

CEO
The Chicago Public Schools

From: John E. Morrissey
Independent Hearing Officer

Board of Education
City of Chicago

In Re: Matter of the Proposal
To Close
Florence B. Price
Elementary School

Before
John E. Morrissey
Independent Hearing Officer

At 5:30 p.m. on Monday, January 23, 2012, a hearing was convened at the Board of Education of the City of Chicago, 125 South Clark Street, Chicago, Illinois. The purpose of the hearing was to enable the previously appointed Hearing Officer to receive public comments from concerned persons, including representatives of the CEO (Chicago Public Schools), members of LSCs, student school parents, members of the staff, the principal, students, Chicago Teacher's Union representatives and interested members of the public concerning the CEO's proposal that Florence B. Price Elementary School located at 4351 South Drexel Blvd., be closed at the end of the current school year and that its current enrollment of approximately 111 students be assigned to National Teachers Academy (NTA), 55 East Pershing Road, Chicago. A Certified Court Reporter transcribed the hearing.

Applicable Law

Powers of the Board. The Board shall exercise general supervision and jurisdiction over the public education and the public school system (ch 105 ILCS 5/34 et seq.)

- (a) If the Board approves a school action, the chief executive officer or his or her designee shall work collaboratively with local school educators and families of students attending a school that is the subject of a school action to ensure successful integrations of affected students into new learning environments.
- (b) The chief executive officer or his or her designee shall prepare and implement a school transition plan to support students attending a school that subject of a school action that goals of the Section. The chief executive must identify and commit specific resources for implementation of the school transition plan for a minimum of the full first academic year after the board approves a school action.
- (c) The school transition plan shall include the following:
 - (1) services to support the academic, social, and emotional needs of students; supports for students with disabilities, homeless students, and English language learners; and support to address security and safety issues;
 - (2) options to enroll in higher performing schools,
 - (3) informational briefings regarding the choice of schools that include all pertinent information to enable the parent or guardian and child to make an informed choice, including the option to visit the schools of choice prior to making a decision, and
 - (4) the provision of appropriate transportation where practicable.

Section: 302.6A – CPS Policy Manual

Policy: THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER RECOMMENDS:

That the Chicago Board of Education adopt a School Performance, Remediation and Probation Policy for the 2011-2012 School Year

Achievement Level 1: Shall mean the rating for:

- an elementary school that obtains a total performance score of thirty (30) or above or with at least 71% of the available performance points; or
- a high school that obtains a total performance score of twenty-eight (28) or above or with at least 66.7% of the available performance points.

Achievement Level 3: Shall mean the rating for:

- an elementary school that obtains a total performance score of twenty (20) or below or with less than 50% of the available performance points; or
- a high school that obtains a total performance score of eighteen and one-third (18.33) or below or with less than 44% of the available performance points.

GUIDELINES FOR SCHOOL ACTIONS
2011-2012 SCHOOL YEAR
ISSUED NOVEMBER 29, 2011
("Guidelines")

For the 2011-2012 school year, the CEO will consider the criteria specified below when recommending any of the following school actions governed by Public Act 097-0474:

- reassignment boundary change,
- phase-out,
- co-location,
- school closure,
- school consolidation

ACADEMIC CRITERIA

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.

If a school is being considered for a school action based on the factor identified above, the school will be excluded from consideration if it meets any of the following minimum performance criteria:

- (a) an elementary school that had an ISAT composite meets or exceeds score at or above its geographic network average in the previous school year;
- (b) a high school with a 5-year cohort graduation rate at or above its geographic network average in the previous school year; or
- (c) any school that scored at or above the 25th percentile on the trend and growth component of the Performance Policy in the previous school year.

SUMMARY OF THE EVIDENCE Via Public Hearing

A. Speakers on behalf of the Chicago Public Schools. Monday Evening January 23, 2012

1. Ruchi Verma: Deputy General Counsel, Chicago Board of Education who summarized the evidence to be presented at hearing on January 30, 2012, with full binder admitted, in connection with the Chief Executive Officer, Chicago Public Schools proposal. She presented evidence of Notice, Illinois Law, Chicago Board of Education Policy, Guidelines and Procedure, transcripts of

prior community meetings on January 6, 2012 and January 20, 2012 and the accounts CPS witness.

2. Adam Anderson: Portfolio Strategy and Planning Officer for CPS. He explained that evaluation of Price under CPS Guidelines and Procedure showed that Price has achieved that lowest performance rating (level 3) for at least 2 years. He recommends closure.
3. Ryan Crosby: School Performance Manager, CPS. He presented specific data highlighting the low academic performance of Price finding that Price had test scores and percentile performance policy below minimum criterion for past 2 years, and is therefore eligible for closure.
4. Shawn Smith: Chief for CPS, Burnham Park and Skyway Elementary School Networks. He discussed Price's low academic performance for the past 5 consecutive school years and how CPS has supported and mentored Price during the last several years. He concluded that despite support, Price has not improved student outcomes. Because of consistently low academic performance, the CEO is proposing closure student assignment to NTA, a Level 1 school.
5. Amy Rome: Principal of National Teachers Academy, (NTA). She described NTA as a Level 1 school, which will offer Price student's safe and supportive academic environment, stressing improvement. NTA welcomes Price students to join its community.

