

ILLINOIS GENERAL ASSEMBLY
CHICAGO EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES TASK FORCE
State Representative Cynthia Soto and State Senator Heather Steans, Co-Chairs

DRAFT MINUTES OF THE MEETING AND COMMUNITY HEARING OF
SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 9TH, 2013, 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM
CHICAGO EMBASSY CHURCH, 5848 S. PRINCETON AVENUE, CHICAGO, IL

I. Call to order

- A. Welcoming remarks: Co-Chair State Rep. Soto welcomed the attendees and thanked the Pastor of Chicago Embassy Church for hosting the Hearing.
- B. Roll call for attendance: Members present were Rep. Soto; Rep. Golar; Dr. Berry, Chicago Principals & Administrators Assoc.; Sarah Hains, CTU; Cecile Carroll, Blocks Together; Rene Heybach, Chicago Coalition for the Homeless; Valencia Rias-Winstead, Designs for Change; Dr. Nona Burney, GBF.
- C. Establishment of a quorum: With 8 voting members present, quorum was established.
- D. Approval of prior meeting minutes (Oct. 17, 2012, Dec. 13, 2012, Jan. 12, 2013): The Oct. and Dec. 2012 meeting minutes were reviewed; Ms. Rias-Winstead moved that the minutes be approved, Ms. Hains seconded the motion; motion approved unanimously. Minutes for the Jan. 2013 Meeting and Community Hearing were tabled.

- II. Reports of Standing Subcommittees:** Since 29 people registered to testify, reports from the Subcommittees were tabled at the request of the Chair in the interest of allowing maximum time for Public Testimony.

III. Public Testimony: The 10-Year Educational Facilities Master Plan and School Utilization

Approximately 110 members of the public were in attendance. The Chair asked the audience to indicate by a show of hands, or in their oral testimony, if their Local School Council or Principal had received notice from Chicago Public Schools regarding the December 2012 online Survey seeking input for the 10-Year Educational Facilities Master Plan. No one in the audience raised their hands. One principal in attendance rose to respond to the Chair, saying that she might have received an email, but that in the conversion of CPS' internal email system (Winter 2012) doubted if their schools had received the survey. More than 35 members of the public registered to testify; however, given time constraints, 29 witnesses gave testimony – brief summaries of their statements are provided. The Task Force was not equipped to create transcripts of the verbal presentations, but attached to these Minutes are written statements submitted to the CEFTF. The following individuals/schools registered to speak:

1) **Matthew Johnson, Dewey Elementary LSC Chair**, summary of key points –

CPS claims Dewey's utilization rate is 53% but it's really about 80%, because CPS didn't count the SPED rooms where there are 12 – 13 kids per class. Dewey has a special PreK program that follows kids to 3rd grade and requires only 17 kids per class. The school has a state-of-the-art media center not reflected in CPS' utilization. Dewey was destabilized because it had 6 principals in a 2-year span, but now is improving dramatically with the new principal. Dewey should be kept open, and various facility needs should be addressed by CPS. The school has the strong support of the local Alderman (Pat Dowell).

2) **Venus Shannon, Principal, Trumbull Elementary**, summary of key points –

Trumbull prepared and provided the Task Force with a detailed portfolio **challenging CPS' under-utilization, and documenting Trumbull's significant recent academic gains** under the new principal, who has been at the school for only 20 months. The student body is diverse (70% Latino, 20% Black, 5% Asian, 5% white), and has a focus on serving special needs (SPED and autistic) students. **CPS' utilization does not take SPED into consideration** and only assumes schools have 5% - 7% SPED (CPS' formula consigns SPED space to the 23% of rooms allotted for all "ancillary" uses), while Trumbull serves over 37% SPED population and has dedicated SPED classrooms. For example, the Autism TMH teacher is required to have a maximum of 7 students, 14 with an aide. Trumbull's General Ed population does have approximately 30 students per classroom. The school also has a blended (GenEd/SPED) PreK program with 14 students/classroom. The PreK program is so well known and highly regarded in the neighborhood that it has a waiting list. But CPS refuses to consider this as future enrollment growth (adding grades). When the instructional needs of Trumbull's SPED population are factored in, the school is 88% utilized. **Trumbull is also challenging CPS' estimate that the building requires \$16 Million in facility improvements.** When the principal and LSC asked their Network Facility Manager if he had provided CPS with information to calculate the supposed \$16 million in capital needs, he said he had no input. Neither the Network Facility Manager or the Trumbull administration can account for how that dollar figure could possibly be that high, and **CPS has not provided the school with any data to justify that estimate.**

