Chicago Public Schools
School Utilization Community Meetings
Breakout Session Notes

Date/Time of Meeting: February 9, 2013, 11:00am to 1:00pm

Network: Rock Island

Schools represented by audience: Marcus Garvey, Langston Hughes, Cullen, Medgar Evers

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

Parents are concerned about...
- Safety.
- Wrong utilization numbers.
- Resources invested in school but will close a few years later.
- Transition of special education and autistic children.
- Technology.
- Partnerships with local communities help schools address issues that CPS has not.

School Specific Learning

Marcus Garvey:

Community member for over 50 years. Twin daughters attended school. Very successful. Garvey Principal Mrs. Van Allen. Attended school as student. Selective enrollment expectations. School has been featured in video documents. Experimenting with socio-emotional learning (one of the first in CPS). Composite scores are above 70 percent in all categories. They are not underutilized, they are under recognized. Partnership with Metropolitan Family Services. Great teachers (from Parent). Awesome principal and staff. Very approachable teachers. Open door policy. No one is ever turned away. Fun activities like recess and gym. Reading, math, mostly science. Reading groups to work problems out. Safe and structured environment. Very adamant about it. Security at school. Great assistance to the students to make sure they are making progress. Teachers notify parents about bad progress. After school and one on one tutoring. 4th graders switch classes. Great communication. Very disciplined and teach men how to be men. Belts, haircuts, proper
attire. Teaching men how to be men again. Impressed by the disciplinary actions. School gives kids how to be men and women and be respectful to one another. School teaches them pride and priority. Had two kids that graduated from college. One will be a teacher. This is a village and people do not provide them with resources. You can't build bricks with straw. This is a partnership, and kids deserve stability. No libraries, no books, not updated.

Teacher: Son was in private school but she transferred him to CPS. Incident at private school made her bring her child back. School is spoken of like a private school but small and he knows everyone. Socio-emotional learning video on YouTube. We have a peace center, so every time we have a dispute, they can work out problems with each other without the teacher. Went to private school, but chose to send her kids to her community school. There is a difference between private and public schools. It is a village, and everyone helps.

Education is first priority at that school. Parents and students have to be committed to educating the students. They keep the parents involved. They make the child responsible. Keep programs open for parents that work late. Teachers spend money out of their own pockets to purchase Rasskids software to students. School needs resources to help educate students. Some of our rooms are being used for science labs for k-6, not 7th and 8th. Private rooms so students can get one to one assessment. 3rd grade classroom has 20 kids. World languages, partnership that CPS is not funding. Social workers, speech therapists, occupational therapists use rooms. They are trying to set up things for parents as well. School is being used, but not with 35 people in mind. This is terrible that it had to come to this.

Langston Hughes:

Principal: This is a new school. Millions have been spent, and she is a third year principal. It is a special educated facility that is tailored to those students that are medically fragile. RN and LPN onsite. **10 of our classrooms will never be able to use the utilization standard that CPS set, because 17 is the max.** Only 10 students can be used for special education. It is clustered space. They can accommodate 3 and 4 year old autism programs, but they have to send them across the city instead of keeping them at a place that they are accustomed. We went down .5 point, but we increased 12.5 points the previous year. They have been on the IL state report card for academic progress for two years, even though they are a level 2 school. We have a parent resource room, with a GED program and a job employment room. Metropolitan Family Center has invested in them. We take whoever we get and we are a community hub. Look at the progress that we have made. We care about our kids and we keep them safe. There are opening charters in this neighborhood but they have a deficit.
Grandparents are pleased with the advancement their grandson has made in the past few years. This is the best school that he can attend. They have four meals a day for these kids. We have after school programs and an additional meal during that time. We have to put children out because they feel safe there.

Parent: I can't afford to send my child to private school. What do I do as a parent to keep my kid out of the charter schools and not keep my kid in his comfort zone?

Aunt of one of the students: child comes home and is excited about the work he does and puts it on the refrigerator. He is trained to do his work and do it well. Makes her want to get more involved because of his excitement. CPS needs to understand that we have kids with 42 students in a classroom (8th) and 39 for a 3rd grade class. Hard for a teacher to contain. And we are dealing with hormones. What can we do with a .5 teacher? As a parent of 3 kids with special needs, suffered consolidation from Davis to Hughes. **It is more detrimental to have kids with special needs transition and it takes time for them to adjust.** They will not perform unless they know the people. My kids do not test; their progress is listed in a different way. They have washrooms in the classrooms. The school was just built. The bonds that are being made cannot be measured by a test and the school needs to stay open. They are now implementing socio-emotional learning. They need a mentoring program so they can see there is more to life than gangs. Resources for the boys to train them to be husbands, providers, and protectors. Training the girls to be informed about the possibilities they have because of the negative influence the media has. Training begins at home, so we would like to train our parents about health and nutrition. School is in a food desert. There is a disconnect sometimes between school and home and we want to make that connection so the students are being taken care of. Sometimes we only look at schools in the academic sense, but we cannot expect the students to drop everything that they have to deal with at the door because it is not possible. We need in house social services because the teachers are spending their time being the parents. We have the space to accommodate these needs. We are a cluster school and we can more appropriately place special needs kids in different classrooms that can accommodate their needs within our building. Teachers collaborate with one another to address students’ needs.

