FAQs for Student Opportunity Guidelines

1. **How were the criteria outlined in the draft guidelines developed?**

   CPS subject matter experts performed a deep dive into school performance metrics, isolating measurements that most accurately identify chronically low performing schools. They then established a series of qualitative markers that will help guide CPS leaders to determine which students are in the most immediate need of quality schools.

   First, the lowest performing schools in the district were identified using the Performance Policy measurements. Next, the guidelines identified schools with a pattern of low performance and that are low performing in comparison to the schools within their network. Finally, the guidelines identified the schools with the least amount of growth per the Performance Policy over a period of time.

2. **How do the Draft Guidelines differ from previous guidelines?**

   This year’s guidelines will provide CPS with the tools necessary to identify quality school options for parents and their children who attend the most challenged schools in our district. The guidelines were based on some elemental questions – what are the most chronically underperforming schools? What options are available for students within their communities? How can we use turnaround schools, new schools and enhanced investments in an existing school to improve school quality for every student in these schools?

   In the past, school utilization was an important factor in the guidelines, while this year the guidelines are focused on school quality.

3. **How is the process for engaging interested communities different from before?**

   The draft guidelines will be subject to a community input process that CEO Brizard will use in part to determine which actions must be taken to drive achievement among students in schools where the greatest need exists today. The process includes numerous opportunities for gathering feedback at multiple stages. There will three opportunities per school action to gather feedback after an action is proposed, including two separate community meetings and one formal hearing. In addition, CPS will encourage parent, community and stakeholder engagement through our website, emails and by attending Board of Education meetings in December, January and February.

   In the past, all actions had a formal hearing, but only closures had a community meeting. Problems in the past process included not having sufficient time in between the proposals and hearings, which is solved this year because there are 30 days in between notice and the first meeting or/hearing.

4. **How did SB 630 impact the school actions process?**
On August 22, 2011, Governor Quinn signed Public Act 097-0474, amending the Illinois School Code by adding requirements for School Action and Facility Master Planning. Also known as SB 630, Public Act 097-0474 requires, among other things, that CPS follow a clear process for school actions that includes community hearings, advance notice of such hearings and a period of public input for proposed school guidelines. CPS has already taken several steps to follow the requirements set forth by SB 630, as well as having met with members of the Chicago Educational Facilities Task Force (CEFTE) several times to gather feedback on these guidelines. The new administration has welcomed the opportunity to work with the Task Force and looks forward to building on their early relationship.

5. **How will SB 630 impact how we make decisions?**

While SB 630 altered the framework process, CPS decisions will be driven by a commitment to providing higher performing options to all students affected by a school action. The enhanced public engagement will give CPS new opportunities to detail how students will benefit from the proposed changes.

6. **What will be the process for identifying schools that are proposed to the Board for school action?**

The proposed guidelines will in part identify underperforming schools, whose students have the most immediate need of a better quality education, based on the following criteria:

When a school receives the lowest performance level (Level 3) on the CPS Performance Policy for two consecutive years, the school may be subject to a school action. The Performance Policy score is determined following an evaluation of key indicators that assess a school’s current test performance, performance trends over time and student achievement growth.

Schools will be excluded from consideration for meeting any of three benchmarks that measure how schools are performing relative to others in its network and whether the school has shown recent improvement.

- Elementary schools with ISAT composite meets or exceeds scores that are at or above its geographic network average in the previous school year will be excluded.
- High schools with 5-year cohort graduation rates at or above its geographic network average in the previous school year will be excluded and
- Any school that scored at or above the 25th percentile on the trend and growth component of the Performance Policy in the previous school year will be excluded.

The CEO will then consider qualitative factors – including the following, but not limited to, before making any decision that will be presented to the Board:

- Student safety data
- School culture and climate
- The quality of the school facility
- Family and community feedback
- Whether the school has recently undergone any changes in academic focus
Should any school actions such as closures or consolidations occur, CPS will make critical investments in schools and students related to school actions, including investments above and beyond what’s been done in the past, such as:

- School safety analysis
- Social emotional supports
- Program investments (IB, CTE, STEM)
- Art/Music programs
- Afterschool programming
- Professional Development for teachers
- Additional administrative positions
- School-based Health clinics
- Capital investments

7. **What is the timeline for decision making?**

   Announcement of proposed school actions per SB 630 will occur on or before Dec 1st. Hearings on those proposals will not occur prior to 30 days after the announcement and are an important part of the process towards decision making. Community and stakeholder engagement however will occur prior to announcement and well before hearings begin.

8. **Who is involved in making the decision on school action proposals?**

   The Chicago Board of Education will make the final decision on the proposed actions no sooner than its February, 2012 board meeting.

9. **Where/when and how will schools be announced for school action?**

   Proposals for school action will be announced on or before December 1, 2011, as required by SB 630. Detailed informational packets will be delivered to every member of the school staff and every parent/guardian. Elected officials and LSC members will be fully briefed as well. This information will include all the details about the proposal, the public hearings and community meetings, and the educational options available to students. The same information will also be mailed to the students’ home address at the same time.