

# **CHICAGO BOARD OF EDUCATION**

**In Re: Proposal to Phase-Out Richard T. Crane  
Technical Preparatory High School**

**In Re: Proposal to Co-Locate Talent Development High  
School with Richard T. Crane Technical Preparatory  
High School in a Shared Facility**

**Report of David H. Coar  
Independent Hearing Officer  
February 3, 2012**

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## **Report of DAVID H. COAR, Independent Hearing Officer**

The undersigned was appointed to serve as an "Independent Hearing Officer", as that term is used in 105 ILCS 5/34-230. One of the duties of the Hearing Officer is to conduct a public hearing on the proposed school actions. That hearing was convened at the Chicago Board of Education Offices at 125 South Clark Street, Chicago, Illinois at 5:30 pm on Tuesday, January 24, 2012. At the hearing, public comments were received from concerned persons, including representatives, of the CEO and the Board, parents of Crane students (and students themselves), teachers, representatives of the Chicago Teachers' Union, alumni of Crane School, residents, elected officials and members of the public.

### **Summary of Proposed Actions**

The Chief Executive Officer of the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) has proposed that the Chicago Board of Education (the "Board") approve his recommendation to "Phase-Out" Richard T. Crane Technical Preparatory

High School ("Crane") over a three year period and to co-locate Talent Development High School with Crane at the Crane Campus at 2245 W. Jackson Blvd beginning the 2012-2013 school year. Current ninth, tenth and eleventh grade students would continue to attend Crane but the school would not enroll new ninth grade students for 2012-2013, no tenth grade students in 2014-2015 and no students at all for 2015-2016 and thereafter. Talent Development is a Charter high school, opened in the fall of 2009.

### **Notice and Opportunity for Public Comment**

The state of Illinois has very specific requirements that govern proposals for school actions. The proposals herein are deemed "school actions" under Illinois law. Section 5/34-230 describes the procedure for such actions. Section 5/34-230(c) provides that, on or before December 1, 2011, the CEO must publish notice of the proposals. That notice must include a written statement of the basis for the proposed action and how the proposed action meets the criteria set out in guidelines published by the CEO. These guidelines set forth the academic and non-academic criteria for school actions.

The notice must also include a preliminary transition plan, the requirements for which are set out in the Guidelines for School Actions issued November 29, 2011. Copies of the notice and transition plan must be provided to the principal, staff, local school councils, parents or guardians of students, the State Senator, State Representative and Alderman of the schools affected.

The CEO must provide for at least three opportunities for public comment on the proposed school action at open meetings. At least two of those meetings are to be held at sites convenient to the school and

communities affected and one public hearing must be held at the board offices. Community hearings were held concerning these two proposals on January 6, 2012 and January 20, 2012. The public hearing was held on January 24, 2012. The person presiding over this public meeting is called an Independent Hearing Officer and must be a licensed Illinois attorney who is not an employee of the Board and who must not have represented the Board, its employees or any labor organization representing its employees, any local school council or any charter or contract school within the last year. The undersigned, an Illinois attorney has been appointed Hearing Officer.

The Independent Hearing Officer must issue a report summarizing the public hearing and determine whether the CEO has complied with the requirements of the statute. If the CEO proposes a school action that does not comply with the statute, the Board shall not approve the proposal during the school year in which the school action was proposed.

### **Guidelines for School Actions**

Section 5/34-8.3 of the Illinois School Code requires the CEO to monitor the performance of Chicago Public Schools using criteria established by the Board. Pursuant to that directive, on or about July 28, 2010, the Board adopted a policy (Guideline) on *School Performance Remediation and Probation For The 2011-2012 Year*. That policy provides that each year, every school is assigned a performance score based upon its level of current performance, trend over time and student growth. As to high schools, each school may receive a total score from zero (0) to forty-

two (42) points based upon the following criteria:

**I. One year dropout rate - 6 possible points**

a. *Current Status* (3 possible points)

1. 2% or less dropout in one year = 3 points
2. 2.1%-3% dropout in one year = 2 points
3. 6.1%-10% dropout in one year = 1 point
4. more than 10% dropout in one year = 0 points

b. *Trend* (points for improving dropout rate calculated by comparing current rate with the average of last 3 years) - 3 possible points

1. No reduction = 0 points
2. Reduction of at least 0.1 but under 1.0 percent = 1 point
3. Reduction of at least 1.0 but under 3.0 percent = 2 points
4. Reduction of at least 3.0 but under 3.0 percent = 3 points

**II. Freshmen on Track** (percentage of freshman students who earn five credits in their freshman year and fail no more than one core course (English, Mathematics, Science, and Social Science) based on last 2 year average) - 6 possible points

a. *Current Status*

1. 80% or more on track = 3 points
2. 60% - 79.9% on track = 2 points
3. 45% - 59.9% on track = 1 point
4. Less than 45% on track = 0 points

b. *Trend* (Compare the 2010-2011 rate with the average of the 3 prior years)

1. No improvement = 0 points
2. Improvement of at least 0.1 but under 2.5% = 1 point
3. Improvement of at least 2.5 but under 5.0% = 2 points
4. Improvement of at least 5.0 = 3 points

**III. ACT Score - 6 possible points**

a. *Current Status* (average of scores on tests. Administered to students in grade 11 during spring 2010 PSAE administration and Spring 2011 administration)

