LAKE CALUMET NETWORK COMMUNITY MEETING

February 14, 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 Olive-Harvey College, 10001 South Woodlawn, February 14th, 2013, at the hour of approximately 7:00 o'clock, p.m.

PRESENT:

MR. HARRISON PETERS, Chief of Schools for the Far South Side Lake Calumet K-12 Network

MR. PHILLIP HAMPTON, Chief of Family and Community Engagement

MR. ADAM ANDERSON, Officer of Portfolio, Planning and Strategy

MR. ARNIE RIVERA, Deputy Chief of Staff to CEO
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MR. PETERS: All right. Let's try this.

Good evening.

Principals, I need your help. We want to go ahead and get started.

All right. Good evening.

THE AUDIENCE: Good evening.

MR. PETERS: Oh, it is really, really good to hear and see and feel so much energy in the room.

My name is Harrison Peters. I am the Chief of Schools for the Far South Side Lake Calumet K-12 Network, and I want to welcome everyone here tonight, and we're going to do a couple of rounds of introductions, and then we'll go through what the agenda is going to look like.

Before we get started, before we get started, I want to share a couple of things.

I am absolutely certain that I know that we are all so passionate about our schools. I understand that we don't want any of our schools to close.

The reason we are here tonight is to listen to you just like we did the first time. We are here to listen to you.

Being able to listen to you has a couple of ground rules. Make certain that we're respectful; that
we air our time; that we adhere to the rules and the
time limit.

My goal, our goal is to make certain that we
hear from every group that's present tonight.

Before we get started, I want to introduce --
introduce a couple of folks that are sitting up front.

First of all, our Chief of Family Community
Engagement Phil Hampton, he works directly with the CEO
Barbara Byrd-Bennett; Arnie Rivera, Chief of Staff works
directly with the CEO; Adam Anderson works in the Office
of Strategy so he's the numbers guy, puts all this stuff
together.

Right after I sit down, before we bring you up
to talk, I'm going it ask Adam to come up and share a
couple of things with you. He's going to talk about
some of the new criteria that we've established based on
the feedback that we heard from the first round of
conversations.

Does that make sense?

THE AUDIENCE: (Indicating.)

MR. PETERS: You'll have an opportunity to talk. I
guarantee you that.

So, again, I promise we will be respectful to
you, and I ask that you, in turn, give that same
respect, give the speakers their voice so we can hear
them and take the ample notes.

Again, we've got a court reporter, a
stenographer here taking down everything that we say so
we can translate those notes into a transcript and feed
them directly to the Chief Executive Officer, okay?

So now we're going do bring up Adam, and Adam
is going to talk a little bit about the utilization
numbers.

MR. ANDERSON:  Good evening, everybody.

THE AUDIENCE:  Good evening.

MR. ANDERSON:  I'm going to only ask for three
minutes of your time tonight so we can immediately get
into everybody else speaking.

First and foremost, on behalf of
CEO Byrd-Bennett, myself and everybody at CPS, I want to
thank all of you for coming.  I want to thank the
teachers that are here, the parents that are here, the
community members that are here, and, most importantly,
I want to thank the students that are here.

Everybody that's here --

THE AUDIENCE:  (Applause.)

MR. ANDERSON: -- everybody in this room I know
believes in each and every student and wants to help
provide those students with the highest quality
education they can.

So to the students, thank you for being here.

Keep working hard, okay?

Now, very quickly, all I'm going to do is take
and walk you quickly through the handout that you all
should have received tonight.

This handout is two-sided, and I'm going to
talk in the next two minutes about the front side, which
talks about the updated criteria that we released, and
then quickly through some questions on the back side of
the handout.

Now, yesterday, CEO Byrd-Bennett announced an
updated set of considerations based on feedback from
communities at the commission meetings and at the first
round of meetings that removed a number of schools from
consideration.

We started this process with 330 underutilized
schools. Based on this criteria that we heard from
communities, that number has come down to 129.

Now, I want to be very, very clear, and this is
directly from CEO Byrd-Bennett, this does not mean that
129 schools are proposed for closure.

We're here tonight to hear from the 20 -- I'm
sorry -- the ten schools, there was 20 originally in
Lake Calumet, and we will be having the same
collection across the city.

Now, these criteria, I'm not going to read them
to you, you all have it on the handout, but I want to
emphasize that these have been informed by the meetings
that we've had, and I know we talked a lot about
numbers, we talked about spreadsheets, but these really
start to get beyond that.

And, for example; one of the things we heard
from many schools in Lake Calumet was that there are
schools that are isolated. We heard that, and that
criteria has been added above and beyond anything the
Commission heard, and that reflects some of the schools
have been removed from consideration.

But more importantly for tonight, it's about
the ten schools that are still up for discussion.
Again, every one will not close. We're here to talk
more about these schools.

Now, the question that we've been getting, and
it's a great question is, why are we here again? We
were here a few weeks ago. We've been here this whole
time.

I want to emphasize, just because you're part
of the ten schools does not mean we haven't been
listening. We heard from all of you in the first round
that came and spoke. We heard when Whistler talked
about using classrooms for lunchrooms meaning they're
not available for instructions. Okay. We heard Carver
and Aldridge talk about planned developments at Altgeld
Gardens. We heard these things.

And CEO Byrd-Bennett has been monitoring this
and continues to consider it. What she has outlined on
the back side, these come directly from the CEO, are
additional questions that she would like to hear each
community talk about.

Now, again, you can talk about any of these,
you can about all of these, and note the last question,
which is anything else that you want to share. So these
are not meant to be constraining, and these are not
meant to guide a conversation. We do want to hear
whatever you want to share about your school tonight,
but these are specific questions that we want to
continue to understand to continue the conversation.

I'm going to stop there. I'm going to hand it
back over to Chief Peters to facilitate the
conversation.

Again, thank you for coming out tonight, and
I'll look forward to hearing from each and every school.

Thank you.

MR. PETERS: Thanks, Adam.

Just a quick rundown of what -- how it's going to go.

Each school will have a total of six minutes.

Joseph, raise your hand.

(Indicating.)

MR. PETERS: Joseph, he is the timekeeper, and his little cards up here will tell you as the time elapses, so please try to be mindful, and he'll give you that sort of physical cue.

So we'll have six minutes per school, and then we'll wrap it up after that with some feedback and listen to other community members.

The first school is Aldridge. Where is Team Aldridge?

Come on down.

SCHOOL: ALDRIDGE

SPEAKER: Good evening, Ladies and gentlemen.

Well, my name is Barnisary Long (phonetic), and I'm part of Aldridge Elementary -- Elementary School, and I'm speaking on behalf of all of them.

I've been going to Aldridge since fifth grade,
and it has been a good -- good school for me. It has a
good organization and equipped to every student there to
learn and be successful.

Aldridge is a good school. It helps students
doing homework, stay after school and even during
extracurricular activities.

Students are safe at Aldridge. They have
afterschool programs that last until 6:00 and art so you
don't have to walk home by themselves or with a group.

But if you -- But if you close Aldridge,
students will have -- be forced to go to different
schools and communities, and they don't know nothing
about the community and territory of gang violence.

The students -- The students will be scared,
don't know nobody or won't even -- won't even know most
of the students or the teachers they will have to meet,
and they will be so nervous about their environment, and
they won't have a good education.

Aldridge has a tremendous effect to all
students, and we have an excellent basketball team that
this season we are going eight and 0.

And on behalf of Aldridge students, if you just
give us another chance, it will make a big difference.

SPEAKER: Hello, everyone. My name is
Barbara Butler.

How is everyone tonight?