3) **Jennie Biggs, Bridgeport Alliance/Raise Your Hand**, summary of key points –

CPS is using inaccurate and outdated information. Local Bridgeport parents and community are challenging CPS' claims that Armour, McClellan and Graham schools are under-utilized. Over 120 parents attended a community meeting earlier this week to object, and plan to fight any closures/consolidations. Example: Parents did a "walk through" at Armour Elementary and found that **while CPS calculated its under-utilization score based on 29 classrooms, there are really only 22 classrooms.** A recent ADA renovation eliminated 5 rooms to install elevators; and a Target grant was used to create a library in other rooms.

4) **Cherie Novak, Principal, Fulton Elementary**, summary of key points –

CPS has not alerted principals/LSCs or prioritized school input into the Master Plan: Principal Novak couldn't be sure if she received this particular survey because she's received a huge amount of spam e-mail since CPS switched to google and because CPS sends out so many surveys. **Fulton opposes any further School Actions since it just went through a CPS Central Office-run "turnaround" and does not want students to be further destabilized.** The school has a 47% mobility rate, 98% of students live in poverty, and the surrounding neighborhoods have some of the highest foreclosure rates (1st and 3rd highest) in the city. The school space is fully utilized, with every class participating in after-school programming, and runs parent/community programs, including GED and ESL. Five students are homeless and 55 more are "doubled up." Yet Fulton has the 2nd highest growth rate in math scores in the Network despite its challenges.

5) **Kurt Jones, Principal, Libby Elementary**, summary of key points –

Libby community challenges CPS' under-utilization ranking, CPS is using inaccurate and outdated information: Libby is fully utilized and is open early and late for students and families. CPS is including in its utilization formula 5 rooms in Libby's basement that are uninhabitable. CPS also does not take into consideration that Libby's 21st CCLC grant requires a community room and a parent resource room, and that the school has a YMCA-funded fine-arts room. CPS has also refused to factor in the following: One-third of enrollment is by "choice" (parents seek out the school because of its positive reputation); Libby's 2 Autism programs, limited by state law to 12 students/room; 5 SPED classes, fully departmentalized, also subject to class size limits; and 2 GED programs. CPS does not factor in Libby's new Mac lab with 40 computers, the new laptop lab with 37 computers labs and 2 science labs in its utilization calculations. CPS also refuses to adjust for

space use by Libby's "Wilson Program" (there are only about 8 such programs in the District) which focuses on students who are 3 years behind in small classes of 10 students per classroom so children can make up their academic deficit. Libby also partners with Urban Initiatives' soccer program in the morning, and "Chicago Communities in Schools" programs till 6pm every night. Despite a mobility rate of more than 40% over the past 5 years and 87 homeless students in the school, Libby's enrollment level has been maintained; there are no split grades; and Libby provides 8th grade algebra and honors literature courses. This year, for the first time in recent memory, 100% of Libby's 8th graders will graduate. Given the school's growing success it is likely to attract more students in the years to come.

6) **Earlean Green, Ella Flagg Young LSC**, summary of key points –

CPS has manufactured the "under-utilization crisis" and is not planning for the long term; LSC has not had input into the Master Plan: in 1998, 3,000 students were bused out of the community to relieve over-crowding. Right now, enrollment is lower than before; but in the next 5-10 years the school will likely become over-crowded again, because the area is being repopulated with new families. CPS is not factoring in the community redevelopment that is occurring and planned for the future. Ella Flagg Young's LSC never received CPS' survey for input into the long-range plan.

