COMMUNITY MEETING

FULTON NETWORK COMMUNITY MEETING

February 11, 2013
7:00 o'clock p.m.

The Report of Proceedings had in the meeting of the above-entitled cause, taken before ROBBIN M. OCHENKOWSKI, a Certified Shorthand Reporter and Notary public in and for the County of Cook and State of Illinois, at First Baptist Congregational Church, 1613 West Washington Boulevard, February 11th, 2013, at the hour of approximately 7:00 o'clock, p.m.

PRESENT:

MS. SHONDA HUERY, Chief of Fulton Network - Moderator
MS. DENISE LITTLE, Chief of Network
MS. THERESA PLASCENCIA, Chief Of West Side High School Network
MR. LORENZO RUSSEL, Deputy of Fulton Network
MR. EARNEST GATES, Member of the Commission on School Utilization
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REVEREND DANIELS: Ladies and gentlemen, have a seat so we can kindly get situated in the proceedings. There's extra seating on the first level, and there is other seating upstairs.

Let us join in prayer. Let us join our hearts and minds in prayer.

Most Holy gracious Father, Creator and sustainer of the universe, we adore you. We pause to praise and exalt your Holy Name for all your marvelous acts of kindness.

We thank you for according us safe travel to arrive at this event. Your presence and power is invited into this very room to equip the Chicago Board of Education, the public school system, along with their allies into this journey through the derails of education with justice, peace and love.

As we continue to live, our experience is clean sunrise and sunsets, absorbing all of life's experiences, be they uncertain, frightening or indifferent, good or bad. We need your guidance in each arena of our lives.

Lord, we pray to this great republic in which we live. But tonight it is not a more perfect union. It is divided by classicism, racism, sexism, incivility
and economic imparity.

We need to change the course for our direction, and God you can help us. As the old profit in the old testament wrote, "If my people who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and forgive their sins and heal their land. We need a healing in our land today.

Gun violence has had a devastating impact on several families who had it in New Town, and more recently there were shootings in the City of Chicago. Lord, we need your help. It is not okay that 500 people lost their lives to gun violence in Chicago in 2012, over 2000 shootings.

The real joy of life is hearing children play, eager to learning on the playground and in the classroom, being excited by the expanding world, soliciting questions that would require more than a sense of yes or no.

Tonight we celebrate academic excellence for all of our youth. We need to encourage our young people to pursue career paths and, in all honesty, look after our children, they need advocates, ones that will not belittle the size of their future or their goals.
So, God, we need to listen. We need to listen,
and we need each other so we pray that after this we
come together, we will do what is best for our children,
even though the land of our children are our greatest
heritage, it's education institutions or military
hardware, but it's our children. So, Lord, guide them
in experience that will lead them down to your glory and
leads them in my prayer. Amen.

Brothers and sisters, again, perhaps you'll get
to the world in one of these meetings.

And one of the things we would like you to do
and encourage you to do is, if you have a cell phone,
would you put it on vibrate or turn it off?

We encourage you to be courteous, and, in turn,
the presenters, we're sure that they have differences of
opinions and all of that so the one thing that's
characteristic of the real educated person is they're
civil, and we pray that you will do that in a very
proper way tonight, show respect and kindness, and,
hopefully, each one will have an opportunity to raise
their questions.

We're going to do that and at this time turn it
over to the person who is responsible for this event.

God bless you, God keep you, and may he bless
and smile on you.

MS. LITTLE: Good evening. Good evening. I'm going to try this one more time in my teacher voice. Good evening.

Okay. My name is Denise Little, and I am the chief of -- Chief Officer of Network for the Chicago Public Schools.

It's my honor to be here tonight with each and every one of you. And I'm going to serve as your facilitator.

Before we get started, I wanted to -- I have some announcements to make.

One is, we have a translator, a Spanish translator so, when we go downstairs and we have our break-out sessions, we will have a translator at that session.

SPEAKER: And we want her to be able to come up in Spanish and ask who --

MS. LITTLE: No. We have one now, too. I'm sorry.

I also have this young man over here, and he's going to translate for us. So that's covered.

Okay. Before we begin --

SPEAKER: Make sure, ask if anyone needs sign language. I'm sorry. Just make sure and ask if anyone
needs sign language.

MS. LITTLE: Why don't you do it?

SPEAKER: I'm sorry.

If anyone here needs American sign language, can you please raise your hand?

We want to make sure that we got her in place right where we need her.

Okay. Thank you.

MS. LITTLE: Okay. Who's going to be joining me tonight is Jose Anaya. And he's our translator, and so when you come up to speak, then we're going to take time for him to translate, and we go back and forth.

Is that fair?

I can't hear you.

Okay. We want to do this and in order for everyone.

I want to also --

Someone left their lights on, gray Nissan Ultima, License Plate Number G953470, gray Nissan Ultimata, G953470.

(Translator translation)

MS. LITTLE: I'd like to start by introducing the members that are here tonight for Chicago Public Schools.
I want to start with Ms. Shonda Huery, who is the Chief for the Fulton Network.

(Translator translation)

MS. LITTLE: Lorenzo Russell, who is the Deputy Chief of the Fulton Network.

(Translator translation)

MS. LITTLE: Theresa Plascencia, Chief for the West Side High Schools.

(Translation performed)

MS. LITTLE: And Earnest Gates, who is from the Commission.

(Translator translation)

MS. LITTLE: I'd also like to note the members from the Chicago Public School.

We have Wanda Washington, who is the Chief of the Garfield/Humboldt Network.

(Translator translation)

MS. LITTLE: Chip Johnson, Deputy Chief of the Garfield/Humboldt Network.

(Translator translation)

Then Ms. Tracy, Ms. Tracy who is Assistant Deputy Chief.

(Translator translation)

MS. LITTLE: I want to thank all of the Chicago
Public School faculty that is present tonight.

To get started, I want to kind of lay ground rules down.

First of all, we're going to be here to hear everyone.

(Translator translation)

MS. LITTLE: We are going to allow three speakers from every school at which -- which to speak.

(Translator translation)

MS. LITTLE: After we allow those three speakers to speak from each school, then we will remain in the sanctuary for any other community members or individuals who wish to speak.

(Translator translation)

MS. LITTLE: Once all of the schools have spoken, we will begin the break-out sessions, which will take place at various locations within the church.

(Translator translation)

MS. LITTLE: We also have some public officials here that we want to recognize and allow them to speak as well.

(Translator translation)

MS. LITTLE: And we will begin by greeting

Alderman Bob Fioretti.
Come and address the audience.

(Translator translation)

ALDERMAN FIORETTI: Can we hear?

Yes, I guess.

Good evening. As I was introduced, I'm

Alderman Bob Fioretti for the 2nd Ward for the City of

Chicago.

And I don't care what anybody says. I still

represent the City of Chicago of the 2nd Ward of 2015.

I was elected until 2015.

The mayor is going to make an appointment to

fill the 7th Ward office on Wednesday. That person is

appointed to fill for the boundaries of the old ward,

not the new 7th Ward. Let's get it straight even though

the people want to take away your power by saying that

the new wards are in effect now. It's not.

Secondly, I do want to say, and I heard, and I

think we all heard in the prayer to start, over 500

people killed in the City of Chicago, over 2600 people

shot last year.

One in every 12 CPS students knows somebody who

was shot in this city. One in 12 knows somebody who was

shot in this city that attends the Chicago Public

Schools.
You know, I'm proud to be here with the parents that are here, the teachers, the community activists and the students.

Our ward treasures our schools, 40 schools in the 2nd Ward. In fact, the schools are our greatest common asset, the most stable and welcoming public spaces.

There are families here tonight who have educated generations of families in these schools. That is why our parents and neighbors are here from King, from Dett, from Herbert, from Suder, from Irving, from Smyth, Montefiore or from Peabody. Why?

Because these schools have served our children. Even when Horner, Avil, Adams and Rocco Gardens (phonetic) came down, the schools remained as a stable home serving children within these communities and mothers and fathers that continued to select these schools and their work to improve these schools.

Whenever the problem arises, these schools have served the children from low-income households. They provide learning, nutrition, recreation and social services. They are true neighborhood schools.

And from the crowd here tonight, you can see
that the people of this community truly value our
schools.

(Applause)

THE TRANSLATOR: Sorry to interrupt. I want to
translate what you're saying.
(Translator translation)

ALDERMAN FIORETTI: Are the Board of Education
members here?

What about the leadership of Chicago Public
Schools?
The people who are in charge with making
decisions are absent tonight. They've been absent from
all of these meetings.

They need to see and hear and feel the spirit
in this room.

(Applause)
(Translator translation)

ALDERMAN FIORETTI: This community is complaining
about public schools, and we are fighting for the future
of our children, we are fighting for the future of our
neighborhoods.

Can we have stable safe neighborhoods without
neighborhood schools?

ALDERMAN FIORETTI: No way.
These schools are public resources.

Can they use improvement? Of course.

But you can't improve a school once it's shut down. Once it's shut down, it's gone forever, it's public space we can never get back.

Instead of closing schools, instead of giving them away to private companies, we need to have an honest budget discussion.

(Applause)

(Translator translation)

ALDERMAN FIORETTI: The audit of the Chicago Public School finances for the school year ending June 30th, 2012, revealed that CPS had close to a $400 million surplus heading into this school year.

This CPS document blows a gigantic hole in the CPS claim of a growing billion dollar deficit.