I am a parent as well as a resident in Altgeld community, a grandmother. (Inaudible.)

Sorry. But I'm here to represent Aldridge School because I have children that's been graduated from there, I've been out there over 20-something years, I am a single parent, my kids ain't missed a day of school, and when they did, it was mandatory. I got a daughter right here in college. I got two out of college. I got a schoolteacher, and I got a grandbaby right here that needs her education. And it came from Aldridge. My kids' education comes from Aldridge.

We need to represent. Where are our kids going to be? Who are going to protect our kids if we have to leave our community and go to somewhere else that's discouraging our babies?

Our babies are not well-protected if they have to transfer from school to school. They can't get an education, not the proper one. It's peer pressure with these gangs, with the guns, with the violence, with the drugs.

Why should we be subject to that? We
shouldn't.

We don't have a cop there to transfer. They don't have a school bus to get --

THE AUDIENCE: (Applause.)

SPEAKER (cont'd.): -- back and forth. They don't have none of this. We don't have no police chiefs to protect us.

Well, first of all, it don't start with the police. It starts with us parents. That's the problem. We looking for the police. The police are issues. When the police came, police are education issues. It's for the violence. It's the parents' issue. It's the kids' education. It's for us to stand up for our community. This is for us to do, not for somebody to allow us to be pushed away, for our kids to be discouraged by it.

Stop the violence. Stop the wars with some kids that they know nothing about.

That's -- I mean, I'm hurt. I have children. I have grandkids. I'm a part of the village. These are my kids as well. It takes a village to raise a child. If I'm not a part of it, these ain't my kids.

And this (indicating) is my living proof right here. Third year of college, 3.8 GPA come from Aldridge, come from Aldridge.
Pass the word.

SPEAKER: Hello. My name is Renee Dupalla (phonetic), and I'm a third grade teacher at Aldridge Elementary School.

I've been at Aldridge, this is my fifth year, and I want to touch upon some of the things you specifically want to hear about that you've listed. And I'll have to apologize, I didn't see this first report, so I'm going to go off the top of my head. First and foremost, our theme at Aldridge is it takes a village to raise a child. And every single person in this building at our school raises every single child every single day.

When we talk about our academic priorities and goals, we are shaping our students to be functional citizens of society. We are not drilling to these tests because that is not what forms citizens of society.

The resources that we have started to put in place to do this are reading specialists to help bring our reading knowledge up. We've implemented a science class teacher who is shaping functional scientists going out in the community, conducting research, conducting labs. We are working together as a staff to hit every single school.
The resources we need; social workers, psychiatrists, books. And we need that help from the District. We are coming out of our own pockets to get our kids the things they need because we know they need them. We are psychiatrists and social workers because we have one that comes every other week.

So we are working together with the things we have. We have a leadership team meeting every single week talking about all the goals to looking at our data to drive our instructions to help our students be where they're at to be functional citizens of society.

SPEAKER: You know what? This was my school. I taught here for four years. I will be brief.

You took the high schools off because you were concerned with the gang violence. Everybody in here knows the gangs start in the elementary schools. If you going to take the high schools off, take the elementary schools off.

You put this up here because you want the community vote, you want the community voice. Well, here's the community.

Anybody out there, if you want your school to close down, stand up.

If you want your school to stay open, stand up
and say save our schools, save our schools, save our
schools, save our schools, save our schools.

THE AUDIENCE: (Indicating.)

SPEAKER: Good evening, Commission. My name is
Delanya Higgins (phonetic). I am a 13-year CPS teacher
at Ira Aldridge School and Altgeld Gardens. I am a
product and proud parent of CPS. As a child
I lived from Englewood to Roseland to the west side.
I was once called a pioneer in this city
because of this.

Earlier this year on January 7th at 1:30 a.m.,
I lost my brother due to gun violence. When my sister
called me to relay the tragic news, I was stunned,
devastated and afraid. How can I could face my family
after hearing this, I said.

I had been off work for three weeks, and I
hadn't seen my children at Aldridge. Those smiling
faces and loving arms carried me that day.

Guess what I did, Commission, after hearing
about my loved one? I ran to work to see their smiling
faces and embrace their loving arms. I needed them.

My sister said just Tuesday, Aldridge is your
safety net. I agreed.

Not only do I speak for Aldridge, but I speak
for each and every school from Englewood to Roseland to the west side.

THE AUDIENCE: (Applause.)

SPEAKER (cont'd.): Our children's schools are their safety net. The teachers and every adult in the school environment is the next chain of command from a parent or guardian.

Commission, if the schools' families aren't there, who can our children run to?

Thank you for hearing me and countless others who stand before you. We need your advocacy and cooperation desperately for our city, our communities and, most importantly, our children.

MR. PETERS: Thank you, Team Aldridge.

Our next group is Carver, George Washington Carver.

SCHOOL: CARVER

SPEAKER: My name is Mrs. Gilmore Tilnarson (phonetic), and I am a teacher at George Washington Carver Elementary School.

The mention of Carver Elementary School at the weekly childcare center encourages all staff, parents and community members to play an active role in the process of each educating our students for the colleges
of today and tomorrow.

We provide a safe, clean, beautiful and orderly environment where all students, staff and parents have high expectation for academic excellence.

To that end, for the last four years, 96 percent of our eighth graders graduated on time with the other four percent successfully completing summer school.

A number of our students have been accepted in the selective enrollment schools such as Northside Prep, King College Prep and George Gwendolyn Brooks. They have also been accepted into Simeon and Carver Military Academy.

These students are all doing well. This is a result of parents, teachers and the community working collaboratively to ensure that our students receive the highest quality of education.

Carver Whitney has a history of many accomplishments. For the last three years, our students had placed in the top category at the area network science fair and has gone on to participate at the regional level and has received recognition.

Last year Carver Whitney was selected to receive fundings to spend on an early childhood program.
This money -- These monies allowed us to now have
a full preschool four-year-old program with two
three-year-old half day programs. This initiative
increased our commitment of certain children in the
Altgeld community.

TIMEKEEPER: (Indicating.)

SPEAKER: Hello, everyone. My name is Vernita. I'm
a parent of a student at Carver.

Okay. Can everybody hear me?

THE AUDIENCE: (Indicating.)

SPEAKER (cont'd.): Great.

In regards to Carver Whitney Elementary School
and all the Chicago Public Schools, today is a sad day
because, instead of speaking on improvement for our
schools, we're speaking against the massive intermedial
shutdown of, for many of us, our safe and educational
institutions.

All of are children are more than good enough
and deserve to have their neighborhood schools and
staffs provided with fair resources such as staff or
self-contained special education class, teacher
assistants for mainstream in self-sustained classrooms
for every tier for a fair educational process and thus
equipping them with the equal opportunity to succeed.
We're talking about members of our only one society. They can be one of two things, either productive or destruction members of their society.

Please do not take my son's or anyone's child deserving equal opportunity to succeed and become a productive member of society away.

Shutting 193 schools down is not the answer. Children in poverty-stricken areas need help not deterred that any message that no one cares because we do care, and we will fight for our equal deserving opportunity.

With one hand you built your charter schools, and with the other hand you destroyed our public schools.

THE AUDIENCE: (Applause.)

TIMEKEEPER: (Indicating.)

SPEAKER (cont'd.): -- more time.

Therefore, you're destroying your very own society.

And I just want to add one more thing. Me and my siblings are all products of Chicago Public Schools, and we all have degrees.

SPEAKER: Okay. I'm here to pick out some points that we need for our schools. That's the behavior, and
that you've given us the bad kids with the mainstream
kids. So we were lied to.

   Fix that.