7) **DeMaris Campbell, Reavis Elementary LSC Chair**, summary of key points –

Reavis challenges CPS' utilization score for their school, plans for additional programs and community use: Reavis has to use 4 classrooms for storage because the building does not have a basement and no alternative storage space. The school also uses space for a health clinic which is open to the community. Its 21st CCLC grant also has space requirements, and runs an early morning program from 8am and is open until 5:30pm every night. Reavis should not be destabilized: The school has a new principal, a new After-School Program coordinator; is now doing fundraisers; and is conducting basketball games and reading and science nights for students and their families. Reavis has proposed and wants a GED program for adults, and a parent-run tutoring program for students.

8) **Bonita Robinson, Austin-N. Lawndale Network (retired teacher)**, summary of key points –

Opposes school closures/consolidations as a detriment to students' educational progress. She questioned CPS' academic performance policies as being far too reliant on standardized testing and has found it is often inconsistent and arbitrary. She urged CPS to not punish Level 2 and 3 schools because there's no integrity to the online testing and online attendance data. She has found flawed data throughout the system, including students marked as present when they are absent approaching fraud in record keeping. Teachers are not given enough time to actually teach due to so much pressure to prep for testing. CPS is no longer closing the achievement gap, and is now in an era she regards as "Pedagogy of the Absurd".

9) **Kilayah Layton, Alex Haley Elementary Parent**

10) **Brian Hardiman, Alex Haley, Pre-K Teacher**, Haley representatives testified together – summary of key points:

Haley should not be closed because it is steadily improving academic outcomes, and is only 8 points away from becoming a Level 1 school. Haley recently had \$3 million in capital improvements. It provides the community with a GED program, and after school programs for students. It already has a library and gym. All schools in Rock Island Network (except Poe Classical) are being considered for closing. Why are inner-city schools with smaller class sizes considered under-utilized when elsewhere in Chicago and in other public school districts, lower class size is idealized?

11) **Cynthia Zucker, Trumbull Elementary Parent** – testified in agreement with Trumbull principal.

12) **Christopher Lattin, Libby Parent** – testified in agreement with Libby Principal.

13) **Bettye Eboifo, Robeson HS, PAC Chair**, summary of key points –

CPS should help, not close Robeson. It is struggling in part because it hasn't had a fully constituted LSC since 2005. Students suffer from violence in the area. Parental involvement needs support to encourage students to take advantage of programs Robeson offers. CPS considers Robeson 40% under-utilized, but the school is serving some of the most impoverished students in Chicago, with 20% identified as homeless, and many others not counted who should be.

- 14) **Velma Cooksey, Principal, Wadsworth Elementary**, summary of key points – School community opposes consolidation. Any “under-utilization” was caused by CPS, changing enrollment to PreK – 5th grades, taking away their 6, 7 & 8th grades. They have the highest homeless population in the area, and have already taken students from closed schools several times over the years. Despite challenges, parents send their students back even when they move because it's the safest school in the area. Wadsworth has been recognized by the state and CPS for raising ISAT scores every year for past 6 years; 5th graders won a state award for a website they built.
- 15) **Eric Dockery, Dewey Academy** testified in agreement with Dewey LSC Chair, the school should not be closed.
- 16) **Yanfeng Li, Teacher, J. Ward Elementary** – testified that CPS' survey did not reach her school, CPS information is not provided to parents in Chinese. J. Ward is needed in the community and should not be closed.
- 17) **Fayvelle Buie, PreK Autism Teacher, Ryder Elementary**, summary of key points – Oppose closure; every school in Auburn-Gresham is on the list. CPS has created any under-utilization, because when more kids to try enroll, they get bused west instead of opening new classes at Ryder. The school has struggled without permanent 2nd, 5th or 7th grade teachers, they've had only subs since beginning of school year; and has no internet. Despite these challenges, the school scores high on the Consortium for Chicago School Research “5 Key Supports” survey: well organized, safe, parents are happy; has a new principal, and is the highest performing school in the network. LSC and parents wanted to testify to CEFTF but had to attend other CPS meeting.
- 18) **Jeremy Peters, Robeson HS, Teacher** – testified in agreement with Robeson parent.
- 20) **Cathaline Carter, Horace Mann** - opposes any further CPS School Actions, they have not helped students.
- 21) **Sharon Powell, Dunbar HS** – registered to testify but had to leave.
- 22) **Xian Barrett, Gage Park HS, Teacher**, summary of key points – CPS has not adequately invested schools. While CPS has opened several charters nearby in last 5 – 6 years with better facilities, Gage Park HS suffers from neglect: Water leaks into some classrooms when it rains; heating is barely functional; windows in disrepair are “death traps”. There isn't even any soap in the bathrooms. The CEFTF should push to strengthen reform legislation to really hold CPS accountable, because it's running the district so disastrously.
- 23) **Megan Cusick, Rogers Park Neighbors for Public Schools (represents network of 5 schools)**, Summary of key points – Opposes CPS utilization formula and any more closings/consolidations. All 5 schools are working on their own utilization analysis because CPS' data are inaccurate, even though the O'Hare Network officer told parents that CPS has their own figures and doesn't want parents' “help.” After CPS' initial hearings, CPS contacted networks and told them to keep their parents in check. CPS' process has confused parents, they aren't sure who they're addressing, i.e., CPS, its “Utilization Commission,” outside consultants, or the Task Force. We need our elected officials to tell CPS that they were granted an extension with criteria – including process – that CPS is not complying with.
- 24) **Joy Clendenning, Parent of CPS students**, summary of key points – Schools working together to oppose closures/consolidations. Canter was created 10 years ago from community visioning process to relieve over-crowding, but now is being labeled under-utilized because of boundary and grade range changes CPS made. Kenwood HS is deemed over-crowded by

