

**BEFORE THE
BOARD OF EDUCATION OF THE CITY OF CHICAGO**

In the Matter of:)	
)	
The Public Hearing to Elicit Public Comment on the)	Before
)	
Proposed Reassignment Boundary Change of National)	Hon. Francis J. Dolan (Ret.)
)	
Teachers Elementary Academy)	Independent Hearing Officer
)	
)	2018
)	

**Hearing Officer's Report and Determinations to the Chief
Executive Officer Regarding the Proposed Reassignment
Boundary Change of National Teachers Elementary Academy**

I. Introduction

The undersigned was recently retained by the Chief Executive Officer ("CEO") of the Chicago Public Schools ("CPS") to serve as an Independent Hearing Officer in this matter. I am an attorney licensed to practice in the State of Illinois and a retired State of Illinois judge. At 6:00 p.m., on Monday, January 29, 2018, a hearing was convened at the Board of Education of the City of Chicago, Central Office, 42 W. Madison Street, Chicago, Illinois. The purpose of the hearing was to enable the Hearing Officer to receive evidence in support of the CEO's proposal and public comments from concerned persons, members of the local school councils of National Teachers Elementary Academy ("NTA") and South Loop Elementary School ("South Loop"), parents of the schools' students, members of the schools' staffs, the schools' principals, representatives of the Chicago Teachers' Union, students, and interested members of the public, concerning the CEO's Proposed Reassignment Boundary Change of National Teachers Elementary Academy.

Notice of the hearing was served on the parents, staff members, principals, and members of the local school councils via U.S. Mail and/or personal service through CPS Mail. Notice of the Hearing was served upon the public by newspaper publication in the *Chicago Sun-Times* newspaper. A certified Court Reporter transcribed the hearing.

Pursuant to the directives provided in 105 ILCS §34-230 (School Action Public Meetings and Hearings) and the CPS document entitled "Procedures for Public Hearings on Proposed School Closure, Consolidation, Co-location, Phase-out, or Reassignment Boundary Change" the undersigned summarizes below the input received at the Public Hearing.

II. Relevant Statutory Provisions and Board Policies/Procedures

A. Illinois School Code (105 ILCS):

1. §34-18. Powers of the board

"The board shall exercise general supervision and jurisdiction over the public education and the public school system of the city, and, except as otherwise provided by this Article, shall have power:

"7. To apportion the pupils to the several schools;

"24. To develop a policy, based on the current state of existing school facilities, projected enrollment and efficient utilization of available resources, for capital improvement of schools and school buildings within the district, addressing in that policy both the relative priority for major repairs, renovations and additions to school facilities, and the advisability or necessity of building new school facilities or closing existing schools to meet current or projected demographic patterns within the district.

"The specifications of the powers herein granted are not to be construed as exclusive but the board shall also exercise all other powers that they may be requisite or proper for the maintenance and the development of a public school system, not inconsistent with the other provisions of this Article or provisions of this Code which apply to all school districts."

2. **§ 34-200. Definitions**

For the purposes of Sections 34-200 through 34-235 of this Article:

“School action” means any school closing; school consolidation; co-location; boundary change that requires reassignment of students, unless the reassignment is to a new school with an attendance area boundary and is made to relieve overcrowding; or phase-out.”

3. **§ 34-230. School action public meetings and hearings**

“(a) By October 1 of each year, the chief executive officer shall prepare and publish guidelines for school actions. The guidelines shall outline the academic and non-academic criteria for a school action. These guidelines shall be created with the involvement of local school councils, parents, educators, and community organizations. These guidelines and each subsequent revision, shall be subject to a public comment period of at least 21 days before their approval.

“(b) The chief executive officer shall announce all proposed school actions to be taken at the close of the current academic year consistent with the guidelines by December 1 of each year.

“(c) On or before December 1 of each year, the chief executive officer shall publish notice of the proposed school actions.

“(1) Notice of the proposal for a school action shall include a written statement of the basis for the school action, an explanation of how the school action meets the criteria set forth in the guidelines, and a draft School Transition Plan identifying the items required in Section 34-225 of this Code for all schools affected by the school action. The notice shall state the date, time, and place of the hearing or meeting.

“(2) The chief executive officer or his or her designee shall provide notice to the principal, staff, local school council, and parents or guardians of any school that is subject to the proposed school action.

“(3) The chief executive officer shall provide written notice of any proposed school action to the State Senator, State Representative, and alderman for the school or schools that are subject to the proposed school action.

“(4) The chief executive officer shall publish notice of proposed school actions on the district's Internet website.

- “(5) The chief executive officer shall provide notice of proposed school actions at least 30 calendar days in advance of a public hearing or meeting....
- “(d) The chief executive officer shall publish a brief summary of the proposed school actions and the date, time, and place of the hearings or meetings in a newspaper of general circulation.
- “(e) The chief executive officer shall designate at least 3 opportunities to elicit public comment at a hearing or meeting on a proposed school action and shall do the following:
- “(1) Convene at least one public hearing at the centrally located office of the Board.
 - “(2) Convene at least 2 additional public hearings or meetings at a location convenient to the school community subject to the proposed school action.
- “(f) Public hearings shall be conducted by a qualified independent hearing officer...[who]... shall have the following qualifications:
- “(1) ...must be a licensed attorney eligible to practice law in Illinois;
 - “(2) he or she must not be an employee of the Board; and
 - “(3) he or she must not have represented the Board, its employees or any labor organization representing its employees, any local school council, or any charter or contract school in any capacity within the last year.
- “The independent hearing officer shall issue a written report that summarizes the hearing and determines whether the chief executive officer complied with the requirements of this Section and the guidelines.
- “(g) Public meetings shall be conducted by a representative of the chief executive officer....
- “(h) If the chief executive officer proposes a school action without following the mandates set forth in this Section, the proposed school action shall not be approved by the Board during the school year in which the school action was proposed.”