We want to talk about the carrying H laws. Can
we learn something about that? We want to talk about
the special aid kids and not have these special aid kids
in with the mainstream kids. We want to take down the
32 kids to one children and make it a smaller classroom.

   And the main thing that you all did to us, you
tried to kill us, most kids have -- they have computers,
you tore down our computers, giving us a library. So we
want to see these laptops back, and we would like to see
you put our school back together.

   The last thing, we want more police. We didn't
get our police for our school.

   So, finally, in the words of George Washington
Carver, education is the key to unlock the golden doors
of freedom so please keep our golden doors open.

   MR. PETERS: We're ready for our next group.

   Before our next -- Before our next group comes
on, from Carver, Carver and Aldridge, if you have
written notes or letters that you would like us to give
to the CEO, I know many of you had your speeches on you,
you read your speeches, if you want us to deliver those
to the CEO, please bring them down and give them to
Joseph. So from Carver, Aldridge and any other school
that comes up, if you want to -- if you want to give the
CEO your notes, please make sure that we have them.

Our next school is Gompers. Gompers Fine
Performing Arts, come on down.

SCHOOL: GOMPERS

SPEAKER: Good evening. My name is Makala Smith
(phonetic), and I will be representing Samuel Gompers.

This will be my last year at Samuel Gompers
Fine Arts Afterschool, and I'd like to share with you
what being a Gompers student has meant to me.

Samuel Gompers is an offered self and build
good care center and also for measuring artistic and
musical talents into something wonderful and
extraordinary.

I have attended Gompers since the fourth grade,
and I have personally experienced most of their useful
activity artistic programs. In fact, Gompers is the
only remaining fine arts elementary school on the
southeast side of Chicago.

My participation in these programs transformed
me from a shy girl into someone with a unique and
distinct voice.
It is my hope that other children can experience the sensational opportunities available at Gompers Fine Arts Afterschool after I graduate. But this can only happen if the doors of Gompers day open. So if you're looking to close the school, please reconsider because no other school can provide children in the community with the opportunities and academic excellence that Gompers can.

 SPEAKER: Hello. My name is Erica Snyder, and I am a student and soon-to-be graduate of Samuel Gompers Fine Arts Option School. Closing Gompers is not only a bad idea for the Chicago Public School system, but it is also a bad idea for the community and the children who attend Gompers. For me, my true education in life began at Gompers. Gompers Fine Arts Option School offers many educational programs that help mold talented students into model students. Because of Gompers, I am an active member in Color Bars Band, a writer for True Star Magazine and Solberg (phonetic) Math and Science Club. Each of these activities is an extension of my learning and have helped me increase in my academic achievements. Mr. Mayor and CEO Bennett, I know you have
worked very hard to make my -- to make the best
decisions for the children of the Chicago Public School
system, but, I'm sorry, you made a mistake on this one.
Closing the doors of Gompers will make a huge mistake.

SPEAKER: Good evening, everyone. I am
Ronell Anderson, and I am proud to say that I attend at
Samuel Gompers Fine Arts School and Gompers should not
close.

Gompers should not close because not many
schools can say that 95 percent of the teachers hold a
master's -- master's degree with some of them being
nationally certified as well.

Gompers also offers an Algebra 1 Program that
students who successfully complete the course can earn
high school credit. Gompers also has programs that
teach students how to garden and adapt to healthy eating
habits. We also have the band and drumline. Our
drumline has even performed in the Columbus Day Parade.

Gompers is a safe, warm, caring and welcoming
school with loving staff like Miss Flowers, Miss Choice
and Miss Howard. Each of them push students to do their
best and get your education.

It's sad for me to think that this is my -- not
only my last year at Gompers but the school's, my school
where I've been here since the fourth grade and made
close connections with the staff.

Gompers might be closed, and this is on your
head. Please don't close Gompers.

Thank you.

SPEAKER: Good evening to the CPS administrative
staff and people here and, more importantly, to the
schools who are here to defend their programs.

My name is Arthur Hyrum (phonetic). I am a
community representative from the Gompers Fine Arts
Academy.

I enjoy a unique position because, not only
have I been in the community for 39-plus years, I'm also
on the local school council, and, more importantly, I
have seen the workings of CPS from the inside.

For 37 years I had contributed valuable service
to CPS and have watched the myriad of changes that have
occurred. I have watched trained educational
specialists reduced to background and political toys.

I resent the fact that we are closing our
schools, we are putting our students in jeopardy.

I would like to say everything starts with our
school at the top. We don't have a -- just a principal.

We have an instructional leader. She's very involved in
our programs. She provides tremendous support for our
teachers and staff and students. She's the councilman
educator.

TIMEKEEPER: (Indicating.)

SPEAKER (cont'd.): Thirty seconds left.

And then I guess in summary, I'd like to say
that we face a number of challenges. We get our
students from the fourth grade on up so we don't have
them to inform them in years. About more than
50 percent of our students come in below reading levels
and are behind. And over a period of time, we get to
bring them up to level, but it takes time.

With the creation of magnet programs at Brooks
and at Morgan Park, you have siphoned off many of the
students we could have used to meet our educational
challenges.

TIMEKEEPER: (Indicating.)

SPEAKER (cont'd.): So, once again, CPS, stop
changing.

The old saying was, when a students falls
asleep, wake up the teacher.

I'm saying to CS, the students are watching
you, wake up.

MR. PETERS: Okay. Our next group is Lawrence,
SCHOOL: LAWRENCE

SPEAKER: Good evening, Lake County. My name is Bishop Tyrone Harrington. I'm standing on behalf of concerned clergy and residents of the Jeffery Manor community.

We stand here as advocates to -- actually to save Lawrence School, not because of budget but because and for the sake of young lives.

Lawrence School sits in the middle of three major parts that are all gang-invested and drug-invested, and we're asking you to save these 410 children for the sake of not having to perform 410 funerals because there is not enough resources, there are not enough schools.

The alternative schools that have been allotted are not capable or efficient enough to hold 410 additional children.

Last year alone I performed eight funerals of young people in the Jeffery Manor area all because many of them have traveled outside of what's called their own blocks into other blocks and neighborhoods where they have fallen into the hands of gang violence.

And so I must ask you, on the burden of saving
budgets, if we must save anything, let's save our
children.

Lawrence is a performing school that has proven
over and over again that they're on the rise of being
cutting edge.

Three years ago the school was gang-invested
with graffiti all over it. This year or last year, they
just built a beautiful playground, and there's a park
1000 feet away from the school that they cannot go to,
but yet they have been in a safe haven or Lawrence
school could be a safe haven where they can reside and
where they can feel safe at.

So I'm empowering you. I read this one article
that said this. It says, a budget -- if we must cut a
budget, let's do it on the principle of making sure that
we're not forgetting the number one rule. What is the
number one rule? That education is our children.

And so I'm asking you, find other avenues, as a
pastor, as a constituent, find other avenues to help
push this budget to find something else to give these
children hope for tomorrow.

SPEAKER: Good evening.

Lawrence is a foster for learning. Our school
is overall a well-behaved. They're age-appropriate.
They take ownership in their learning. They're constantly consistently in uniform on a daily base.

As far as our instructional programs, our special needs students are showing academic gains and social adjustments as they take pride in their accomplishments. They are learning at grade levels as evidenced in their growth.

We foster a collaborative teaching model whereby teachers in third through eighth guide teach no more than one or two subjects to offer students a more rigorous educational program. We have prepared our students for the bar exam by giving them intense exposure to technology. We have interactive programs weekends, boards in every instructional classroom. We have a full functioning computer lab we have been recently granted by an outside vendor, not at the expense of Chicago Public Schools.

