

Community Meeting for the Proposals to Phase-Out Crane High School and Co-locate Crane High School and Chicago Talent Development High School in the Same Facility

January 20, 2012; 6:00 to 9:00 p.m.

Location: Malcolm X College, 1900 West Van Buren

CPS Staff in Attendance

Donald Fraynd, Theresa Plascencia, Adam Anderson, Antonio Ruiz, Dave Schwab, Ron Kubalanza, Didi Swartz

Chicago Board of Education Member in Attendance

Jesse Ruiz

Brief Summary

The purpose of the meeting was to receive public comments on the proposal to phase-out Crane High School and the proposal to co-locate Crane High School and Chicago Talent Development High School in the same facility in accordance with Public Act 097-0474. CPS officials made a presentation regarding the proposal. There were approximately 48 speakers. Public comments focused on a variety of topics including: support for the CPS proposal, opposition to the proposal from faculty and community members and a desire to see CPS invest more resources in Crane. Those who were objecting to the CPS proposal shared a prepared presentation.

CPS Presentation

Don Fraynd, Chief School Improvement Officer for CPS, welcomed those in attendance, introduced the meeting and explained the ground rules. Theresa Plascencia then gave an overview of the proposals to phase-out Crane and to co-locate Crane and Talent Development in the same facility. At approximately 6:15 p.m. the meeting was opened for public comment.

Public Comment

Aston Coleman, Dean of Students

Mr. Coleman thanked CPS for showing the Crane student video.

Carol Cole, Alumnus

Ms. Cole said that she was a Crane alumna, had 3 daughters there and wants it to stay open.

JB, Student

J.B. stated that Crane should not be closed and that he learned a lot in biology, math, and world studies. He also likes the sports options. He asked for CPS to not stop the proven history of the school.

L.I., Student

L.I. stated that Crane is an excellent school and asked for better resources. She was afraid about sharing the space with another school. L.I. also stated that Crane needs help improving the teachers. She believes that decisions were made without student input and feels ignored by the mayor, Mr. Brizard and the Board of Ed. L.I. wants to keep Crane open and keep it a neighborhood school.

Unidentified Student

The student stated that “they” don’t care about the effects of raising property taxes and building condos. She also stated that they want this area for white kids and they make excuses like low test scores and graduation rates.

J.M., Student

J.M. was outraged to hear about Crane being phased out. She stated that no one asked the students about the decision. She loves her school and asked that it not be closed.

Mark Ritter

Mr. Ritter asked to submit a document on the proposal. He stated that at the January 6 meeting there were a number of elected officials who spoke and none advocated for the closure of Crane. The elected officials represent the people and CPS should listen to them. Mr. Ritter also said that the state task force said that none of what the board is doing is complying with state law. Mr. Ritter concluded by saying that hundreds of people were there to keep Crane open and that CPS should invest in Crane.

T.W., Student

T.W. disagrees with the plan for the phased-out. T.W. stated that Crane has always been there for her and although we might not be the picture of perfection, we still manage to bring up scores. She cited gains made from low ISAT scores. CPS should not close Crane down.

Committeeman Smith

Mr. Smith stated that Senator Collins could not be there but that they could not allow this to go on, because they are with the people. Lane Tech isn’t getting closed, but we are if we don’t say anything. Mr. Smith also said that none of the elected officials want this school closed. They work to get young men off the street. Where will students go if Crane was closed? Mr. Smith believes that we have a responsibility to the students to make sure they are competitive and successful. He concluded by saying that they will not quit and will “march, raise hell, whatever we have to do.”

D.H., Student

D.H. recited a poem about secrets. The poem addressed Crane students trying their best. Crane can improve like all schools. His poem also suggested that that people want to close Crane for a school closer to downtown.

Jay Dellinger

Fix the school, fix the problem. Save our children.

G.K., Student

G.K. stated that Crane means a lot to them and they don’t want it to be closed.

C.R., Student

C.R. stated that Crane should not be closed. Many changes have been made since her freshman year, including large gains on standardized tests. She asked CPS to believe in them like the teachers do.

Marvin Wright

Mr. Wright stated that Crane is rich with history, education and sports achievement. He asked that the problems at Crane be fixed and the school not be closed

Unidentified Student

The student said that closing Crane would throw the legacy away. He little brothers who would want to attend Crane in the future.

J.A., Student

J.A. transferred to Crane and is proud to be a Cougar. Crane goes way beyond teaching and the teachers are phenomenal. The teachers are like parents.

A.R., Student

A.R. disagrees with the phase-out process. Crane has given him many opportunities to be successful. Crane students have made gains in their test scores. The teachers are caring and Crane should not be phased out.