4. **§ 34-225. School transition plans**

“(b) The chief executive officer or his or her designee shall prepare and implement a school transition plan to support students attending a school that is the subject of a school action that accomplishes the goals of this Section. The chief executive must identify and commit specific resources for implementation of the school transition plan for a minimum of the full first academic year after the board approves a school action.

“(c) The school transition plan shall include the following:

“(1) services to support the academic, social, and emotional needs of students; supports for students with disabilities, homeless students, and English language learners; and support to address security and safety issues;

“(2) options to enroll in higher performing schools;

“(3) informational briefings regarding the choice of schools that include all pertinent information to enable the parent or guardian and child to make an informed choice, including the option to visit the schools of choice prior to making a decision; and

“(4) the provision of appropriate transportation where practicable.”

B. Board Policies/Procedures:

**1. GUIDELINES FOR SCHOOL ACTIONS
2017-2018 SCHOOL YEAR (“Guidelines”)
(Published November 22, 2017)**

I. PREAMBLE

The Illinois School Code (105 ILCS 5/34-230) requires the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) to publish draft guidelines for school actions by October 1 of each year. These guidelines shall outline the academic and non-academic criteria for a school action, be created with the involvement of local school councils, parents, educators, and community organizations, and the draft guidelines, and each subsequent revision, are to be subject to a public comment period of at least 21 days before their approval. The Illinois School Code (105 ILCS 5/34-230) also requires that the CEO announce all proposed school actions to be taken at the close of the current academic year by December 1 of each year. The

draft guidelines were published on September 29, 2017. Public comments were received on the draft guidelines until October 20, 2017. On November 22, 2017, Chicago Public Schools hereby publishes the Final Guidelines for School Actions applicable for the 2017-2018 school year.

II. CRITERIA

“If recommending any additional school actions during the 2017-2018 school year, the CEO will consider the criteria specified below:

“B. Criteria for Reassignment Boundary Change

“The CEO may propose a reassignment boundary change that results in the reassignment of current students from one school to one or more other schools only if:

“the school(s) principal, parents or community members have requested that a reassignment boundary change proposal be considered via the process to request proposals outlined in the definitions section and the resulting space utilization after the reassignment boundary change will not exceed any affected schools' enrollment efficiency range as defined by CPS' Space Utilization Standards.

“In determining whether to propose a reassignment boundary change that meets the above-specified condition, the CEO may consider other information, including, but not limited to: safety and security; school culture and climate; school leadership; quality of the facilities; transition costs; the academic performance of the schools; and the feasibility of impacted students to access options that are higher performing, including the likelihood of admittance and distance of travel required.”

III. NOTICE AND SCHOOL TRANSITION PLANS

“Notice of any proposed school action will be provided to the principal, staff, local school council, parents or guardians, Illinois State Senator, Illinois State Representative, and Alderman for the school or schools that are subject to the proposed school action.

Notice will include the date, time, and place of public meetings being held to elicit public comment on the proposal.

“Along with notice of the CEO’s proposal, the CEO will issue a draft school transition plan concerning the proposed school action. The draft school transition plan will include, but is not limited to, the following: (1) services to support the academic, social, and emotional needs of students; supports for students with disabilities, students in temporary living situations, and English language learners; and supports to address security and safety issues; (2) options to enroll in higher performing schools; (3) informational briefings regarding the choice of schools that include all pertinent information to enable the parent or guardian and child to make an informed choice, including the option to visit the schools of choice prior to making a decision; and (4) the provision of appropriate transportation where practicable.”

IV. DEFINITIONS

"Process to request proposals" means one of the following: (1) requesting a proposal via e-mail at ceoguidelines@cps.edu by October 20, 2017; (2) requesting a proposal via e-mail at transitions@cps.edu during the 2017 calendar year; (3) requesting a proposal via formal communications to the CEO or Chief Education Officer within the 2017 calendar year; and (4) requesting a proposal at a community meeting or open public meeting during the 2017 calendar year

"Reassignment boundary change" means an attendance area boundary change that involves the reassignment of currently enrolled students.

“School action” means any school... boundary change that requires reassignment of students...

“Space Utilization Standards”¹

"Higher performing school" means:
(1) receiving a higher level on SQRP for the 2016-2017 school year, or

¹ The Space Utilization Standards were revised on January 19, 2018, and are titled: “CPS Space Utilization Standards & Methodology – January 19, 2018” (SEE: Tab 12)

(2) if the 2016-2017 school year level on the SQRP is equal, higher performing means performing higher on the majority of the following metrics:

- a. for elementary schools- for the 2016-2017 school year, multi-year value added results in reading, multi-year value added results in math, NWEA attainment percentile for reading grades 3-8, NWEA attainment percentile for reading grade 2, NWEA attainment percentile for math grades 3-8 and NWEA attainment percentile for math grade 2....”

2. CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOLS SPACE UTILIZATION STANDARDS & METHODOLOGY – January 19, 2018

“Elementary School Approach:

“For elementary schools, CPS provides an ideal capacity and an enrollment efficiency range based primarily upon the total number of instructional classrooms available in the main/permanent building. Each elementary school building is ideally allotted a number of dedicated K-8 general education homeroom classrooms equaling 77% of the total classrooms available. Each elementary school building is also ideally allotted a number of ancillary classrooms equal to 23% of the total classrooms available. An elementary school building’s ideal capacity is derived first by multiplying the total number of physical classroom spaces identified as available for use by 77% and then multiplying the product—which is first rounded down to the nearest whole number—by 30.

“Efficiency Range:

“In the past, as a school’s enrollment increased above the efficiency range (previously above 120% of ideal capacity), a school was considered overcrowded, and as a school’s enrollment decreased below the efficiency range (previously below 80% of ideal capacity), a school was considered underutilized. To reflect the District’s strong commitment to enrichment programs, and in acknowledgement of the unique space challenges that confront many schools and the need for greater program flexibility, the enrollment efficiency range going forward is adjusted from 80-120% of ideal capacity to 70-110% of ideal capacity.

3. CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOLS SCHOOL QUALITY RATING POLICY (Begins with the 2014-2015 School Year) (Board Report 14-1119-POI; Adopted 11/19/14)

I. Purpose and Goals

“This policy shall establish the standards and criteria for issuing a School Quality Rating and Accountability Status to each school... per Section 5/34-8.3 of the Illinois School Code. This policy will take effect beginning with a School Quality Rating and Accountability Status issued to each school for the 2014-2015 school year based on school performance data gathered during the prior school year. This policy will also apply to subsequent school years unless amended or rescinded by the Board.

“This policy sets out a systematic means for measuring a school’s performance and identifying schools in need of support and increased oversight due to insufficient levels of achievement and growth based on the key indicators and School Quality Rating system as defined by the Board herein. Section 5/34-8.3 of the Illinois School Code provides for the remediation and probation of schools and requires the Chief Executive Officer (“CEO”) of the Chicago Public Schools (“CPS”) to monitor the performance of each school using the criteria and rating system established by the Board to identify those schools in which: (1) there is a failure to develop, implement, or comply with the school improvement plan; (2) there is a pervasive breakdown in the educational program as indicated by various factors such as the absence of improvement in reading and math achievement scores, an increased drop-out rate, a decreased graduation rate, or a decrease in the rate of student attendance; or (3) there is a failure or refusal to comply with the provisions of the School Code, other applicable laws, collective bargaining agreements, court orders, or with applicable Board rules and policies.

“The Board recognizes that an effective and fair School Quality Rating system considers a broad range of indicators of success, including, but not limited to student test score performance and student academic growth, closing of achievement gaps, school culture and climate, attendance, graduation, and preparation for post-graduation success. Therefore, this policy establishes a comprehensive system to assess school performance in order to identify, monitor and assist schools with low student performance in these areas, as well as provide a framework for action to intervene in schools with stagnant or insufficient rates of student improvement. The School Quality Rating system also provides a means for recognition of schools who have demonstrated distinguished levels of performance.”

II. Scope of the Policy

“All CPS schools are subject to this policy, including, but not limited to, neighborhood schools...”

III. ACCOUNTABILITY INDICATORS, STANDARDS AND SCORING

A. Accountability Status Determination

“A school shall receive a School Quality Rating and Accountability Status based upon its level of performance and growth. The school’s School Quality Rating is determined based on a point system. A school is evaluated on each of the indicators identified...” [hereinafter] “...and receives points ranging from 1 to 5 on each indicator as specified. The points for each indicator are then weighted as described...” [hereinafter] “...and averaged to determine the school’s overall weighted score, which will also range from 1 to 5. The school’s overall weighted score is used to determine the school’s School Quality Rating...”

C. Elementary School Performance Indicators

Some of the “...indicators and standards and related points that determine a high school’s School Quality Rating are as follows:

- “1. National School Attainment Percentile on the NWEA Reading Assessment
- “2. National School Attainment Percentile on the NWEA Math Assessment”

F. Assignment of a School Quality Rating

“For elementary schools, the National School Attainment Percentile is based on NWEA Reading and Mathematics assessments in Grades 3-8 or in Grade 2 if the school's highest grade served is Grade 2. An elementary school must meet the National School Attainment Percentile minimum in both Reading and Mathematics to qualify for a School Quality Rating based on attainment percentile.”

4. REVIEW AND ESTABLISHMENT OF SCHOOL ATTENDANCE BOUNDARIES (Board Report 05-0622-PO1; Adopted 06/22/05)

PURPOSE:

“The purpose of this policy is to establish a process and procedures for the establishment of attendance boundaries for new schools and for the review and revision of attendance boundaries that the Board may determine are necessary from time to time.”

POLICY TEXT:

I. Annual Review of Attendance Boundaries

“The Department of School Demographics and Planning (DSP) shall review the enrollment at existing schools to determine if there is a need to revise existing boundaries as necessary.”

II. Factors to be Considered

“In reviewing and proposing revisions to boundaries for existing schools and proposing attendance boundaries for new schools, DSP shall consider a range of factors, including the following:

A. Capacities of Each of the Schools Involved in the Proposed Boundary Revisions

“In considering whether to revise attendance boundaries at existing schools, DSP will consider the extent to which a school is overcrowded or underutilized. Where feasible, the goal is for elementary schools to be utilized at not more than eighty percent of design capacity, and for high schools at not more than one hundred percent of program capacity. Schools will be considered severely overcrowded if they are operating in excess of 100% utilization and significantly underutilized if they are less than thirty percent. DSP also shall consider these utilization rates when proposing revisions to attendance boundaries for existing schools and when proposing attendance boundaries for new schools.”

B. Current and Projected Racial and Ethnic Composition of the Schools Affected

“Where feasible, DSP shall propose establishing or revising attendance boundaries to maintain or promote stably desegregated enrollments in each of the affected schools and to avoid the creation of one-race schools.”

C. Geographic Barriers

“In proposing new or revised attendance boundaries, DSP shall consider geographical barriers so as to promote safety and minimize transportation burdens, to the extent feasible.”

D. Travel Time and Distance

“In proposing new or revised attendance boundaries, DSP will seek to minimize travel time and distance, to the extent feasible.”

E. Program Considerations

“In proposing new or revised boundaries, DSP shall consider the placement of programs....”

III. Process

“As necessary, DSP shall provide a report to the CEO regarding whether there is a need for changes to existing boundaries or for developing boundaries for new schools. For each proposed attendance boundary, DSP shall develop at least two alternatives. For each alternative, DSP shall prepare a report for the CEO showing three-year enrollment projections by racial/ethnic group for all schools affected by the proposed change pursuant to each alternative. The report shall document for each alternative the impact on the affected schools for the factors of capacity, geographic barriers, travel time and program considerations. In developing alternatives, DSP shall consider whether any feasible alternatives would better maintain or promote stably desegregated enrollments in each of the affected schools and/or better avoid the creation of one-race schools. The CEO shall review the report and may suggest additional alternatives.