In addition, we have two mobile laptop carts for use on every floor. Students are excited about learning technology.

We are a community school, and we are using our resources to help the community by providing extended day learning for our pre-K babies at no additional cost to the parents.
All of our instructional classrooms have technology.

Data, let's talk about data. Our data shows we are on the rise. Our model is making leaps and bounds, bounds; ISAT gains overall composite 47.3.

My name is Laura Green, and I love working at the Lawrence School.

SPEAKER: Hello. My name is Ms. Veronica Johnson. I'm speaking to you as the sixth to eighth grade reading teacher.

You all want to know our school's academic priorities and goals.

Well, we are known for Common Core. We're trying to prepare our students in the college.

So what we're doing is, we have a targeted instructional practice in the area of reading comprehension, which is closed reading. And we all know that's what the writers at Park say that is needed to help our students to become a critical thinker.

As far as priorities and goals, all of our students are growing. I can say, for myself, having approximately 130 students, I am proud to say, being their reading teacher and also in NWEA, a hundred and plus of them have met their reading target or even
exceeded it.

I am also a member of a highly functional ILT team. Our teachers are being trained in professional learning centers, cycles every week. We read professional readings.

TIMEKEEPER: (Indicating.)

SPEAKER (cont'd.): And we just ask you to give our students a chance and give our teachers a chance because we are at Lawrence School continuing to make it in leaps and bounds.

SPEAKER: Hi. My name is Rebecca Gutierrez, and this is my sixth year at Lawrence.

And if you were to look up Lawrence, there's so neg -- so much negativity about that building and that school that has gone on for the last six years, but in the last three to four years when Mrs. Coleman took over, we have -- the students have -- they really improved.

I am in third grade, and my focus is mathematics. I would say that, out of 52 students, I had probably about six students that didn't meet their goal for the NWEA, for the actual NWEA standard goals.

So everybody is making improvements throughout the school. Ms. Coleman is doing a very excellent job.
The staff is very much a family. We work together.

I will say that we have come from a very bad place. We are moving to a very wonderful place.

So we are asking that you please consider to keep our school open because we are moving forward.

SPEAKER: My name is Rafael Sambeel (phonetic), and I'm LSC chairperson from Robert Lawrence School.

I'm not going to be too long because I know you don't have time.

But what I -- my point is, as a foreigner, I'm from Haiti, and I have three children coming from Haiti to come to Robert Lawrence, and we have so many other friends in the same area that went to a different school, and when they came to this school, we asked CPS to help us to bring some bilingual teachers to help us out so the children can improve.

By going to Robert Lawrence for one year, two years, the students would never have known about English, they were able to improve, not able to speak fluently but just because of Robert Lawrence.

So you're trying to close the school?

What about no child left behind, no child left behind because if the students are from Haiti, they don't know nothing about English. Now they're able to
speak English proper, and this proper is because of
Robert Lawrence.

So give us a chance, give us a chance, give us
a chance.

MR. PETERS: Our next school is Metcalfe.

SCHOOL: METCALFE

SPEAKER: Good evening, Ladies and gentlemen. I am
here, Dr. Patricia Wakefield here, to represent
Metcalfe School.

Yeah.

THE AUDIENCE: (Applause.)

SPEAKER (cont'd.): I don't have a speech prepared
for you.

I'm going to speak from the heart because I
work from the heart and because my people at Metcalfe
teach from the heart.

THE AUDIENCE: (Applause.)

SPEAKER (cont'd.): We have a committed staff who
serves your children, and my question to all of you and
to CPS is, what about the children?

I understand fiscal responsibility, I
understand underutilization, I understand lack of funds,
but what about the children?

We are products of CPS. We went through
kindergarten, we went through first grade through eighth, we went to your high schools, we dodged bullets, we graduated from your high schools, we went to your colleges and universities, we got master's degrees and bachelor's degrees, doctorates. Excuse me. We came back to serve in your community.

You cannot close our schools.

THE AUDIENCE: (Applause.)

SPEAKER (cont'd.): I have to put my teachers out every night. I can't go home and kiss my husband. They won't let me leave the building. They're still trying to work and take care of your children.

What about your children?

THE AUDIENCE: (Applause.)

SPEAKER (cont'd.): I'm not going to talk about NWEA.

Last year it was Scantron. Next year it's going to be something else. We have to keep teaching so the children can pass tests so that they can go to college and come back and take care of us when we get real old.

What about your children?

SPEAKER: My name is Leo Scott (phonetic).

It's time for the administrations to stop
passing the blame on the schools. They have designed a system to fail, and instead and directing the real problem, they throw a diversion in the form of school utilization.

If you research the top 100 schools in the nation, you'll find that these schools have many similar elements, and these elements are 15 to 20 students per teacher. They want us to have 36.

You're set up to fail if you do that. It will not work.

Of the 100 schools, 63 of these schools are in Massachusetts, and if you research what's going on there, you'll find a role model, you'll find a system that works.

Instead of trying to just pull straws out of a hat, look at what's working, and then work it here.

Closing schools is not the answer.

There are four of the top schools in Illinois. These schools are Northside College Prep, Deerfield, New Trier and Payton. They're all high schools, and they have an enrollment of 15 to 20 students per teacher.

Once again, (indicating), if you're talking about utilization, utilize what we have. Put the money
in the schools. The money is there. Stop acting like we don't have it. Put the money in the schools and work the school system.

If you want to get rid of something, you might as well get rid of some of the heads and start anew.

SPEAKER: Yes. My name is Virginia Demoore (phonetic), and I'm the chairperson for the NCLB of the parents in Metcalfe School.

And I understand, yes, we have a problem. But we do not want to be part of the problem. We want to be part of the solution.

So we're asking you to take a look at what we have, take into consideration that 100 percent of our children walk to school. Take into consideration that we have a preschool program that, when the children come out, they're reading. Take into consideration that our -- that we have a gifted program. And take into consideration that we have an NCLB. We have never had less than 25 parents per kid. Take into consideration that our staff, they acts as mothers and fathers, whatever. It's no problem with them buying a pair of gloves or a coat. They do more than they have to.

One teacher had to purchase a reading kit. That didn't come out of her budget. One teacher taught
the kids how to knit. That didn't come out of the budget.

So they take a little time to do something that you all don't even pay them for.

And, also, our school has services. We have an actual band, we have the dentist, we have the nurse, we have Ronald McDonald, we have a psychologist, and we have a PTA that sponsors the eighth grade that helps them with anything we have.

So take a look at what you all said, that underutilizing. We don't know what that is. And you mean underutilizing by bodies? Just give us some more bodies.

SPEAKER: My name is Pamela Dukes, and I am the assistant principal and proud at Metcalfe.

We have a very positive learning environment for all our students.

We're not going to bus preschoolers and kindergarteners. They're going to stay at their home school and continue to learn, grow and expand.

We have hard-working teachers who come in the morning and stay late at night. You have a committed administration who wants the very best for them and nothing less.
We are committed here at Metcalfe, and we will
fight to keep our schools open.

SPEAKER: I will just take one minute. I am not
just a teacher at Metcalfe School. I am a parent at
Metcalfe School.

We're not just talking about committed
teachers. We have committed parents as well.

Our students at Metcalfe School are growing,
yes. Sixty percent of our school meets and exceeds on
the ISAT test.

I have two sons and a daughter who graduated
from Metcalfe School. They are doing extremely well.

Why is that, you want to say?

I have students --

My son has 25 students in his classroom. My
eighth grade son has 23 students in his classroom.

