Chicago Public Schools
School Utilization Community Meetings
Breakout Session Notes

Date/Time of Meeting: Wednesday, February 6, 2013

Network: Pilsen-Little Village

Schools represented by audience*: Cooper, Jungman, Pilsen, Orozco, Finkl, Kanoon, Little Village, Madero, Dominguez, Paderewski, Whittier

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.

*Note: There were too many people in the main room so the overflow was sent upstairs for a breakout session. The audience was angry and the evening started out with a man standing up and yelling Q & A style: "What do we want? Justice! When do we want it? Now!" Some of the people that were sent upstairs came back down, pounding on the closed door, demanding to be allowed inside. They were not let in and the audience chanted "Let them in" and shouting to give them a voice.

Note: These notes are from the main meeting, which lasted the full two hours and was half in Spanish, half in English.

General Learning

Overall message: “Do not close our schools”

- “If schools are overcrowded, how can you consider closing them” Alderman 22nd Ward
- Do not always go by formula to determine what schools are going to close. Look at all the facts.
- Give schools a fair chance to turnaround
- Find resources to make schools better instead of having to close them
- Listen to what the community wants

Very negative about charter schools

- Do not think charter schools are the solution
- Perception that charter schools are taking money and resources from current CPS schools
- Schools are being closed to make way to charters
Focus should not be on money

- Priority is the children, "not dollar signs"
- Must strive for academic excellence and equality
- Stop closing schools to balance the budget
- Where is the tax money going anyway— if not to our schools?

There are many concerns when your neighborhood school closes.

- If you close our schools, what resources will you put in place so no violence occurs?
- There will be gang violence when kids enter schools that are not on their home turf
- “How many innocent kids have to die?”

Misc.:

- Why aren’t high ranking official like the Mayor and Barbara Byrd Bennett here? They should care enough to be present for these meetings.
- Should start a dialogue with principals, parents and community about what real education looks like
- Overall feeling of discontent and that CPS isn’t really listening
- The smaller the classroom size, the better the learning for the kids

School-specific Learning

**Pilsen**

- “School family destroyed” if you close school
- Need to ensure the safety of the children
- A lot of families use special services, if school closes, how will children with special needs be serviced
- Programs for parents, Room with computers
- Dual language school very positive
- All teachers have a master’s degree
- Annex put in place by CPS, there for years and is a safety concern
- Annex not the answer to overcrowding, need to relocate all students to the main building
- On the rise
- 21% of student are in Special Ed program
- Only school in community that is open on Saturdays
- Before and after school classes for parents
- Should not relocate students to a different school, safety concern when children have to cross Ashland Ave.

**Jungman**

- Caring families
- Not just a school, like a second family
- Concern that Jungman is underutilized
- Was Level 3, up to Level 2; the school is progressing and on the rise
• Children are experiencing anxiety that their school may close, unfair to children
• Don’t want charter schools, they are NOT better than our public school
• Schools are the most important institutions and building blocks in the community.

Cooper Dual Language Academy

• Only 4 points away from being a Level 1 school
• Most students meet or exceed state standards
• Selected by CPS as an Adaptive School
• Don’t close the school-Considerations for CPS:
  o Emotional impact on Children
  o Majority of students are English language learners, need to keep program in place
  o Are currently receiving quality education, what happens if they have to move?
  o After school programs, what happens if discontinued, working parents will have a hard time.
  o Provides cultural pride
  o Keeps children safe
• What makes the school unique and irreplaceable:
  o Teachers have excellent credentials, many with Master’s degrees, some have National Board certification
  o Many various programs
• Classrooms are not being underutilized, being used for Adult Education classes, after school activities, etc.
  o Majority of students are English language learners and Cooper has a very strong program.

Little Village/Dominguez

• Four separate schools, don’t want to consolidate
• Community fought hard with these schools

Orozco

• Only Spanish speaking school that serves gifted children. What will they do if school closes?
• Upward trends in test scores
• First school to adopt a uniform policy
• Provides health care program for children and teachers
• Forty different types of programs (sports, dance, visual arts, and more) in the school, grew to over 400 students
• Strong technology program
• Given $100K for fitness room
Kanoon

- Talk to more parents to see what schools are about before you shut any doors.
- Stop proliferation of charter schools, taking money away from our public schools to fund charter schools

Madero

- Level two currently, but almost at level one.
- Neighborhood schools offer choices
- Strong, award winning ROTC program, that isn’t offered most places

Paderewski

- CPS failed our children
- New principal trying to make things better, give her a chance
- Full day kindergarten, music, Boys and Girls Club, sports program, college prep all important
- Do not underestimate family
- Academic growth shown

Whittier

- It will be dangerous for kids to cross community boarders by having to go to different schools outside their neighborhood
- Where will you hold classes? “In the closet?”

Finkl

- Very family oriented
- Strong program for kids with special needs
- Staff goes above and beyond for families