“As necessary, the CEO shall report to the Board if he/she is recommending any changes to existing boundaries and boundaries for new schools. If the CEO is recommending any changes to existing boundaries or any boundaries for new schools, the CEO will provide the Board with the report of the alternatives considered, including data on the factors of capacity, geographic barriers, travel time and program considerations and will recommend the alternative that is being recommended.

“Prior to taking action on the establishment or revision of any attendance boundaries, the Board shall conduct public hearings on the proposed changes and the CEO's recommendation. Prior to the public hearing, the Board will make available data on the factors of capacity, geographic

barriers, travel time and program considerations. In making its decision, the Board shall consider the factors of capacity, geographic barriers, travel time and distance and program considerations.”

5. THE CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOLS OFFICE OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER PROCEDURES FOR PUBLIC HEARINGS ON PROPOSED SCHOOL CLOSURE, CONSOLIDATION, CO-LOCATION, PHASE-OUT, OR REASSIGNMENT BOUNDARY CHANGE

“1. Upon considering to recommend to the Chicago Board of Education (“Board”) that a school be closed, consolidated, co-located, phased-out, or subject to reassignment boundary change, an independent hearing officer shall be appointed consistent with 105 ILCS 5/34-230(f) to conduct a public hearing.

“a. The hearing will commence and conclude at the time designated in the notice of hearing;

“b. The hearing will be transcribed; and

“c. The hearing officer will be solely responsible for conducting the hearing and will conduct the hearing in an efficient and impartial manner.

“2. Chief Executive Officer’s Presentation

“a. An attorney will present the Chief Executive Officer’s proposal by making an opening statement and submitting evidence in support of the proposal to be considered by the hearing officer.

“b. The attorney may also introduce witnesses, who will present statements regarding the proposal. The hearing officer may ask the witnesses questions to clarify any statements they make.

“3. Public Participation

“a. The hearing officer will receive relevant statements, comments, documents or written proposals from members of the public. Written comments will be accepted at the hearing, hearing registration table, and on the next business day, before 5:00 p.m., if delivered by hand (42 W. Madison) or via email (transitions@cps.edu) to the attention of the CPS Law Department.

“b. All those wishing to comment on the matter being considered will be required to sign up to do so as provided in the notice of hearing.

“i. Registration must be made in person by the individual who will be commenting on the proposal; and

- “ii. An individual may not sign in to speak on behalf of another person.
- “c. The number of individuals in each hearing room will be limited based on room capacity.
- “d. The hearing officer will determine the order of speakers.
- “e. When called by the hearing officer to speak, the speaker shall proceed promptly to the microphone area where s/he will have two minutes to present his/her remarks and materials to the hearing officer.
- “f. The total number of people speaking at the hearing will be subject to the sole discretion of the hearing officer.
- “g. The hearing officer and the Board’s Office of Safety and Security may impose any other reasonable procedures or limitations necessary to ensure that the proceedings are orderly and efficient.
- “h. Courteous, respectful, and civil behavior is expected from all speakers and all people attending a hearing. Disruptive individuals may be removed from the hearing.

“4. Hearing Officer’s Written Report

- “a. Following the hearing, the hearing officer will prepare and submit to the Chief Executive Officer a written report summarizing the public comments and the documents received at the hearing.
- “b. The hearing officer’s report will also determine whether the Chief Executive Officer complied with the requirements of 105 ILCS 5/34-230 and the Chief Executive Officer’s Guidelines for School Actions.”

III. HEARING

Gabriela Brizuela, Assistant General Counsel of the Board of Education, presented the CEO’s proposal. She submitted the following evidence in support of the proposal:

EXHIBITS PRODUCED:

Documentary submissions were received and included the following:

A. **CEO's Compiled Exhibit 1**

Notices of Hearing

- Tab 1 Notice Letter and Draft Transition Plan to the parents or guardians of students at National Teachers Elementary Academy ("NTA") and South Loop Elementary School ("South Loop") dated December 1, 2017 for the proposed reassignment boundary change of NTA
- Tab 2 Notice Letter and Draft Transition Plan to the administrators, staff, and Local School Council members at NTA and South Loop dated December 1, 2017 for the proposed reassignment boundary change of NTA
- Tab 3 Affidavit of Cheryl Nevins, Regional Portfolio Planner for the Chicago Public Schools, regarding: (a) publication of Draft Guidelines for School Actions on October 1, 2017, (b) publication of the List of Independent Hearing Officers for Hearings on October 31, 2017, (c) publication of Final Guidelines for School Actions on November 22, 2017, (d) publication of proposed school actions on December 1, 2017, (e) delivery of Notice Letters and draft transition plan to parents and guardians, school personnel, and Local School Council members of NTA and South Loop on December 1, 2017, and (f) publication of summaries from community meetings on or before January 13, 2018 and January 20, 2018
- Tab 4 Affidavit of Francis Bilecki, Chief Policy Officer for the Office of Intergovernmental Relations at the Board of Education of the City of Chicago, regarding delivery of Notice Letters and Draft Transition Plans to elected officials on December 1, 2017
- Tab 5 Public notice of hearing and community meetings by newspaper publication in the *Chicago Sun-Times* on December 27, 2017

Relevant Legal and Procedural Documents

- Tab 6 105 ILCS 5/34-18 ("Powers of the Board"), effective August 31, 2017
- Tab 7 105 ILCS 5/34-200 ("Definitions"), effective July 13, 2012
- Tab 8 105 ILCS 5/34-225 ("School Transition Plans"), effective November 30, 2012
- Tab 9 105 ILCS 5/34-230 ("School Action Public Meetings and Hearings"), effective November 30, 2012

