



**Jean-Claude Brizard**  
Chief Executive Officer

November 30, 2011

Parent/Guardian of a Student at  
Julia C. Lathrop Elementary School  
1440 S. Christiana Ave.  
Chicago, Illinois 60623

Parent/Guardian of a Student at  
James Weldon Johnson Elementary School  
1420 S. Albany Ave.  
Chicago, Illinois 60623

**Re: Proposed Closure of Julia C. Lathrop Elementary School**

Dear Parent or Guardian:

As Chief Executive Officer of the Chicago Public Schools (CPS), nothing is more important to me than making sure your child is getting access to a high quality education. My team is dedicated to ensuring that every child in every community can be successful in the classroom and graduate ready for college and career – which is why I am writing to you today.

There are too many schools in Chicago failing our children. Across the District, only 7.9% of 11<sup>th</sup> graders last year tested ready for college, while achievement gaps for African American and Latino students remain in the high double-digits. As adults, we all have a responsibility to make sure that we are putting the academic needs of our children before all else. To do so requires some very difficult but necessary choices to boost the academic achievement of our kids.

For too long, Julia C. Lathrop Elementary School (Lathrop) has been one of the schools not meeting the needs of its students. Over the last several years, Lathrop has been a chronically underperforming school with an ISAT “meets/exceeds” score that is below that of other schools in its area. This is why we are proposing today, after a very lengthy and thoughtful process, to close Lathrop and provide your child with access to a better performing school in your community. I know this may be difficult for you to hear because of the connections you have to this school, but I ask that you give us the opportunity to explain this decision and carefully consider the options we are offering to help your child access better school options.

Please take a few moments to carefully review the draft transition plan on this proposed closing that your child will bring home. In this draft transition plan you can learn more about why this school has been chosen to be closed and how we intend to make significant investments in your child’s future to help them be more successful in the classroom.

If Lathrop should close, students will attend a higher performing school in your area: James Weldon Johnson Elementary School (Johnson), at 1420 S. Albany Ave. The investments we will make in this school will help boost the academic achievement of your child and ensure a smooth and safe transition for all students, which are outlined in the draft transition plan.

CPS safety specialists have been working closely with other city agencies that are actively engaged in the safety and security of children and schools to build a foundation for this plan, including the Chicago Police Department, Chicago Housing Authority, Chicago Transit Authority and CPS safety specialists. CPS will continue working closely with these city agencies and other community-based organizations in the coming weeks and months to build and implement these plans to ensure the safety of all students impacted by this action.

At these schools, as well as schools across the district, we are making significant investments to boost the academic achievement of our students:

- Providing a longer school day with additional instructional time for teachers and students;
- Using a new, more rigorous curriculum that meets Common Core State Standards to better prepare your child for college;
- Expanding access to quality preschool programs that put students on the path to academic success from day one of their education.

### **The Guidelines**

I released Guidelines for School Actions (guidelines) that helped focus our attention on the district's lowest performing schools and the communities most in need of better performing school options. The guidelines can be accessed online at [www.cps.edu/qualityschools](http://www.cps.edu/qualityschools). I considered the criteria outlined below when recommending actions, such as reassignment boundary changes, phase-outs, co-locations, school closures, and school consolidations:

1. If a school received the lowest performance level (Level 3) on the CPS School Performance, Remediation, and Probation Policy (Board Report 10-0728-P04) for two consecutive years and was not excluded from consideration based on the minimum performance criteria listed in the guidelines; or
2. If a school is in the process of phasing out based on previous action by the Board; or
3. If two elementary schools within 0.5 miles of each other individually offer less than Kindergarten through eighth grades and can be reconfigured to a single Kindergarten through eighth grade school; or
4. To co-locate a Board approved new or existing school.

The proposal outlined below is one of the tools we hope to use to provide students with better, higher quality school options in their communities.

### **Our Proposal**

Our proposal is to close Lathrop, located at 1440 S. Christiana Ave., at the end of the current school year. This proposal meets criteria outlined above because the Board of Education approved the phase out of Lathrop in 2009 (Board Report 09-0225-EX32). Currently, there are only 83 students enrolled at Lathrop in third through eighth grades, with 62 students projected to be enrolled next year. We believe that this proposal will provide Lathrop students with a better educational environment.

### **Details For Current Students**

Should the Board approve this proposal, returning students who currently attend Lathrop will be assigned to Johnson. Johnson is higher performing when compared with Lathrop and we are committing to make significant investments in Johnson to make the school even better. CPS will also invest in Johnson by providing counselors and other support staff to ensure that all students have a smooth, safe transition. We will outline these resources in a draft transition plan that we will send home with your child. We will also post the plan at [www.cps.edu/qualityschools](http://www.cps.edu/qualityschools) and in the school's main office .

If you have any questions concerning the proposed closure of Lathrop, please call the CPS Quality Schools Hotline at 773-553-5020.

**Details For The Attendance Area Boundary Of Lathrop**

I am also proposing to reassign Lathrop’s attendance area boundary to Johnson, and Lawndale Elementary School, at 3500 W. Douglas Blvd., at the end of the 2011-12 school year.

**Public Comment On The Proposal**

Two community meetings and one public hearing have been scheduled to receive public comment on the proposal.

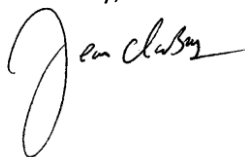
<b>COMMUNITY MEETING #1</b>	<b>COMMUNITY MEETING #2</b>	<b>PUBLIC HEARING</b>
<b>Friday, January 06, 2012</b> Collins High School 1313 S. Sacramento Dr. <b>6:00 pm to 8:00 pm</b>	<b>Friday, January 20, 2012</b> Collins High School 1313 S. Sacramento Dr. <b>6:00 pm to 8:00 pm</b>	<b>Friday, January 27, 2012</b> 125 S. Clark Street, 5 <sup>th</sup> Floor Board Chambers Chicago, Illinois 60603 <b>8:00 pm to 10:00 pm</b>

I invite you to share your feedback on this proposal at the community meetings and public hearing. You may also provide alternate proposals or other suggestions. If you wish to comment at the community meetings or hearing, you must sign up to speak on the day of, at the designated location, beginning one hour before the designated start time and ending one hour after the start of the meeting or hearing. You will have two minutes to speak, unless the hearing officer or meeting organizer provides an extension. The hearing will conclude at the stated end time or following the comments of the last person who has signed up to speak, whichever occurs first.

After the community meetings and public hearing, I will review a written report from the hearing officer. At that time, I may recommend that the Board consider and approve the closure of Lathrop at its meeting on February 22, 2012.

I can assure you that we will not close any school without careful consideration for what is best for our students, and that my team and I will work to make any transition as smooth as possible. If you have questions or concerns, please call the CPS Quality Schools Hotline at 773-553-5020.

Sincerely,



Jean-Claude Brizard

CC: David Vitale, Board President

Noemi Donoso, Chief Education Officer

Willard Willette, Principal, Lawndale Elementary School

LSC Chairperson, Lawndale Elementary School