Chicago Public Schools
School Utilization Community Meetings
Breakout Session Notes

Date/Time of Meeting: January 28, 2013, 7:00pm-9:00pm

Network: Ravenswood-Ridge

Schools represented by audience: McPherson, Trumbull, Gale, Rogers Park, Stockton, Stewart, Field

Round: I

Disclaimer: The following are notes of the discussions in the individual break-out sessions. They do not provide verbatim records or a comprehensive summary of what was said. Also, these notes do not represent the point-of-view of the facilitators or of CPS personnel. Any questions about these notes should be addressed to CPS staff.

General Learning

• Concerns about the process
  o Feel duped that they are not talking directly to CPS
  o Concerned about no notes being taken on laptop, which is a more professional way of taking notes, don’t trust that handwritten notes will get to CPS
  o Want to be able to see the meeting notes that are communicated to CPS
  o Don’t think they’re actually going to be heard by the CPS
  o Expected to have an open forum with open mikes to express views
  o Why use a facilitator rather than a CPS person
    ▪ Where is the money coming from for the facilitators?
  o How do we communicate our efforts within a community to the CPS?
  o It feels like we’re being handled, disrespectful, a hoax
  o Process does not show genuine support for the schools/people
  o What is the list of school closings? Where do I get it?

• General concerns about CPS
  o CPS always cries poor but don’t believe it...
    ▪ If there’s no money for schools, how is there money to open new charter schools?
    ▪ CAFR audit report showed a surplus of several million dollars, not a budget deficit
    ▪ If you divide the CPS budget by the number of schools, you get about $10,000,000 per school, which seems like a lot (reporter from Chicago Phoenix)
    ▪ Salary for superintendents is $259,000 (reporter from Chicago Phoenix)
  o Huge issue of disbelief regarding CPS’s claims of underutilization of schools
    ▪ How can CPS say schools are underutilized when they’re opening new schools
    ▪ Underutilization is manufactured by the charter schools
  o Concerns/disbelief about CPS’s statistics on schools, which feeds into decisions about closings
  o CPS is really just trying to privatize education, not invest in it
  o BBB could enhance believability by moving out of the Hyatt and into the city
School-specific Learning

- **McPherson**
  - Question process to put others in another school
  - What are the choices now?
  - Mailed and phoned Mayor, CPS authorities, everyone and got no responses
  - Are they thinking ahead about population changes in the area?
  - Story of person who bought a condo considering schools she wanted her kids to attend, now if school closes, she would lose that option for her kids

- **Trumbull**
  - Have concerns about CPS's numbers on utilization, e.g.:  
    - Special education counted as 1/3 of a person
    - No discussion of support for autistic kids – transition is especially difficult for them
  - Disagree with how CPS is deciding which schools to close
  - Inaccuracy of data, which was still presented wrong in today’s presentation
  - What will happen to the property if the school closes?
  - Need to invest money in the school. Librarian gets used books from other schools. Kids are desperately asking for books to read, but they don’t have enough or are old editions (from the 90’s). How are kids going to improve scores in literacy if they don’t have enough good books to read? There has to be more investments for libraries in schools
  - LSC member at Trumbull school: lots of things have been done at Trumbull to make it better and that would be lost if they close school
    - Hundreds of parents got involved in helping the school when they heard it got Level 3
    - Got 6,000 dollars investment from Andersonville Chamber of Commerce
    - Placed Reading Coach in the school
    - Principal Venus Shannon has managed to raise ISAT scores to 75% last year, from 73% previous
    - Many more actions (see note provided by this member, attached)

- **Gale**
  - CPS is keeping us in the dark on plans
  - They already have a plan in place
  - There's a communication breakdown
    - No one trusts CPS
    - Need CPS people to be here to hear what we’re saying
  - Their under-utilization is our (teachers’) manageability, e.g., 25 vs. 35 students per class
  - Teacher expressed that with 35 kids in her classroom it is not possible to provide good quality instruction, they don’t even have enough material for so many, 25 students is manageable
  - Revolving door of principals
  - 95% poverty rate. Kids at our school have no money for transportation. If Gale is closed, how are they going to get to another, possibly distant school?
  - Principal: we’ve used our discretionary funding to hire a SW to deal with emotional issues in our students. We have a greenhouse, only school that has that. But those good things that our school is doing, are not counted/considered to keep school open.

- **Rogers Park**
  - It's a dumping ground for students
  - There will be violence if boundary lines for schools are changed
  - There does not appear to be any fiscal responsibility toward the schools
  - We spent our discretionary funds in order to keep class size small
• Stockton
  o Have not heard anything about the community reaching out to the school, which seems to be happening for other schools
  o Is there a dialog between CPS and real estate developers, which could affect future population and school attendance statistics and in turn potential closings

• Stewart
  o Was very intentional about where to live/go to school and now it may not matter

• Field
  o Concerns about class size and how this affects statistics that feed into closing