- Tab 10 Chicago Public Schools School Quality Rating Policy, Policy Manual Section 302.6, Board Report 14-1119-P01
- Tab 11 Chicago Public Schools Policy on Review and Establishment of School Attendance Boundaries, Policy Manual Section 703.2, Board Report 05-0622-P01
- Tab 12 Chicago Public Schools Space Utilization Standards & Methodology (Issued January 19, 2018)
- Tab 13 Guidelines for School Actions, 2017-2018 School Year (Issued November 22, 2017)
- Tab 14 Chief Executive Officer's Procedures for Public Hearings on Proposed School Closure, Consolidation, Co-Location, Phase-Out, or Reassignment Boundary Change

Documents and Written Evidence in Support of the Proposal

- Tab 15 Transcript of the January 9, 2018 community meeting regarding the proposed reassignment boundary change of NTA and South Loop
- Tab 16 Summary of the January 9, 2018 community meeting regarding the proposed reassignment boundary change of NTA and South Loop
- Tab 17 Transcript of the January 16, 2018 community meeting regarding the proposed reassignment boundary change of NTA and South Loop
- Tab 18 Summary of the January 16, 2018 community meeting regarding the proposed reassignment boundary change of NTA and South Loop
- Tab 19 Written statement of Herald Chip Johnson, Chief Officer for the Office of Family and Community Engagement in Education
- Tab 20 Written statement of James Dispensa, Director of Demographics Analysis and Planning for the Chicago Public Schools
- Tab 21 Alderman Pat Dowell's letter dated July 17, 2017.
- Tab 22 Near South Planning Board's letter dated August 25, 2017 and subsequent letter dated January 22, 2018
- Tab 23 A petition dated July 26, 2017, signed by parents and community members of Dearborn Homes

Tab 24 Letters from members of the Pui Tak Center dated June 14, 2017

Tab 25 Charts summarizing SQRP Ratings and NWEA Attainments for NTA and South Loop

Tab 26 Summary of the proposal and transition supports

Tab 27 Racial Impact Analysis

B. Public Comment Documents

- Ex. 2 “REQUEST TO DISREGARD CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOLS' ("CPS") SUMMARIES OF COMMUNITY MEETINGS AND RELY STRICTLY ON THE TRANSCRIPTS PROVIDED” dated 01/29/18, Submitted by Legal Assistance Foundation/Chicago Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights, opposing the proposal. This document was also both hand delivered and emailed to CPS after the public hearing
- Ex. 3 “Testimony of Parents 4 Teachers regarding the proposed closure of National Teachers Academy Jan. 29, 2018”, opposing the CEO’s proposed reassignment boundary change of NTA
- Ex. 4 Written comments of Kathryn McKenzie, parent of South Loop student, opposing the CEO’s proposed reassignment boundary change of NTA
- Ex. 5 Written comments of Karen Wong Chinatown/Bridgeport resident, supporting the CEO’s proposed reassignment boundary change of NTA
- Ex. 6 Written comments of John A. McDermott Jr., opposing the CEO’s proposed reassignment boundary change of NTA
- Ex. 7 Written comments of Parents of Students in National Teachers Academy's Regional Gifted Center containing approximately 100 signatures opposing the CEO’s proposed reassignment boundary change of NTA
- Ex. 8 CUE (Chicago United for Equity) letter dated 01/29/18, opposing the CEO’s proposed reassignment boundary change of NTA
- Ex. 9 CUE (Chicago United for Equity) document titled: “The Impact of Chicago Public Schools District #299's Proposal to Close National Teachers Academy, Open a New High School in the South Loop Community, and Expand the Boundaries for South Loop Elementary School”, opposing the CEO’s proposed reassignment boundary change of NTA

Ex. 10 Written comments of Anika Matthews-Feldman, parent of NTA student, with supporting documents, opposing the CEO's proposed reassignment boundary change of NTA

Group

Ex. 11 Multiple documents including written studies submitted by an unidentified person(s) apparently in opposition to the CEO's proposed reassignment boundary change of NTA

Group

Ex. 12 A total of 274 letters co-written in English and Chinese in support of the CEO's proposed reassignment boundary change of NTA

It was announced at the public hearing that the record would be kept open until Tuesday, January 30, 2018, at 5:00 p.m., to allow those parties who were unable to attend the hearing, or for any other reason, to submit written testimony or any documents relating to the CEO's proposals that they would want made a part of the record of proceedings. The public was given the option to either hand deliver the documents to the CPS Law Department Office located at 42 W. Madison Street, Chicago, or send via email to the following email address: transitions@cps.edu. The documents that were received are listed below and identified as Supplemental Exhibits.

Supplemental Exhibits

Group

Ex. 13 A total of 780 letters were received via email. The subject matter of these letters is identified as follows:

68 letters are in support of the CEO's proposed reassignment boundary change of NTA

712 letters are in opposition to the CEO's proposed reassignment boundary change of NTA

Group

Ex. 14 A total of 398 letters were received via hand delivery. The subject matter of all these letters was in opposition to the CEO's proposed reassignment boundary change of NTA and the persons writing the letters were identified as follows:

2 letters were from parents of NTA students

396 letters were from current NTA students

Group

Ex. 15 An electronic "Jump Drive" containing the following files:

- Four videos of NTA students speaking in opposition to the proposal
- Eight videos of parents of NTA students speaking in opposition to the proposal
- Two videos of grandparents of NTA students speaking in opposition to the proposal
- An article titled: "Education Improves Public Health and Promotes Health Equity"

TESTIMONY PRODUCED:

A. CPS Witnesses:

Name

Affiliation

Herald "Chip" Johnson

**Chief Officer for the Office of Family and
Community Engagement in Education for CPS**

I am the Chief Officer for the Office of Family and Community Engagement in Education for the Chicago Public Schools. I am responsible for the support and oversight of the FACE management team, the Office of the Local School Council relations, Parent University Programs, and the Office of Faith Based Initiatives. I have been the Chief Officer since July of 2017.