1. Average ACT of 20 or more = 3 points
2. Average ACT of at least 18 but less than 21 = 2 points
3. Average ACT of at least 16 but less than 18 = 1 point
4. Average ACT of less than 16 = 0 points

b. *Trend* (Compare 2011 average ACT score with average score for 3 prior years for schools whose ACT average is between 0 and 22.9)

1. No improvement = 0 points
2. Improvement of at least 0.1 but under 0.5 = 1 point
3. Improvement of at least 0.5 but under 1.0 = 2 points
4. Improvement of at least 1.0 = 3 points

**IV. PSAE Reading Score –** (percentages refer to percentage of students meeting or exceeding state standards obtained by averaging PSAE reading results for the two most recent years) - 2 possible points

a. *Current Status* (reading results from tests administered to students in Grade 11 in Spring 2010 and Spring 2011 were averaged)

1. 70% or more meeting or exceeding = 1 point
2. 50% or more meeting or exceeding = 2/3 point
3. 30% - 49.9 or more meeting or exceeding = 1/3 point
4. Less than 30% meeting or exceeding = 0 points

b. *Trend* (Compare 2011 score with average of 3 prior years)

1. No improvement = 0 points
2. Improvement of at least 0.1 but under 2.5 = 1/3 point
3. Improvement of at least 2.5 but under 5.0 = 2/3 point
4. Improvement of at least 5% = 1 point

**V. PSAE Math Score** – 2 possible points.

a. *Current Status* (average the school's PSAE math results from tests administered to students in Grade 11 in Spring 2010 and Spring 2011 and compare to state standards)

1. 70% or more meeting or exceeding = 1 point
2. 50% -69.9% meeting or exceeding = 2/3 point
3. 30% - 49.9 or more meeting or exceeding = 1/3 point
4. Less than 30% meeting or exceeding = 0 points

b. *Trend* (Compare 2011 score with average of 3 prior years)

1. No improvement = 0 points
2. Improvement of at least 0.1 but under 2.5 = 1/3 point
3. Improvement of at least 2.5 but under 5.0 = 2/3 point
4. Improvement of at least 5% = 1point

**VI. PSAE Science Score** – 2 possible points.

(Compare with percentage of students meeting or exceeding state standards)

a. *Current Status* (average the school's PSAE math results from tests administered to students in Grade 11 in Spring 2010 and Spring 2011 and compare to state standard)

1. 70% or more meeting or exceeding = 1 point
2. 50% -69.9% meeting or exceeding = 2/3 point
3. 30% - 49.9 or more meeting or exceeding = 1/3 points
4. Less than 30% meeting or exceeding = 0 points

b. *Trend* (Compare 2011 score with average of 3 prior years and compare with state standard)

1. No improvement = 0 points
2. Improvement of at least 0.1 but under 2.5 = 1/3 point
3. Improvement of at least 2.5 but under 5.0 = 2/3 point

4. Improvement of at least 5% = 1 point

**VII. Attendance** – 6 possible points

a. *Current Status* (average 2009-2010 and 2010-2011)

1. 95% or more attendance rate = 3 points
2. 90% - 94.9% or more attendance rate = 2 points
3. 85%-89% or more attendance rate = 1
4. Under 85% or more attendance rate = 0 point

b. *Trend* (Compare 2010-2011 attendance rate with average rate for 3 prior years)

1. No improvement = 0 points
2. Improvement of at least 0.1% but under 0.5% = 1 point
3. Improvement of at least 0.5% but under 1.0% = 2 points
4. Improvement of at least 1.0% = 3 points

**VIII. Students Enrolled in AP or 1B Classes** – 3 possible points

(improvement in the % of students enrolled in at least one AP or 1B class)

**IX. Students Scoring 3+ on AP Exams or 4th in 1B Exams** – 3 possible points

**X. Students Making Expected EPAS Reading Gains** - 3 possible points

(EPAS is the series of 3 assessments Explore, PLAN, and ACT that are administered to high school students in the following order:

Explore – administered to high school freshman

PLAN – administered to high school sophomores

ACT- administered to high school juniors

*Current Status*

1. Schools with EPAS reading gains score at or above the 85th district-wide percentile = 3 points.
2. Schools with EPAS reading gains score at or above the 50th district-wide percentile but below the 85th = 2 points

3. Schools with EPAS reading gains score at or above the 15th district-wide percentile but below the 50th = 3 points
4. School below the 15th district-wide percentile = 0 points

**XI. Students Making Expected EPAS Math Gains – 3 possible points**

*Current Status*

1. Schools above 85th district-wide percentile = 3 points
2. Schools above 50th district-wide percentile but below 85 = 2 points
3. Schools above 15th district-wide percentile but below 50th = 1 point
4. Schools below 15th district-wide percentile = 0 points

After all of the scores are calculated, the school will receive a total performance score which will be used to determine whether a school qualifies for an achievement level of 1, 2, or 3. Performance Level 3 means a high school that receives a total performance score of 18 and a third ( $18 \frac{1}{3}$ ) or below or with less than 44% of the available performance points. A school with an achievement level of 3 shall be placed on probationary status.

After one year on probation, schools that fail to make adequate progress toward correcting deficiencies are subject to drastic actions by the Board, up to and including closing the school.

