

**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 6, 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 about 48 speakers. The speaker 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.

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**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. Around 6:15 p.m., the meeting was opened for public comment.

**Public Comment**

**Aston Coleman (Crane Dean of Students and Youth Services Advocate), Maurice Schwartz, Bennie Horton (Teacher), Alvita Payne, Erika Kennedy (Teacher), Cindy Fullilove-Adeagbo (Teacher), Chris Burney (Staff Member), Linda Weseman, Rachel Geetha (Teacher), Lisa Russell on behalf of Cheryl Bolden, Daniel Beck (Teacher)**

The speakers above each requested to give a PowerPoint presentation regarding Crane High School.

**Bernice Sconers, Zephyr, Cory Thompson, Jessica Lafrenz, Marlene Edwards**

The speakers above each yielded their two-minute comment period in order for the Crane High School PowerPoint presentation to be given.

**Aston Coleman, Crane Dean of Students and Youth Services Advocate**

Mr. Coleman gave a presentation about Crane, objecting to the proposals. The presentation began by stating that research does not necessarily support opening charters or closing schools as ways to improve student achievement. Mr. Coleman also stated that the Crane numbers do not accurately reflect student achievement because the numbers (1) do not account for the mixture of Achievement Academy and high school students, and (2) do not measure growth. Mr. Coleman asked the Board to work with him to create an improvement plan that would save Crane. Mr. Coleman stated that the CEO is responsible for creating an improvement plan and overseeing implementation of the plan, but oversight and additional funding were not provided to Crane. Mr. Coleman explained Crane’s growth based on EPAS data and compared this growth data to other high schools, stating that Crane’s growth is at the same rate as citywide schools and comparable to other neighborhood schools. Mr. Coleman called for stability and sustainability and identified these challenges: cuts in funding, staffing, professional development and programs, and leadership changes resulting in inconsistency. Mr. Coleman concluded by comparing Crane’s four-year core graduation rate of 49% to other area high schools, including Manley, Wells, Marshall, and Farragut, and noted that Crane’s rate is similar.

**Student A**

Student A opposes the phase-out because the school creates a shelter for children and because of the history of the school. Student A said that Crane is a home to its students because of the love, honesty, and wisdom of the faculty that never gives up on students. Student A identified Crane alumni such as George Halas and noted that the school has existed since WWII.

**Lisa Russell, Parent**

Ms. Russell spoke about her children attending Crane and other family members who attended Crane in the past. Ms. Russell said that it is sad that the people making choices for the community do not live in the community. Ms. Russell said that if you phase-out Crane, there will be no more history.

**Carolyn Cole, Parent and Crane Alumnus**

Ms. Cole stated that she is a product of Crane and three of her daughters graduated from Crane, and she “thanks God” for Crane teachers. Ms. Cole said that she has a daughter who is in her third year of college thanks to Crane. Ms. Cole wants Crane to stay. Ms. Cole said that Crane taught her to be productive and respectful and that Crane is “the hand that put the kids over the broken bridge.”

**Student B**

Student B stated that he has attended Crane for four years and that Crane has opened up many doors and created opportunities for him. Student B said that the people at Crane are like family. Student B stated that he strongly disagrees with the phase-out process and is concerned with what will happen to teachers, the next generation, and whether there will be a school to come back to after graduating. Student B said that instead of taking away programs, more should be added. Student B said that the school needs more resources that it is not getting. Student B said that the school is a historical asset for students and the community.

**Michele Booker, Alumnus**

Ms. Booker stated that she came to Crane in 2003 because she “didn’t get taken in” by the neighborhood school, Farragut. Ms. Booker said that she had many friends, mentors, and resources at

Crane. Ms. Booker grew at Crane emotionally, mentally, financially, and physically. Ms. Booker said that the Crane teachers are “there for you” and do more than just teach in the classroom. Ms. Booker graduated from Crane with 13 scholarships, attended DePaul University and graduated cum laude, and now attends DePaul Law School. Ms. Booker said that she is still life-long friends with the people she met at Crane. Ms. Booker said that the proposals are wrong.

