

The Odyssey School

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February 4, 2010

Executive Board
Stapleton Master Community Association
2823 Roslyn St.
Denver, CO 80238

Dear Board Members,

The Odyssey school has long been a part of the Stapleton community. As you may know, next Fall, the school will move just outside the Stapleton community to the current Philips elementary school building in Park Hill. However, the move to Philips is intended to be a temporary one because Philips is too small. The Odyssey Board and Community engaged in a strategic planning process this past year. What emerged from that process was overwhelming support to double the size of our school over time. Demand for our school far exceeds the supply of available seats (in the 2009 lottery, 300 students applied for 25 spots; over 100 of these families lived in Stapleton). We couldn't expand the size of our school to 450 students in the Westerly Creek campus nor can we do so at the Philips campus.

As such, our ultimate goal is to build a permanent facility in Stapleton. This letter is a request for \$2,000 from the Stapleton Master Community Association (MCA) to help Odyssey in these efforts to move back to Stapleton in the near future.

The Odyssey School opened its doors in 1998 as a K-8 Expeditionary Learning school. Odyssey has had two homes in Stapleton. The first home was in the pre-fab-type buildings that are currently located next to the RTD parking area. This structure was connected to the old airport terminal which served as our cafeteria, community space, and restrooms. We moved into our current location at Westerly Creek in 2003. This space was built for Odyssey to share with a neighborhood school. The intent then was that this would be Odyssey's permanent home. No one anticipated then the overcrowding issues that we would face down the road in Stapleton.

Our school's mission is closely aligned with the vision laid out in the Stapleton Green Book. These shared goals include sustainability, a connection with nature, and diversity. Odyssey uses the wonderful open spaces and parks in the community as an extension of our classrooms. We also embrace diversity with a weighted admission lottery to ensure that at least 33% of our students are eligible for Federal free or reduced price lunches.

One-third of our 225 K-8 students reside in Stapleton (and more than 40% of the students in grades K-2 live in Stapleton). Many of our families and staff members moved to Stapleton because of Odyssey.

Odyssey had a lease with DPS for the Westerly Creek facility through 2011; however, as part of our commitment to working with the district and Stapleton community to solve the facility overcrowding challenges, Odyssey agreed to move to the Philips Elementary school campus. We are going to make this move a positive one for our students and know that it is helping bridge the gap needed before the third Stapleton elementary school opens in 2011-12. However, in order to grow, Odyssey will need to build a larger facility.

The Denver Public Schools, Forest City, and others are committed to helping Odyssey secure the land and funding to build a larger facility in Stapleton. We are in the process of raising those funds now. Our most immediate need is to complete an application to the Building Excellent Schools Today (BEST) program, a state grant program for school construction and renovation, which requires us to hire a firm to draw up conceptual drawings and cost estimates for the new facility. We anticipate this firm will charge us between \$15-20,000 for this work. The Donnell-Kay Foundation has agreed to fund half the cost of this work. We are hoping that MCA, The Stapleton Foundation, and others can contribute as well.

Ultimately, in order to build this new facility we estimate that Odyssey will need to raise approximately \$10 million. BEST funds, if awarded, could fund up to 75% of the new facility and help get the building completed in just a few short years. The BEST application deadline is in early April so we have a compressed time schedule for securing the funds, hiring the design firm, and writing the application. However, we are up for the challenge and excited about the opportunity. We feel Odyssey is a great part of the Stapleton community. It is one of its oldest entities and exemplifies the principles laid out in the Green Book. The new site will allow the school to grow, bringing more opportunities for Stapleton students to attend. We hope to be back in Stapleton in the next few years and with the MCA's support we have a great opportunity of securing the needed funding through this grant. Thank you for your consideration.



Amy Anderson, Board Chair



Marcia Fulton, Executive Director