By way of background, I have worked in public education for over 20 years in both educational and administrative capacities. I began my career as a high school teacher. I went on to serve as an elementary school assistant principal, high school associate principal, and the Network Chief of Schools for Chicago Public Schools before becoming Chief Officer for the Office of Family and Community Engagement in Education. I have a master's degree in education from DePaul University, and I'm currently completing my doctoral degree in educational leadership at the National Louis University.

In November of 2013, after serving as Deputy Chief for the Garfield-Humboldt Network, I became the Chief of Schools for Network 6. In that role I provided support and oversight for schools within my network, including South Loop Elementary School.

During my tenure as Network Chief, there have been two long outstanding educational issues voiced by parents and community members in the near south side, the need for continuum of high quality neighborhood school options for all students from pre-K through high school graduation and the overcrowding of South Loop Elementary School.

A new building is being constructed in the South Loop area such that it will have greater capacity to accommodate K through 8 students. The addition of the new building will create approximately 1200 seats, which would more than accommodate the combined student populations of South Loop and NTA. The addition of the new building will help address overcrowding at South Loop.

The proposed reassignment boundary change of NTA helps to address the need for a neighborhood high school. High school students in the near south area, which includes Chinatown, Bridgeport, Armour Square, and Bronzeville, have very few nearby high school options. Currently 97 percent of high school students in the draft enrollment boundaries for the proposed high school choose not to attend their designated neighborhood high school, attending other schools across the city instead. Additionally, 69 percent of current high school students in the draft enrollment boundaries travel more than three miles to attend a high school of their choice.

In response to a request for a neighborhood high school, CPS introduced a preliminary framework in May 2017 to expand high-quality neighborhood options from pre-K through high school in the near south area by expanding the boundaries of South Loop and converting NTA to a neighborhood high school. This preliminary framework was designed to address key priorities in the near south community, including providing a continuum of high-quality neighborhood school options for all students from pre-K through high school graduation as well as building diverse school communities.

Throughout this process, CPS has extensively engaged various stakeholders within the near south community, including Alderman Pat Dowell, who represents the near south community. Alderman Pat Dowell formalized her request for the reassignment boundary change and the need for a neighborhood high school in a letter dated July 17, 2017. Alderman Dowell's letter is located in your binder at Tab 21.

In the letter Alderman Dowell recognizes this proposal as the most academically positive option for the near south community. She highlights the fact that while both NTA and South Loop Elementary School schools provide a high-quality education for their students, South Loop has been consistently rated as one of the top elementary schools in the City of Chicago. Thus, the reassignment boundary change would make it possible for all K through 8 students in the area to

have the opportunity to enjoy that same academic rigor and access to a new state-of-the-art facility.

The Alderman further acknowledges the lack of a neighborhood high school in the near south area and the problems it has caused for community residents. This proposal would now make it possible for students to have an easily accessible, quality high school option in their community.

In addition to the statement from Alderman Dowell, elected officials representing the affected communities have also recommended and urged the Board to pursue a high school option. Specifically, Alderman Danny Solis believes this proposal addresses the need for families in the area. And Alderman Patrick D. Thompson has expressed the need to create a strong neighborhood high school option for students in the ward he represents.

The Near South Planning Board has also opined on the need for a neighborhood high school via a letter dated August 25, 2017. For a number of years, the Near South Planning Board voiced concerns regarding the need for a high school in the rapidly growing near south side. On August 23, 2017, CPS representatives presented a framework for a new high school and elementary school to their project review committee.

The committee wholeheartedly welcomed the idea of a proposed high school in the near south side as it would enhance their community and give students the much-needed opportunity to receive an education close to home. They also urged CPS to consider extending the boundary of South Loop further south to include the redevelopment of the Harold Ickes Homes, ensuring that children returning or moving into these buildings also have access to South Loop.

The CEO's proposal does exactly this and is in response to this request. The Near South Planning Board subsequently submitted a follow-up letter on January 22, 2018, commending CPS for proposing to extend the boundaries in response to their request. The Near South Planning Board's letters are located in your binder at Tab 22.

Moreover, a request for the proposal, in the form of a petition, was also presented to the Board of Education at its July 26, 2017, board meeting. A copy of the petition signed by parents and community members of the Dearborn Homes is located in your binder at Tab 23.

The petition urges CPS to convert NTA to a new neighborhood high school. The petition further affirms that the addition of a high school with quality educational opportunities would suit the needs of current and future students. The proposed reassignment boundary change would address this request.

In June of 2017, additional requests in support of the proposal were also received via the process outlined in the CEO's guidelines, including 270 letters in support of the proposal signed by members of the Pui Tak Center in Chinatown. The letters from members of the Pui Tak Center are located in your binder at Tab 24. Specifically, these letters express support for the proposal to convert the current NTA facility into a neighborhood high school.

CPS received feedback in support and against the preliminary framework. As a result of this feedback and in response to the requests it received, CPS amended its initial proposal to better serve the community. In particular, CPS focused on creating a more gradual conversion timeline for NTA students so that the majority of existing NTA students could continue their academic careers at NTA as the high school expands. Moreover, based on requests from community members, CPS further adjusted its proposal to expand South Loop's boundaries to incorporate the entirety of NTA's current boundary.

As part of this process, CPS formed the Near South Community Leadership Steering Committee, comprised of community leaders, educators, and parents to gather feedback and discuss the transition supports that would be needed to successfully implement this proposal. If this proposal is approved, CPS will continue to engage the steering committee in the implementation phase and in the development of plans for the new high school.

If NTA transitions to South Loop, they will be attending a higher performing school based on the CEO's guidelines for school actions. The CEO's guidelines for school actions define a higher performing school as a school that received a higher level on the school quality rating policy, which we refer to as the SQRP, for the 2016-2017 school year.

Under the SQRP located in your binder at Tab 10, each school receives an annual rating based on its performance on a variety of student outcome measures, including standardized test scores and student attendance. District wide, schools designated Level 1+ are the highest performing, and schools designated Level 3 are the lowest performing.