Alderman Fioretti

Alderman Fioretti said that he stands to keep Crane open. We need to strengthen our neighborhood schools. He stated that it is wrong to have people paid to be there. He looks to Jesse Ruiz, who has the voice to change things. He and Mr. Ruiz grew up together and they know what it takes to do this. He asked Mr. Ruiz to keep Crane a neighborhood school.

Ayodeji Griffin, Crane teacher

Ms. Griffin is outraged and offended about false accusations. She said that the teachers have always gone above and beyond to make sure that the students get to college. She asked an elementary school colleague why she sent kids to Crane. Her colleague replied that it is because she knows that they will do a good job educating and graduating the students.

Unidentified Student

The student was a senior at Crane and he did not want to see the school closed.

Cody Thompson, Teacher

Mr. Thompson is a proud teacher of sciences and a track coach. He respected and admired all of the students who came and noted that this is an intense situation. The power of Crane is the students and he has seen them personally succeed and achieve. He stated that it hurts when someone says otherwise and tells him that he has failed. Mr. Thompson then read a letter from a student who asked for Crane to remain open.

Maurice Schwartz, Teacher

Mr. Schwartz stated that one of his students was an excellent math student who started in Crane's Achievement Academy. He said that he challenged her to replace him one day. Even though she had a baby she is still on track.

N.R., Student

N.R. asked for CPS to think about the positive things that happen and said they will be making a mistake.

Crane Community Presentation (7-7:15)

A music video made by Crane students was presented.

Powerpoint Presentation

Slide 1: Why is this a bad idea: Sending students to worse schools is not a good idea. Crane has outperformed other schools. There have been increases in violence with phase-outs (Austin: 231%).

Slide 2: How do we improve: Looking forward to collaborating with CPS and Board of Ed. Space utilization: add desirable programs. Offer IB. The largest feeder elementary is an IB school. Increase CTE programs. Increase student services. Increase special needs services. Right now we're at 26% sped. Increase parent services. Build on feeder school partnerships. Vertically align curriculum via the Common Core Standards. Use student interest surveys to hear what students want.

Slide 3: Improve instruction to increase student gains. We ask for support on data teams. Use strategic learning initiative. Plan on implementing a full day plan. Tier our students based on individual needs. The goal with full CPS support is to move to Level 2 in 2 years.

Slide 4: Increasing gains. We had 17 students come in on Saturdays for ACT prep. AA students showed a 3 point gain.

Slide 5: Safety: Work on discipline and safety. Restorative practices. Safe passage—comprehensive collaborative between Crane, CTA and CPD. We also need more security for building space. We want upgraded equipment to effectively monitor safety.

Slide 6: Community support: LSC and parent workshops. Collaborate with family and staff to solve parent issues. The overall goal will be increase parent involvement.

Conclusion of Crane presentation 7:15

B.C., Student

B.C. said that students are at home at Crane and teens have memories that they want to come back to. She wouldn't have made it that far without Crane and doesn't want it taken away.

Unidentified Student

The student doesn't want the school to close. The teachers and staff are helpful. Crane is not bad; there are a few who don't consider the consequences.

Erica Kennedy, Teacher

Mr. Kennedy has been a teacher at Crane for over 9 years. Mr. Kennedy read student testimonials:

- I was a transfer student and have been accepted by students and teachers alike . As I was deciding which school to go to Crane was at the bottom of my list because of the negative remarks. But Crane is a very good school. Please reconsider phasing Crane out.
- I am proud to be a Crane Cougar. I'm disappointed that CPS is trying to close Crane without asking us the students.

J.O., Student

If it wasn't for Crane I wouldn't be where I am today. Keep Crane open.

Mark Carter

Mr. Carter said Derrion Albert and Blair Ivey died because of past CPS school closings. Mr. Carter said that they warned CPS in 2004 that blood would flow. In 2005, there was only 1 gun recovered in CPS, and 6 months later there were 20. Mr. Carter also said that Rahm Emmanuel, Arne Duncan and the Civic Committee of the Commercial Club are the enemy. Mr. Carter then said that the crowd should search for selling out the community on YouTube.

Mr. Cooper, Teacher

Mr. Cooper was speaking on behalf of 2 students:

- I just transferred here and feel that this is the perfect school for me. I could have gone to Simeon or Marshall, but I chose this school.
- As a student here I believe that my school should not be phased-out or closed. Crane has higher test scores than Marshall, but the Board has chosen to close Crane down. Crane is a terrific school. As a proud honor student, I know I speak for everyone

Maurice Garner

Mr. Garner wanted to talk about the family at Crane and how they are now going through turmoil. He doesn't want to see Crane phased out. He is working with 17 men now whose test scores went up after 6 months. He said one graduated last year as the Valedictorian. The same results could be shown with 1700.