On or about November 29, 2010, the Board adopted an additional Guideline to clarify the criteria for school actions. That document provides that when a school receives the lowest performance level (level 3) for two consecutive years, the school may be subject to a school action. School action, for purposes of this Guideline is defined as any school closing, school consolidation, co-location or boundary changes (that require reassignments) or phase-outs. The undersigned understands a phase-out to be a school closing spread out over time in a sequential manner.

If a school is being considered for a school action, it may avoid a school action under the terms of the guideline if, "it is a high school with a 5 year cohort graduation rate at or above its geographic network average in the previous year, or it has scored above the 25th percentile on the trend and growth component of the Performance Policy in the previous year". Crane is in the West Side Geographic Network. Five year cohort graduation rate means the percent of freshmen graduating within 5 years. Trend and growth component of the Performance Policy means the percent of points earned on the trend and student growth metrics on the Performance Policy.

### **Crane's Performance Record**

CPS began using the point system as part of its Performance Policy four years ago. For all four years, Crane has been a Level 3 school. In the 2007-2008 school year, Crane received 8.3% of the available points. In the 2008-2009 school year, it received 22% of the available points. In the 2009-2010 school year, it received 16.7% of the available points. In the 2010-2011 school year, it received 8.7% of available points. Under the predecessor to the current Performance Policy, Crane was on Probation for the 6 years preceding the 2007-2008 school year and did not score above the 25th percentile in the trend and growth component for 2009-2010.

For 2010-2011, Crane's graduation rate was 48% compared to a geographic network average of 61.3% and a district average of 58.3%. Moreover Crane's graduation rate has declined in recent years while the network and district averages have increased. Crane's 5 year cohort graduation rate for 2009-2010 was not at or above the geographic network average.

Of the 42 available points in the performance Policy, 27 points are for metrics measuring the school's improvement over time and individual student growth on a standardized assessment series. Crane received only 9.9% of the available trend and growth points in the 2010-2011 school year which was in the 3rd percentile of schools District-wide.

Crane has achieved the lowest Performance rating (Level 3) since the current rating system was put in place four years ago. Using the point structure to measure performance outlined above, In the 2007-2008 school year, Crane received 8.3% of available points. For 2008-2009, Crane received 22.2%. For 2009-2010 Crane received 16.7%, and for the 2010-2011 school year Crane received 8.7% of available points. Although the system for measuring performance was different prior to the implementation of the current system four years ago, Crane's performance for the six prior years still placed them in a probationary range. The result is that for the last ten years, Crane has been on probation.

### **Crane's Performance Metrics**

A few of the performance metrics from the 2010-2011 school year demonstrate the seriousness of Crane's performance deficiencies:

#### **Graduation Rate**

Crane - 48%      District Avg.- 58.3%      Geographic Network Avg.- 61.3%

#### **Trend and Growth Points Earned**

Crane - 9.9%      District Avg.- 49.4%      Geographic Network Avg.- 48.0%

**PSAE Composite Meets/Exceeds (State Standards)**

Crane - 5.0%      District Avg.- 28.8%      Geographic Network Avg.- 28.6%

**Average ACT Composite Score**

Crane -14.0      District Avg.- 17.2      Geographic Network Avg.- 17.3

**Average ACT Reading**

Crane - 14.0      District Avg.- 17.      Geographic Network Avg.- 17.0

**Average ACT Math**

Crane - 14.9      District Avg.- 17.7      Geographic Network Avg.- 18.0

**Average ACT Science**

Crane - 15.3      District Avg.- 17.7      Geographic Network Avg.- 17.8

**Average ACT English**

Crane - 12.1      District Avg.- 16.5      Geographic Network Avg.- 16.5

**EPAS Gains (% of students making expected gains on EPAS assessment)**

Crane - 37.5%      District Avg.- 48.8%      Geographic Network Avg.- 49.3%

**Attendance Rates (Avg. Daily Attendance)**

Crane - 58.3%      District Avg.- 83.7%      Geographic Network Avg.- 85.4%

**Freshman on Track (% of freshman on track to graduation at end of freshman year)**

Crane - 40.9% District Avg.- 72.6% Geographic Network Avg.- 75.1%  
(according to the Crane Coalition, the Crane number is 59.52%)

Several speakers at the hearing complained about the comparison of Crane to other schools in the geographic network. They asserted that the geographic network contained selective enrollment schools, like magnet and charter schools, with the result that inclusion of scores from these schools inflated the geographic averages. There are, indeed charter and magnet schools in the Westside geographic network, including Whitney Young. The relevance of this fact is unclear from the facts submitted. It might be assumed that the distribution of selective enrollment schools is uniform across the district and that the impact on the district wide averages would dilute or absorb any distortion from the presence of selective enrollment schools. On the other hand, it may be that the westside network has a disproportionate number of selective enrollment schools and that comparing their scores (or including them in the average geographic scores) is unfair to schools who must accept all students within their attendance zones.

Comparisons which include schools which are both selective and which draw students from across the entire district may not capture the many socio-economic headwinds that hinder performance in the area served by Crane. Indeed several speakers alluded to the fact that the performance metrics used by CPS fail to account for the fact that Crane students start with lower Explore scores than the district-wide and geographic network averages. Representatives of the Crane Coalition stated that the average Explore score of Crane freshmen is 11.9,

compared to the district wide average of 14.1. Under the Performance Policy, EPAS scores are determined on the basis of students making expected gains from one year to the next (as measured by the Explore test given to freshmen, the Plan test given to sophomores and the ACT given to juniors). In his written statement, Mr. Ryan (Manager of School Performance) stated that the expected gains for each student is based on a national average of students with the same pretest score. If that is true, it would seem that the possibility of low scores for entering freshman is accounted for.