(Applause)

ALDERMAN FIORETTI: Meanwhile, schools like these in my ward have been begging for smaller class sizes, more art teachers, more music teachers, more languages and librarians.

(Applause)

(Inaudible)

ALDERMAN FIORETTI: And social workers, you're
right.

So please join me tonight in recommitting to our public schools.

Raise your hand if you agree no more school closings, no more school closings.

(Indicating)

ALDERMAN FIORETTI: We should fix our schools, don't close them.

Thank you.

(Translator translation)

MS. LITTLE: Our next speaker will be Alderman Joe Moreno.

(Translator translation)

(Appraise)

ALDERMAN MORENO: Buenas noches. Good evening. I'm Alderman Joe Moreno from the 1st Ward.

Thank you for having me here.

And I'm here with a simple message. For the 1st Ward schools that I represent, I'm here for them, and I'm here for you to listen to the resources that they need, not the resources that CPS thinks they need, the resources that they need.

(Appraise)

ALDERMAN MORENO: And to that -- And to that point,
De Diego over here in the house, right over here,
De Diego in the house (indicating) --
(Applause)
ALDERMAN MORENO: -- in la casa.
(Applause)
(Translator translation)
ALDERMAN MORENO: -- Otis, Burr, Pritzker, all the
1st Ward schools.
And they came here.
(Applause)
ALDERMAN MORENO: I'm not done yet. I'm not done
yet. I'm not done yet. I'm sorry. You stole my
thunder.
That's okay. You did it better than I did.
Talcott, Talcott also is here, Moos.
All of the schools in the 1st Ward that are in
this network are coming here tonight.
They're not unprepared. We met before these
meetings. They're coming with resources that they need
to have successful schools in the community.
(Translator translation)
ALDERMAN MORENO: So in closing, the parents are
here on their own time, the teachers and the principals
are here on their own time, are going to be here for a
long time, but they're prepared.

The schools in the 1st Ward are prepared to get the resources they need to have successful schools in this ward.

They're succeeding today. They will succeed in the future if we provide the resources that they've been begging for.

It's my responsibility to advocate for that, and it's CPS' responsibility to answer that call tonight and the next coming weeks.

(Translator translation)

ALDERMAN MORENO: I thank you for having these meetings. I thank you for having the organized meetings that we have.

Don't listen to me anymore. Listen to these parents, listen to these principals.

The more you listen to them, the better adults we will have.

Thank you very much, muchas gracias, buenas noches.

(Translator translation)

MS. LITTLE: Thank you.

We will now have Alderman Burnett.

ALDERMAN BURNETT: Good evening.
First of all, given unto God with this house, to the pastor of this building.

As to you, Ladies and gentlemen, I'd like to, first of all, commend everyone that's sitting up front.

I've been to several of these meetings, and they've been listening to people, and I know this because, when they changed from closing down any high schools, that came from a recommendation from all of these meetings that all of the parents were coming to and expressing themselves, and they took it back to the powers that be, and they decided, first of all, to take right off the top of the list of closing down or consolidating the high schools.

So I want to thank them for listening, and I want you, Ladies and gentlemen, to know that I commend you for being here.

You need to continue to express yourself because these people are listening, and I spoke to a lot of them, and they do feel what you feel, and they also understand what's going on.

(Translator translation)

ALDERMAN BURNETT: Also, I wanted to say, and I'm feeling sort of redundant because this is not the first one of these meetings that I've been to, I've been to
several of them, and I've been saying the same thing, we
don't need to close down any of our schools.

    (Applause)

    (Translator translation)

ALDERMAN BURNETT: We need to reevaluate what's
going on.

    We don't need to open up any more new schools,
    and that means charter schools.

    (Translator translation)

ALDERMAN BURNETT: We need to take those resources
and put them back into our public schools.

    (Translator translation)

ALDERMAN BURNETT: Most of our schools are in
gentrifying areas. We need to margin our schools to
capture the kids that's in those communities right now.

    (Applause)

    (Translator translation)

ALDERMAN BURNETT: Our competition is not between
ourselves. Our competition is with the private schools.

    (Translator translation)

ALDERMAN BURNETT: So we need to -- the Board needs
to do everything that they can to market their product,
make it better, become competitive and get people to
come to our public schools to feel the love.
So we need the resources.

(Translator translation)

ALDERMAN BURNETT: And then it also goes without saying, and myself and most of the African-American aldermen have met with Barbara; that's the new head of CPS, and we've been expressing to everyone, we have concerns about safety when we consolidate these schools because those of us who live in the hood know that it's a real issue in our neighborhood.

(Applause)

(Translator translation)

ALDERMAN BURNETT: So what I want to say to all of you, I want to commend you for being here. I think it's important that we come down and that our voices be heard, that we stand up and fight for what we give and also fight for what we are for.

But we have to continue to stay active, you all need to stay just as active in the schools right now where your kids are because we are the solution to the problem, and making all of our schools better is where parents are involved and kids prosper.

Thank you all very much. Muchas gracias.

(Applause)

(Translator translation)
MS. LITTLE: We're about to begin by calling the
roll call of our schools.

I'm going to, again, reiterate we're going to
have three representatives from each school. When your
name is called, please take the center aisle. We're
going to stop for the translation as well.

Before we get started, I want to recognize and
thank again Reverend Daniels and the First Baptist
Congregational Church for allowing us to use his
facilities.

MS. IVERSON: All right. Our first school tonight
will be Brown, Brown --

(Applause)

MS. IVERSON: -- followed by Burr. Brown first,
followed by Burr.

MS. LITTLE: Each school will get two minutes. We
have a timekeeper, and she will let you know when you
have one minute left.

Thank you.

MS. IVERSON: Per speaker, two minutes, three per
school?

Is that correct?

MS. LITTLE: Yes.

MS. IVERSON: Okay. Two minutes per person, three
speakers per school.

The persons that signed up to speak for Brown, please come on up.

SPEAKER: I'm Kenya Sadler. I'm here to speak out on behalf of William H. Brown School of Technology. I am the principal at Brown School, and I'll keep my message very brief.

As a student, a former student of William H. Brown School, a person who grew up and lived in this community my whole life, I feel that, if we close Brown School, we're taking the village away from the child.

I came back to Brown because my mother said my neighborhood needed me, and the neighborhood has stepped up to the plate, the children at Brown School have stepped up to the plate, the teachers have stepped up to the plate, the community has stepped up to the plate.

(Applause)

(Translator translation)

SPEAKER (cont'd): Brown School is more than just numbers on a sheet of paper. It's a family. It's a community.

I urge you to come in and see the culture that's being built in this school before you consider it
for closing.

(Applause)

(Translator translation)

MS. IVerson: Okay.

SPEAKER: Hi, my name is Deborah Canatraval (phonetic), and I am a volunteer at Brown School, and I'm here speaking on behalf of 61 volunteers that come every week in the reading intervention program.

We -- We had a pilot program last year with just six people that grew to 40 people, and this year we have 60 people. And they're not parents. They're all people who live here in the city and are just really committed to seeing children at Brown succeed in reading, and we give hours.

(Applause)

(Translator translation)

SPEAKER (cont'd): I would just like to say that not only do these volunteers feel so strongly about the progress that we're making with the children, but some of the children that we're working with are kindergarteners and first graders, and you're not going to see that progress in another two years until the test scores begin to come out, and so you can't really measure yet upon what's going on, but a lot of my
volunteers are here tonight because they feel so strongly about --

(Applause)

SPEAKER (cont'd): -- what's going on.

And I want to say to the Chicago Public Schools, if you want to see how to turn around a school, see if you can use this as a model of how to engage the community and get volunteers in the school working with children.

(Applause)

(Translator translation)

SPEAKER: Good evening. My name is Dee Stevens, and I'm one of the lead pastors at Soul City Church, which is located at Adams and Racine. And we are here with a strong amount of people because we believe, we believe in the power of Brown Elementary School.

And I want to let you know that I am here tonight and I speak with a voice of somebody that's a member in this community. I don't drive in. I live in this community, and I'm a member of the west loop.

I speak as a parent tonight. I raised my children in this area. I speak tonight as a pastor, and I believe in the power of what is happening at this
school, and I speak here tonight as a believer, as a
believer in the potential of the children that attend
Brown Elementary School, and I believe in the leaders,
the faculty.

And, most importantly, I want to let you know
that I stand here because of this woman, this woman
right here (indicating) Kenya Sadler.

(Applause)

SPEAKER (cont'd): She is the principal of
Brown Elementary.

And I feel that it is quite fitting for me to
share with you tonight from God's word, which is very
clear, it says, we are God's handiwork, we are creators
in Christ Jesus to do good work which God prepared in
advance for us to do.

And I want to let you know this school is not
just doing good work, they are doing great work. They
are doing great work.

(Applause)

SPEAKER (cont'd): Their dedication, their love,
their care, their superb teaching, their excellence,
their integrity, their professionalism.

I stand here tonight along with every other
person in this room that believes schools should not be
shut down; they should be given the funding that is necessary so that --

(Applause)

SPEAKER (cont'd): -- they can move forward and let these children succeed.

And what better picture for these kids to look at; that a woman that actually sat in their chair, a woman that stood and sat in their chair as a student is now the principal of this school.

This school should not be shut down. That's all I have to say.

(Applause)

(Translator translation)

MS. IVERSON: And this school is Burr.

SPEAKER: Hi, I'm Clara Chambers (phonetic) from the Burr community.

