

Community Meeting for the Proposal to Phase Out Dyett High School

January 20, 2012; 6:00 to 8:00 p.m.

Location: Charles A. Hayes Center, 4859 S. Wabash

CPS Staff in Attendance

Oliver Sicat, Sean Stalling, Brian Pool, Tanya Branch, Carly Bolger

Brief Summary

Summary: The purpose of the meeting was to receive public comments on the proposal to phase out Dyett High School in accordance with Public Act 097-0474. CPS officials made a brief presentation about the proposal. There were 19 speakers during the meeting, and their comments focused on a variety of topics.

CPS Presentation

Oliver Sicat, Chief Portfolio Officer for CPS, welcomed those in attendance and introduced the meeting. Sean Stalling, Chief of High Schools for the South Side Network, then gave an overview of the proposal. Oliver Sicat then reiterated the process for making comments before opening up the floor to the attendees who had signed up to speak.

Public Comment

Sheri Lucas

Ms. Lucas discussed the difficulties of change. She believes that after 7 years of failure, children will now have access to better options. She believes that Phillips has more resources than Dyett. Dyett is among the lowest performing schools. Nearly 2/3 of Dyett students do not graduate. Phasing out Dyett ensures that students are not left behind. Children will be safe at Phillips and the time of accepting failure is over.

Andy Pearson - English Department Chair

Mr. Pearson believes that statistically, EXPLORE scores have improved at Dyett. He feels that the teachers should not be criticized or punished. If Dyett is phased out, students will have less of a chance to experience success. He also believes that Dyett is academically a better school - one of the first to implement IDS - and is nationally recognized for its state-of-the-art gym.

Don Gibson - Teacher

Mr. Gibson is concerned about the phasing out of Dyett because when he was a student, he was influenced by an educator. When he was first transferred to Dyett, he thought it would be great. Some would say there is a safety issue at Dyett, but he feels the school has overcome it and is much safer. He feels as if Dyett got the kids that no one else wanted, the hard ones to deal with. But the staff worked with the students and improved their scores.

Karen McDonald - Teacher

Ms. McDonald has grave concerns about what is happening to the students at Dyett because crossing certain gang boundary lines creates safety issues. CPS should consider what could happen when students cross those boundary lines. Even though CPS thinks it could be safe, it may be the death of students. Although Dyett has limited resources, students do more. She feels that students may not make an 18, 19 or 20 on the ACT, but the team at Dyett appreciates moving them up.

Perlander Swinney - KLEO Center.

Mr. Swinney expressed concern as to why it took so long to phase out Dyett. He believes that Dyett is the reason there are so many students on the streets. Teachers overlook the students. He has tutored students and given them simple problems that they are unable to do. CPS knows best – SHUT IT DOWN!

K.G. – Student

K.G. does not agree with the proposed actions. She is united with the Bronzeville Center in the belief that mixing different gangs will not benefit students. She believes that students will graduate and go on to college. She feels that the students at Dyett have better opportunities if they stay at Dyett. K.G. would CPS to provide much needed resources, such as the READ180 program, which CPS has previously denied. She feels that the students will not sit back while their future is sold. They will not accept this.

Bettie Danay - Grandparent

Ms. Danay feels that the phasing out of Dyett is unfair to children, teachers and the principal. She will fight and stand with the staff. CPS is the one failing the children. CPS has had 20 years to fix schools and has not done anything. She wants the children to remain in the community and not be bussed 4-5 miles. She does not feel that CPS is doing what is best for children.

Marilyn Foster – Teacher

Ms. Foster believes that Phillips is the same as Dyett. He urged people to look at the report on cps.edu, and ask why CPS would send students somewhere that does not display success. He said that the racial achievements gaps are growing ever since turnaround. After 20 years of reform, children are not being successful and African-Americans fall behind all other groups.

Jarvis Walker – KLEO Center

Mr. Walker does not have proper books or the ability to move forward as a teacher. He wants to see something better in the neighborhood.

Darryl Randall

Mr. Randall stated that the community meeting is smoke and mirrors and CPS does not have the best interest of students in mind. He believes that CPS wants to develop the land around Dyett and this meeting is a farce that the community does not need.

Chanavia Riggs – Parent

Ms. Riggs believes that CPS failed by not properly teaching children. Officials want to destabilize the community and she is opposed to the phase-out of Dyett.

K.R. – Student

K.R. believes that CPS is sending the message that students at Dyett are nothing. She believes that her teachers care about her grades and whether or not she does well. She believes that the people in the community are not helping the school do more.

Norine Gutekarst – CTU Rep

Ms. Gutekarst attended the meeting to stand up for teachers because teachers go into the profession to make a difference in the lives of children. She is concerned that many schools in Bronzeville have closed and if Dyett closes where are the children to go. When Austin closed the teachers were blamed. Gang lines get crossed and the children are the ones who suffer. CPS does not have children's best interest in mind. CPS bashes teachers and is disrespectful to the community.

Linda Lake – Grandparent

Ms. Lake feels that the decision to phase out Dyett is too much, too little, too late. It is time to try something new, something different. The community must not be afraid of change. It is time to bring in new blood.

Johnathan Lake – Former graduate

Mr. Lake stated that a lot of the problems children display start at home. Parents must quit putting the kids in a room by themselves and take time out to be with their children. It is the parents who must plant and sow the seeds.

Marilyn Foster – Teacher

Ms. Foster believes that 98% of teachers at Dyett work hard with the students. She wondered when CPS takes resources out of a school how CPS expects the school to be successful.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 7:19 p.m.