NTA and South Loop both received a Level 1+ rating based on their performance during the 2016-2017 school year. However, in accordance with the CEO's guidelines, when schools are designated the same rating, the higher performing school is determined based on a variety of metrics, including multiyear value-added outcomes and standardized test score attainments. While CPS does not calculate district-wide multiyear value-added results anymore, it does, however, compile standardized test score attainments in accordance with the guidelines.

South Loop meets the definition of a higher performing school because, according to the most recently available data, it performed higher on the majority of the metrics. Charts summarizing this data are located in your binder also at Tab 25.

CPS is committed to supporting the transition of current NTA students through graduation and has budgeted approximately 3.5 million to support this transition. The draft transition plan included within the notice letters to parents, staff, and local school members outlines the various supports that would be offered if this proposal is approved and was developed based on recommendations from the Near South Community Leadership Steering Committee. A summary of this proposal and transition supports is located in your binder at Tab 26. To highlight a few, these supports include:

A budget for a variety of events and activities designed to support community building and culture integration.

The creation of a joint culture and climate team comprised of staff, parents, and student representatives from NTA and South Loop.

Principal and school-based transition coordinators to assist with the implementation of new programs and practices, administrative support, and other supports identified by both schools' leadership.

The implementation of restorative practices.

Professional development and training opportunities for school staff, and

Shuttle bus service for NTA students who transition to South Loop Elementary School.

In conclusion, the proposed reassignment of NTA's boundary meets the criteria of the Chief Executive Officer's guidelines for school actions because it is a proposal requested by parents or community members via the process to request proposals outlined in the guidelines. Specifically, we have heard the request for this proposal from public officials and parents and community members in the form of petitions, e-mails, and statements at community meetings. This proposal is also consistent with the guidelines because the resulting space utilization after the reassignment boundary change will not exceed the enrollment efficiency range as defined by the CPS space utilization standards.

You will hear next from my colleague, James Dispensa, who will provide information regarding the resulting space utilization with respect to this proposal.

James Dispensa

**Director of School Demographics
And Planning for CPS**

I'm the Director of Demographic Analysis and Planning for the Chicago Public Schools. My responsibilities include undertaking school demographic studies, enrollment projections, and the monitoring of space utilization of the public school facilities throughout Chicago. I have been in this position since October 2004.

The CEO has asked me to appear at this hearing today to convey to you, the parents, staff, and school community of NTA and South Loop Elementary School, as well as interested members of the public in attendance, information relevant to the proposal to reassign the attendance boundaries of NTA.

This proposal involves the expansion of South Loop's boundaries to encompass the entirety of NTA's current boundary and gradually converting NTA from an elementary school to a high school. Specifically, the proposal involves the reassignment of NTA students in kindergarten

through 3rd grade to South Loop in the 2019-20 school year while giving students in 4th grade and above the option to remain at NTA through graduation or transfer to South Loop.

The CEO may propose a reassignment boundary change that results in the reassignment of current students from one school to one or more other schools if the school's principal, parents, or community members have requested that a reassignment boundary change proposal be considered and the resulting space utilization after the reassignment boundary change will not exceed any affected schools' enrollment efficiency range as defined by CPS's space utilization standards.

As you've already heard, this proposal is consistent with the CEO's guidelines for school actions for reassignment boundary changes because it is a proposal formally requested by the members of the community, including parents and community representatives.

Moreover, this proposal is consistent with the guidelines because, as I will detail for you, the resulting space utilization after the reassignment boundary change will not exceed the enrollment efficiency range as defined by CPS's space utilization standards.

NTA is currently located at 55 West Cermak Road and serves 723 students in grades kindergarten through 8th in addition to its pre-K program. South Loop serves 780 students in grades kindergarten through 8th in two different facilities known as the South Loop main building and the South Loop branch building.

If the proposed reassignment boundary change is approved, NTA would decrease its grade offering from K through 8 currently to grades 4 through 9 in the 2019-20 school year. Each school year thereafter, NTA would adjust its grade offering such that by the 2024-25 school year, it would offer only high school grades 9 through 12.

For clarity, Your Honor, I will describe the expected NTA grade offerings in each of the following seven school years should the board approve this proposal.

Next school year, 2018-19, NTA would offer grades K through 8 in addition to its pre-K program. So that's no change from the current school year.

In the 2019-20 school year, NTA would offer grades 4 through 9.

In the 2020-21 school year, NTA would offer grades 5 through 10.

In the 2021-22 school year, NTA would offer grades 6 through 11.

In the 2022-23 school year, NTA would offer grades 7 through 12.

In the 2023-24 school year, 8 through 12.

And then finally in the 2024-25 school year, NTA would offer grades 9 through 12.

Over the summer of 2019, the district expects to complete construction of the new South Loop school building at 1601 South Dearborn, which is located approximately one half mile north of NTA. This 120,000 square foot four-story elementary school, together with the current South Loop building at 1212 South Plymouth and the South Loop Early Childhood Center Branch at 1915 South Federal will accommodate the combined enrollment of South Loop and those students from NTA who choose to transfer.

Again, in the 2019-20 school year, the rising 4th through 8th grade students can remain enrolled in NTA through graduation or transfer to South Loop.

To understand the enrollment efficiency range of a facility, CPS uses its space utilization standards, which is located in your binder at Tab 12. CPS provides an enrollment efficiency range for elementary schools based primarily on the total number of instructional classrooms available in the facility.

There will be a total of 69 classrooms available at the South Loop Elementary main and branch facilities. The ideal capacity of these facilities will be approximately 1590, that's 1,590 students, and any enrollment within the efficiency range of 1,113 through 1,749 would be considered efficient.

The projected enrollment range of South Loop for the 2019-20 school year, should the Board approve this proposal, is between 1,200 and 1,500 students, and this projected enrollment range is within the efficiency range of the new South Loop.