So my first question is, where is the Board of Education, where --

(Translator translation)

SPEAKER (cont'd): -- where is the Board of Education, where is Barbara Byrd-Bennett, where is Rahm Emanuel, who truly is --

(Applause)

SPEAKER (cont'd): -- making all of these decisions?
(Speaker translation)

SPEAKER (cont'd): Because we know that you all are not making these decisions. You all are not making these decisions over our community schools.

They're the anchors in our communities, okay, and if they are not here, what does this say about how much our input is actually valued in this decision-making process?

(Speaker translation)

SPEAKER (cont'd): The Board is not asking us whether or not school closings is a valid option. They're asking us which schools should we close. They want us to plan our own funeral. Are we going to let them do this?

(Indicating)

SPEAKER (cont'd): So these are our schools, and they've been anchors in our communities for generations, for decades.

Can the Board say the same thing?

The Board is a constant revolving door, staying a couple years tearing down our schools, privatizing our schools and make a profit off of our schools.

The Board of Education might be here a year or two, but our schools are here to stay.
SPEAKER (cont'd): Okay. So I think we should actually test the idea that the Board cares about what we think, okay?

So let me just take a vote now to send a clear message to the mayor.

SPEAKER (cont'd): Stand up if you are opposed to school closings.

(Speaker translation)

(Speaker translation)

(Speaker translation)

SPEAKER (cont'd): If the Board is not looking to us as community members, are you willing to take more drastic action to save your schools?

(Speaker translation)

(Speaker translation)

SPEAKER (cont'd): Okay. Save our schools. Save our schools.

MS. IVERSON: Just an announcement. There's a black Highlander across the street on the east side of Ashland with flashers on.

If that's your car, it will be towed.
Okay. Burr?

SPEAKER: Hi, my name is Colleen Dillon (phonetic), and I have two daughters at Burr. My oldest is in third grade, and my youngest is in her second year of pre-K.

We started at Burr five and half years ago. There was only two pre-K classes totaling 40 students and one grade per class kindergarten through eighth.

Families are coming to Burr for preschool only and then fleeing to the suburbs because they do not see CPS as a viable option.

Burr now has five pre-K classes with only 100 students, two kindergartens, two first grades, and we continue to grow from the bottom up.

This did not happen overnight. It was the result of the community teachers and administrators coming together.

Many of our families, our alumni, who graduated from Burr are now coming back to send their children and grandchildren to Burr. This is how much of an impact Burr has had on their lives and their families.

The reason that families are staying is the great sense of community at Burr, the family environment and the dedicated staff. Our teachers are at school early, and they stay late.
I know that this doesn't happen at every school, and I'm grateful that our teachers are so dedicated and committed.

I believe this is a direct result of our strong leadership. Our principal, Mr. Klee, is in his second year at Burr, and under his leadership our enrollment grew six percent this year. Under his leadership we have three additional teachers who are working towards their national board certification, having six nationally board certified teachers.

Burr teachers strive to improve instructional techniques and student engagement by continuing professional development and looking towards each other for feedback and development.

Burr has very high success for both students and teachers. Burr students are challenged, and their progress is continually monitored and communicated.

My fear is that if Burr closed or if Burr consolidated with another school, our community will be damaged.

We are currently at over 350 students, and CPS' goal for us is to get a hundred percent utilization at 450 students.

Burr is on track to make this happen, but if
Burr is to be consolidated to another school, we could advance too fast, and I feel that will destroy the culture of our school. We'd be forced to result quickly, causing overcrowded classrooms, we'd be waiting to get more staff, a fast influx of new staff if you did get any, and the hard work we have done through the past five years with our school would become undone.

Please allow Burr to continue down the successful path they're moving and continue to grow forward at our own pace so we can continue to track neighborhood families in our school and keep families in the city because we feel so fortunate to have such an amazing educational community in our neighborhood.

(Applause)

(Translator translation)

MS. IVerson: Chopin followed by Dett, and then De Diego.

Chopin, Dett and Diego.

SPEAKER: Okay. I'm a parent with Dett School.

Dett School has been a Level 1 school for the past few years.

Dett became that level school because of the ISAP dropped only three points. It is still our status school with the great leadership.
The scores are still much higher than we hoped.

Institutions that have, for 53 percent, the ISAP dropped for 750, it says. It was in the -- I believe it was in the Tribune paper.

Even though the City gave the charter schools moneys and resources that were filled, we scored 23 points higher than the nearby challenged Dett schools.

It does have a school play. Computers were broken that we need.

Before I go any further, I got to ask this.

What happened to the money, that TIF money --

(Appause)

SPEAKER (cont'd): -- that they put it into highrises downtown before it went to our kids' schools, the Hyatt Hotel?

We need an answer where that money went to. We need to know. That's money from our kids. We need it.

So we need an answer.

Now, they could have been here to give us the answers that we need, you know. It doesn't make no sense.

But they're renting to line their pockets with money, but they can't help out a school.

Our kids need it. You know, this is our kids'
future. Just it don't make no sense.

So they should have been here tonight. So --

We have a lot of kids --

TIMEKEEPER: (Indicating.)

SPEAKER (cont'd): Okay.

(Translator translation)

MS. IVESON: Okay. De Diego followed by Duprey.

SPEAKER: Hello. Good evening. My name is Ann Essie (phonetic), and I am the LSC chair for De Diego.

My daughter has been there for six years. I have served on the chair -- or as chair for the last three years.

And it really is heartbreaking to see our school get less and less every year instead of more and more every year like all the other schools that we hear about are either charter or suburban schools.

We just want to ask for the same amount, or just give us a chance to get more resources every year instead of struggling to get by and really trying to reinvent the wheel if they're ready to make something out of nothing.

We have so many parents and so many teachers that spend their own money, their own time, we're
waiting for CPS to step up and say, you know what, we
got this, why don't you guys just volunteer and help the
kids, and we should be able to get more resources every
year.

(Applause)

(Translator translation)

SPEAKER (cont'd): I have received over -- We've got
800 letters from our students in our -- in our entire
school, and the main theme for all these letters is
family. That's one of the main reasons I love De Diego.
I was not an alumni here, but of the stories of
parents that are alumni, they keep it clear, the fourth
generation of alumni to come back to the school, it's an
old high school, it's really been around for so long,
it's just impossible, I just can't even fathom that it's
even on the list to possibly be closed.

(Translator translation)

SPEAKER (cont'd): If our school is closed, our
community would not be the same.
Please take that to heart.

(Applause)

(Translator translation)

MS. IVERSON: The schools are Duprey, Herbert,
Irving, and Jackson to follow up on the list.
MS. LITTLE: We want the letter.

SPEAKER: Good evening. My name is Nissan Dino (phonetic). I am the PTA president for San De Diego.

I have three children in the Chicago Public School system. Two years ago I transferred my children to go to San De Diego because of the lack of socioemotional support for students at their previous school.

The school my kids transferred from had great teachers, administration and staff, but the lack of social workers and socioemotional support is what made it unsafe for my kids.

Since my children have attended De Diego, they have not come to physical altercations and my oldest has not been suspended for having to defend himself.

I am concerned that, with school closures, De Diego will receive more students or we can lose our school. This contains the dynamics of the students and teachers.

I am here to say that I am against school closures and feel that schools are safe havens and a resource to a community.

My question to CPS is; what is your transition plan for these students, what is your plan --
SPEAKER (cont'd): -- what is your plan to provide the schools with more counselors and teachers, what is your evaluation process that the students now -- now that the students have to deal with a dramatic situation as far as school closures to rectify the schools or receiving new students?

At De Diego we do not mind receiving children, but we need the support and resources to provide students with a quality education. We want to continue progressing academically, but this radical move is setting us all up to fail.

With Common Core people, they see things differently, kids are learning differently, and petitions have risen.

Why is it that charter schools that are severely underutilized and are not performing any better are not being charted to close --

(S Applause)

SPEAKER (cont'd): -- and still receive our taxpayer money?

Every single child deserves a quality education and a school that has resources to meet their needs.

Charter schools are not. All children are entitled to a
quality education.

MS. IVerson: (indicating.)

(Translator translation)

SPEAKER: Good evening, everyone. My name is Marian Ryes Nessum (phonetic). I am a proud dedicated parent at De Diego.

I have two children at --

(Applause)

SPEAKER (cont'd): -- Diego, and I have nieces at Diego, and our family has a deep root into the school from my father to their grandchildren and nieces and nephews.

I have to say one thing. We are a family at Diego. We take care of our own and each other's children. We have proud, hard-working teachers, staff, to the security people, to the maintenance people, to the cafeteria workers. They're dedicated in the care of our children.

Please provide our school what we need because we are -- we have an endless list of resources that we don't have of services that we would need.

We have children who go without, and they don't have to. We have children who exceed, not just meet what they have to do, they exceed what they need to do.
The same with our staff and teachers.

I'm sorry. I'm not even reading what I have here because I'm so excited and passionate and nervous about all this.

So please know this; we cannot go on the way we've been. We are the kind of staff, teachers, families that will do what we have to do with what we have, but we can't go on this way, especially when we're receiving more students.

Give us what we need, help our children exceed their potentials. Don't let them think that this is all they get. Give them the opportunities that are entitlements to others.

Thank you very much.

(Applause)

(Translator translation)

MS. IVERSON: Duprey.

SPEAKER: Thank you very much.

My name is Elizabeth Adler (phonetic), and I'm the executive director and founder of Chicago Danztheatre Ensemble.

And I live --

(Indicating.)