Another "metrics" related objection raised by several speakers was the assertion that, under the transition plan, students who would have gone to Crane will be assigned to schools whose performance is no better than Crane's. The schools are Wells, Farragut, Marshall and Manley (Receiving Schools). No data was presented at the hearing to indicate what the performance ratings were for these four schools, however a document produced the next day contains some useful information. In response to my questions about the composition of the Westside geographic network, Ms. Verma provided a spreadsheet with the names of the schools. It also contained some performance numbers for those schools at the end of the 2010-2011 school year. Those numbers shed some light on the performance of the schools that, under the proposal, will receive students who otherwise would have attended Crane. Those numbers (and the corresponding numbers for Crane are reported below:

**2011 Performance Policy Percent**

Crane - 9%; Wells- 45.%; Farragut- 53%; Marshall- 30%: Manley- 30%

### **2011 Performance Policy Level**

Crane - 3; Wells - 2; Farragut - 2; Marshall - 3; Manley - 3

### **Performance Policy Trend and Growth %**

Crane - 10%; Wells - 63%; Farragut - 75.%; Marshall - 49%; Manley - 43%

### **2011 Five Year Cohort Graduation Rate**

Crane - 48; Wells - 59; Farragut - 43; Marshall - 37; Manley - 49

### **2011 PSAE Comp Meets/Exceeds Percent**

Crane - 5%; Wells - 11%; Farragut - 22%; Marshall - 6%; Manley - 5%

While the methodology for producing these scores is unclear in some instances, several things are clear:

1. Crane trails comparable schools dramatically in its geographic area in several important measures, including Performance Policy Percent, and Performance Policy Trend and Growth percentage;
2. of the four schools that would receive Crane students under the transition plan, two are in performance level 3 (the lowest performance level) and the other two are in performance level 2, and all four of the receiving schools have low scores on the PSAE meet/exceed measure with Manley and Marshall scoring only marginally better than Crane .

## **Efforts to Improve Crane's Performance**

1. When a school is placed on probation, control of its discretionary budget is assigned to the Chief of Schools to assure that funds are diverted towards programs and opportunities to advance achievement;
2. For school years 2007-2008, 2008-2009 and 2009-2010, the district provided Crane with a Comprehensive Development System (CDS);
3. In the fall of 2009, the Westside Geographic Network partnered with the Network for College Success (NCS) which provided Crane staff with training in analyzing data, using data to support instruction and using data to monitor and support the effectiveness of instructional improvement efforts. Crane staff was also provided coaching to develop Instructional Leadership Teams (ILT's) and facilitate instructional leadership;
4. The network instructional coach provided support and assistance to a subset of Crane teachers most in need of additional support so as to improve instruction;
5. Beginning in the fall of 2009, Crane was offered professional development on instructional leadership, school management, the use of interim assessments to drive student achievement and the use of success teams focused on improving Crane's freshmen on-track metric;
6. Crane received the District's Smaller Learning Communities (SLC) programming and funding through the US Department of Education. Crane received about \$800,000.00 in grant funds to implement SLC; and
7. Crane is part of the District Community School Initiative (CSI). As such, it receives grant money to provide after-school activities and health and social services to students, parents and members of the community. For

2008-2009, 2009-2010, 2010-2011, Crane's funding was about \$100,000.00 per year.

At the January 6, Community meeting, Ms. Plascencia said that, over the past 5 years, Crane has received about \$7,500,000.00 to improve its performance.

### **Public Comments**

Thirty-three people spoke at the public hearing. Twenty-nine spoke clearly in opposition to the CEO's proposal to phase out Crane. Two spoke clearly in support of the proposal and one urged some sort of compromise between the CEO's proposal and the Crane Coalition proposal. One sought more information about AA attendance boundaries if Crane is phased out. Most of those who spoke against the phase-out of Crane did not address the co-location of Talent Development. Of those who did, most did so because they saw the proposal to phase out Crane as part and parcel of an attempt to get rid of neighborhood schools in favor of Charter schools. A few speakers expressed concern that differences between the two students groups (Crane v. Talent Development) would create a volatile situation and that violence would ensue. Among those who opposed the phase-out proposal, most acknowledged (though sometimes begrudgingly) that the status quo was unacceptable. Putting aside the question of what/who is to blame for the poor academic record at Crane, most conceded that drastic action is needed.

### **The Crane Coalition Academic Improvement Plan**

The Crane Coalition, a collaboration between parents, students, administrators and education experts has put together a comprehensive

plan for improvement at Crane, beginning with the 2012-2013 school year. I hesitate to attempt to summarize the elements of the plan because doing so will be a disservice to the thought and attention that went into it, however a copy of the plan is attached to this report and members of the Board are encouraged to read it. I will, however highlight some of the plan proposals.

### **On Track Performance**

Crane will closely monitor (and reassess every 5 weeks) on-track rates for freshman and sophomores, listing each student as Green (on track), yellow (in danger of being off track) or red (off track).