Schools need to recognize that teachers are
spread too thin when we have to teach children for
36 children in a classroom.

It is unfair not to the teachers but to those
children who are learning in those classrooms.

TIMEKEEPER: (Indicating.)

SPEAKER (cont'd.): My time is up. There is more to
say.
But, please understand, Metcalfe School is on the rise.


SCHOOL: OWENS

SPEAKER: I am Dr. Trudy Taylor, proud, new principal at Jesse Owens Community Academy.

I didn't come here tonight to speak, but I thought compelled to speak, especially when I just saw the awesome principal and assistant principal of Metcalfe speak. I said that I cannot let them outdo me.

So, Metcalfe, here it goes.

Jesse Owens is a school, and I'm going to say this, but we don't have a sad story. We don't have to worry about gang violence. We don't have to worry about our students being safe. We don't have to worry about our young students being exposed to things that are coming from older students in black fights, teen pregnancies and those kinds of things.

And the reasons we don't have those kinds of things at Jesse Owens is because we are a unique school in that we have children Grades pre-K to 3.

THE AUDIENCE: (Applause.)

SPEAKER (cont'd.): And so we are proud to say that
we are a model that is followed in most successful
suburban and in other national schools.

And instead of closing Jesse Owens, we think
that you should try to duplicate our model.

We have lots of data. I don't want to take all
the time because I have some other awesome speakers.
But there's a brochure. If anybody wants one, we can
leave one for you. But we have staff data.

Just one highlight. Eighty percent of our
teachers have advanced degrees, and we have a high
retention rate.

Assessment data. We have classrooms on the
NWEA that have gone up in reading and math as much as
89 percent. Every class that has taken the NWEA, which
is every class, has shown tremendous growth since 2013
or, should I say, since 2012 September.

Also, we have some awesome partnerships. We
have a new science lab, and that's some of our school
data.

I'm going to turn it now to our awesome case
manager and counselor Ms. Saunders-Wolffe.

SPEAKER: Thank you, Dr. Taylor.

My name is Tanya Saunders-Wolffe, and I'm the
counselor and case manager at Jesse Owens Community
I've been a member of this community for 23 years. I've seen generations of students come through this school.

Jesse Owens is a primary school which services K through third grade -- pre-K through third grade.

We offer a warm and nurturing environment to the 330 students that embrace us -- embrace us every day. That's more than some schools from K through eighth.

We offer four preschool classes and two full day kindergarten classes in addition to the two and three classes at first, second and third grade.

We've also applied for a grant that will allow us to have three full day preschool programs. We also have an early childhood autism cluster program, one of the few in this network.

All of our teachers are highly qualified, and many have advanced degrees, almost 80 percent.

Never in my 23 years have we been on probation until this year. It was a surprise to us. We are not traditionally a school that is on probation.

Our students and staff have been working tirelessly to improve our scores. Our current NWEA
scores have risen upwards of 85 percent since September.

For years we have participated in fine and performing arts magnet cluster programs.

CPS has depleted funds and strangled resources in this program. Yet, we continue to provide programs for participation in the Austin choir, piano and violin masters, ballroom dancing, full production plays, yoga, sign language, cheerleading, basketball, visits to operas, art museums and galleries.

CPS --

THE AUDIENCE: (Applause.)

SPEAKER (cont'd.): CPS states that its first priority is to the safety and security of the students.

We do that at Jesse Owens. Our school is a safe haven for our students. They spend seven and a half to eight hours in our environment and provide -- we provide the physical safety.

TIMEKEEPER: (Indicating.)

SPEAKER (cont'd.): I just have a few more minutes.

We didn't get a chance to speak at the first one.

Our school is in a community that is ridden with violence no different than Iraq and Afghanistan. Yet, our children come every day, and we come prepared
to embrace them. We come prepared to teach them.

CPS talks about right-sizing. They're not right-sizing. This is genocide. This is a systematic, deliberate approach to genocide in our community. This is not right-sizing.

Right-sizing is having less than 33 children in our kindergarten classroom. That's right-sizing. Right-sizing is using those classrooms that may be empty for science labs, literacy labs, math labs.

We finally have the room to do those things, and we have done those things.

You've lured our students away --

TIMEKEEPER: (Indicating.)

SPEAKER (cont'd.): -- from our schools by using --

Just one more minute. I promise you.

We've lured --

You've lured our schools away to charter schools using bus passes, uniforms and laptops.

You've taken our students away from us, and, therefore, now we're underutilized.

You want the right size? Do what's right.

This is genocide. Replicate our models. We need primary schools in this system. We need intermediate schools. We need junior highs, and we need senior high
schools. You need to replicate our model.

   Come, take a look at what we do. I haven't seen anyone in our school.

   SPEAKER: Good evening to the panel.

   My name is Tammy Rufus (phonetic), and I am a proud parent of Jesse Owens Community Academy.

   I want to talk about the drive and the obsession that the teachers and educators and principal being under a new administration that's just taken over in September. I want to talk about the drives that I've seen them have, the turnaround that they are doing.

   They are implementing a whole lot of new programs after school, parents and teachers are volunteering, not only just to teach and educate our children, but to help educate the parents educate their children as well.

   We all know that teaching begins at the home and that they are a positive reinforcement of helping us to help our children.

   We need Jesse Owens in the heart of the Roseland community to help continue to pass on.

   They're grasping our children and from pre-K to third grade. They're grasping our children at a young age, and they're molding these children to go on to
other elementary schools that can help keep their grades
and their levels up as far as academics are concerned.

We need Jesse Owens to stay open. We would
like for you to save this school to help us continue to
teach and grasp our children at a young age and to mold
them and let them know that they have a safe community
to come to at the school and to understand that we are
not the enemy, that we are here as parents to help
provide education, and we're doing that by getting them
to school each and every day on time in uniform.

Some of these kids, this is their first and
only meal that they have that they provide. This is a
close-knit family, and each and every one of these
children that I've seen out here, two children go
through Jesse Owens Community School, and each and every
one of these teachers know each and every one of these
kids by name, not just their classrooms but all the
classrooms.

And I appreciate the way that they're teaching
my child, not only my child, but all schools.

We don't want any schools to close down, but we
would like for Jesse Owens to stay open.

TIMEKEEPER: (Indicating.)

SPEAKER (cont'd.): Please give our new
Good evening. My name is Macina Iverti (phonetic), and I've got an extra two seconds, and I'd like to give a shout out to Whistler Elementary School, who has given my daughter a quality education. I'd like to thank you for that.

THE AUDIENCE: (Applause.)

The CEO of CPS has stated that the top priority is making sure that every child in Chicago has access to high-quality, well-rounded education.

This is what we have at Pullman Elementary School.

We are in a historic district and a viable part of the Pullman community. We are an anchor for the community and a safe harbor with a professional learning community. Our students feel safe and respected with a dedicated caring facility.

We have very few discipline issues.

Our parents are active in our school with our LSC, bilingual and PTA committees. We have over 400 neighborhood students in our preschool program.
Our test scores have risen repeatedly over the last few years, and we expect more growth this year. Over 77.5 of our students meet or exceed state standards. We are a Level 2 school and are not on probation.

We have no other school in close proximity to our location, and this will be a great safety issue for our students. Over 65 percent of our eighth graders have applied for selective enrollment schools.

The following programs are very active at Pullman.

Over a ten-year association with Metropolitan Family Services serving our students, this year we have begun a parent mentor program from the developing community project to have parents assist in the classroom, aftermatters -- afterschool matters and SCS afterschool programs including Saturday school. We have the Stellar Girls' Science Program, Black Star Project, Real Men Read, Earth Force Museum of Science and Industry, music programs from Chicago Symphony, nurse and novelist, boys in Sports, cheerleading and choir just to name a few.