SPEAKER (cont'd): Chicago Danztheatre Ensemble.
We are a multidisciplinary performing arts ensemble.

And I live and I work in Logan Square in Humboldt Park, and I have worked as a teaching artist at Pritzker Elementary, I have worked at Chopin, I have worked at Burr, I've worked at Lafayette.

But tonight I'm here to talk --

(Applause)

SPEAKER (cont'd): I think I've also worked at a couple of other schools along the years.

But today I'm here to talk about Duprey Elementary School where we work with the Books Alive and Poetry Alive Program.

And this is Archie (indicating). This is Archie during our class. He's dancing. And this is Archie at 5:30 when he had to go home; underneath a chair because he's sad because he doesn't want to walk home because it's scary to walk home because in our school it's safe, and he doesn't want to go home because he had fun during the day. That's why.

And because of our corroboration together, we have raised over $10,000 worth of funding to bring our education to her school (indicating).

This woman (indicating) is creative, and the
fact that she doesn't have a lot of resources and what
she's doing to bring art partners and other partnership
programs to the school is quite amazing.

And, also, as somebody that lives and works in
Humboldt Park and Logan Square, you wouldn't even shut
down all of these schools, and some day I'm going to
have a baby, and where in the world is my poor child
going to go to school?

(Applause)

(Translator translation)

SPEAKER: Hi, my name is Magdeline Barnay
(phonetic). I'm here for the Duprey School. I'm a
parent, and I have kids that go to that school.

I love the school. My kids transferred from
out south to the northwest side. It was a scary
transition for me. But since I've been to that school,
they opened their arms up, and they helped my kids.

At one school they were telling me, oh, your
kid is on the honor roll. When I get there, my kids are
reading at the levels that they're supposed to read at.
At Duprey my kids read at their levels they're supposed
to, their math scores are up.

We love Duprey School. We want that school to
stay in our community. They help our kids.
Instead of subtracting from the schools, add a computer lab so our kids can have more computers, add a library so our kids can read more books, add more programs like nurses.

When our kids fall down and hurt themselves, we get a call when they're home with a big bump. Add more nurses in there so they can help our kids.

Add more counselors for the kids to be helped so they help with the parents because some of us is at work so we can't be there to counsel our kids, to help our kids.

Please just be sensitive what you guys are doing to the community and the people in the neighborhood that need their schools. Please do not go close down our schools.

Thank you.

(Applause)

(Translator translation)

SPEAKER: Good evening. I am Gloria Roman, the principal of Duprey Elementary School.

I opened that school 25 years ago, I'm 40 so, and about three and a half years ago, we were moved over to Von Humboldt facilities. So we've already had one action at our school where we were moved to keep
Von Humboldt open and Duprey open.

I was actually a student at Von Humboldt as well so I can empathize with the other principal.

So what sets us apart is our small class size. And everybody knows that with a small school and small classes, you can do a lot more with the students.

And we've been able to make great change and accelerate academically our students' growths. Every student -- We were able to move from a Level 2 school -- I mean from a Level -- I'm sorry. We were able to move out of probation past year.

And, really, we're just asking for three things.

We've already applied for preschool programs. So if we were to get the preschool, we would be able to bring in more people.

We also need help in marketing our school and also in bringing some type of a magnet program. We had a magnet cluster program that was taken away because of funding.

So we believe we have a lot to offer our families. We just need more support. Thank you.

(Translator translation)

MS. IVERSON: Herbert School, up here, please.
SPEAKER: Good evening. I am the librarian at Herbert School.

Over the years Victor Herbert School has worked to form partnerships that enhance our student population, the alliance Herbert has formed with Rush Health Center, essay contests and students who began to see a career for themselves in nursing. The partnership has gained boys and girls clubs and supported our quest for liberty for the Reach Together Project which reached out to ensure some set home libraries. The foundation has supported A-teams, which support academic success in the form of money for college. Our students continue to benefit from this alliance well into their high school years.

We at Herbert know that our students need to be well-rounded individuals in order to become productive citizens in tomorrow's world. It has taken us years to form network for support. If our school is closed, all that we have worked for will vanish.

Our students enjoy a safe haven during the afterschool hours with many special programs at the club and homework help with the branch of the Chicago Public Libraries.

All of these alliances are just a few steps
from the school's front or back door. Can you imagine that we have created a net of safety for students in a city that is currently experiencing the worst crisis in years in terms of children meeting their deaths by violence?

We have decided at Herbert that our students will be armed with all that they need in order to meet the challenges of higher education, the corporate world and everyday life. We have decided at Herbert to create safe havens so that they can pursue their dreams and aspirations. Herbert School has formed alliances that allow our students to realize the potentials and see success in their future. To close our school would undo these alliances.

And just a P.S., I sat for the last three years and wrote grants, and I watched the Board fund millions and billions into charter schools.

What's up with that?

(Applause)

(Translator translation)

SPEAKER: Good evening, everyone. My name is Wanda Noys, (phonetic), and I currently serve as the chairperson for Victor Herbert LSC.

Now, I stand before you to speak from a
parent's perspective.

But before I do that, I did have the opportunity of attending one of the utilization meetings over on Jackson, and I posed the question to the committee, if you were able to allow a person of interest to serve on your committee, and you all said that -- well, you said yes, and I submitted the name and the phone number of that person, and he has yet to be contacted. So at the end of my little spiel, I would like to know if you guys have an answer as to why he hasn't been contacted.

(Applause)

SPEAKER (cont'd): Now, from the parent's perspective, I can say that I stand behind Victor Herbert 100 percent because of the success that I've had with my own children.

Of my seven children, four of them have graduated and attended selective enrollment schools, and I have one that comes from Kenwood, the accelerated program, one that got accepted into Walter Payton, I have one at Lane Tech, and I have one at Lindbloom. I currently have an eighth grader that I hope will get into a selected enrollment school as well.

I say this to say that Victor Herbert is not
where it should be, but we are not what we used to be. We have --

(Applause)

SPEAKER (cont'd): All of the things that the Board has had, the school should have.

We have a functioning LSC, we have a functioning PTA and a functioning No Child Left Behind program.

So I don't understand why we are slated to be closed. I don't think it's fair. I don't think -- And, especially, I don't think it's fair to these children that have to be relocated and displaced.

I want you all to understand that, when you guys decide to come for Victor Herbert, it will not be easy because we have put a lot into that school and we are prepared to stand there and fight until the end.

Thank you.

(Translator translation)

SPEAKER: Hi. Good evening. My name is Brenda Carter.

I'm here because I am a grandmother, I'm a grandmother of seven and have grandchildren at Victor Herbert.

I just want to say, has the Committee
considered where they will send the special needs 
students at Victor Herbert? Will we have children that 
are taught to walk, talk who would meet their needs? 

Once before I spoke when we were over there on 
Jackson, I have a granddaughter that was at 
Victor Herbert, and without Victor Herbert and her being 
special needs, she didn't know how to talk, she didn't 
know how to do anything, and by the grace of God and 
Victor Herbert, she is now going to graduate this year 
from special needs at Whitney Young High School, okay? 

And I would also like to say shame on you. All 
I have to say is that it's on your back with our 
children's education because Victor Herbert is one band 
and one sound, and we will not, we will not stand here 
and let you all take, not only Victor Herbert, none of 
our schools. 

We pay our taxes, we do this, we do that. Find 
another way. Take it out of the CEO's, do whatever you 
got to do, but leave our schools alone. 

Thank you. 

(Applause) 

MS. IVERSON: Irving, Jackson, King, Lafayette and 
LaSalle. 

(Translator translation)
SPEAKER: Good evening. My name is Tony Venter (phonetic). I am a teacher at Washington Irving where I am also the union delegate. And I'm standing for those schools that are facing closure.

Let me be honest. I don't care to hear about your budgets, I don't care about your bureaucracy, and, frankly, in this case, I don't even care about politics. What I do care about are my students and specifically the black and Latino students that these closures only seem to affect.

I currently teach two eighth grades and one seventh grade English arts classes. I realize that I'm fortunate because I can teach classes that have about 20 students in them, and even with inclusions, I only have about 27, and I believe I'm affected because of that.

Smaller classes afford more individualized instruction, effective differentiated instruction, development instructions and a calm, collaborative learning environment that's conducive to all.

I've got about 15 years under my belt, and the only year I didn't receive a superior rating was the first year when I received an excellent one. So I think I know what I'm talking about.

But I don't know how I'm supposed to work these
miraicles in the classrooms where the students, if the 
schools close, will be sitting on top of each other and 
fighting for resources.

Our schools are good enough. If you took the 
resources of what went to charters, give to them. Stop 
treating our babies like they're numbers and shuffling 
them around to appease mandates for people who have not 
even stepped foot in the classrooms.

Our kids are humans, not human deficits, and 
it's time for CPS and Board of Ed to start treating them 
as such.

And, FYI, we need you guys to be transparent. I 
heard a facilitator with the break-out session are paid 
for by Wal-Mart who are big supporters of charter 
schools.

I say we don't go to break-outs. I say we stay 
in this -- in the main sanctuary and we tell you guys we 
will not be satisfied until that school list that comes 
out for closures has zero school closures on it.

(Translator translation)

SPEAKER: My name is Maria Lofton (phonetic). I'm a 
citywide school nurse, and one of my schools is 
Victor Herbert, and the rest of my schools are also in 
West Lawndale.
I'm here to say that we all love our children so, when one of us closes, we all are affected. Not one of these schools should be closed.

