

## Linwood Monroe Arts Plus School Community Dialogue

July 16, 2018 at Palace Rec Center in Saint Paul

### Summary

The event was planned as a result of Linwood Monroe Arts Plus school (LMAP) announcing in May that they were pursuing a process to change the name of LMAP. Learn more about LMAP at their website: <https://www.spps.org/Page/22402> A new name was desired to better reflect the school's current arts focus and diversity of its students, parents, faculty, and staff. Some neighbors and alumni of Monroe High School expressed concern about changing the name, that is, a name that would not include "Monroe."

The Fort Road Federation convened a planning group<sup>1</sup> to create an event and received funding to hire a professional facilitator. Together, they designed a gathering in which attendees would tell their stories and listen to others' stories about school and community, and consider our values related to community. The meeting was not designed to make any decisions about a name and none were made. About 75 people attended the meeting. Monroe High School Alumni were the majority of attendees, about 50; fewer attendees were those with a relationship with LMAP and other interested neighbors.

Following the order of the agenda, attendees collectively decided on the "Principles for Working Together," which included respect, listening, cultural sensitivity, no personal attacks, open mind, empathy for each side, and consideration of current, future, and former students. Attendees were then instructed to discuss specific topics at their tables in two separate sessions.

The first table discussion was to share stories of how the neighborhood connects with the school and what it means to have the school in the neighborhood. Highlights reported to the whole group included, for example:

- Monroe = Sense of Place
- Strong alumni; Diverse student body
- Lifelong connections, including reunions, identity, and great childhood experience
- School reflects values of West 7th
- Connections with current kids
- It's a family
- Charity, we help each other
- Melting pot, different backgrounds at the school

The second table discussion was to answer the question, "Who and What is Community?"

Highlights reported to the whole group included that "Community is," for example:

- Monroe, the school building (as a common denominator)
- Supports the school: politically, volunteering
- Everything
- Geography of West 7th means that we fight together for the area, with success
- More than geography: students, family, within the building

**Outcome:** An open discussion at the end found many commonalities among attendees, such as:

- Value of supporting the school which is an institution / landmark in West 7th
- The importance of continuity, home and belonging, names
- Community - Create and Maintain it
- Attachment to place
- Care about education of young people

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An example of a comment from one attendee afterward summarized the evening as, “I was so skeptical about the agenda, but I saw during the meeting that people calmed down and had real conversations. I realized that there’s this whole other segment of students that I want to help and support, although I didn’t change my mind and still want to keep the name the same.”

### Next Steps

- The West 7th / Fort Road Federation Board members will be updated on the event at their next board meeting on September 10 at 7 pm. It is very *unlikely* that they will take a position on the name of the school. Rather the board will discuss how/if to convene further events.
- Linwood Monroe Arts Plus School will invite representation from school community members including PTA members, Monroe High School community alumni, LMAP current students and alumni, LMAP faculty for a committee in October.

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<sup>1</sup> Members of the event planning group:

From Fort Road Federation:

Becky Yust, President

Walt Weitzke, 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President

Denise Wickiser, 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President

Emily Northey, Executive Director and Community Organizer

From LMAP:

Dr. Bryan Bass, Principal

Steve Heitzeg, PTA member

Facilitator:

Tabitha DeRango