Steve Godfrey, Teacher

Mr. Godfrey has taught at Crane for 19 years. He has changed many lives in the years and has seen many initiatives. He said that they do what they can to prepare students. Crane students might not be at a 21 on the ACT, but they achieve much higher compared to when they came in.

Ronald Dates

Mr. Dates is a community member. Crane was the only school to take in his nephew when they had nowhere else to go. He said that now his nephew is married with kids and has a great job.

Aston Coleman (Dean of Students): Mr. Coleman said that they are there to ask for an opportunity to fix Crane with cps. He said that he was formerly at a charter school and has found a lot of love at Crane. He said he is asking for the feeling of togetherness with CPS.

Ronald Wallace

Mr. Wallace asked Mr. Ruiz to consider keeping Crane open. He asked which high school isn't faced with challenges. Mr. Wallace asked that Crane be given a reprieve to show that it can change.

Patrice Wilson, Teacher

Ms. Wilson has been a teacher at Crane for 17 years. She was there with a heavy heart. She said that she was there based on a decision that they didn't have input on. She asked CPS to work with Crane and help improve the teachers.

Unidentified Student

The student is a junior. He does not want the Board to phase out Crane. The principal is a wonderful person and Mr. Garner is a father figure to him. He said that all of the teachers give them good advice. His older sisters and brothers attended Crane.

Phillip Kelly

Mr. Kelly works at Crane and sponsors NHS. He read 2 letters from students who were not in attendance.

- As a freshman, I disagree that Crane should be phased out. They treat you as your own. They go through a lot so you can stay on track. I am proud to say that I attend Crane.
- As a student, I disagree that Crane should be phased out because of its proud tradition. The teachers always encourage me and help me out financially.

Mr. Kelly then stated that at a recent event, 16 counselors came to a breakfast. He also stated that Crane currently has 900 freshman applications. He asked what will happen to those applications.

Ms. Glover

Ms. Glover is a parent. She expressed opposition to the proposals.

Linda Weseman, Teacher

Ms. Weseman is a teacher in the Achievement Academy. She is proud of herself and the AA students. She then had M.B., a current Crane student, read a poem in opposition to the proposals.

Shanita Tapes

Ms. Tapes stated is a concerned parent. She said that the community needs Crane to stay open. She also stated that, "Our kids need change" and Crane was a second home for its students. She asked, "If you close Crane, where will these kids go?"

J.M., Student

J.M. and the cheerleaders did a cheer with the cheer squad. Another cheerleader professed her pride to be a Cougar. She then spoke on behalf of the cheerleaders and said this is a hurtful decision.

R., Student

R. is a freshman at Crane. He stated that the school he came from really doubted him, but he is now a proud Crane Cougar.

J.T., Student

J.T. was at the microphone with the cheerleader squad. She strongly disagreed with the decisions the Board is trying to make. She then asked, "Where would these students go, to the streets?"

Rasheed Preston

Mr. Preston thanked the teachers and said that he knew what they have to go through. He was appalled. We shouldn't be arguing over education. He then spoke to students and said that they need to stop all this - that change starts with us and we have to improve.

T.W., Student

T.W. said that Crane changed her. She asked what the real reason for closure was. The students care about their school and she has been to many colleges because of Crane. She asked the Board to think about their decision and what they're putting the teachers through. She shared that she lost her father and one of the teachers had pushed her to succeed.

J.H., Student

J.H. is a senior and has been at Crane for 4 years. She chose Crane and enjoys being an underdog. She has an ACT score of 22 and numerous scholarship offers. She asked CPS, "How can you take my history and my building from me?" She considers Crane her family and compared taking the students out of their building and out of our homes would be like us taking CPS out of their offices. She then asked, "Where are the options for us that the suburbs have?"

Ms. Payne (teacher in the Achievement Academy): She asked CPS to reconsider the proposal at hand and stated that our children are our future.

Kareem Jabbari

Mr. Jabbari asked who is paying the people who have been bussed in.

Luis Navarro

Mr. Navarro asked CPS not to close or phase out Crane. His auto shop was given a half-million dollars by CPS last year that will go to waste if the school closes. He accused CPS of only caring about academics and not prioritizing other programs, especially trade and vocational programs. He thanked the students there in support of Crane.

Corey Thomas

Ms. Thomas congratulated the crowd for the strides they are making. He spoke in support of the proposals. He said that the numbers don't lie and Crane had their chance for years. He also stated that Crane improvements were not anywhere close to where they need to be. He cannot continue to support failure and it's time to change the way CPS educates Crane students.