We believe that, if you take a look, I see about 14 million here for one of the charter schools for upgrades, there's money here. There's money at the State. Uno got $98 million over the last two years.

There is no way that it is not possible where we can find money to resource our schools with social workers, nurses, occupational therapists, clinicians, have remedial-based programs come in.

You say you want smaller class sizes, and then when you have them, you want to close them down. That is today.

(Translator translation)

SPEAKER: Hello, I'm Cion Barrett (phonetic). I live in the Irving School community, and I'm also a teacher at Gage Park High School.

I wanted to --

I could stand here tonight and tell you about the scores of our neighborhood schools. I could talk about the $2.25 billion dollars that CPS robbed from the schools and we don't exactly where it's going back to schools, some to build Hyatt Hotels; I could break down
all the beautiful works that each individual school has done, but I've been listening to that at all these different hearings, and I've been listening to it at all the hearings for years, and we keep begging for our community, we keep begging for our schools, and then we -- we're not too proud to do that, but then no satisfactory answers from that.

I could talk about the utilization formula and how it's completely off national standards and it's a complete travesty and shows that, basically, you all don't know how to do your job on this end. I can talk about the probation policies and how it exempts charters so that we've got a situation where lower performing charters with less students are exempt from this but neighborhood schools that are doing better aren't. I could talk about all that.

This whole process is absurd. It's absolutely ridiculous that we have to sit here and beg for the right to determine our own children's futures.

(Applause)

SPEAKER (cont'd): If you think about this clearly, could you see a situation where Rahm Emanuel's constituents up in Winnetka would have to come to Chicago and beg us to keep their schools open, to see
the parents of the lab school coming to us and saying,
please keep this lab school open, our scores are pretty
good.

    That's ridiculous.

    I want to ask the panel, since you can't make
any actual decisions, is it worth it to be here every
night getting beat up by the community when you know
this is wrong?

Finally, I do want to address the people in the
room and the 12,000 other parents who by my estimate in
all these hearings that have come out and voted pretty
nearly unanimously against it.

    In a situation where the people who rule us
completely ignore our voices, is it enough to talk, is
it enough to fight to save one school, is it enough even
to try to save all schools?

    I think it's at this moment where we have to
say enough is enough and say we're the ones who should
be running these schools.

      (Applause)

      (Translator translated)

SPEAKER:  Mathew Ditto, the principal of
Andrew Jackson.  I'd like to say good evening to
everyone.
And this is an exciting process because we are in a State process. I've made a long-term commitment to working with Chicago Public Schools over the years, and it's nice to see people who I've worked with over the years in the schools and the communities that we are now discussing.

So the one thing I invite everyone to think about and reflect on the panel, and it's nice to see the educators sitting before me that I worked with on a daily and weekly basis, is that the schools are the lighthouse, and the lighthouses are the hope in the community for the children, and as soon as the students enter the schools, they know that they have pathways to the future.

So as we share our thoughts and you share your hopes and you're sharing concrete evidence on why the schools should continue, I ask that we always are aware of that there's a recorder here today, there are people at the table, and I invite you all to really, once you have all of this wonderful communication that people have shared with us today, to not be afraid to stop and think aloud.

That's a wonderful quote from Lorraine Hansberry.
Thank you.

(Translator translation)

SPEAKER: Good evening. My name is Wanda Hopkins (phonetic). I am a proud parent of a child who attends Andrew Jackson Language Academy.

Clearly, my daughter's school will not be closed as State law for the record.

I'm here tonight to support the schools that's in this room not to close.

I'm here to make this body know that not one school needs to close since we're talking about saving money. Saving money is what they say we need to do.

Closing schools have never saved money.

For the last 15 years, schools have been closed, but yet the deficit increased hundreds of thousands of dollars in the years.

CPS continues to make false accusations.

I'm in the church. I'm in the church.

And they tell us that they need to close, and they say false things on the record based upon their sheet of paper.

Don't believe nothing on it.

If they ask the taxpayers in the room tonight, would you vote to put millions of dollars into community
schools or into charter schools, I wonder what you think this body would say.

Our schools are in need of social workers, counselors, nurses, libraries for some, but yet you say today that we need to close our schools.

We're not dealing with a level playing field.

As I look around to see many principals that I know, I've been advocating for children for 35 years, some of them are not on the closing list, just like my principal, Mr. Ditto. I thank you for coming tonight to support the schools who are on the chopping board.

But I say to the elected officials and to the principals of the schools of the City of Chicago that you tell the Chief of Schools, you tell Denise Little, the Chief Network Officer, that we're not -- I'm sorry -- I must say to the commissioner who comes to every meeting that I've been at, I commend you, but you need to go back and tell the group that none of the schools need to close.

Closing and consolidating the schools is dangerous for our children, and if any one of you make that decision, the blood lays on your hands, and I tell you in closing, you don't want that kind of problem on your hands.
Thank you, everybody.

(Translator translation)

MS. IVerson: Lafayette, Lozano, and Mitchell, please come up.

SPEAKER: Good evening. My name is Joel Rodriguez (phonetic). I am a proud parent of four children in Lafayette Elementary School.

Lafayette, Lafayette is the only school my kids have known. There they have been exposed to a high level of teaching and learning and, above all, caring adults.

My three boys all play the cello and violin in our incredible music program, and my daughter is anxiously awaiting to join next year.

Our school has had its struggles, but with a cultural disinvestment in neighborhood schools in CPS, how can a school not have its struggles?

CPS has given many of our schools a twig and then placed us in a gun fight, leaving us to defend for ourselves.

Lafayette has been put on the list of underutilized schools mainly because of low enrollment.

So the question is where are the students? Why are we seeing so -- such low numbers in many of our schools?
Because of the fact that CPS is pushing the charter schools over neighborhood schools affecting our numbers?

In making your decisions, are you asking, considering schools that serve a high population of students with learning disabilities like Lafayette?

Lafayette's population is 484, 166 of them have IEP's, 144 of them are diagnosed with some form of learning disability from autism to Down syndrome to Fragile X.

When making your decision to close schools, are you considering the devastating effects that this will have on communities and their families?

I think a better question is what communities are being affected by these decisions to close these schools. Is it not the communities of color?

These meetings --

(Applause)

SPEAKER (cont'd): These meetings are a slap in the face of parents, students and teachers. Your now.

School closing is now? We somehow have to convince you all that you should not close our schools. It seems like some sick war of hunger games.

TIMEKEEPER: (Indicating.)
SPEAKER (cont'd): Give me one second.

Closing schools in low-income communities like ours will lead to displacement and destabilization of children and neighborhoods already in potential vulnerable situations. There will be significant negative impact. Closing schools are not the answer.

(Applause)

MS. IVERSON: Lafayette.

(Translator translation)

SPEAKER: Hi, my name is Stephanie Thompson. I (inaudible) colleges for Chicago Public Schools.

I've been working at Lafayette for nine years, and since working there, I've seen the low-incidence autism program grow.

When I first started in 2004, we had two classrooms that serviced early childhood and primary, and now we service sixth through eighth grade with autism, Fragile X and other low-incidence disabilities.

SPEAKER: Hi, I'm a teacher at Lafayette School, Sullivan.

I teach in the low-incidence population. I have fourth through sixth grade.

One of my students this year got accommodated to play the violin. Very exciting. She's part of music
program, and she's thrilled about it, but our music teacher went out of his way to accommodate so that a shorter arm can reach to the violin. It's a huge accomplishment. It's a gift that we have. Lafayette is a gift, it's an anchor to our community that we need, and our music program is one of the many things that we have to offer.

SPEAKER: There are this year 50 classrooms at Lafayette, and those classrooms this year have been used for the office of itinerary encroaches to plan their trainings and also to give trainings to low-incidence teachers citywide, and we've had other trainings at Lafayette on a regular basis, but there a few classrooms, but they're being utilized for many activities.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Lafayette is half full, not half empty.

(Applause)

MS. IVERSON: The King School.

SPEAKER: Hi, my name is Deava Tyler (phonetic).

I stand here today before you a CPS teacher, a CPS parent and in my opinion, most importantly, a product of CPS.

My son is a second grader at King Elementary.
I graduated college in 2010, and so he attended King for pre-K, for kindergarten, first, second. I'd just like to say that most of his time in schools, I have been in school myself.

King taught my son to read. They taught my nephews to read who came in after going from school to school on the south side, came in as a first and second grader who could not read familiar awareness, awareness beyond, but my second grade nephew is reading now. He is very important to the neighborhood.

And I'm just devastated right now to find that so many of the schools in this area are closing, so many of the schools on the south side they are talking about closing, and my question is, where is my son supposed to go, are you all going to pay for him to go to private schools, or, you know, where is he supposed to go, where are all of these other schools supposed -- the other students supposed to go, do you really plan on forcing 40 students in a classroom?

That's ridiculous.

I don't have anything else to say.

SPEAKER: Good evening. I greet you. Good evening.

I am Lazene Ellis (phonetic), a grandparent and volunteer at King School.
I have four -- I have four grandchildren that's kindergartener, of which I volunteer in, and a fourth grader, first grader and second grader, and two of them are on the honor roll.

Our schools belong to us in our community. We need it for the education and advice for our children. During the day it's like a place like home for them, they feel very accepted, and it's a place they need to learn social skills and all those other good things along with our parents. We, too, have a place that we can give ourselves -- of ourselves, and at King it is the village, and we're always saying it takes a village to raise our children so don't close our school. There are and will be children that need us all over this planet.