We have partnered this year with the
University of Chicago in a research project to make the transition from eighth to ninth grade a valuable worthwhile experience.

If our voice really matters, our school needs to remain open so we can continue to service our students, parents and community in the Pullman historical district.

Thank you.

SPEAKER: Hello. My name is Maya Teeks (phonetic), and I'm for Pullman Elementary.

I just got one thing to say. You all can't close the drug houses on our streets, but you decide to close our schools.

THE AUDIENCE: (Applause.)

SPEAKER (cont'd.): It is my right to go to school.

I like school.

School is the place where most kids don't -- can get breakfast, lunch and dinner. Take that away, what are you doing?

It is an inalienable right that I get an education. I believe my ancestors fought for me to get an education.

Why --

THE AUDIENCE: (Applause.)
SPEAKER (cont'd.): Why do you choose to take my education away from me? Why do you choose to take every right that I have?

SPEAKER: Hello, my name Shakita Covington (phonetic). I am a proud parent of Pullman Elementary School.

Pullman has been a safe haven for my son and my daughter. I feel safe that my kids are in school until 5:00 o'clock. They have those programs for these kids.

My daughter right now is going through her brain hurricane as far as getting her reading and her math up.

My daughter is a straight A student because of Pullman. My son is getting better grades because of Pullman and his wonderful teacher beyond me.

Please keep our schools open. We need these safe havens for our kids.

I'm sorry.

SPEAKER: Hello. My name is James Hampton, and I'm from George M. Pullman Elementary School.

I do believe that any school should not be closed, every child has a future, and they want to follow that future.

If our schools be closed, our children -- well,
you all children will not have the opportunity to have
the knowledge to pass to their future.

If our schools close down, our children are
going through gang lines, and we cannot accept that.

If our children get shot just by going to a
different school they're transferred to, it's possible
that that child can be killed even if the parent goes
with their child.

We should take care of our children. Well, you
all, too.

I'm sorry. I keep getting all mixed up.

We --

I do know parents love and support their
children, and I do believe that parents want their
children to follow their future and their dreams.

Like Martin Luther King when he first gave his
speech, he believed --

THE AUDIENCE: (Indicating.)
TIMEKEEPER: (Indicating.)

SPEAKER (cont'd.): Can I keep moving?
TIMEKEEPER: (Indicating.)

SPEAKER (cont'd.): -- he believed in his dream.

My dream is for children -- for every child to
get their education.
THE AUDIENCE:  (Applause.)

SPEAKER (cont'd.):  And Martin Luther King also
followed his dream with justice.

He wasn't the only person who was following his
dream.  He had people over him who accepted his dream
and continue on to that dream.

I had a dream, and I want that dream to live on
for our children, and I want them to have the perfect
education for their dreams to go on.

SPEAKER:  Good evening.  I'm Charlotte Freeman
(phonetic).  I'm an LSC community representative for
Pullman.

I would like to say that my problem with CPS is
that you have constantly over the years failed our
children.  You made commitments you're going to make the
classes smaller.  Didn't happen.  You said you're going
to give us supplies.  It hasn't happened.

Then you have a school that's doing great, and
then you want to come in and shake up things.

I want to say tonight to CPS, I give you a
grade of a F.

MR. PETERS:  Songhai.

SCHOOL:  SONGHAI

SPEAKER:  Okay.  Good evening.
I, too, --

THE AUDIENCE:  (Indicating.)

SPEAKER (cont'd.):  Good evening.

I, too, am a proud student of Chicago Public Schools. Also, I am a proud teacher of Songhai Learning Institute. I've been a teacher at Songhai since 1991.

We do not want our school to close. We are thinking about the safety of our students.

Songhai is a comm -- is in a community that is full of crime. To help our students keep safe, our building is jumping so to speak with activities from afterschool programs, before-school programs, band, chorus, clubs, Girl Scouts, recess, sports, you name it, we have it going on. Our students are in the building every day from 7:45 in the morning to 5:30 in the evening.

I can recall back in 2002 there was a brawl at Songhai Learning Institute, and this brawl took place when students from -- I'm going to say the school -- Curtis came over with bats and sticks and attacked our students.

I was the computer lab teacher at that time. I was -- Because I was a computer lab teacher, I didn't have a homeroom. I spent the entire day at Roseland
Hospital waiting for ambulances to bring our students in to be seen by doctors because of their injuries. I was at that hospital until like 5:30 that evening waiting for the last parent to come and pick up his or her child.

So who wants their children to leave their community where they're safe? Not the people of Songhai. We want our children to be safe at home in our community where they belong.

The brawl was an escalated tension that rose between the two schools, and this continued for years, it took place -- it continued for years.

Even back then we used to have another school that you would call your safe school in the event that something happened in your building. Well, Curtis was our school. One year the heat went out in our building. We refused to go to Curtis because we knew we were not wanted there, we knew it would be trouble. We sat in our cold building with no heat and no lights just to stay safe.

So let's keep Songhai School kids safe. Let's keep Songhai School open.

In addition to our safety net, Songhai is a sustainable school, and it has improving performance.
Songai's current enrollment is 334 students.

Songhai School's composite in the ISAT increased from 55 and a half percent in 2010 to 11 to 59 and seven-tenths in 2011 to '12. The students at Songhai's ISAT math increased three years in a row.

TIMEKEEPER: (Indicating.)

SPEAKER (cont'd.): And Songai's science increased three years in a row. Just as we increased in ISAT, we're going to move -- we moved in Santron, and we're moving in NWEA. Seventy-five percent of our students met or exceeded their goal for this year so far.

SPEAKER: Hi. My name is Marshall Braggs (phonetic), and I attended Songhai Learning Institute this last year. I'm in eighth grade now.

One of my classmates wrote, Songhai Learning Institution should not be closed because I've been going to this school since kindergarten and it is not very far from my home. It has been through its ups and downs, but we still manage to be successful.

Songhai has an awesome principal that reaches out to a lot of things and people like the Chicago Bulls and the MO Harris Bank, and we have an awesome right-hand assistant principal that keeps us in check and always helps us when we need it.
Songhai Learning Institute is a wonderful school. My opinion is we have a great staff with Ms. Dantzler, Ms. Kendricks, Ms. Vitek and Ms. Sachen. We have afterschool for people that need help in certain subjects and skills. They just want to learn.

We also have wonderful school helpful security guards that stop a lot of bad things from happening. Their names are Mr. Thomas, Mr. Garmon, Mr. Hawkins and Mr. Roberts.

We have a lot good teachers starting with Ms. Crosby, Mrs. Gayden, Ms. Rodriguez, Ms. Johnson, Ms. Radford, Ms. Richard, Ms. Landeen, Ms. Evans and Ms. Harris.

We also have a great basketball, flag football, track and field, volleyball, softball and cheerleading teams.

Some of our school's afterschool activities are math club, reading club, Stellar Girls, basketball, computers and dance.

That's some things that other schools in our district don't have at their schools.

I also feel safe at Songhai because I know a lot of people at this school.
TIMEKEEPER: (Indicating.)

SPEAKER (cont'd.): If my school --

If my school is closed down, I fear that my younger siblings will be introduced into gangs and violence.

Keep our school open.

SPEAKER: My name is Stephen Mosley (phonetic). I'm the former chairperson for the Local School Council for Songhai and still an active member as well as a full-time dad, single father, having full legal custody of my daughter after a long, constant battle with the system for child support for 12 years.