**Kemarius Lee, Alumnus**

Ms. Lee said that she is a 2007 Crane graduate and senior majoring in public relations at Valley State. Ms. Lee disputed that additional funding has been provided to Crane because programs were in place when she started at Crane that were not in place when she finished. Ms. Lee said that Crane should remain open.

**Senator Collins**

Senator Collins stated that the Crane community has spoken and they want to keep the school open. Senator Collins said that community is what it is all about and that kids want to stay in their neighborhood when they go to school. Senator Collins said that she is going to help fight to keep Crane open. Senator Crane said that the community does not want students to have to get up at 6:00 in the morning to be bused to another school or to have to go through gang territory to get to school. Senator Collins said that the community wants programs and resources for the school. Senator Collins said that schools are what bring communities together, where everyone can go. Senator Collins also stated that children have memories of school and that the buildings are historical and belong to the people who live in the Crane community. Senator Collins stated that she is proud of parents for fighting for Crane.

**Alderman Fioretti**

Alderman Fioretti stated that he remembers after Ruben Ivy was killed that they established Operation Safe Passage to get kids to school safely. Alderman Fioretti stated that they knocked on almost two hundred doors in one weekend in the cold and rain to get kids to school. Alderman Fioretti stated that everyone wanted to help kids have a better education and to get them to school safely. Alderman Fioretti exhibited concern for students crossing gang lines to get to Marshall, Manley, Wells, Farragut and stated that he supports keeping Crane open. Alderman Fioretti said that the money given in the summer to increase and improve schools should be given to neighborhood schools. Alderman Fioretti stated that teachers, administrators and programs need more resources for the kids. Alderman Fioretti called on all to be proud of the neighborhood school.

**Unidentified Speaker**

The speaker stated that it is time to stop the Board of Education from closing schools. The speaker said that the money, teachers, and students exist to keep the schools open.

**Alderman Burnett**

Alderman Burnett said that he supports those that have spoken and asked CPS to give Crane a chance. Alderman Burnett said that Crane has not been given the same resources as other charter schools around the area, which is unfair. Alderman Burnett said that the parents and community are what make schools successful, and there are a large number of parents in the community committing to making Crane one of the best schools on the West side of Chicago. Alderman Burnett said that he is there to support the other elected officials and the parents, and he asked the Board of Education to reconsider

the proposal and give the community the opportunity to show what can be done in the neighborhood with support.

**Dr. Patricia Van Pelt-Watkins**

Dr. Van Pelt-Watkins stated that she ran for mayor in the last race because she felt that the community was not being taken into consideration when policies are made. Dr. Van Pelt-Watkins said that Crane and other schools across the city can be saved if CPS looks to parents and teachers to put together programs that will improve schools and fund those programs. Dr. Van Pelt-Watkins stated that some of the money spent to close schools should be spent to improve schools with the support of parents, businessmen, clergy, and teachers. Dr. Van Pelt-Watkins said that she is running for State Senate in the area and that she would be a voice for change.

**Mark Carter**

Mr. Carter stated that Roosevelt Watkins bused people in to oppose those fighting to save the neighborhood school. Mr. Carter said that he warned CPS that moving children to various communities without a proper transition would result in a loss of life, and then Derrion Albert and Ruben Ivy were killed. Mr. Carter also stated that young men were given 50 and 60 years because of deals that were being cut by people under the table. Mr. Carter said that a search on YouTube for “selling out the community” would show a video of Congressman Danny Davis, Arne Duncan, Michael Scott, and State Senator Ricky Hendon in a back room cutting deals to close private high schools. Mr. Carter said “it’s about the land.”

**Barbara Burchjolla**

Ms. Burchjolla stated that Pauline Lipman of the University of Illinois has done writing on charter schools and offered copies of an article entitled: “Making Sense of Renaissance 2010 School Policy in Chicago, Race, Class, and the Cultural Politics of Neo-Liberal Urban Restructuring.”

**Thomas Tulley, Teacher**

Mr. Tulley gave a background of his career, including jobs teaching at Malcolm X College, Bartolome de Cinco, Austin High School, Orr High School, Roberto Clemente High School, Michele Clark, and Crane High School. Mr. Tulley said that teaching is a privilege and that Crane is an excellent school and should not be phased out.

