeting. The meeting is at 6:00PM at the offices of St. Louis Public Schools (801 North 11th Street). We need to pack the room with charter school staff, parents, stakeholders! Any individual interested in making a comment should arrive 15 minutes early and sign in on the sheet on the podium.
- Give SLPS Superintendent Adams a call at 314-345-2500
- Tweet your opinions to @SLPSDistrict, @SLPS_Info and/or @SLPS_Supt
- Share a Facebook message regarding your feelings with [https://www.facebook.com/stlpublicschools/](https://www.facebook.com/stlpublicschools/)
- Follow @MOCharterSchool and @DThaman on Twitter and retweet
- Resources about this issue are available on the MCPSA website at www.mocharterschools.org

Should we attend the next SLPS SAB meeting (May 19th) and voice our concern?

Yes, please attend the Thursday, May 19th SLPS Special Administrative Board’s monthly meeting. The meeting is at 6:00PM at the offices of St. Louis Public Schools (801 North 11th Street). We need to pack the room with charter school staff, parents, stakeholders! Any individual interested in making a comment should arrive 15 minutes early and sign in on the sheet on the podium.