Therefore, we give thanks for our teachers. I feel they give the best that they have to give, and as a community, as a King participant, we are a community.

For our community, God's will be done, not CPS'.

SPEAKER: Good evening. Mr. Flowers, principal of King Elementary School.

As I've been listening, it sounds like you're on the element that all the schools have shared the
passion for their schools. The element is the word love. I hear that in your voices, and I would hope that your words that all of you said before and say after me do not go in vain. Someone has to listen.

On behalf of a parent, three students came to our school this year for the first time. A parent told me last week that the students that she brought to our school, her children, were victims of schools that were closed, they've been to three other schools, all those schools are closed. So these children have been bumped around because of school closings.

She gets to a school like King, like some of your other schools, and the schools they're doing away with, they're developing, they're stable, and we like to keep them that way because of the nurturing part of what we do is helping our students.

The violence is going on in our city so bring our programs back that we used to have when we were young.

We started at King --

And these -- these numbers on the size, underutilized, are all fake, they're not accurate.

When we started at King Elementary School, we had an ESP in every classroom all the way to fifth
grade. Now we have no ESP's with the exception of
special education.

CPS does a good job with math only in the area
of subtraction.

(Appause)

SPEAKER (cont'd): So all I'm saying that we, you as
parents, you have a voice. Use your voice, stand for
what you believe. Let's continue to keep our schools.

MS. IVerson: Montefiore and Moos.

SPEAKER: My name is Amy Lys (phonetic), and I teach
early children special education at LaSalle II Magnet
School. I have taught in the Fulton Network for eight
of the past nine years.

Today as we discuss future school closings, it
is imperative to look in the past.

I began my career in 2004 at Gladstone School.
That year Gladstone received children from the closed
Thomas Jefferson School which had in turn received
children from the closed Jacob Reed School in 2001.

Rahm's reported scores decided universally to
extend the day.

Gladstone cited a well-resourced extended day
for every child from preschool through eighth grade. As
a fine arts cluster magnet school, children received
music, visual arts and drama each week in addition to
(inaudible) -- school edification. Gladstone helps
several special education cluster programs and welcomes
hundreds of children from schools on the southwest side.
Gladstone housed the school-based health center open to
the greater community with a nurse practitioner. This
not only has students in medical compliance but also
provided assistance with ill children since CPS does not
provide a nurse daily.

Despite all this, Gladstone was closed for a
rehabilitation in 2008. A year later it was delegated
for this school to close between 2011 and 2009 on the
near west side.

My current school was considered underutilized.
My school is a private magnet school. It is often
overlooked that we have four early childhood special
education classes.

I ask that you consider the small class sizes
with deep classes that are required by law to adhere to.
Additionally, I ask that you approach that no schools
are utilized in their building space.

LaSalle II has classrooms dedicated to world
language study in accordance with the mission of the
school.
I ask that you take a personal look towards these kids that may be impacted by a Board action. This includes not only schools in consideration for closure but also schools which may be designated as receiving schools.

I hope visiting schools will allow you to see children that will be impacted and these children's faces that become more than a number and a utilization formula.

SPEAKER: My name is Kathy Bizinski (phonetic). I am a member of our LSC at LaSalle II.

I'm also a product of the Chicago Public Schools. I went to grade school at on the northwest side, I went to Steiner High School, and I went to a state school, college.

And I feel like I had a pretty good career before I started my second year, and I owe that to the Chicago Public Schools. I am a huge proponent of public education.

And that's why my two daughters go to LaSalle School. My brother had learning disabilities, and because of our great school, he is now a successful financial planner, and like I said, I'm very proud of my public education, but that was 30 years ago and I think
we need to change things.

I am appalled at the fact that people don't have libraries, they don't have books, they don't have computers, they don't even have the resources that they need.

If someone was given a choice between a school that has these resources, computers, and one that doesn't, why in the world would they choose a school that doesn't have computers and the resources they need?

No school in Chicago would be underutilized if we spent the time and the energy to put back the resources that we need to give our teachers and our principals a training daily and to give them the resources that they need.

I know people who would like to send their teacher to CPS schools, but they don't feel they can because resources are lacking. Put them in there, and people will come. We're being short-sighted.

LaSalle II is underutilized according to this spreadsheet. I think you've heard this before. It's flawed. It doesn't take into account that we are a language school and we have five rooms specifically set apart for our languages. We have preschool, we have special ed, and if LaSalle II is closed, that would be
an amazing loss of -- what, what would it be -- it would be a --

Well, anyway, okay. So if you added more children to our school, it would be a huge overcrowding. And we went through a consolidation, and we are a Level 2 school now because of our consolidation and getting our cultures together.

Every single school that goes through a consolidation and taking in children will have a hit to their school.

THE TRANSLATOR: Okay. I'm going -- I'm going to start translating again.

(Translator translation)

SPEAKER: Good evening. My name is Wendy Weingarten (phonetic). I'm a national board certified teacher, and I've been teaching at CPS for 18 and a half years. During these 18 and a half years, I've taught at Gary Elementary School in Portage Park, and currently I'm at LaSalle II in Wicker Park.

I've watched the CEO's at CPS change five times. The regions become areas, the areas become networks, the IAO becomes CIO and then become a chief. I've seen my e-mail server change two or three times, my attendance book, grad book and report cards have changed
two to three times over the years.

What I haven't seen changed two to three times
over the years are the professionals with whom I teach.

In my 13 years at Gary Elementary school, when teachers
left, they left for retirement, two left to have a
family, and two left to transfer to new CPS schools,
which includes me. My current school is in its fifth
year, and I've only seen two teachers leave for
retirement.

Teachers become the constant in students'
lives.

(Translator translation)

SPEAKER (cont'd): See, as I look at this
utilization plan that you all shared with us, this is
flawed. I have 31 students in my classroom by my
contract. So when I look at LaSalle School, which is a
world language academy as you've heard, we have five
classrooms dedicated, and that was not included in that.

I also look at --

I also wonder why we're using a census to
figure out how many children are in CPS? If you look at
CPS' records, we don't know of what census how many
children attended public, private or independent
schools.
Yet, in 2000 CPS had 435,618 students attending CPS. Today on CPS' website, there are 404,151 students. That is a difference of 31,000, not 145,000. It is important and imperative that we look at this.

You all would be shocked and everyone in this room should be appalled that not every classroom has libraries, every school does not have libraries, classrooms do not have computers.

Not every child in CPS is given the same opportunities.

It is time that we put children first, that we do not leave children behind.

You have heard what we're all doing in here. I now want to know what you will do to protect these children and these schools.

MS. IVERSON: Mitchell, Montefiore, Moos and Near North and Otis please line up and Lozano.

SPEAKER: Good evening. My name (inaudible)

Martinez.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I can't hear.

SPEAKER (cont'd): My name is Sylvia Martinez (phonetic). I am a proud parent, LSC member and teacher at Lozano.

And I am here today to have a summary of data
and facts in response to your underutilization report
done by the Commission.  (Indicating.)

(Speaker translation)

(Indicating.)

MS. IVerson: Mitchell School, Mitchell.

Speaker: Good evening. I'm Danielle Singleton

(phoneetic), parent of two and LSD member at

Mitchell Elementary School, and here's why we chose to

commute from a historic movement to a school in West

Town.

We wanted a small school. But how do you find

what's the best fit for the most benefit?

We visited schools based on high test scores

and discovered that current stats are only part of the

picture. So we began looking at schools in terms of

academic growth, and that narrowed our search, but

something was still missing.

We started looking closely at teachers and

their practices and found that not all teachers' styles

would work for our kids.

So we added teacher qualifications and

dedication to the list, and, again, our search was

narrow, but something was still missing.

Speaking to parents during school visits became
part of our MO. We found that a school's ability to
involve parents in a community is crucial to a student's
success. So the pieces were now starting to come
together, but still nothing clicked.
And just when we were about to dive into home
schooling, we stumbled across Mitchell.

Mitchell has dedicated six years of consistent
academic improvement — improvement making us the
highest performing elementary school in the 26th Ward
and earning the Illinois Spotlight School Award.

Now, many of the teachers at Mitchell have
reached national board certifications, they've been
awarded thousands of dollars in grant funding this
school year, they have skills at designing an adaptive
rigorous curriculum, and they've presented conferences
around the country on using Common Core.

Parents and community members fully support the
school as well through fundraising, volunteer efforts
and learning opportunities.

Mitchell's success is not a function of any one
of these aspects; rather, it is a collaborative effort
of Principal Milberg and a host of parents, staff and
community presence all focused on the academic growth
and well-being of our students.
So all of this is why I believe that when CPS says that its mission is to create quality education for every student in every community, Mitchell really should be a model for realizing that.

Thank you.

MS. IVERSON: Montefiore, Moos, Near North.

Near North is with them.

SPEAKER: Good evening. My name is Janet Beacon (phonetic), and my son attends Mitchell Elementary School.

When I drop him off in the morning, I know he is safe, well-cared for and challenged to do his best every day, he is under the effective leadership of our principal and assistant principal, who not only deal with budgetary and parental concerns but our support for the effective and innovative teaching.

Principal Milberg and Assistant Principal O’Connor actually teach classes at Mitchell's, which not only allows them to remain connected to students personally, but it gives them more credibility with their teaching staff and makes for better teacher mentoring.

Our teachers have impeccable resumes. Seventy percent of our teachers are nationally board certified
and recognized with Illinois master teachers. This is what you'll -- how our family at Mitchell begins.