### **One Year Drop Out Rate / Graduation Rate**

Crane will heavily involve counselors in monitoring and counseling students including transcript audits and quarterly grade level meetings at which promotion and graduation requirements are reviewed. A UIC College advisor has been identified who will assist students with awareness of and the transition to post secondary opportunities. Exposure to these opportunities will begin with freshmen and continue as students progress through high school. Counselors and Programmers will begin advising students on course selection options for graduation and curricular exploration. Individual conferences will be conducted to ensure that CPS graduation requirements are being met.

### **Strategic Learning Initiative**

SLI is a Chicago based nonprofit organization which is dedicated to accelerating student and adult learning. Over the past twenty years, SLI

has worked in more than sixty-five CPS schools. Its goal is to quickly improve student learning using a program called "Focused Instruction Process" According to representatives of SLI, its most recently completed neighborhood network involved eight "failing CPS elementary school which had been on probation for over 10 years and were to be closed or reconstituted. After one year, three schools had turned around their scores and culture. Three more schools were turned around after the second year and the final two after the third year. I will assume that the Board is familiar with the work of SLI and I will not attempt to describe that program in detail.

### **Full School Day Plan**

Crane Coalition has set the improvement of reading skills as a priority and established the following goals:

1. Increase reading gains from Explore to Plan by 2 points;
2. increase reading gains from Plan to ACT by 2 points and
3. enroll 100% of seniors in a college preparation seminar which would include FAFSA completion, scholarship applications, college applications, resume writing, personal statements and credit recovery.

All freshmen, sophomores and juniors would be placed in one of three categories (intervention, maintenance or enrichment) based on their level of literacy skills. Each tier will receive the individual counseling and assistance to improve their literacy skills.

### **Parent and Community Support and Involvement**

A comprehensive plan for greater parent involvement has included counseling and resources for parents. Parents will be encouraged to take an active role in their child's education, both at home and in school. To

those ends, a schedule of parent meetings will be established. Through resources provided by a Community Organization, Crane will host a Family Engagement Center to engage parents and the community in the activities of the school. Programs and activities will include education and literacy programs, workshops and training and after school activities.

### **Attendance**

A strict system of monitoring attendance will be implemented.

### **Requirements for School Actions**

The Board has general power over the supervision of public education and public schools within the City of Chicago ( see 105 ILCS 5/34-18). The CEO is charged with the responsibility of monitoring the progress of schools within the district and of taking action in the event that a school fails to meet performance standards (see 105 ILCS-8.3). Included within the power given to the CEO under these provisions is the power to remediate schools and to place them on probation if remediation fails.

Pursuant to the CEO's duty to monitor the performance of schools within the district, on July 28, 2010, the Board adopted a Policy on School Performance, Remediation and Probation Policy for the 2011-2012 School Year. Under that policy, schools that fail to make adequate progress in correcting deficiencies after one year on probation are subject to and including, closing the school.

On or about, November 29, 2011, the Board adopted Guidelines which provide that "when a school receives the lowest performance level (Level 3) on the Performance Policy for two consecutive years, the school may be subject to a school action." A high school otherwise meeting the

requirements for a school action may avoid that action if it meets either of the following requirements: its 5-year cohort graduation rate is above its geographic network average in the previous year, or it scored at or above the 25th percentile on the growth component of the Performance Policy in the previous school year. Crane met neither standard.

The Board has the power to alter attendance boundaries including the utilization of shared facilities (see Shared Facilities Policy adopted February 23, 2005).

Illinois law 105 ILCS 5/34-230 requires that certain procedural actions be taken before school actions may take place. Most of these requirements address the content and timing of notice to those likely to be affected by the proposed action and the public. The law also mandates multiple opportunities for public comment. 105 ILCS 5/34-230 also requires that the CEO publish Guidelines for school actions. Consistent with the requirements of the statute, the CEO has adopted procedures for public hearings on school actions (See Procedures For Public Hearings On Proposed School Closure, Consolidation, Co-Location, Phase-out, Reconstitution, Or Reassignment Boundary Line).

### **Finding of Independent Hearing Officer**

One of the roles of the Independent Hearing Officer is to determine whether the statute and those Guidelines have been followed. It is the express finding of the undersigned that the requirements of state law and the Guidelines have been met as to the two proposals of the CEO. There is no question that Crane has been on probation for several years and has not made significant progress toward improving. The CEO has presented uncontested evidence of all required notices having been provided within

the timeframes set out in the statute as to both proposals under consideration. Copies of those notices were made a part of the record of the January 24, 2012 Public Hearing on the proposals. Tellingly, no speaker has raised any significant objections to the procedural propriety of the CEO's proposals. All of the required notices appear to have been provided in a timely fashion and public and community hearings have been held in accordance with the statute and guidelines. The transition Plans drafted by the CEO meet and address all of the requirements of law and the policies of the Board. The one procedural objection (if it rises to the level of an objection) is the failure of the proposed transition plan to delineate the attendance boundaries for any current Achievement Academy students at Crane who would be reassigned to another Achievement Academy as a result of the phaseout. Because reassignment of some of AA students will be done on an individualized basis, it is too early to establish firm attendance zones at this time. This is not a material omission.

The hearings required under the law and Guidelines have been held in the manner prescribed. Moreover, the co-location of Talent Development at the Crane campus is consistent with the the power of the Board to efficiently utilize space in CPS facilities. The proposal to phase-out Crane falls squarely within the policies established by the board to sanction underperforming schools.

