Chicago Public Schools  
School Utilization Community Meetings  
Breakout Session Notes

Date/Time of Meeting: February 6, 2013, 7:00pm-9:00pm

Network: Pershing

Schools represented by audience: Armour, McClellan, Dewey, Libby

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 is concerned about utilization rates being incorrectly calculated.
- Utilization rates are wrong. CPS has to factor in ADA compliance regarding utilization rates for classrooms.
- CPS is not helping schools prepare their school’s improvement plan. Why are small schools being undervalued?
- Neighborhood schools serve a greater purpose than charter schools.
- Elementary school students have to worry about gangs, too. CPS needs to bring back busing students. Schools cannot close because they are safe havens.

School Specific Learning

Armour:
School is a safe, dry place and historical place. It is over 110 years old. Wonderful school. 10 years ago, the school was at 37%; now scores have consistently went up, and we now have scores over 70% for math and reading. We provide love and our kids know that. Some kids have been there since pre-school. The school is special. School sits between two rival gangs, so we moved up the start time to protect the kids. It is a safe haven and sometimes kids are there until 6 pm/7 pm at night. We are one of only 28 schools to implement the common core standards. One of only three schools that received a $500,000 grant from Target. Two new laboratories and we feed the kids 3 times a day and they have bilingual classes. High retention rate for teachers. One of only the few schools that can accommodate disabled students. Has two separate buildings for K-3 and 4-8 grades. We have high quality teachers. We are leading the network in professional development credentials and our teachers are very dedicated. Our utilization should be at 75%, not 50%. 
McClellan:

94% poverty rate and 75% of our students meet or exceed standards. Why is it underutilized? We have an autism program and by state law, the special needs students max is 13. It is sad that we have become rivals with our sister schools. 3 autistic classrooms and 2 resource rooms for special needs students. Resource rooms should not be counted as homerooms. We have to have quiet spaces for students to meet state guidelines. We had to make our closet a quiet room. People in the school know the spaces and this needs to be reflected in the report. 25% students receive specialized services and we are sharing rooms because we don't have enough room. Parents had to give up space for their resource room. Some schools are getting new Wi-Fi and new units; why is CPS investing in schools that will close? Isn't CPS wasting resources? Will CPS give us transportation? Will teachers follow the students? What will happen to our schools? Where are my tax dollars going? If you have overcrowded schools, why are we sending students to other overcrowded schools? The process is backwards. Why weren't we asked what we needed before the utilization numbers were calculated? Why can't CPS go to the schools to get the information? We are doing your report for you.

Dewey:

How can you house 630 students? The building is 120 years old. Extracurricular activities have been put in the place of older classrooms. Three classrooms have been used for after school activities. Parents feel like they are being shut out of the process. We have been upgraded to smart boards and other resources. School is being expanded to have smaller class sizes. Utilization numbers should be 20 instead of 30. 30 is an outdated number.

Libby:

Before it was too many teachers; now utilization is the new crisis. Libby has full classrooms. Should we be concerned with ideal numbers when the real focus should be education? Why are the charter school numbers not there? Are they walking through the schools and doing the assessments?