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**Barbara Byrd-Bennett**  
Chief Executive Officer

March 21, 2014

Parent or Guardian of a Student at  
Walter Q. Gresham Elementary School  
8524 South Green Street  
Chicago, IL 60620

Re: **Proposed Reconstitution of Walter Q. Gresham Elementary School**

Dear Parent or Guardian:

As Chief Executive Officer of the Chicago Public Schools (CPS), I am committed to ensuring that every child in every neighborhood receives a high-quality education that prepares them to be 100% college-ready, 100% college-bound.

From investments in early childhood education and a full school day to ensuring there are strong principals and teachers in our schools, we are working each and every day towards ensuring that all children have the resources and supports they need to be successful in the classroom. This can sometimes mean making difficult decisions, particularly when a school is struggling academically.

Over the last 5 years, Walter Q. Gresham Elementary School (Gresham) has been an underperforming school and has not made the progress necessary to be removed from probation. This is why we are proposing to reconstitute this school. In other words, we will make Gresham a “turnaround” school for the 2014-2015 School Year. CPS is proposing to “turnaround” Gresham based on the school’s low academic performance and the need to provide higher quality educational options for students in the community.

As a former teacher and principal, I have lived through the process of turning around academically-challenged schools, and I can assure you that CPS has made this decision in an effort to create a culture of success that will give all students at Gresham the high-quality education they deserve.

If this proposal is approved, I will recommend that the turnaround process be led by The Academy for Urban School Leadership (AUSL) –an organization with a proven record of improving student performance in a short amount of time. They bring highly-skilled teachers who have experience working in low-performing schools, and their results within CPS schools have been remarkable. I invite you to learn more about their approach by visiting [www.auslchicago.org](http://www.auslchicago.org) or calling (773) 534-0129.

Below you will find more information about this proposal and why we are considering Gresham as a turnaround for SY 14-15.

### **Our Proposal**

We are proposing that Gresham, located at 8524 South Green Street, be turned around at the end of the current school year in accordance with 105 ILCS 5/34-8.3(d)(4). Gresham has been on probation for 5 consecutive years and has failed to make adequate progress to address the deficiencies that placed it on probation. CPS is proposing to turnaround Gresham based on the school’s low academic performance and the need to provide higher quality educational options for students in the community. If the Chicago Board of Education approves the turnaround of Gresham, I will recommend that the Academy for Urban School Leadership (AUSL) partner with the Board to provide educational services at the school.

## Details for Current Students

The turnaround of Gresham will have no effect on the enrollment of any current students or any students eligible to enroll. All current students will remain enrolled in the school after it is turned around.

## Public Comment on this Proposal

A **public hearing** has been scheduled so that public comment may be heard on this proposal:

Wednesday, April 9  
8:00pm - 10:00pm  
CPS Central Office  
125 South Clark Street

Prior to the public hearing, a **community meeting** will be held to receive input. The community meeting will be held:

Wednesday, April 2  
6:00pm – 8:00pm  
Walter Q. Gresham Elementary School  
8524 South Green Street

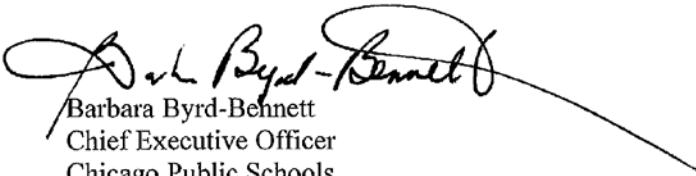
I encourage you to share your thoughts on this proposal at the community meeting or the public hearing. If you wish to speak publicly, you will need to sign up on the day of the hearing or meeting at the hearing or meeting location. Speakers may sign up from one hour before the designated start time until one hour after the start of the hearing or meeting. You will have two minutes to speak, unless the hearing officer provides an extension. The hearing and meeting 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 a written report from the hearing officer. At that time, I may recommend that the Board consider and approve the reconstitution of Gresham. You will be notified of the final decision after the Board of Education vote on April 23, 2014.

As a parent, I realize that this proposed change may not be easy, but I would not be doing my job as CEO if I did not work to provide your child with an academic environment that can help them reach their full potential. Proposing to turnaround Gresham will allow us to create a new culture of success without displacing students. I appreciate your support during this process and look forward to your feedback.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to call 311 (City Services) or visit [www.cps.edu/qualityschools2014](http://www.cps.edu/qualityschools2014).

Sincerely,



Barbara Byrd-Bennett  
Chief Executive Officer  
Chicago Public Schools