**Thaddeus Scott**

Mr. Scott stated that he signed up to speak because he supports all schools and the safety of children in schools. Mr. Scott said that more voices need to speak up.

**Constance Ramsay, School Clerk**

Ms. Ramsay stated that she has been working as the school clerk at Crane for eight years and working within CPS for 15 years. Ms. Ramsay said that if Crane was on probation for 10 years, an academic advisor should have been implemented to support the school. Ms. Ramsay said that they let the school reassign the principal and that the school does not have any academic assistance. Ms. Ramsay asked when the Board can step in to help.

**Francine Jackson**

Ms. Jackson stated that she is from the Englewood area. Ms. Jackson said that phasing out the school instead of closing it will reduce the impact on students and that the students that remain at Crane will not be left behind.

**Congressman Davis**

Congressman Davis said that he has been coming to meetings like this for 40 years and tries to listen to what is being said and what is pursued. Congressman Davis said that he doesn't believe that the most effective way to educate people is to close schools as the primary way to address a lack of educational achievement. Congressman Davis said that he has been studying education for a long time and believes that if you can motivate communities to believe and know that education is a way out of whatever their circumstances are, you develop the base for a high level of student achievement. Congressman Davis said that he came to listen to what people were saying and to try to understand what the issues are. Congressman Davis said that he has been on the opposite side of many public decisions made, but he is not on those sides just because he wants to disagree. Congressman Davis said that he hopes CPS would be the best in the nation and hopes that the decisions made by those empowered to operate CPS would do the most effective job that can possibly be done. Congressman Davis said that he is going to be in the position of being with the public on issues, and if the public takes a position, he tries to understand why. Congressman Davis said that he is delighted to see the level of activism, participation, involvement, and engagement and that he is prepared to help in any way that he can.

**Joyce Akinrinade**

Ms. Akinrinade said that she is from the Englewood area. Ms. Akinrinade stated that "it's not about our needs, it's about the children's."

**Steven Godfrey, Teacher**

Mr. Godfrey said that he is appalled to see signs that read "close failing schools." Mr. Godfrey stated that if he has a child on a fourth, fifth, or sixth grade level in the ninth grade, when the students leaves in the twelfth grade and is on a tenth, eleventh, or twelfth grade level, the student is an achiever. Mr. Godfrey said that according to the Illinois State Board of Education, UAIP, and RAO reports, every school on the West side would be designated as a failure.

**Roosevelt Watkins**

Mr. Watkins said that he is appalled that Mr. Carter called him out when he has taught Mr. Carter's daughter. Mr. Watkins said that the truth of the matter is that students are failing and that half of the schools in the African American community are failing. Mr. Watkins said that nearly three hundred schools in the community are failing. Mr. Watkins said that it is irresponsible to defend failing schools.

**Mike Quinlan, Community member**

Mr. Quinlan stated that he lives across the street from Crane. Mr. Quinlan said that Talent Development High School hasn't graduated a single student and that the presentation did not include any information about Talent Development's successes.

**Sherrea Washington, Parent**

Ms. Washington stated that the Crane building was in bad condition for years, but then CPS put on a new roof, beautified the outside, and asked if Crane students are now not good enough for the new building. Ms. Washington said that a building in failing condition does not motivate kids to go to school to learn. Ms. Washington stated that she knows Crane alumni and current students who are success stories and who have gained years in reading and math. Ms. Washington said that CPS has failed the kids when it did not provide services that the kids needed. Ms. Washington said that teachers have worked sometimes day and night and that it does not make sense to close a school with 600 students for a school that has 200 students in waiting.

**Joslynn Nicholson**

Ms. Nicholson said that she is neutral on whether Crane should stay open and that everyone is refusing to look at what the kids are still going through. Ms. Nicholson said that everyone needs to agree on something and that if there is no agreement, nothing will be accomplished.

