Chicago Public Schools
School Utilization Community Meetings
Breakout Session Notes

Date/Time of Meeting: February 2, 2013, 11:00am-1:00pm

Network: Englewood-Gresham

Schools represented by audience: Altgeld, Barton, Bass, Cuffe, Miles Davis, Goodlow, Mahalia Jackson, Gresham, Harper, Hinton, Bontemps, Joplin, Copernicus, Langford, Mays, Rider

Round: I

Disclaimer: The following are notes of the discussions in the individual break-out sessions. They do not provide verbatim records or a comprehensive summary of what was said. Also, these notes do not represent the point-of-view of the facilitators or of CPS personnel. Any questions about these notes should be addressed to CPS staff.

General Learning
- Not enough technology as computers, tablets, computer labs
- greater safety concerns than other CPS networks
- Schools don’t have enough resources to hire additional staff for security, nurses, counselors and social workers
- Students in our schools have social/emotional needs as well as parents and grandparents who are assisting in raising small children
- safety of the children and caregivers because they are crossing gang lines
- need for more extracurricular programs like art and science classes

School-specific Learning
- **Altgeld**: Children will have to cross gang lines (Racine, Ashland); overcrowding the classroom if you close because class sizes have to have under 30 children.
- **Barton**: provide funds to support schools; give our new principal the opportunity to make changes. If you provide us resources, we will do better. How much time are we giving the new principal to put his plan in place?
  We need to have the rest of the dates related to this process. People need this information and the timeframe for what we need to do
  For our 33 kindergartners, technology is a necessity, there is a deficit. Their access is not equitable at all. The scores of our kids are compared with scores of kids in schools with resources that our kids don’t have. That’s not fair.
- **Bass**: Taxpayer who wants to keep all schools open, because this was not talked about when project housing was torn down and displaced children. We want equal compensation. You don’t discuss the pension. Safe haven and making progress I
have a pre-K child and a student at Mays. I also attend Kennedy-King College. I am concerned about all schools, and there are more grandparents in this area than parents, so their safety is a concern, too.

- **Bontemps**: Unique. Needs social services and counselors. I taught for 18 years and this is the only school I have ever been at. The kids need us. You have not given us what we need. We are teaching our kids about consequences and actions but you fail to take responsibility for yours (CPS). If the school does not stay open, you are telling them that their community is not good enough for them. If it is not good enough for your kids, then it is not good enough for ours. Why are we being asked what to do if we have been telling you we need resources and you tell us that we have to consolidate? How is trust being built between the parents, community and CPS? How will we deal with safe passage and support for the transition if necessary. How will you keep quality teachers in this area if you keep closing schools?

- **Cuffe**: Students are making great strides. We need the same resources that every good school has. Research says students do better in smaller classrooms. Defeats the purpose of closing schools if it results in overcrowding.

- **Miles Davis**: Grandmother; all children need a quality education. School is underutilized. There is a waiting list for the school, yet it is underutilized. Why is there a waiting list if there are spots?

- **Goodlow**: Parkenya Barnes, on LSC board, we need money for supplies and funding for involvement. You are taking away from our children. Please don’t close any schools. School is behind CSX railroad, no one is making that company pour resources behind the trees because going behind Carl is dangerous. Rats eat the gate and the railroad is not properly maintaining the area. These companies should invest in us.

- **M. Jackson**: Who came up with the numbers for utilization and who said the schools are underused? What is the formula? Safe passage parent and worker. The trials of the students are real because the students can’t even walk home alone without worrying about gangs. This is causing conflict with the principals and the community. Schools are not adequately heated, so they get sick and miss school days. Single father. I have an autistic child and my child is well integrated in my school. We have no resources to hire security guards. We have 2 guards and thousands of students. Our school has father/daughter dances. No one else has that. Our principal has a disability, so he understands the needs of our children. Deal with results. We need to upgrade the technology. Mr. Hubbard has made the school peaceful. Closing this school would be detrimental to our community.

- **Langford**: The kids have extreme social and emotional needs. I am an involved parent, but my hands are full, I need support. If you consolidate, will kids that need it, will continue receiving counseling? If you move kids and you don’t improve level of support, it will not work.
• We need to make these classrooms smaller so students can learn. Provide aides to the teachers. I am a supportive parent and funds need to be put in schools. Bring the schools up to code. Build more schools, not close schools.

• **Kershaw** is a level 1, but has kids in Bass and Mays, some of them are children with special needs and others are 2nd graders. No profile for the special needs child. Teachers need to do more. Parents need to get involved. 2nd grade class has 40 students, special needs class has 10.

• **Mays**: People need to see hard evidence because grandparents are in the room. People have to help educate parents to make it easy for them to understand. Transfer students come in every day. If you want quality results, be honest and give updated information. We receive transfer students every day. I have a second grade class with 38 students. You have taken a lot out of CPS since I was a student. Banks make money; schools are to educate. What will happen after the closings? We need more information.

• **Henderson**: Will you give the principals enough time to complete her goals if you keep closing? The environment is getting better; violence is decreasing. Do we take a chance on closing schools if you invest resources then close a school. Utilization-if they are underutilized with 40 kids in a classroom, then how did they come up with the number. There should be no more than 20 kids in a classroom. We need solutions, we already see the problems.

• **Rider**: We just got a principal on Monday. What are going to do if we haven’t had the proper leadership? Our principal starts next Monday, but he can’t help us and testing is about to start. Miles Davis is competitive. You are closing the schools that are underutilized if we have to enter a lottery and they have new technology.

• **Alderman 17th Ward**: all these factors have to be considered in your formula when analyzing utilization, and it is not being considered: special needs classrooms, parent rooms need to be considered, the mobility of students need to be considered, because there are transition classrooms that help bring these kids up to date, homeless population. Also the safety of our children. We need to build trust, and CEO Byrd-Bennett knows that.

• Eben Credit, Julian high School (not in the EG network) Are there going to be hearings on boundary changes since they closed the schools and the safety plans because every boundary is supposed to have a safety plan in place for the boundary? How will that incorporate the receiving schools into the fold? How will this affect the students who usually take the Red Line due to the shutdown?

• **Gresham**-Parent, went on tours. CPS sent the wrong address and made people not attend the event. We need technology. All schools need money. Treat our kids like you would treat your kids. Level the playing field. Safety is the greatest concern. Viaducts on Halsted are not safe. We hear all of this talk about the budget, but what will happen if there are salary cuts? Will we get money that will be saved from the cuts invested in our
schools? We have no assurance that arts and other things our children need will be funded.
Kids have to cross gang lines. What about the safety of elementary schools? How many schools are getting closed up North? You do not provide the educational support our children need, then when they turn to gangs and violence and end up in jail you wonder what happened and then you really do not care about what happens to them at this stage. You need to monitor the teachers because some of them are not qualified. Charter schools do not deserve CPS’ money. The kids deserve better. I am here because my child is important.

- **Harper**: Schools on the South Side and West Side should not be closed. Enrollment numbers are wrong because other rooms are being used as classrooms. Why not lease space to community organizations that the schools can use to improve the schools. The Illinois Lottery was supposed to give money to CPS; did we get it?
- **Hinton**: Staff member. The School has received awards. Safe haven. Closing schools will lead to increased violence. Closings will promote genocide. Level 2 school, making progress. Principal Allen needs time to implement her plan of action and continue to improve the school.
- **Joplin**: 53 years teaching, and I want to support my community. I have witnessed the changes and I do not like it. Something positive must be done to improve these schools.
- **Copernicus/Langford**: When will we get answers? Will there be transportation. I am just asking basic questions. No one is assisting us. Can you help?