



Jean-Claude Brizard
Chief Executive Officer

November 30, 2011

Parent or Guardian of a Student at
Pablo Casals Elementary School
3501 W. Potomac Ave.
Chicago, Illinois 60651

Re: Proposed Reconstitution of Pablo Casals 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 students are 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 11th 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, Pablo Casals Elementary School (Casals) has been one of the schools not meeting the needs of its students. Over the last several years, Casals has been a chronically underperforming school that has not made the progress necessary to take it off probation. This is why we are proposing today, after a very lengthy and thoughtful process, to reconstitute Casals. In other words, we will make Casals a “turnaround” school, which will provide your child with the opportunity to access a high quality education and get on a path to success in the classroom.

What is a turnaround? Turnarounds change under-performing CPS schools by completely overhauling them, without moving students, and creating an entirely new culture of success. The turnaround process brings highly qualified staff who are specially trained to work in low-performing schools to help meet the specific needs of those schools’ children. Turnarounds have a laser focus on driving student learning and improving academic achievement immediately.

The results of these turnaround schools in Chicago have been remarkable – for example, the percent of students at turnaround schools that met standards last year improved twice as fast as the CPS district-wide average. We want to provide your child with access to the same opportunities to boost their chance of academic success, which they will receive next school year should we implement this turnaround at Casals.

At this school and schools across the district, we are making significant investments in the coming year to boost student achievement:

- Providing a longer school day with additional instructional for teachers and students;
- Implementation of a new, more rigorous curriculum will better prepare your child for college by using Common Core State Standards in their school day;

- Expanding access to quality preschool programs that put students on the path to academic success from day one of their education.

Below you will find more information about this proposal and why we are considering Casals for a turnaround in order to give your child access to a better educational environment where he or she can thrive and succeed.

Our Proposal

We are proposing that Casals, located at 3501 W. Potomac Ave., be turned around at the end of the current school year per 105 ILCS 5/34-8.3(d)(4). Casals has been on probation for the last five consecutive years and has failed to make adequate progress to address the deficiencies that have placed it on probation. In other words, CPS is proposing to turnaround Casals based on the school's chronic low academic performance and the need to provide higher quality educational options for students in the community.

If the Board approves the turnaround of Casals, I will recommend that the Academy for Urban School Leadership (AUSL) manage the school. AUSL is a Board-approved turn-around provider and the organization has a track record of successfully managing a number of schools across Chicago. I invite you to visit their website at www.ausl-chicago.org or call them at 773-534-0129 to learn more about their approach to teaching students.

Details For Current Students

The turnaround of Casals will have no effect on the enrollment of any current students or any students eligible to enroll as of the 2012-2013 school year. All current Casals students will remain enrolled in the school after it is turned around. If you have any questions concerning this proposal, please call the CPS Quality Schools Hotline at 773-553-5020.

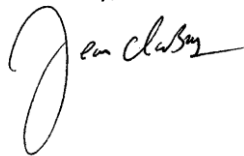
Public Comment On The Proposal

I invite you to share your feedback on this proposal at the public hearing scheduled for **Monday, January 30, 2012, at 125 S. Clark St, 5th Floor Board Chambers, from 5:30-7:30 p.m.** You may also provide alternate proposals or other written suggestions at that time. If you wish to comment at the public hearing, you must sign up between 4:30 pm and 6:30 pm on the day of the hearing at 125 S. Clark St. in the lobby. Each speaker will have two minutes to speak unless the hearing officer extends his or her time. 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 public hearing, the hearing officer will provide me with a written report. After reviewing the hearing officer's report, I may recommend that the Board consider and take action on the proposed turnaround of Casals at its meeting on February 22, 2012.

I can assure you that we will not turnaround 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