Chicago Public Schools
School Utilization Community Meetings
Breakout Session Notes

Date/Time of Meeting: January 29, 2013, 7:00pm-9:00pm

Network: Midway

Region/Schools focused on in discussion: Stevenson, Dawes, Tante, Ashburn

Round: I

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

General Learning

- Audience feels they are in the network with the most students but that they don’t have enough resources channeled to their network.

- No trust in CPS, no consistency in their plans. If they consolidate schools this year and schools get the utilization levels that they now consider acceptable, then next year they will come up with another number for “underutilization” and more closing or consolidations might happen.

- Parent: There is already a social disaster when students play social games, there is fighting at basketball games. Say, if you take schools like McKay and Marquette and try to consolidate them that might be putting students in harm’s way.

- CPS needs to shift from the mentality of going into communities of color and create plans behind closed doors and have no consideration of the people who are impacted by their decisions. Galileo, Skinner, Whitney Young...put those teachers in the schools that are not performing well, that might alleviate the environment of the schools and create an environment of learning. Money can be better used to fund schools that are facing challenges instead of building new facilities for schools like Jones College prep that are already performing well.

- Elected school board not appointed. Most of the people elected have never set foot in a public school. How can they know/understand our needs?
• Teacher from Dawes School: we work in a district that is the most wasteful that you have ever seen. Programs, plans are started, then interrupted, that is a waste of money. There is no sense of mid-term and long term planning from CPS administration, there is no follow through on what they start. How many books are ordered for a specific program and then never used. You have to stop wasting.

• We have to go thru certain vendor to purchase items that are much cheaper elsewhere but we are forced to use from approved vendors. That is a waste of money too

**School-specific Learning**

**Stevenson**

[Notes from Stevenson Administration]:

• Schools here, like Owen, Ashburn, and Carroll-Rosenwald-- while slightly below capacity according to CPS guidelines, would only serve to exacerbate the overcrowding at neighboring schools if they were to be closed.

• Throughout the construction of the new wing, we have not had a consistent qualified and dedicated engineer.

• Stevenson is currently at 136% of capacity. With the new addition, we are still at more than 120% of capacity in multiple buildings-- Main with addition, Branch two blocks away, and four antiquated mobile units that have far exceeded their original life expectancies. We would need at least about 15 more rooms to enable all of our students to be in one building and eliminate the mobiles and branch. As the principal from Dawes noted, these design capacity numbers are from when the buildings were first erected in the 1950s and do not include modern educational needs, such as a library, computer lab, cafeteria, music room, art room, and adequate gym space.

• At Stevenson, even with the addition, the **Main Building lacks**:
  - a full-size library
  - adequate gym space
  - art room
  - music room
  - health room
  - teachers’ lounge
  - an auditorium
  - and space for support staff, such as counselor, Lead Literacy Teacher, Math & Science Specialist, etc.
• We have 2 art teachers who go room to room with a cart. We have a music teacher who goes room to room with instruments. We have a health teacher who goes room to room to provide health instruction. Having these prep classes in the homerooms limits the teachers’ ability to use their own rooms to plan instruction and collaborate with colleagues.

• At Stevenson Branch, the building is shared with the Park District and lacks:
  o a computer lab
  o a library, an art room
  o a health room
  o and adequate gym space.

• The computer teacher sets up laptops in the Park District Room on lunch tables and the students connect wirelessly. The computers often crash, particularly during high stakes testing. Art, music, health, and library are all on carts in the homerooms. There is no cafeteria, so the students eat in the small gym. As the students dine in the gym, there is no adequate space for indoor recess. The branch has a lot of facilities issue and lack of adequate heat has been an ongoing issue for the past two years.

• Currently, we are using all ten classrooms at the branch for five 7th grade rooms, four 8th grade rooms, and one self-contained 7/8 special education room. Next year, we will have five 7th grades and five 8th grades and we have no space to put the additional 8th grade room.

• CPS is mandating all-day kindergarten. We will need two new classrooms somewhere and kindergarten classroom furniture to meet this mandate.

• Plus, we will need two additional rooms for our late shift pre-k program to shift it to regular day.

• We would have liked an additional wing on the west side of the new courtyard that would have fully enclosed the courtyard like at Sandoval and would enable us to bring our 7th and 8th grade students back to the main building and close the mobiles once and for all.

• Despite these challenges, Stevenson is a school on the rise within two points of being a Level 1 school after making significant strides last year. We hope to build upon our success this year and the new addition certainly does help address our situation.

• Most of our kids walk to their school, only way to achieve moving kids around is moving boundaries around...make boundaries bigger and other schools next door are overcrowded
DAWES
Principal

- does not want programs cut and does not want to absorb other schools since they are overcrowded.

- In the past kids were shipped to other school, next to train tracks. Had many problems, including fatalities, lost limbs, all because they had to cross the tracks. For that specific school (close to the tracks, there is no solution to minimize the danger from proximity to the tracks. There have been plans to build overpass, etc, but never anything materialized. We don’t want our kids moved to areas that will be a possible harm for them.

- Consider gang areas between where our kids live and where they would have to be moved too, we don’t want our kids to be crossing gang areas.

- (teacher) By moving kids to other schools, you are going to be splitting up families, older siblings walk to and from school with younger ones, they take care of younger ones while parents at work, parents need to work to sustain their children, they count on having their kids all together in the same school, if separated it would be a nightmare for many families.

Tante:
Principal

- Well organized school, we are doing everything to keep the school improving but face space constraints. Over 120% capacity

- Needs: Lack of classroom space, lack of rooms for kindergarten

- Need preschool for our community. Has applied with the city and hopes they will help out

- Need of a playground, we have even hosted fundraisers to build new playground

Ashburn:

- Underutilized is problem, worried if their school is closed, then they get shipped to overcrowded school. Thinks better solution is to bus kids from overcrowded schools to here[Ashburn]

- Various school ranked as underutilized by CPS, are within walking distance of each other. We could receive some kids from other schools within our network

- Charter schools concerns, they have opened more charter and those schools have taken many of our best students.
• foreclosure problems. Parents are losing their homes and have to leave the area and with it students that would have attended our schools