CPS standards, and while parents don't agree and also say that CPS could send kids to Dyett which is a great facility. Parents who know about the CEFTF object to CPS using Walton Foundation-paid consultants who don't know Chicago school's history to do "community engagement" when CPS should be working with and through the CEFTF. Community opposes closing/consolidating Kozminski when the school is developing a new PreK program, wants to have an ELL program, and has proposed other plans to enrich programs and attract more students.

25) **Angelique Harris, Wells Prep LSC/Bronzeville CAC**, summary of key points –

Opposes any further CPS School Actions because since 2003, past actions have created huge instability in the Bronzeville neighborhood. Being a receiving school is disruptive, and CPS hasn't given any of the promised resources. Wells started as a small school by parents in CHA's Madden Park Homes. When the projects were torn down, CPS moved them into Phillips HS. When CPS did a turnaround (AUSL) at Phillips HS, CPS moved the Phillips principal to Wells, whose poor leadership resulted in Wells being put on probation. When the LSC hired a new principal, Wells improved. CPS' utilization and capital costs data about Wells is inaccurate: It currently occupies only ½ of 1 floor in the Phillips HS facility, yet CPS said Wells needs \$26 million in capital repairs, while Phillips needs \$27 million - a difference of only \$600,000 when Wells only occupies ½ of 1 floor. CPS said Wells was 73% utilized on December 5th, 2012, but on Jan 4th, 2013, said Wells is only 51% utilized. No one at CPS can explain why.

26) **Guadalupe Lerma, Fulton Elementary Parent**, summary of key points –

In support of Principal's testimony, Ms. Lerma opposed closure/consolidation of Fulton. Her 2 children who graduated from Fulton are in honors programs in HS. Fulton could accept students from the nearby, over-crowded Chavez school. Moreover, as others have testified, CPS did not plan properly, and opened a charter school across the street from Fulton, which is not performing well and is a Level 3 school.

27) **Libby-additional parents and staff: Kathy Parker, Carolyn Knight, Yvette Bruce** – supported the testimony of their Principal that Libby is not under-utilized, and a vital hub of community activity – open early before the school day, and staying open into the early evening for students and parents

28) **Keith Kysel, Fulton Elementary** – testified in agreement with Fulton principal.

29) **Ronald Jackson, concerned parent** – registered to testify, but time expired.

30) **John Paul Jones, concerned parent, Sustainable Englewood Initiative** – registered to testify, but had to leave.

IV. Next Meeting: SATURDAY, MARCH 9, 2013, 10 AM; HUMBOLDT PARK LIBRARY, 1605 N. Troy, Chicago, IL

V. Adjournment - The Chair adjourned the meeting at approximately 1:15 pm.