I feel that this school is a safe haven for all of our children, especially me and my daughter right now, speaking that we have almost been homeless for almost a year. Oh, I can tell the story.

So, like I said, let's keep our schools open because our kids need this.

And me being a full-time dad, what forced me to be a full-time dad is where I lost my job several years ago, so now I'm in the schools actively involved helping constantly keeping our kids out of trouble, keeping them safe.

Losing two brothers to gun violence, buried
three one -- I mean buried one three years ago is a
tragedy. So we are constantly seeing our kids and our
children die.

So let's save the children. What about the
children?

Come on. Let's give ourselves a round of
applause.

What about the children?

THE AUDIENCE:  (Applause.)

SPEAKER (cont'd.): So let's take these things into
consideration.

I just thank God for just a wonderful staff
here at Songhai. I thank everybody that came here in
support of this whole event because, if you stand for
nothing, you'll fall for anything, and I mean that
sincerely from my heart.

This school I have volunteered my time, went up
on the third floor, educated -- re-educated myself,
thought I knew, and I didn't knew -- I didn't know.

So I can probably tell you that Songhai has a
whole history of 120 years, one of the oldest schools in
the City of Chicago.

Somebody take heed to our schools. What about
the children?
So to save our children, our school is a safe haven, our school has just partnered with the Chicago Bulls as well as the BMO Harris Bank.

Yes, school of the year. Give us a round of applause.

THE AUDIENCE: (Applause.)

SPEAKER (cont'd.): So my challenge to you is what about our children? Let's save our children. Let's stop thinking about ourselves --

TIMEKEEPER: (Indicating.)

SPEAKER (cont'd.): -- and think about our children.

Have a great evening.

MR. PETERS: West Pullman.

SCHOOL: WEST PULLMAN

SPEAKER: Good Evening. My name is Jahari Johnson (phonetic).

I'm a sixth grader at West Pullman Elementary. I've been a student there since kindergarten, and it's heart-wrenching to even think of the possibility of my school being shut down.

It will affect not only the futures of the students but the employment of the faculty as well. This may result in many students having to move to another neighborhood in order to get a country.
For most of us students, West Pullman is the only school we've known since pre-K, and I think it's totally unfair for you guys to close our school instead of working with us to make this school a better place.

THE AUDIENCE: (Applause.)

SPEAKER (cont'd.): West Pullman is my home, and I feel as if my home is being broken up.

My entire family graduated from West Pullman, including my mother with the Class of 1995.

If my school is closed, it will leave me with no place to call my own, with no way to follow in my mother's footsteps.

I also wanted to add that several teachers are constantly staying after school voluntarily to work with those students in need of help. They're staying on their own time and dime, absolutely free, and yet you're going to fire them?

Sounds stupid if ask you me.

THE AUDIENCE: (Applause.)

SPEAKER (cont'd.): If you guys give up on us, we'll give up on ourselves.

Closing down our school means closing down millions of futures for us. It is imperative that we keep our school open.
Please don't shut down West Pullman Elementary.

SPEAKER: I'm Erica Fox. I have been a member of the West Pullman family for approximately 12 years. I've grown from a teacher to assistant principal. And this year we started with a new administration, which includes myself and my Principal Taquia Hylton.

And within the seven months that she's been here, we've seen growth in our EWEA scores from the fall to winter to the point where we have third grade meeting and exceeding and reading at 19 percent, math 12 percent, fourth grade meeting and exceeding 44 percent and math 88 percent we have kids' meeting. Fifth grade we have 25 percent of our kids meeting and exceeding in reading, we have 35 percent in math, 53 percent for sixth grade in reading and 45 percent in math. Seventh grade, 25 percent meeting and exceeding, 23 percent in math. In our eighth grade we had 59 percent meeting and exceeding and 76 meeting and exceeding in math. I just basically want to say, we have a lot of things going on. We have a West Pullman Wildcats bus that we give our kids to help improve behavior so they can shop at our store. We have the Boys & Girls Clubs. We have Whitney Young Making a Difference mentoring program at our school.
Our babies walk through a war zone as it is with abandoned buildings and vacant lots. Why make them go through more war zones to get to a school when they can stay at the place that they can call home since this baby came in preschool?

THE AUDIENCE: (Applause.)

SPEAKER (cont'd.): I've seen these babies grow, and I want to continue to see them grow. I want to see their children. I want to see their children come to West Pullman.

So that's -- that's basically all I have to say. That is my home. I've been there my entire career with CPS, and I want to stay there.

SPEAKER: Good evening. My name is Paul Lew, and I'm with the Boys & Girls Clubs of Chicago. I'm one of the directors that helped supervise Burg (phonetic) Elementary and also West Pullman.

I'm here tonight to speak on behalf of our partnership with West Pullman Elementary School.

We opened this club, this site, within less that a month ago, and now we're serving a quarter of the population of the school. So it's telling me as a director there is a need at the school.

And our program provides not just a safe haven
for our kids every day from the violence out in the
streets but academic enrichment, life skills, drugs and
gang violence. We also provide sports and fitness
programs for all these kids.

On top of that, we provide a partnership with
West Pullman on a food program so that our kids are not
walking home hungry.

So as of now, you know, I'm encouraging this
council and all of CPS to reconsider West Pullman
Elementary school as on the list.

On top of that, this is a 21st Century site,
21st learning center, so this grant is for the State of
Illinois that allows us, the Boys & Girls Club, to have
use of a level of professional staff and a club manager
Ms. Melissa Bogart (phonetic) there for five years, and
we're also looking beyond that.

So if you allow us the opportunity to keep
West Pullman open, we want to service this community
but, more importantly, all the kids at West Pullman
Elementary.

Thank you.

MR. PETERS:  Whistler Elementary.

And I see you guys already coming down so come
on down.
SCHOOL: WHISTLER ELEMENTARY

SPEAKER: Good evening.

Good evening. My name is Jesenta Valana Witlow (phonetic). I am a proud teacher from the Whistler Elementary School.

THE AUDIENCE: (Applause.)

SPEAKER (cont'd.): Come on, Whistler.

My purpose this evening is to give you some background on our professional development focus at our school.

Firstly, at Whistler we have partnered with DePaul University Center for urban education. Our teachers have weekly team meetings that are led by our fantastic and phenomenal and fabulous Principal Mrs. Tiffany Phinn --

THE AUDIENCE: (Applause.)

SPEAKER (cont'd.): -- and our dynamic and amazing Assistant Principal Mrs. Fritz O'Connor.

MR. ANDERSON: (Applause.)

SPEAKER (cont'd.): As we have these weekly team meetings, they are -- we are -- they are in place to ensure that our children have the very best instruction using Common Core standards and goals.

We also have parent university at Whistler
School because we know that there is a vital link to our parents and our students.

There's also a long-standing partnership with YMCA at our school that not only has programs for our children but for our teachers and our parents as well.

Our NWEA data the middle of the year has already far exceeded the previous year Scantron data end of the year. I would have everyone to know that 75 percent of the students at Whistler Elementary School have met or exceeded their middle of the year growth targets of the NWEA.

THE AUDIENCE: (Applause.)

SPEAKER (cont'd.): We, our entire culture and climate, has changed under the new leadership at our school with our Principal Mrs. Phinn and are our Assistant Principal Ms. O'Connor, and I stand before you again as Jesenta Witlow, a proud teacher at Whistler Elementary School, telling everyone that is listening, we stand united, we are determined, we are fired up, and we are Whistler Elementary School.

SPEAKER: Good evening. My name is Carolyn Harris (phonetic), and I am a proud parent of four students who attend John Whistler Elementary School.

I am also a member of the Local School Council
and PTA. I've been a part of Whistler family for seven years.