#### **Additional Comments by the Independent Hearing Officer**

I have not addressed in detail the proposal to co-locate Talent Development on the Crane campus because there was very little said about this proposal at the public meeting. The Crane building has an ideal capacity of 2000 students. Current enrollment at Crane (including the AA)

is 638. Eventually, Talent Development's enrollment is predicted to grow to 600 from its current number of 200. Obviously there is excess capacity at Crane that is not currently being utilized. From the point of view of space-utilization, Talent Development could be co-located at the Crane campus whether or not Crane is phased-out.

There was a strong undercurrent of expressed belief that the decision to recommend the phaseout of Crane was motivated by the desire to replace it with a Charter school. In that way, many of the objections to phase-out contained an implied objection to co-location. In a sense, Talent Development is the proverbial football in this debate, being tossed around without any real concern for the merits of locating at Crane or someplace else.

Viewed in isolation and without consideration of the co-location issue, the Board would be well within its sound discretion to phase-out Crane based on its poor performance. By any objective measure, Crane has been failing the academic needs of its students for a very long time with little to indicate that it is making progress to change that fact. Phase-out of Crane is consistent with the Board's policy guidelines.

Against this evidence of poor performance is a great deal of local support for Crane (and opposition to phase-out), motivated by a strong belief that Crane continues to serve the community despite many obstacles beyond its control. In one sense, the question for the Board is whether the cost of allowing Crane to continue is reasonably outweighed by the potential benefit of an energized Crane constituency coalescing around a proposed plan of rehabilitation. Obviously in attempting to assess the costs and benefits of its question, the Board will have to assess the availability of resources necessary to effectuate the Crane Coalition Plan and the

educational efficacy of the Plan itself. The danger is that the belief that Crane can succeed is just a pipe-dream-fueled by the understandable fear of loss of an old and cherished community institution. Yet the Crane community has put forth a well thought-out plan that has support of the community, local political leaders and the teachers and staff at Crane. This plan was put together with the assistance of credible experts in school turnaround with a track record of success. While many speakers questioned the performance metrics around the margins, most would concede that Crane's academic performance has been unsatisfactory, even when compared to comparable schools in its geographic area.

I am sure that the Board has encountered this dynamic in many phaseout/school closing hearings in the past. What possibly makes the Crane situation different is that the opposition to the proposed action has coalesced into positive action, represented by the improvement plan submitted by the Crane Coalition and supported by Strategic Learning Initiatives, an organization with a track record of school turnarounds. It would be tempting to say that what the Coalition proposes is "too little, too late". It is indeed late in the day for the Crane staff and community supporters to suddenly realize that Crane was failing and to mobilize to address the problem. Crane has been on probation for ten years. Moreover, the proposal may be too little. Ms. Plascencia has described a number of initiatives at Crane over the past several years that have failed to produce satisfactory results. I have neither the educational experience or expertise to address the efficacy of the Coalition proposal, but it appears that it is the product of much thought and effort and deserves analysis by the educational experts. If it was the case that students in the current Crane attendance zone were to be reassigned to much better schools, I

would say, close Crane and let them go. The truth of the matter is that while the receiving schools have better metrics than Crane, most of them are only marginally better and two are in Level 3. That fact begs the question as to whether, in light of the disruption that phase-out will cause, it makes sense to at least explore the feasibility of the proposed turnaround plan. For those reasons, I would respectfully recommend that the Board order an analysis of the Crane Coalition Improvement Plan before acting on the CEO's proposals.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David H. Coar". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "D".

David H. Coar

Independent Hearing Officer

## **SUMMARY OF PUBLIC COMMENTS**

**Michael Brunson** – Mr. Brunson is an officer of the Chicago Teachers Union and a parent of two Chicago Public School students. He requested copies of the documents submitted by CPS in support of the proposed school actions as to Crane and Price schools.

**Rodney Estvan** – Mr. Estvan is a representative of Access Living and spoke on behalf of students at Crane and Wells who have disabilities (not including those with cognitive disabilities). It was his understanding that Cranes students with disabilities will be reassigned to Wells. His concern is that there is no statistically significant difference between Crane, Wells and Manley. He noted that his investigation yielded only two students with disabilities at Crane and two at Wells who tested at state standards. He questioned the value of disrupting the lives of disabled students by phasing out Crane and sending them to a school that was not better.

**Lanathia Andrews** – Ms. Andrews is a junior at Crane and a member of the National Honor Society. She questioned the need to close Crane and suggested more efforts to improve Crane by adding additional resources and developing programs for Crane-bound students like seventh to eighth grade academies. She believes that more dialogue with parents and students should have occurred before the proposal to phase out Crane. She stressed the importance of Crane as a neighborhood school.

**Jason Cooper** – Mr. Cooper, who I believe is a teacher at Crane, spoke on behalf of the Crane Coalition, an organization comprised of Crane

teachers, staff, parents and community members. He submitted three writings in opposition to the proposals for Phase-out and Co-location:

1. Petitions signed by 1,193 people opposing the proposal;
2. Letters from community members, and
3. An improvement plan for Crane as an alternative to the action proposed by the CEO.