Rachel Gita, Teacher

Ms. Gita was proud of Crane. She acknowledged the emotional nature of the meeting and said that she understood how the students could be upset. She acknowledged the signs of the supporters and pointed out that Crane scores outrank 14 schools. She then asked CPS to give Crane one more chance.

Daniel Williams

Mr. Williams works in the community helping people to use computers. He asked where the resources were going and why aren't the charters targeted for closing. He also asked CPS why this is about moving the poor and working class people in Chicago. He then asserted that CPS didn't close schools in wealthy communities in Chicago. The city is also closing clinics in poor neighborhoods. The community is up against Mr. Brizard and the Mayor. He is opposed to the proposals.

A.N., Student

A.N. is opposed to the proposal.

Nathan Johnson, Former Teacher

Mr. Johnson came out to lend his support. He said hello to his former students and affirmed Crane as a really good school. He referenced test scores through students' careers at Crane.

Joe McDermott

Mr. McDermott came to the hearing as a 24 year-old man due to Crane. He represented Crane as a member of CTU. He asked how the building will be utilized. Where is the achievement academy going? He asked CPS for a plan. He said that Mayor Daley and Mr. Duncan had praised Crane in the past.

Diane Crawford

Ms. Crawford turned her back to the stage and cited her opposition to the proposals. She stated in her two roles as a parent and teacher she had high expectations and pushed kids to succeed. Turnarounds are so wrong and if you take the kids out of Crane and send them to a Level 3 school, CPS should tell the community that they want the building. She would respect CPS more if they told the truth.

B.C., Student

B.C. said that CPS should open their eyes.

Freddy Santiago

Mr. Santiago was sad to see organizations turning students against students. He stated this is about the students and more than just going to heaven. He thinks that the students need to get educated now. There is a problem that needs to be fixed. He supports the proposals. He asked "If there's nothing wrong, then why are we here?" He also stated that it was time to phase-out Crane and give students the best education.

Lou Ramos

Mr. Ramos acknowledged the crowd and said that he was very impressed with the stories, but unfortunately, it's an old story. He asked the crowd, who wants a better education? He supported the proposals. He pointed out that it was not only Crane, but the entire CPS system. He would not settle for less.

J.H., Student

J.H. asked to see charter school scores and attendance numbers. She asked how others from different neighborhoods know what happens at Crane. She spoke about how well she was doing. Crane was her

family who is being taken away. She compared students at Crane with students in Africa stating “In Africa, they’re fighting for education while you’re taking ours.”

Cynthia De La Cruz

Ms. De La Cruz is a resident of the West Side. She expressed concern with CPS and a desire for the improvement for the students of Chicago. She told CPS, “Shame on you for it taking 10 years to do something.” She believes that CPS should be held accountable for other failing schools and should be given a chance to improve the education system in the whole city of Chicago.

Melody White, Teacher

Ms. White was proud of her children. She told the students who were present that they have made everything worthwhile. It’s important that they understand the demographics we’re dealing with. She stated the students were coming up against serious things that society has thrown at them and she is ashamed that other adults in the hearing would tell the students that they are failures. She told the students that they are important and they are not a statistic. She told CPS that if something happens to these children, “that blood is on you.”

Darlene Garcia

Ms. Garcia was excited to be here standing for what she believes. She believes that education will take us toward advancement. She doesn’t just want 1 or 2 percent at “excellent,” but 100%. She speculated that 10 years down the line, sadly Crane would still be on probation. She asked the crowd to use this opportunity for improvement. She wants other children to have better opportunities.

Unidentified Student

The student asked how supporters could say what they have said. She asked why they think she is a failure and hoped the supporters of the proposals hear her.

Mark Gonzalez

Mr. Gonzalez is a supporter of the proposal. He is here for the students and is a product of CPS. He believed that CPS needs to make a change. He implored the crowd to look in to their hearts and make the right decision. He said he is here to help the students achieve.

Elias Carvajal.

Mr. Carvajal supported the proposal, articulating that change is difficult. He said everyone has the same common goal and we need to find solutions for Crane and other schools. He reiterated that change is necessary.

Napoleon English

Mr. English is an outreach worker for Ceasefire. He stated that Crane students will have to walk through unfamiliar neighborhoods. He stressed that the proposal will increase violence and endanger the children.

McCoy, Student

McCoy stated that CPS should not close the school.

Cody Thompson, Teacher

Mr. Thompson shared anecdotes about students participating in school activities. He is opposed to the proposals and stated that no one has looked into the classroom. He is willing to solve problems. He doesn't think CPS makes the decisions based on education, but rather, business.

T.C., Student

T.C. feels judged by the people who spoke in support of the proposals. He wants someplace to come back to after graduation.

Unidentified Student

The student stated that the students at Crane were not failures.

Public Comment concluded around 8:30 p.m.