Our teachers collaborate with each other and with families to provide the best outcome to our students. Our parents are very involved, and we foster a family environment at Mitchell, which is easily and effective to do as a small school.

As a family, we are concerned not only about our sons and daughters but all of the kids at Mitchell. I can walk down the hall at any given time and talk to kids about why they might not have their homework or tell kids on the playground to put their hat on because I know they were just sick, and I know the other parents would do the same for my children. That is the culture at Mitchell.

Our students are amazing. They enjoy art, music, Chinese, gym and dance during school hours and have rigorous academics. Our afterschool programs include art, dance in an extensive dance program, musicals, basketball, volleyball, tennis, football, hockey book clubs, et cetera.

I believe Mitchell has dedicated students, staff and parents. I know there is no lack of volunteers who wanted to speak about Mitchell tonight,
and I think our attendance here on a Monday night, when our children don't have school tomorrow, prove that our family at Mitchell is more than dedicated to our children and that we succeed in helping our students become world class citizens.

And I would like to say that there are a lot of parents here tonight, we have an amazing amount of parents we devote to network, and you guys should all pat yourselves on the back.

SPEAKER: Ola, hi.

(Speaker translation)

SPEAKER (cont'd): Today I am here saying how wonderful Mitchell is to the community and to my family. My family has 50 years dedicated to this community and to this school.

Currently my grandchildren are enrolled in the school, though I came from immigrated parents that also were with six children re-enrolled, my children enrolled and now my grandchildren are enrolled.

(Speaker translation)

SPEAKER (cont'd): I have been very active volunteering at Mitchell School, attending many workshops like Common Core, Bullying, CPS, mathematics, emotional and social well-being that have helped parents
and students to get the first-hand education resources
that Mitchell provides.

(Speaker translation)

SPEAKER (cont'd): I always try to translate to
bridge the gap between Spanish-speaking parents here at
Mitchell on any occasion.

(Speaker translation)

SPEAKER (cont'd): This school has been a blessing
to have. It's small where everyone knows each other and
is very willing to help each other.

(Speaker translation)

SPEAKER (cont'd): On my street we play happily with
our classmates.

Keep our school.

(Speaker translation)

SPEAKER (cont'd): I have been seeing how my
grandchildren have grown in their education, knowledge
of others and their world because of Mitchell's
excellence.

MS. IVERSON: All right. Otis, Peabody, Pritzker.
Rudolph and Sabin, please line up.
We have Montefiore.
Otis, okay, Otis.

SPEAKER: Hi. Good evening, everybody. My name is
Alcozio Martinez (phonetic), and I graduated James Otis back in '94 -- I'm sorry -- '90.

And, well, I'm a third shift. I start work in about a couple of hours. And I don't know if some parents here probably asked for the day off, probably are not going to go to work tomorrow, and, frankly, I'm sleepy, and as -- as you -- based on the passion and the compassion of these parents here, you probably -- I mean I'm pretty sure the past meetings that you've had, you've seen the same thing.

So, please, you've got the information, please stop wasting our time, and, you know, just in a couple of words, instead of -- instead of just closing these schools, you have the information, three words (indicating). I don't think you need a translator for that.

THE TRANSLATOR: You can do it.

MS. IVERSON: Pritzker, Prologue, Sabin, Skinner and Smyth, please.

SPEAKER: Good evening. My name is Henry Ramos (phonetic), and I'm an eighth grade student at Peabody School.

Peabody School's students as well as our families are connected to the school and staff and have
a sense of comfort and security within our walls.

Peabody is a small school which is regarded in
the neighborhood as underutilized, and to the Board the
underutilized schools should be closed.

The Board needs to examine small schools more
closely, especially one that is making gains with
celebrating (inaudible) -- of school closings in 2009
causing grave instability.

I've been at Peabody since kindergarten, and
I've had an extraordinary learning experience.

So to the teachers and staff, thanks to them,
I've had an opportunity to go into one of Chicago's most
highest high schools.

According to research, small schools create
(inaudible) in the community, but students are aware
they will be supported by (inaudible) --

Research has also shown us that small school
closings -- (inaudible). Small schools are for the
success (inaudible) which has been so popular with the
Board these days and based on this research.

At Peabody I knew I could accomplish many of my
goals. At Peabody the teachers and staff members had
opportunities to get to know the students before they
reach the classrooms and in activities keep working with
you after we leave our classrooms.

This is true for me and my sisters.

I have seen creative efforts. It has created an effort for us throughout the last few years to belong to a school -- (inaudible). Our teachers have been able to accomplish a lot from the very beginning to the very end of each school year.

Teachers at larger schools cannot do this.

Students at larger schools get passed by. We've had students go to North Side, Lane Tech and many more high schools.

Please do not close Peabody.

SPEAKER: My name is Lisa Torres.

I'm a mother of three, and two of my sons are currently at Peabody, and let me tell you Peabody is a vital, vital part of our town community.

I'm sorry.

Peabody School has been educating for many years and has an excellent response for -- of keeping excellence and education. Peabody has a dedicated staff that works hard to bring their very best to their students.

As a parent of a child who has ADHD and a learning disability, I can tell you firsthand the
vigorous dedication by everyone at Peabody.

    Peabody had the honor of holding the Illinois Spotlight Award from 2008 to 2009, which demonstrates that no other students and schools with limited resources had shown an academic performance which Peabody expresses tremendously.

    Unfortunately, smaller schools are seen as underutilized. That to me means no child, my child, is not left behind. He gets all the attention, all the education that he's entitled to, and with Peabody and their dedication, my child can achieve his goals, and they show me that every day.

    Peabody Elementary is a strong neighborhood school that celebrates diversity, teamwork and quality education. Peabody simplifies excellence and education that CPS is looking for.

    It would be a shame to shut down Peabody Elementary, especially in a neighborhood that will still have a high demand for schools.

    Leave our children alone, please.

    MS. IVerson: Peabody.

    Can we get the rest of the schools up, Sabin, Skinner, Smyth, Suder, Talcott and Von Humboldt, please?

    Speaker: Peabody is a small school family.
Research shows that student achievement rises as a class size drops, especially for minority and low-income students.

CPS used to push for the small school model. In fact, small schools are so hailed for their success that the charter school concept was based on this research.

Peabody has shown continuous growth throughout the years. A few years ago, we received an award being one of eight spotlight schools in the state for on-track performance and under NCLB.

We have shown growth until the Board has come in, pulled our resources back, curriculum theory and mandated testing.

This constant changing has caused a lack of cohesion in the classroom and a constant shift in priority of resources in the divisions.

We have educated generations of families. Because of this personal involvement, we have always had an attendance rate around 95 percent.

Smaller schools are safer schools. We are able to target children for specialized attention in counseling that would otherwise be lost in a crowd.

Counseling just made the news as an effective way to
prevent violence in the communities.

We have taken students that have been kicked out of charter schools with a behavioral problem and have worked with them. We have also taken in students that were displaced in the closings and in some classes a percentage of transfer students as high as 20 percent.

Research states that the more a child moves during their education, the further behind they will fall. These children also have to walk further and further to get to a neighborhood school.

The Tribune states ten percent of all pedestrians struck by vehicles were walking to or from a school.

This is not the only safety issue. There are also different gang factions that have kept relatively peace in our neighborhood. These boundaries will now be crossed.

Since closing the schools will save less than one to one and a half percent of CPS' operating budget, is it really worth the cost, especially when the buildings might turn into district offices or sold to a charter for a dollar such as is the script of charters?

In fact, in canvassing the neighborhood, many people said they didn't want the building to close, they
want an expansion of pre-K or a misutilization formula.

TIMEKEEPER: (Indicating.)

(Speaker translation)

SPEAKER: Good evening, and thank you for this opportunity to speak. My name is Ashly McCallen (phonetic), and I'm a second grade teacher at -- a second grade bilingual teacher at Peabody School.

(Speaker translation)

SPEAKER (cont'd): I am here not only as a representative of Peabody but as someone who has knowledge of the severity of the crisis that exist.

(Speaker translation)

SPEAKER (cont'd): You all claim that by addressing utilization changes can reduce the number of underutilized facilities to focus on.

I ask you to please out a school that you have focused on.

One of the issues here is that closing schools are only guaranteeing that there are fewer buildings to operate, not that students will be safer or in a better academic environment.

(Speak translation)

SPEAKER (cont'd): My question is this. Who is going to be responsible for students after they have
moved? Are the schools going to absorb these students
once we receive the proper resources, or are they going
to face the same issue, one counselor and a nurse for
three hours a week? Are the students --

(Speaker translation)

SPEAKER (cont'd): In the small buildings, the rooms
are too small for classrooms. We use those for LSC
meetings, with meetings with the networks, based for
parents, peer classrooms. In the big building, we have
a recess or a gym, a student -- a student store and a
space for teachers.

We ask that you come to visit Peabody and see
how we are using our space every day.

(Applause)

MS. IVERSON: Pritzker?

Pritzker.

SPEAKER: My name is Jesse Sharkin (phonetic). I'm
the father of two sons at Pritzker Elementary School,
and I'm also the vice president of the Chicago Teachers
Union.

Sisters and brothers, what are we doing here?
If this district, this network closes three schools,
then every argument that you make for closing -- for
saving your school is an argument to close somebody
else's school.

Every word of love that I say about my closing school is a drop of poison to close somebody else's school.

