Chicago Public Schools
School Utilization Community Meetings
Breakout Session Summary

Date/Time of Meeting: February 9, 2013 11:00am – 1:00pm

Network: Rock Island

Region/Schools focused on in discussion: Bennett (Shadd) School

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

Assistant Principal (newly assigned), staff and parents spoke passionately about the need to keep Bennett school in the community. Parents feel the focus should be on keeping the class sizes small and not overcrowded, although not all their classes are small (average 27-30 students in each class). Parents don’t feel that the population of their community is declining.

School-specific Learning

What makes Bennett Special?

Parents feel strongly that Bennett is a “great school” with a good family environment and dedicated teachers. Parents volunteer to patrol the grounds before and after school. The students feel safe in the school and walking home. Most of the students walk to the school (even 8 blocks). The security staff (Officer White) is present to make sure kids are safe. Many of the teachers live in the community, also.

Bennett School has afterschool tutoring program for students and parents, basketball, volleyball, baseball, chess team, and dance class (funded by BAGS Foundation).

Some other academic programs include Feature Friday to feature students who perform well academically and socially and acknowledge teachers, “word of the day” and daily quote, and give facts for African American history month beyond February, Spanish and science programs “In Search of Genius” for 4th grade and “You Be The Chemist” program for upper grades. Everyday at 2:15-2:45 is the DEAR program – “drop everything and read.”

How are classrooms being utilized? “Every inch of Bennett is being used”
Partnership with SGA Youth and Family Services. Work with Pre-K to 3rd grade. Utilize room for services and parenting meetings held during the day on Fridays.

Use rooms for after-school programs, indoor recess, pre-K program, teacher meetings, in-school suspension – “instead of having kids on the street”

Computer lab, Harold Washington Cultural Center (2nd floor) is a multi-purpose room, library.

Parents see the most important benefit of having the open space is to allow for “pull out” opportunities for children with IEPs (8% have IEPs).

**What are the needs for Bennett?**

Laptop carts, iPads, art center to help students explore creativity and imagination. Also, need a program to help students focus on global education and be able to compete globally.

**What would be the challenges if Bennett were to consolidate with another school?**

Parents are concerned with “chaos” if consolidating with another school. Every morning, an assembly is held to give announcements and daily “student creed” in the auditorium. With more students, they would not be able to do this. This assembly sets the tone for the day.

Parents feel that their children are getting more individualized attention with smaller class sizes. The principal and assistant principal know all the students personally.

Parents expressed concern about abandoned buildings in the neighborhood with school closings.