



Jean-Claude Brizard
Chief Executive Officer

November 30, 2011

Parent or Guardian of a Student at
Chicago Vocational Career Academy High School
2100 E. 87th St.
Chicago, Illinois 60617

Re: Proposed Reconstitution of Chicago Vocational Career Academy High 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 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, Chicago Vocational Career Academy High School (CVCA), has been one of the schools not meeting the needs of its students. Over the last ten years, CVCA 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 lengthy and thoughtful process, to reconstitute CVCA. In other words, we will make CVCA a “turnaround” school, which will provide students 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 create an entirely new culture of success. The turnaround process brings highly qualified staff that 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, students at turnaround schools in have more than doubled the rate of decrease in the dropout rate and have more than doubled the change in the Freshmen on Track rate. We want to provide students 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 CVCA.

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 students for college by using Common Core State Standards in their school day;

Below you will find more information about why we are considering CVCA for a turnaround in order to give students access to a better educational environment where they can thrive and succeed.

Our Proposal

We are proposing that CVCA, located at 2100 E. 87th St., be turned around at the end of the current school year per ILCS, 105 5/34-8.3(d)(4). CVCA has received the lowest performance level (Level 3) on the CPS Performance Policy (Board Report 10-0728-PO4) for ten 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 CVCA 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 CVCA, I will recommend that the CPS Office of School Improvement (OSI) manage the school. OSI is a nationally recognized pioneer in turning around chronically under-performing schools. Through effective and innovative school reform strategies, OSI has demonstrated success in accelerating growth in students' academic skills in its high schools in comparison with similar high schools and with the district as a whole. It is showing higher rates of change in average ACT scores, in Explore and Plan Scale scores, and in the percentages of students meeting or exceeding state standards on the PSAE.

Details For Current Students

The turnaround of CVCA will have no effect on the enrollment of any current students at CVCA or any students eligible to enroll as of the 2012-2013 school year. All current CVCA 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.

Details For School Personnel and Local School Council Members

If the Board approves this proposal, all current administrators, faculty and staff members assigned to CVCA will be displaced at the end of the 2011-12 school year in accordance with Board policies and any applicable contracts and collective bargaining agreements. If you have any questions or concerns regarding how the proposed turnaround affects the employment status of administrators, faculty or staff, please contact Employee Services at (773) 553-1142 or employeeservices@cps.k12.il.us.

If the Board approves this proposal, the Local School Council at CVCA will remain intact but certain powers may be impacted. For more information, please contact the Office of Local School Council Relations at (773)553-1400.

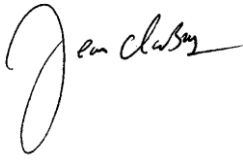
Public Comment On The Proposal

I invite you to share your feedback on this proposal at the public hearing scheduled for **Friday, February 3, 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. You will have two minutes to speak unless the hearing officer extends your 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, I will review the hearing officer's written report. At that time, I may recommend that the Board consider and take action on the proposed turnaround of CVCA 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,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jean-Claude Brizard". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "C".

Jean-Claude Brizard

CC: David Vitale, Board President
Noemi Donoso, Chief Education Officer