**Cullen:**

Bud Brian, Principal at Cullen. The board will not reveal which schools they will close until late spring. How long has the Rock Island network come to existence? Formerly Area 18; CPS went from CAOs to Chief Network Offices. Public schools are being omitted and charter schools are being selected. We should have a say so on whether or not we elect charter schools because we are paying taxes to go to CPS. In the Chicago Sun Times, the utilization formula comes from construction data? Have you thought about using Census Tract data? Why did CPS give us a person who cannot answer our questions? CPS is not triangulating the information they should use to determine utilization. Why is CPS closing schools and building new schools? Are they using GIS data? Data makes the school a victim of their own success. What people don’t understand is that once you hit a certain score, if you drop points, they did not benefit from the scoring system. The state recognizes the school as a high performing school, but we were put on probation because we went from 95% to 94%.
We have a multi-purpose room that is an auditorium, gym and classroom. We space that is being use by multiple groups at multiple times. We are using rooms to respond to the full school day. We have a two full tech labs, music and gym. The school and staff need to be let in place because we support the community. We have gang problems. Children west of Indiana attend Cone and children east go to Cullen. Hispanic gangs also exist and will endanger the kids if they have to cross Indiana. Been at Cullen 14 years. Had about 60-70 gang members retaliating from a fight that occurred outside of the school. I was in the midst of that fight and I was trying to safe my kids. If that school is closed, you will not have the staff that patrol the alleys to protect the students. CPS recognizes data, but our data merits us being kept open because of state recognition. Some of the schools that are recognized have 4-5 police calls every day. Our staff keeps our students safe and they protect our kids. Principal walks the alleys. Grandparent has seen granddaughter’s grades go from 3rd grade to 6th grade reading. She has improved by 40%. Teachers, principal and staff are dedicated. They tell them to pull up their pants. Children feel safe at the school they are honor roll students and have perfect attendance. Students never say “I don’t want to go to school.” They escort the children at all times and I applaud them for that. If I have to sit in front of the school 24 hours a day to keep it open, I will and I have friends who will do the same. My grandchildren say school is wonderful. High rate of sexual offenders in the area in poor African-American neighborhoods (10%) in Chicago. Cullen cannot be captured only quantitatively, but qualitatively. I went to Cullen, worked there as a college aide. Everytime CPS wants to do something new, Cullen is affected. They had a special program that let the school stay open in the summer to provide services and CPS cut the funding. How is the school supposed to keep up if the school and city continues to leave us out of their plans? We are a family. They are doing an excellent job. SGA Youth and Family Services (supports K-3 students) has a room at Cullen that might not be factored in. Provides parenting services every week. Our numbers are being recalibrated by the Chief of Technology from CPS and get the money we needed to develop the tech lab. We have two Promethean boards that we can use for the kids because they learn from technology. We have a leaking roof and have had this issue for years. We need 6 million dollars to fix our roof and accommodate 130 more students. They just spent $50 million on Carver and we still have a leaking roof. We are using the rooms by placing buckets in the room. We have Response to intervention rooms (RTI) and we have classrooms over 30. They do charters based on 20 kids in a room, but they are using higher numbers for us. Our classrooms are smaller; we don’t even have coat closets or lockers. Parents want their students at Cullen. If you base it on data, Cullen should stay open. 3 generations of my family have gone to that school, and they take interest in every child. The community would suffer a loss if the school closed. The board of education should be ashamed of themselves because they are the problem. The mayor swung people around the city and made the schools underutilized. Most of the numbers are used by the 20th day of school. They are not counting the fact that we have had 30 students after the 20th day. We are not counting classrooms, but we do not have enough teachers to accommodate our students. CPS needs to update our numbers because they will only give us additional teachers if we reach a certain capacity within those 20 days. Would have had more people, but we have Saturday school and kids at the United Center.
**Medgar Evers:**
Excellent programs, classrooms are used for music and it is a small school. Space for parents (resource room). It is a level 1 school, and we have partnerships that invest in the school. It makes no sense to invest only $500,000 in a school to improve it. That is nothing. Small schools allow students to spread out. We use the rooms for multiple purposes.