6. Elizabeth Perkins: Transportation Specialists, CPS. She discussed how all returning Price students, 84 in number, will be transported to and from NTA for the next 3 years*

* Hearing Officer Note:

- Price is a Grade 5-8 school. Since 8th graders will graduate in June of 2012, transportation is only necessary for the remaining lower grades.

7. Jadine Chov: Chief Safety and Security Officer, CPS. She related how CPS will provide additional safety support to Price students to and from NTS. Security personnel will be present at Key Street intersections and at NTS for safety and security.

B. Speakers and Written Evidence from the Public

1. Written Evidence

- Letter from William D. Burns, Alderman, 4th Ward, Chicago

He opposes closure of Price (and Dyett High School). He offers that additional resources at other schools point to the same support for Price. He did not suggest any specifics.

- Report dated August 2011 from Strategic Learning Institute

By bullet-point-counterpoint, bar and graph analysis, it concludes that partnering and networking may have led to overall improvement among certain Chicago Public Schools without closing and staff replacement.

- Report

Bronzeville Global Achievers advocates longer school days, additional staff partnering

Post Hearing Submissions

Letter – Katrina Wilson – Price LSC opposes CPS proposal and supports Bronzeville Global Achievers Village. Available to discuss proposals.

Letter – Shawn Smith offering additional input. It references Community concern concerning Price's attendance area to reassigned to Fuller and Woodson Elementary school areas. Accelerated student growth is anticipated in the 2012-2013 school year. This concern could affect area student performance in future years if Fuller and Woodson statutory reconstitution proposal is not implemented. They are Level 3 schools.

Letter – Teacher at Price. She wages remediation continues, and opposes closing of Price.

OTHER WRITTEN DOCUMENTS

Summary of January 20, 2012 Community Meeting

Summary of January 6, 2012 Community Meeting

PUBLIC SPEAKERS

21 persons spoke publicly on Price's Closing, covering 5 themes. First, and paramount, due to lack of funds, resources, policy or concern, the Chicago Public Schools must be blamed for poor performance at Price. Second, and equally important, Price is a community school and children should be educated in their own neighborhood. Third, consolidation of Price's area will be 2 other Level 3 centers. The fourth issue is safety and the fifth, concession that Price should close because quality education, not available there, is the sole issue for its children.

STATEMENT OF FINDINGS

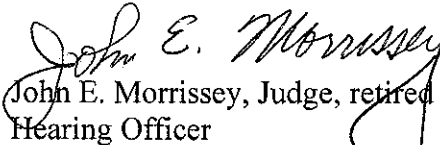
1. Proper notice of the hearing was given as required by Illinois law, Chicago Public School Policy, and Procedures for hearings on school closing to the Principal, staff, parents, LSC, Chicago Teachers Union, Public Officials, and the interested Public.
2. On January 23, 2012, a public hearing was held at the Board of Education, 1125 South Clark, Chicago.
3. Price is subject to a school action, including closure, due to its receiving the lowest performance rating or level 3, for consecutive years.
4. The CEO of the Chicago Public Schools has recommended closure.
5. There have been 3 opportunities for public comment, including one public hearing, captioned above.
6. Price meets all criteria for closure: lowest performance rating – 2 consecutive years, ISAT compos sit score below geographic network average, and in better 25% of schools in the District in terms of points received on the Performance Policy (Guidelines for School Actions 2011-2012 School Year)
7. Price was properly placed on probation and remains on probation for the past 5 school years.
8. National Teachers Academy (NTA) is a nearby school, rated Level 1 and willing and able to accept Price students to a safe and nurturing environment.
9. Transportation will be available for all Price students to and from school for the next three (3) years.
10. Utmost security and safety will be extended to the Price students through CPS Office of Safety and Security working with community groups and the Chicago Police Department.

11. Although suggestions and concerns expressed by the public were at times compelling, they added no substance that weighs strongly against the CEO's proposal to close Price.
12. The new attendance area schools for the current Price boundary should be offered reconstitution as level 3 institutions, under Illinois law.

RECOMMENDATION

With due consideration given to the time and effort spent on both sides of this issue, the Hearing Officer recommends, in accordance with the CEO's proposal, that the he recommend to the Board, and the Board approve, the closure of Price Elementary School.

Respectfully Submitted


John E. Morrissey, Judge, retired
Hearing Officer