Mr. Cooper disagreed with several of the CEO's reported performance scores for Crane. He also questioned the basis for some and suggested that others failed to tell the true story of student performance at Crane. He pointed out that Crane students begin school behind the district-wide average with an average Explore score of 11.9 compared to the CPS average of 14.1. Moreover, the AA (Achievement Academy) students entered with an average score of 11.0. He concludes that given the low starting scores for Crane freshmen, academic progress is being made and that progress is equal to or greater than the progress scores for students at the schools to which students would go if the phase-out is approved. That is especially true because, while the Explore scores are computed separately for Crane and the AA students, for purposes of the ACT scores, the two groups are aggregated. Cooper also raised questions about the calculation of points for freshmen on-track. The Crane Coalition calculated Crane to be at 59% while the CPS score was reported at 40.9%. Cooper complained that he requested (in November) a meeting with CPS staff to discuss the disparity but has gotten no response. Finally, Cooper questioned the commitment of resources to Crane to remediate its poor performance offering several examples of a lack of resources.

**Marlena Edwards** – Ms. Edwards is the mother of a current Crane student and has three other daughters who are Crane graduates. Two of her daughters were valedictorians and some are currently members of the LSC. Two daughters are college graduates and pursuing graduate degrees. She supports the continuation of Crane.

**Lisa Russell** – Ms. Russell is the parent of three boys. She is concerned with their safety if they have to attend other schools. She praised the efforts of the Crane staff in keeping students safe, including walking her son to the bus stop. As far as safety is concerned, she believes that Crane is safer than the schools that will be receiving students from the current Crane attendance zone.

**Ashton Coleman** – Mr. Coleman is Dean of Students at Crane and a member of the Crane Coalition. Mr. Coleman believes that the proposal to phase-out Crane was a wake-up call that mobilized the community and caused the creation of the Crane Coalition. He attested to the countless hours and dedication that has gone into the development of the Coalitions Improvement Plan for Crane. While acknowledging the need to improve (especially in the area of student performance), Coleman stressed that there exists a demonstrated commitment to educating Crane students so as to “grow them academically and socially”.

**Benny Horton** – Mr. Horton spoke on behalf of the alumni of Crane as well as current students who oppose phase-out. He read a letter from Patrick McCaskey, grandson of Crane alumni, George Halas. He referenced a

\$20,000 donation from the Pro Football Hall of Fame to Crane for its football team.

**Cheryl Bolden** – Ms. Bolden is the LSC chair for Crane. She is also Chair for Cluster 3 and a parent of 29 foster, adopted and biological children that have attended Crane. She questioned the commitment of CPS to the children. When (after first learning of the proposed phase-out), she questioned the CEO as to whether the children in the Crane attendance zone would attend Whitney Young or Walter Payton, she was told no, they will have to attend Farragut, Manley, Wells, or Marshall. She believes that these schools have no better performance than does Crane.

**Ayodeji Griffin** – Ms. Griffin is the SOC coordinator at Crane and has served as senior class sponsor for the past five years. Ms. Griffin disputes the CEO's statement that only 2 of 19 students had graduated from Crane in the past ten years. She stated that 79 out of 89 students graduated in 2011, 181 out of 198 in 2010 and 155 out of 170 in 2009. She stated that in 2011 Marshall's graduation rate was 39.15 and Farragut was 44.95%. Manley and Wells were slightly higher, but only by 3 or 4 percentage points. She pointed out that Crane does not have selected enrollment and accepts any students within the attendance boundaries. Some of the students coming directly from Cook County Jail or Juvenile Detention Center. The student population contains children of poor families who tend to be transferred, thus a higher than average drop-out rate.

**Senator Collins** – Sen. Collins opposed the proposed phase-out and expressed concern about the culture clash that will occur if the co-location

proposal is adopted. She supported community self determination and the preservation of Crane as a neighborhood school.

**Linda Wessman** – Ms. Wessman is a teacher in the Achievement Academy (AA) at Crane. She expressed concern that under the CEO's transition plan, the current 87 freshman in the AA will be assessed individually to determine whether they will be allowed to continue at Crane as sophomores or be transferred to another AA. She believes that transfers would be to Clemente. Her concern is that you cannot tell from the transition plan, what the AA boundaries will be.

**Alderman Burnett** – Alderman Burnett asked that the Crane Coalition Academic Improvement Plan be seriously considered and pledged to use his efforts to help obtain resources necessary to support the plan. He also expressed concern about safety if students from the neighborhood near Crane were assigned to schools in other neighborhoods in different gang territories.

**Elliott Foster** – Mr. Foster is a Crane student who was a poor performer in elementary school who has found himself at Crane. He expressed thanks for the guidance he has received at Crane and opposes the proposal.

**Allen Byrd** – Mr. Byrd has taught at Crane for 14 months. For 10 years before that he taught at Walter Payton. He expressed concern that if Crane is phased-out, many of its students will decide to drop out. He said that students at Crane, unlike those at Walter Payton, see not attending school as an option. He is afraid that closing their neighborhood school may

cause some of them to lose interest in school. He sees Crane as a binding agent in the community, providing a familiar place and accepting place for neighborhood students to attend. He believes that this “zone of familiarity” encourages students to stay in school.

**Erica Kennedy** – Ms. Kennedy is a teacher at Crane who indicated, when you look at the Performance scores of the schools to which students in the current Crane attendance zone will be assigned, their scores are not significantly better (and sometimes worse) than the scores at Cranes, especially when you look at EPA gains. Farragut’s EPA gains are only 2.9; Marshall has been 2.7; Wells has been 2.3 and Manley 1.6. Crane’s EPA gains have been 3.