**Dr. Grady Jordan**

Dr. Jordan said that he was the principal at Collins High School and was a high school superintendent for ten years. Dr. Jordan said that he has been in every high school in the city, including Crane and Englewood. Dr. Jordan asked what the CEO is trying to accomplish by moving students out of Crane. Dr. Jordan asked if the CEO is saying that something is wrong with the kids and that they need to be moved out of the building, or if the CEO is saying that students will be better served at Manley and Farragut. Dr. Jordan said that in the Austin community, the school was shut down, privatized, and given to people from outside the community who don't look like community members. Dr. Jordan said that CPS should look at the scores in Austin and should look at the scores of turnaround schools. Dr. Jordan said that "turnaround" has not been defined and it has been left open so that CPS can keep claiming that it gained success. Dr. Jordan said that CPS cannot show success in these actions based on the scores. Dr. Jordan also stated that the number of African American teachers in CPS has decreased from 34% to 19.5% since the schools were turned over to the mayor. Dr. Jordan said that there is no high school in the Austin community right now in which children in the community are entitled to attend.

**Lisa Russell**

Ms. Russell said to the parents in attendance that the school council and No Child Left Behind funding are wiped out with charter schools and that LSC parents are losing their power.

**Philip Kelly, Crane Staff Member**

Mr. Kelly stated that he is proud to have worked at Crane for the past year because Crane is a family. Mr. Kelly asked what will happen to the 595 applications that were sent out after a recruitment trip. Mr. Kelly also said that last year, a student graduated and her mother was not able to throw her a trunk party for college, so Mr. Kelly gave her a gift card to Target so that she could go to college.

**Leticia Crame**

Ms. Crame stated that she graduated from Corliss, a failing school, in 2007. She said that she graduated third in her class and was vice-president of the National Honor Society. Ms. Crame stated that the bottom line is failure.

### **Maurice Garner, Crane Staff Member**

Mr. Garner said that he has been working at Crane for four years and sees the young men in the hallways as beautiful children in need of help, and he knows that they get that help at Crane. Mr. Garner said that the school is showing growth and that failure is not accepted at Crane. Mr. Garner said that three students told him that they are going to meet the President of the United States. Mr. Garner said that if you are going to close Crane, you should also close Englewood, Harper, and South Shore.

### **Unidentified Speaker**

The speaker said that CPS should close schools and build them back up.

### **Virgil Crawford**

Mr. Crawford said that the oldest trick is to divide and conquer, and that in the morning, everyone will wake up and wonder what happened tonight. Mr. Crawford stated that children are seeing those at the meeting act in a way that is shameful. Mr. Crawford also said that he supports Crane High School staying open and that even though there are problems, the community has to do a better job of setting standards that can be measured and that we should measure the kind of performance that we expect in our schools. Mr. Crawford said that he is from the Austin community and that what is happening at Crane has already happened in Austin. Mr. Crawford encouraged those who are fighting to keep Crane open to think boldly and to be courageous and to continue to fight. Mr. Crawford said that there will never be a victory until everyone comes together as a people to create a plan and vision.

### **Leticia Waters**

Ms. Waters stated that she is from the Englewood area and that she has lived in many different areas. Ms. Waters said that she and her brother were part of a failing school, and that her brother was passed through because he was a problem child instead of being held back and given help. Ms. Waters said that the school does not need to be closed down but that there needs to be a better way to keep students interested in school. Ms. Waters said that there is not one community that is better or worse than the next. Ms. Waters said that the parents, students, and teachers trying to keep Crane open should continue pursuing their goal. Ms. Waters said that she came on a bus, but that no one gave her money under the table to go against those trying to keep the school open.

### **Student C**

Student C said that she has earned a quality education and wants to thank everyone at Crane.

### **Jasmine Mickey, Crane Alumna**

Ms. Mickey stated that she graduated from Crane in 2007 and grew up in the area. Ms. Mickey said that she had teachers at Crane who supported her. Ms. Mickey also said that Crane was tough and dangerous, but the students and teachers were good to her. Ms. Mickey said that she went to Virginia State University on a full scholarship and recently graduated with a bachelors of arts in English. Ms. Mickey said that she comes to Crane and supports the school every year. Ms. Mickey challenged everyone to come to Crane, sit in on a class, and get to know the students. Ms. Mickey said that if you tell students that you want to help them, she guarantees that they will be willing to listen. Ms. Mickey said that Crane should stay open because it is a positive place.



Public Comment concluded around 8:30 p.m.