



Community Meeting for the Proposal to Close Julia C. Lathrop Elementary School

January 6, 2012

Location: Collins High School, 1313 S. Sacramento Drive

CPS Staff in attendance

Jennifer Cheatham, Chandra James, Kishasha Ford, Alex Soble , Colleen Broderick

Brief Summary

The purpose of the meeting was to receive public comments on the proposal to close Lathrop Elementary School, an existing phase-out school, in accordance with Public Act 097-0474. CPS officials made a presentation regarding the proposal. There were 14 speakers. The speaker comments focused on a variety of topics including: concerns about failing schools and failing students, better performing schools, the quality of teachers, charter schools, student safety and the quality of the proposed receiving school.

CPS Presentation

Jennifer Cheatham, Chief Instructional Officer, welcomed those in attendance and introduced the meeting. Chandra James then gave an overview of the proposal and highlighted its benefits. Following this presentation, the meeting was opened for public comment.

Public Comment

Rev. LaRue Kidd, faith-based leader

Rev. Kidd noted the need to make tough decisions to help children succeed. After four years of failure, students deserve more than Lathrop Elementary. He said Johnson is an improving school, and most importantly, the kids will be safe and will get more support.

Rev. David T. Whittley, faith-based leader

Rev. Whittley said he supports the move to help students reach the highest level of education. He said the action will help children achieve.

Tracy Barrientos, teacher and member of CORE

Ms. Barrientos spoke out against the proposed closure and cited a Consortium for School Research report which said that students who are moved from one school to another are twice as likely to move again.

Jermaine Gause, teacher at Lathrop School

Mr. Gause said that data do not show paint an accurate picture of Lathrop. He said he has seen the school improve its test scores with minimal resources. He said teachers at Lathrop have to deal with violence and a lack of resources.

Brian Glaviz, school teacher and counselor

Mr. Glaviz told the audience to make sure they take all the kids, because they don't take all the kids, especially special needs and underserved students and homeless students. He addressed the CPS staff members in the room: "If you aren't doing everything you can to fight for what you say you're fighting for, God have mercy on your soul."

Sherika Stennis, a product of CPS

Ms. Stennis said she attended Whitney Young Magnet High School and went on to earn her B.A. and M.A. in Human Resources. She said she definitely endorses turning around schools and that the proposed action will bring in teachers who care more about their students.

Cory Thomas, a product of CPS

Mr. Thomas said he heard teachers tell their students, that they will get a paycheck whether the student learns or does not learn. He said this is a terrible attitude. He feels that teachers need to be held accountable and that teachers are hiding behind the unions. He said CPS needs to show children that there's something better out there and that if you keep pushing the same old, you will get the same results.

Andrea Wallace, Chicago resident

Said she came to the meeting to support Chicago schools, although she is not originally from Chicago. She said she has yet to walk into a Chicago school and find it fit for these children. She said that CPS should fix the schools, do not shut them down.

Virgil Jakes, faith leader

Said he supports turnarounds. He said that after the phase-out, closing Lathrop was a foregone conclusion.

Sheton Dunlap

Said when you close down schools, it leads to overcrowding. Wondered how you can teach 30 children at one time and proposed not closing schools down but rather fixing them up.

Toni Clay, parent

Ms. Clay said she has four children in the public school system. She said closing schools is not the solution. She said CPS needs to motivate children, and that the District should keep these schools open and fix them up.

Regina Louis, a community member

Ms. Lewis spoke in defense of old values and tradition and said that parents have to come back in the system and that nobody can raise our children but them. She asked why take public school money and put it into charter schools? She stated the money that is being allocated to charters should be used for students in the school's attendance area.

John Alkins, parent

Mr. Alkins said Johnson is an improving turnaround school and the district is committed to its growth. He said at Lathrop, less than half of the students are meeting/exceeding state standards. He said Johnson also offers more academic support, including tutoring and after-school programs. He said the district is working with the community and with CPD to ensure that children get to and from school safely.

LaSondra Kidd, parent

Ms. Kidd has five children in the CPS system. She said CPS needs better teacher and resources like Lakeview has. She said that they need Safe Passage. She said all they have here are teachers who don't want to teach. She said that if a teacher is not willing to teach, "how can you motivate the kids ... the kids are willing to learn, but you have to give them a chance." She said she support keeping the schools open. She said he is tired of sending African-American children to Cook County Jail and that "we want to make doctors, lawyers and future Presidents."