**Adourthus McDowell** - Mr. McDowell is a parent representative and a LSC member at Smith Elementary Magnet School which is a feeder school for Crane. He is also the parent of a child who may be affected if the proposal is adopted. Mr. McDowell wants a moratorium on all school closings until there is a full and open discussion on school closings and the privatization of public education.

**Martin Ritter** – Mr. Ritter is a former teacher at Marshall who lives in the current Crane attendance zone. Mr. Ritter expressed concern about the safety of students in the Crane zone crossing gang territories to get to Marshall, Manley, or Farragut. He stated that the resources needed to ensure their safety if they are assigned to these other schools could be better spent improving the quality of Crane.

**Nathan Johnson** – Mr. Johnson, a former teacher at Crane expressed support for the concept of neighborhood schools and the importance of Crane within the community that it serves. He spoke of the social dynamic at Crane and the positive social interaction between students and teachers there. He opposes phase-out.

**Gregory Konieczk** – Mr. Konieczk, a teacher at Wells Academy, spoke about potential violence if students from different communities are thrown together in a new environment. A sub-theme of his comments was the role of schools, especially high school in shaping attitudes of community and neighborhood. He opposes phase-out.

**Carolyn Cole** – Ms. Cole is a Crane alumni with three of her daughters having also attended there. She spoke of her daughters' positive experiences at Crane and how she attributes a great deal of their success in College and in life to those those experiences. She also addressed the drop-out rate issue, noting that demolishing public housing in the area and gentrification has had an impact on the transient nature of the population.

**Jean Schwab** – Ms. Schwab objected to the phasing-out of Crane based upon what she has heard from people who have worked there.

**Mark Carter** – Mr. Carter opposed the CEO's proposals in general and the Renaissance 2010 Plan in particular. He believes that closing of neighborhood schools and the creation of Charter schools has forced students out of their neighborhoods and into unfamiliar areas. This, he

believes, has resulted in an uptick of incidents of violence and weapons possession.

**Rev. Ernesto Betancourt** – Rev. Betancourt is Pastor of Temple of God Shalom and President of the Ministerial Association of the Hispanic community in Chicago. Rev. Betancourt supports “better quality education, better quality schools and better quality teachers.” He supports the phase-out proposal because he believes that Crane is a failed school.

**Veronica Spicer** – Ms. Spicer opposed the proposal to phase-out Crane.

**Shakeela Tapes** - Ms. Tapes is the mother of a Crane student and opposes the phase-out. She stressed the importance of preserving Crane as a neighborhood school.

**Sarah Chambers** - Ms. Chambers is a teacher at Saucedo Academy. She quoted Tim Cawley as saying that he “will never invest in schools that he expects will be on the closure list or the turnaround list”. She believes that threatening to close schools destabilizes them and is especially harmful for those students who have come to see the school as the only stable thing in their lives.

**Dwayne Truss** - Mr. Truss criticized the CEO for his failure to consider all of the things that the Guidelines require when school actions are contemplated. He cited the November 29, 2011 Guidelines:  
In making a decision on which school actions to propose to the Board, the CEO will also consider other information, including but not limited to

student safety data, school culture and climate, enrollment estimates, the quality of of the school facility, *family and community feedback*, or whether the school has recently undergone any school actions....(emphasis added by Mr. Truss)

Mr. Truss also objected to the CEO's comparing Crane's performance with averages from schools in the geographic network because that network includes selective enrollment schools (like Whitney Young) which do not reflect the socio-economic backgrounds of the Crane student body. He also questioned co-locating Talent Development given the large size of he Crane facility and the small enrollment of Talent Development.

**Karen Williams** – Ms. Williams decried the lack of public notice and opportunity for communities to be heard before recommendations are made by CPS affecting the opening and closing of schools are recommended by CPS. Much of what has happened, she complained, ignores neighborhoods.

**Lizvette Gonzalez** – Ms, Gonzalez is a youth pastor for Mission Christian Familiar. Ms. Gonzales said that we can no longer accept "failure in our youth's education." She urged a compromise between the community and CEO proposals that focus on the best interest of the students.

**Mark Battaglia** - Mr. Battaglia has a son who attends a CPS school and another who is a CPS teacher on the West Side. Mr. Battaglia questioned whether there were already enough charter schools and expressed

concern that the roles of the charter schools was to supplement the offering of the public schools not supplant the traditional neighborhood schools.

**Jan Arroyo** - Mr. Arroyo spoke in support of the CEO's proposal because in his opinion, Crane has failed its students.

**John Smith** - Mr. Smith is President of Strategic Learning Initiatives (SLI), a non profit organization. Mr. Smith is a former teacher at Harvard University and was responsible for education policy at the World Bank for a number of years. For the past 20 years, he has worked with CPS "in the neighborhoods". He noted that six years ago, CPS initiated a demonstration project involving eight schools that had been scheduled to be closed or reconstituted. SLI was asked to lead the effort to turn these schools around. After two years, six of the eight schools turned around in relation to their test scores and culture. One of the schools has been the most improved school in the city over a 5 year period. SLI has been approached by the Crane Coalition to help design and implement a turn around program for Crane. Mr. Smith believes that the cost of implementing the SLI model at Crane is less than \$200,000 per year.