I am appalled at the fact that Whistler School continues to remain under scrutiny for school action. Whistler School is a pillar in our community, and it has been -- it has educated families for many generations.

It is quite disturbing to learn that my children, as well as other families, may be forced to attend other neighboring schools.

Our children love their school, and they can't imagine being separated from their Whistler family.

This school is their safety net and home away from home.

I choose to send my children to school because I don't worry about their safety. The staff has my children's best interest at heart.

And I have also developed positive relationships with the stake -- with many stakeholders, and I am proud of many accomplishments Whistler has experienced in such a short time -- short time under the new leadership of Principal Phinn.

Safety in our community is a major concern. I am not in agreement with sending Whistler children outside of their local school community because of issues relating to gang territory, drugs and violence.
Our children and families would live in constant fear, concerned that our children won't make it to or from school safely because CPS decided to close their neighborhood school.

Can this school system afford any more losses due to political interests?

TIMEKEEPER: (Indicating.)

SPEAKER (cont'd.): I say that we all should say no.

THE AUDIENCE: (Indicating.)

SPEAKER (cont'd.): Therefore, keeping Whistler School open is the only option.

TIMEKEEPER: (Indicating.)

SPEAKER (cont'd.): Okay. Okay.

We don't build strong communities by tearing down schools, closing school buildings and sending our children outside of their neighborhood.

This will create new problems such as overcrowding receiving schools and tension between children due to gang territory.

I want my children safe.

Instead, we must build our communities by providing the necessary resources and supporting our neighborhood schools.

Our school separates gang territory. Can you
imagine a schooling building sitting in the middle of a residential neighborhood completely abandoned?

Neither can I.

The end result will lead to increasing crime in our community, loitering and hopelessness.

Is this the message that we want to send to our local community?

THE AUDIENCE: (Indicating.)

SPEAKER (cont'd.): Whistler School is on the road to excellence. Teachers are teaching as the children are learning. The atmosphere reflects positive change.

Have you even looked at our data?

CPS cannot balance the budget on the backs of our children.

SPEAKER: My name is Pastor Rayford Grady. I am pastor of the Lutheran Church of the Holy Spirit in the Maple Park community, and I met again with pastors, and I have been chosen again to speak.

The pastors are united in our front in regard to supporting our school, Whistler Elementary School.

Whistler is in the house?

THE AUDIENCE: (Applause.)

SPEAKER: We may have a little shorter of the 270 that we brought last time, but that's all right. We're
We would like the school board to rethink the closure of Whistler Elementary School. The closure of Whistler Elementary School would have a negative impact on the students' education and the community at large. We have a new administration. We like this administration.

This new administration understood the urgency that they needed to counteract the past failures of Whistler. This new administration analyzed the cause and the effects of the past. This new administration had the ability and the persistence to improve what needed to be improved.

This administration invited outside resources. This administration added learning and measuring resources just as --

THE AUDIENCE: (Indicating.)

SPEAKER (cont'd.): Whistler now uses --

THE AUDIENCE: (Indicating.)

SPEAKER (cont'd.): -- and diagnostic assessments. Whistler now uses Common End, a curriculum assessment, benchmark assessment, which measures not only what students have learned but how effective the teachers are.
SPEAKER (cont'd.): Our parents --

TIMEKEEPER: (Indicating.)

SPEAKER (cont'd.): Our parents, our communities and
our churches support Whistler Elementary School.
We are involved in our school, Whistler
Elementary School.

There is a new respect in our community for
education because of a new administration.

Whistler student achievements have gone to have
moved to the positive direction. Whistler's culture has
changed. Student performance data has turned upward.
Our school is on the right path and going in the right
direction.

We want Whistler to have the opportunity to
be -- to continue. Whistler is a safe haven, our safe
have icon for these children and for the community. To
close Whistler Elementary School is to displace students
several blocks north, south, east or west, it does not
matter, it will destabilize this community, jeopardize
this community and trace territorial lines and place
them and us in harm's way, which can cause a dysphoria,
a despair of law-abiding citizens leaving the community,
losing a tax base in our community.
We are asking the Board to delay your decision and re-evaluate Whistler three years down the road.

UNISON SPEAKERS: Hello. We are here because we care about our future. We are here because we believe in ourselves and our people. We are here to be told that we are created to be confident, capable, creative and compassionate young men and women.

We think before we speak and choose our words carefully. We recognize the power we have and use it to make good choices for ourselves and others.

We take care of our school and our community because we represent them and they represent us.

We are high achieving in all areas and work hard to get smart. We are learning to be great and to share our creativeness with others.

No matter what, we never give up. We believe that our words speak for us, and so we take it very seriously.

We think, speak and act in a way that always shows our very best. Every warrior, every day, college bound, always be pleasant, be positive, be productive and even powerful.

Have a wonderful day, and be sure to find something good.
Thank you.

MR. PETERS: Ladies and gentlemen, I want to thank you so much for coming. I appreciate your voice.

Please check the CPS website for periodic updates, but thank you so much for your voice and your passion.

Be safe going home, but be prayerful and remain diligent. See you soon.

SPEAKER: Good evening, Board members. My name is Toni Liki (phonetic) Stith. I live in the Maple Park community on the south side.

John Whistler Elementary School is in my neighborhood. I graduated from John Whistler Elementary School from eighth grade in 1974. I went to Curtis Elementary for one year while Corliss High School was being built. I graduated in 1977.

I'm here on behalf of Maple Park Homeowner Association and the taxpayers.

We have been living in Maple Park, and Whistler was built specifically for that neighborhood. Our neighborhood was the first African American single-family residential neighborhood built in the 19 -- in the United States.

We just celebrated our 53rd year of a quiet,
single-family, close-knit neighborhood, and we want it to remain the same.

We are objecting to our property taxes being used -- being --

I'm sorry. Let me just correct that.

The homeowners and the property owner taxpayers, we are objecting to our taxpayer dollars being taken from Whistler School and given to other schools to fund charter schools, failing segregated charter schools, segregated schools being built specifically in Hispanic neighborhoods and elite white schools like Walter Payton.

Our children are doing well at Whistler, and the Board should have enough experience with taking children out of their neighborhoods in light of the Derrion Albert meeting when they forced students from other neighborhoods to be put in the Whistler School and place them and their lives in danger, and that young man lost his life.

Ever since this segregation of the Chicago Public Schools has began again, our children have been put into harm's way.

There are federal dollars involved, and the actions of the Board of Education and the Chicago Public
Schools are in violation of Title 6 of the United States Code which prohibits discrimination with any activities, programs or services that receive federal funds.

By the Chicago Public Schools and the Board of Education deciding to close African American schools, they are in violation of federal law, constitutional rights to free education and to the Illinois Compiled Statute School Code 105, and at this we object, and we will not -- and we will not tolerate the closing of any school in -- in Lake Calumet because our children deserve to be inside their homes, not bussed all over the place.

They will be tired going to school, tired coming home, and it would ruin their lives, and parents will be worried.

So we're no -- we're objecting to that, and we will be sound and putting you on notice that we're going to file an injunction of Chicago Public Schools and the Board of Education, the Board of Trustees for the City of Chicago.

Thank you. My name is Toni Liki Stith. I'm the parent of Jeffar (phonetic) Stith, a 15-year-old that was illegally transferred from Walter Payton College Prep High School. Thank you.
My first name is Toni, T-o-n-i, middle initial D, last name Stith, S-t-i-t-h, and I live at 11829 South Bishop, Chicago, Illinois, in Maple Park, and I'm a homeowner and taxpayer of John Whistler Elementary School.

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