Chicago Public Schools
School Utilization Community Meetings
Breakout Session Notes

Date/Time of Meeting: February 11, 2013, 7:00-9:30pm

Network: Fullerton

Schools represented by audience: Ames, Belmont-Cragin, Brantano, Darwin, Goethe, Jenner, Lincoln, Manierre, Northwest, Yates

Round: I

(check one)

Disclaimer: The following is a summary of the open mike discussion. **There were no breakout sessions at this meeting.** 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 CPS personnel. Any questions about these notes should be addressed to CPS staff.

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**General Learning**

*Comments from Community Speakers, Parents and Teachers*

- Overall, parents showed anger, frustration and concern about schools closing in their community. They attended in large numbers, brought signs and chanted, and stood in a long line to be able to voice their concern.

- Transportation is a big concern of school consolidation. Most parents in many of these schools do not drive and do not have a way to safely get their children to school outside of their neighborhood. They want to know if CPS has considered providing transportation or finding ways to help parents.

- There is concern that the system is broken and that long term, holistic approaches to fixing the system must be developed. Consolidation is viewed as a short-term fix with serious consequences.

- Without neighborhood schools, parents are concerned that bonds are broken and communities are weakened.
  - Educational research shows small, safe, K-8 neighborhood schools are best for the child.
  - Attendance rates are greatly affected when students must leave the neighborhood.
  - There is concern that only neighborhood schools will support homeless families while Charter schools would not.

- There is anger and frustration regarding the formula for underutilization, which considers class size of 36 as capacity.
  - Parents want smaller classrooms to enhance learning
  - 36 students is not an acceptable class size according to educational research

- The community believes bilingual programs must be saved as they are linked to student success.

- Early Childhood Centers are critical to the community and need to stay open to accommodate parents and children.
• Recent changes, trends in many of the schools seem to be ignored in the ratings.
  o Large growth rates in certain grades
  o Neighborhood growth rate (children under 5)
  o New administration within past year that is beginning to see improvements
  o Major building investment
• There was also concern that school closures are racially motivated with less support for certain communities.

School-specific Learning
Comments from Parents, Teachers and Students

Ames
• Proposal for Ames to become a Marine Academy has been rejected by 92% of the parents in a survey
  o CPS wants Marine to move to Latino neighborhood but other options exist
  o Current Marine Academy is underutilized so doesn’t need to be moved
  o Current Marine Academy has poor retention, which doesn’t speak well for success
    ▪ Ames: 100% on track to graduate; Marine: 89% on track to graduate
• Ames is a Level 2 school working very hard to improve to Level 1
  o Parents, teachers, principal all working together toward student progress
• Ames has a bilingual program, critical for the neighborhood
• 7th grade student spoke about wonderful programs at school, including orchestra, chess, snowboarding, leadership, mentoring

Belmont-Cragin
• One of only two Chicago schools that received a national award from President Obama
  o Model is emulated internationally
  o Principal is a big part of school success
• Includes one of only a few Early Childhood Centers in Chicago, already overcrowded
• High parent involvement in the schools – family environment; pride and joy of community
• Bilingual program – 90% ELL

Brentano
• Opportunity to make Brentano a STEM school
  o Already a Math & Science focused-school
  o CPS pushing for more math/science through STEM schools
• Able to accept other students, including those with special needs
• Population growth must be considered:
  o Neighborhood growth in families with children under 5 who are planning to send their children to Brentano
• School performance scores are above average
• Deemed underutilized because class sizes are appropriate; should not be as full as 36
• Been investing in school, e.g. new playlot, so why close after investment?
• Parent had to move family to Pilsen for a few years but young child wanted to take bus to Brentano every day and had perfect attendance
  o Loved Brentano; importance of continuity
Darwin
- Diverse, united, growing and here to stay
- Prefer smaller class sizes for better learning environment
- One of only six Chicago school with dual language program, important to neighborhood
- Appreciate host of special classes offered, such as Self Esteem, as well as parent mentoring program
- One parent spoke of several years when she was homeless, but daughter was able to be an honors student and Darwin and is now attending college at U of I.
  - Believes Darwin could accommodate homeless students but Charter schools cannot

Goethe
- CPS rates school as Efficient, but actually overcrowded
  - Need another classroom for 1st graders
  - Art class is in the cafeteria
  - Grew 40% in last 5 years

Jenner
- 8th grader talked about how Jenner is important to keeping the community healthy
  - Loves the school
  - Students graduate and come back to school and community as leaders
- Teacher feared consequences of pulling up roots, dividing the community
  - Concerned that school closures are racially motivated
- Volunteer spoke about working closely with teachers and staff
  - Teach the whole child
  - Everyone cares about the children

Lincoln
- Educational research shows small, safe, K-8 neighborhood schools are best for the child

Manierre
- Have new administration working hard to improve schools
  - Principal and Asst. Principal in place for only 6 months
  - Already seeing tremendous progress
  - Teachers being pushed beyond comfort zone to improve school
  - Students have enthusiasm for learning
- Proximity results in excellent attendance
  - Students are from CHA across the street
- Critical to keep all Early Childhood Centers open or spend the money later on prisons
- Lives are at stake if students have to move to another school

Northwest
- One of the best Special Ed programs in the city
  - School needs more resources
Yates

- Strong administration – innovative
- Huge population growth in third grade unaccounted for
- Parent spoke of career success of her three children who graduated from Yates
  - Yates produces winners