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Community Walk Reflection
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For one of my under grad classes, we had to examine a specific neighborhood in Chicago. Our goal was to become familiar with the essential components of the community and attempt to acclimate ourselves within the community over a period of a month. Being a Chicago native, I felt the experience was very significant because I not only got to visit China town for the first time, but I got a small sense of what the culture of the community was like. During this experience of the community walk, the same sort of emotions were evoked, but they were all the more significant because it was the first step towards a year long experience that will have a significant impact on my life.

Although we were able to do research ahead of time, none of the information that we found had any real meaning to it. I strongly believe that our group walk solidified that information and gave us a brief, but yet very real overview of what our experience will be like at The Chicago Academy. I was almost in awe at the actual atmosphere of Portage Park. To me, the neighborhood almost seemed too idealistic. There were no signs of any graffiti, garbage, or other inhibitors for a safe community. I know that during our presentation I referred to it as "Pleasantville" like and to this moment I really cannot find another word/phrase to describe it. It was a complete change from my Wicker Park neighborhood, where the area is surrounded by a vast amount of large buildings, lots of noise, and an ample amount of diverse individuals. As we walked throughout the neighborhood, I noticed that there were also no children to

be found anywhere. While it was early in the morning, it made me contemplate what type of impression that would have for the students at TCA. I wondered about what kind of thoughts they had as they walked through on their way to school. With the idea that TCA was intended to respond to the vast overcrowding, and serves a student population based upon proximity to the school, I imagined that students had grown accustomed to the neighborhood culture if they experience it daily within their home life. After looking at statistics on line, we saw that a large portion of the students were performing well academically and I thought that the structure of their neighborhood, as well as the significant amount of parent participation could essentially be correlated with that success. I wondered more about how a student, not from the community, would feel in such a community. Would they be responsive to such a tranquil environment? How would their school experiences differ from those whom are residents of the Portage Park neighborhood?

One of my group members mentioned that TCA seemed like an ideal model that hopefully all AUSL schools could follow. I honestly was taken back by the culture of the community and realized that I had a different set of expectations for the school and neighborhood. As we walked through the neighborhood, looking at the traditional structures of the various single-family homes, I wondered about the development of TCA and how supportive the community was. It also made me think about how different the experience for TCA would have been if maybe it was centered in a low income community. What would be the response from the community where resources weren't as

accessible as they appeared to be here? What would the student success rate be like, if they didn't come from a very family oriented community?

I enjoyed the other group presentations as well. They provided an in depth look at the other various communities within the AUSL network. It was very interesting to hear their experiences and visualize the different infrastructures within their schools. It made me realize, that although we are part of the same cohort, each one of us will have a completely different experience during our residency. Not only were we already planning to have these different experiences because of the individual students, school, and families that we would encounter, but all of our communities had their individual and very significant characteristics.