Pritzker is not in an underutilized school.

There are too few people here from schools that are on the list.

We are here to beg for our schools individually one at a time. We should unite together to demand justice for our schools, not beg.

Don't we all love our children? Don't we all love our children?

Then together with me let us pledge that, when one school is injured, it is an injury to all; an attack against one of us is an attack against all of us.

And in this city we have marched and we have stood for educational justice for all children.

Teachers went a week and a half without pay, parents went a week and a half and their students couldn't go to school.

We stood together. We will stand together again if we have to against every school closing until of our schools are safe. Solidarity.

One last point. One last point. We notice
where the schools are being targeted. It is on the
south side. It is on the west side. It is where the
students are black and brown.

In the 1960s when white folks in the city were
having white flight and the schools were empty, they
didn't close the schools on the north side, did they?
They worked hard. They weren't closing schools because
of the white flight. They were bussing in students.
They were waiting for the school populations to rise.

Why are they closing our schools now on the
south and west side?

Thank you very much.

MS. IVerson: Von Humboldt.

SPEAKER: Good evening. It's a pleasure to see all
of you here this evening. Hi. My name is Julius Lossen
(phonetic), and I represent Von Humboldt.

It would be very easy for me to do this and
talk about how Von Humboldt has one of 17 child parents
that live in the City of Chicago and how child parents
have been tied directly to academic achievement, but I
won't.

I'm kind of here to discuss all the last
decades Chicago Public Schools have focused to mediate
specific school actions in black and brown communities,
and if we continue to close these schools, then we are directly responsible for the violence that targets our students.

And with that said, we need to stop.

MS. IVERSON: Thank you.

And now all you see here is Talcott, Smyth, and then Talcott.

Thank you.

SPEAKER: Hard act to follow.

Hi, my name is Lisa Coolachek (phonetic). I'm a parent of a preschooler at John M. Smyth Elementary. I'm also vice chair of the Local School Council.

I would like to complete the story of the closing of Jefferson, the closing of Gladstone, the closing -- the tearing down of Jacob Reed and all of those students on the near west side, being Smyth plus the students from Mitchell when it was still closed to John M. Smyth Elementary.

I am not the best representative of the parents at my school, most of whom who are African Americans, several of whom are school alumni and several of whom could not come tonight because they would be afraid to go home at this time of the night.

You could understand that.
Many of the children live within blocks of the school, and they are every bit as deserving of access as every other CPS student. In fact, I'd argue more deserving.

The school community is actually tight-knit and resilient and poised to watch its school rising with hard-working teachers, great kids and an influx of new parents like me to compliment these significant strengths.

Smyth Elementary belongs to our community, and I expect and hope to watch it grow and thrive for generations to come.

MS. IVERSON: And the speaker of our last school is called up.

SPEAKER: Hi, my name is Sitiar Roques Ivan (phonetic), and our family has been a part of the Talcott community for over 60 years.

Ivan is the third generation to attend Talcott, and as a family, we have invested our community, we've invested in the schools, we've invested in our children, and as parents today, we're asking that you invest in our community, you invest in our schools and that you invest in our students.

(Applause)
SPEAKER (cont'd): Okay. I'm going to translate myself because at Talcott we're a dual school with the school, that's how we do it.

So my name is Sitiar Roques --

Sorry. Spanish.

(Speaker translation)

MS. IVERSON: Talcott.

SPEAKER: Good evening, everyone. I have a student Talcott, and I was a former student at Talcott and now attend one of Chicago's top high schools college.

And I feel that every part of Talcott has prepared me to get to such an amazing school. All of the fine arts have been -- have greatly impacted my life. We have full-time music teachers, drama teachers, dance teachers now, and I feel that every part of Talcott has prepared me to be such an amazing student and to get into the top high school.

And today I'm speaking on behalf of my brother's education because he has a couple of years left to go to -- until he goes to high school, and, honestly, if they close down Talcott, where would everyone go, where are all the students going to go?

I feel like the Board of Education should focus
on improving everyone's education right now before deciding to even close down any of these schools.

SPEAKER: It's hard to follow.

I want to say that it's been wonderful to hear the pride here. I'm a parent, I'm also a teacher, but it's been wonderful to hear the pride from around the room about your individual schools.

But I have to say that I've been sitting here getting a sick feeling in my stomach as well. It's as pathetic as it is wonderful that we're here tonight begging you to keep our schools open.

And you hear these schools have so many different resources, and it's resources they've built because they've worked with the very little that CPS has given.

(Applause)

(Translator translation)

SPEAKER (cont'd): And I want to say that it's sad to watch my daughter and her friends make the signs on our way here, to put them in the position where they're making signs please keep my school open and, please, I'd like to stay with my friends.

I want to say that in the past --

TIMEKEEPER: (Indicating.)
SPEAKER (cont'd): I won't go there because I know I have one minute, right?

Okay. I also want to know how will you come up with a plan that results in overcrowded classrooms in supposedly underenrolled schools? It doesn't make sense.

I watched Ms. Denamos (phonetic) over here every day walk 31 five-year olds down the hallway. It's not all right. It's not okay. And she does an amazing job with those kids in a dual language classroom with a ridiculous amount of children.

And, see, the answers are here. You want answers. They're commonsense answers. Ask the parents. Ask the teachers. There are too many kids in our classrooms. Utilize the schools well, and we won't be having this problem.

(Translator translation)

SPEAKER (cont'd): I just want to close up and say something that I learned in the house of God; to treat others the way you want to be treated.

I just think that us, as parents and teachers, we want honest answers, we don't want spreadsheets, and we don't want your utilization table. We want you to come together. You're -- Our children's futures are in
your hands.

Please, you can do better than this. You can
do better.

MS. IVerson: All right. We have some community
people that would like to speak.

Gian -- Steven Asabad (phonetic), Anthony
Sharpy (phonetic), Elizabeth Adler (phonetic),
Juan Gonzalez (phonetic), Hi Joy (phonetic),
Antonio Moore (phonetic) Melissa Barret?

Excuse me.

SPEAKER: Good evening, everyone. My name is
Albert Ramirez (phonetic). I'm here on behalf of my
neighborhood school Stem.

I thought it was kind of strange that we were
going to have a school meeting in a church, but then,
the more I thought about it, it made sense because the
church is and the schools are the heart and soul of our
communities, they serve the communities.

When I was a little kid, they taught me a
couple of things. They told me not to lie, steal or
kill. That's what I learned growing up as a kid.

Well, this policy --

Excuse me. Pay attention up here.

I'm sorry. I'm sorry. Hopefully, I'm the last
(Applause)

SPEAKER (cont'd): Thank you.

This policy is wrong. And I know you've heard it, but I'm going to say it again, and I'm going on record right now. This policy is wrong because it lies and it steals and it's killing kids right now.

If you care about your schools, you came out today, beautiful. If you care about your kids, you showed up today. If you care about your kids' education --

TIMEKEEPER: (Indicating.)

SPEAKER (cont'd): And I don't care about one minute because I'm angry.

I'm sorry. I'm sorry, Reverend Daniels, but I'm angry right now.

There's a lie you have out there that says that we need to save money, about we're going to close the schools to save money, but at the same time we're opening up 13 new charter schools. That's a lie.

That's a lie.

Saving money? $98 million was given to Uno, $98 million was given to Uno in 2011, and we ain't got no money.
And they have the nerve to ask for $35 million more.

It's a shame, I'm sorry, but I've got to say it.

There's a gang problem in Chicago. Is there a gang problem in Chicago? Is there a gang problem in Chicago?

(Indicating.)

SPEAKER (cont'd): Well, what this policy does is, it moves kids to other neighborhoods, to other new enemies, and the kids dies.

(Indicating.)

Just an example, Fenger High School, they fired all of the teachers down to the janitors and brought in new people, and then what happened? When the kids --

When the kids were going to have a big fight after school, nobody knew about it, and they killed my friend.

Excuse me. Albert. I wrote his name somewhere.

(Indicating.)

SPEAKER (cont'd): No, no. Don't. Don't. Take your hands off me, sir.

Thank you.

TIMEKEEPER: (Indicating.)

SPEAKER (cont'd): No, my time is not up.
This is real here. This is real here.

They're going to kill our kids because they have to cross the gang lines. They're going to close our schools. They're going to make -- use the kids to go across to another school. That's wrong.

Another example, Austin, they closed schools in Austin. Are you listening? They closed schools in Austin, and kids went all the way from Oak Park and Austin all the way to Clemente on Western Avenue.

The violence went up.

TIMEKEEPER: (Indicating.)

SPEAKER (cont'd): Thank you, Ma'am, I appreciate that. I'm almost done.

You could bring security around, too.

I saw this guy giving the signal.

Albert died, Albert Darren (phonetic). Albert Darren died because he was murdered.

And I know, this is what I hear --

And I'm almost done.

This is what I hear; that tough decisions have to be made.

You have the tough decision, and I want you to tell the people here, you know, at the top, I want you to tell them that the tough decision would be to leave
all the schools open, the tough decision would be to
invest in their neighborhood schools. That's the
tough -- That's the political tough decision.

Thank you, sir. Thank you.

Leave all the schools open, every school stay
open.

MS. LITTLE: Thank you for --

I'm sorry. Teacher voice.

First of all, I want to say thank you for being
courteous, thank you for staying to hear everybody's
voice, and I'm glad we all have a day off tomorrow.

Good night. Thank you so much.

(Which were all of the proceedings had
in the above-entitled cause.)

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