Furthermore, the proposed boundary reassignment change will have a positive impact on the racial composition and stability of these schools. The option of maintaining the status quo offers a disadvantage over this proposal, and the projected increase and racial ethnic diversity of both schools is included in the report at Tab 27. While other alternatives were examined, no alternatives affected the resulting racial ethnic distribution of students as positively as the proposed reassignment boundary change.

B. Public Comments:

Name

Affiliation

Alderman Dowell

Alderman of the 3rd Ward

As the alderman of the 3rd Ward, my communities include Bronzeville, Fuller Park, the South Loop, and Washington Park. The needs of my students are as diverse as the ward itself.

I've been an alderman of a portion of the South Loop since 2007, and in 2015, after the remap, I became the alderman of a larger portion of the South Loop stretching from Roosevelt Road to the Stevenson Expressway and beyond.

Shortly after officially taking on this expanded area, I began speaking with residents of the area and attending meetings to hear their concerns, the concerns of my new constituents. Consistently I heard two things from most people I spoke to. No. 1, I want to send my children to South Loop Elementary School, but the school is overcrowded, and/or No. 2, the community does not have a neighborhood high school, and I can't get my kid in Jones.

So in 2015 I began to think about solutions and work earnestly on these matters. Working with my community and with CPS, the board is now considering an important improvement to the educational infrastructure in the South Loop neighborhood of my ward. This would include the creation of a new elementary school, which is already under construction, and the establishment of a new neighborhood high school for an area that has not had a true local high school over generations.

The two-part proposal called the Near South Educational Plan is the only viable option that offers the necessary increase in elementary school seats to deal with the overcrowding in the South Loop as well as deliver a badly-needed neighborhood high school to the area.

To meet these needs, the neighborhood Teachers Academy building has been proposed to become the site of the neighborhood high school. As you know, this has become increasingly contentious for the families at NTA.

In response to their concerns, the proposal was modified to significantly allow NTA students to stay and graduate from NTA even if they don't live in the boundary and then go on and attend the new high school with their classmates. A transition team you heard has been put in place made up of parents and community members from NTA and the South Loop to hash out the important issues regarding the merger of these two schools.

These are just a few of the many changes that have been made to the proposal in response to community concerns. But the bottom line is for students who live in the South Loop, regardless of where they live in the South Loop and regardless of their race or their income, they'll be able to send their student to a high-performing elementary school and have the ability to send them to a high school in their neighborhood where there was not one before. This, Your Honor, is a vast improvement.

Also, it rights a wrong from a previous administration that separated the South Loop community at 18th Street forcing the majority black low-income students who live in the South Loop into NTA. This was very wrong. Now with this proposal there will be one school for the entire neighborhood not separated by racial boundaries that will provide the highest quality elementary education for all students regardless of, as I said before, race, socioeconomic, and other demographic characteristics.

To those that say this is a racist plan, I say it is not. This plan will increase both the racial and economic diversity of the consolidated South Loop Elementary School. And for those people who claim that the neighborhood high school is just a grab by rich white people, please look at the boundaries for the high school. The high school will be a majority minority enrolled school and will be one of CPS's most diverse high schools. This proposal creates a learning environment that benefits all races, all students, all incomes.

In 2015 when I started down this path, I told CPS that I wanted a plan that was inclusive of the diverse residents and needs of the South Loop, and this plan could not be a solution for one group over another. This current plan, Your Honor, is fair.

I think I will conclude here. I just want to thank everyone from my community who worked hard on this and contributed to these ideas. I want to thank Dr. Janice Jackson, Jim Dispensa, and Chip Johnson, for their vision and leadership on these issues. And, Your Honor, I thank you for the time that you're going to take to really delve into the issues and hope that you will support this new plan.

Yvonne Franklin

**Guardian of a 6th grade CPS student and
Chairperson of our LSC and Johnson Drake
School**

I'm a guardian of a 6th grade CPS student. I'm the chairperson of our LSC and Johnson Drake School. I'm also a representative of 67 community members that gave me permission to represent them with permission.

I'm in favor of the proposal. I think it would be a benefit to the students in general, although my 6th grader may choose another option. Our board, LSC board chose to support this proposal also unanimously. We think it would be a benefit for the students.

And respectfully, Your Honor, we would insist that Drake school and Chinatown be included in the proposal going forward. We feel that our students are worthy of such an opportunity, and it's right and good that this proposal be instituted.

And I have had the opportunity to hear public comments from the opposition, which includes their wish that they be included in the plan going forward, although they do not recommend that this plan be instituted. So it might not be majority, but I have frequently heard this comment in private and public that they wish to be guaranteed a seat in the school. So I believe some of them think that it's right and good also.

Francine Washington

Member Central Advisory Council

I do agree that we need another high school. What I disagree on is the boundaries.

Before the NTA got there, there were family public housing on them spots. We had to fight and beg the people to tear the house down in order to build the NTA. They needed a public school. I realize time is all about the change, but the boundaries need to change.

Everybody is hollering I agree with the boundaries. Nobody has yet stated what the boundaries was like it's a government secret. Can I please have someone tell me what the boundaries are? Because from my understanding it starts from 24th Street to the north, to the Loop. I thought the boundary should start from 39th Street or just no boundaries. Kids should be able to go to whatever school they want to go to. Why we put boundaries on it.

Plus we haven't even built up on the land that's there. By the time we get the high school to get built up, the people that's coming back to the land and the land down the street to the east and west of it will have nowhere to go. So I would like the boundaries to start at like 39th, south at 39th. We won't go from 39th further. You have to cut us in or cut us out. We're the one fighting for the NTA, now the upcoming high school.

My comment is we need to change the boundaries. They talking about the boundaries over and over again. They had it in black and white. No one actually told anyone what are the boundaries. Did you hear it? You might have read it, but did you hear anyone tell what the boundaries were?

All I want to know the boundaries need to start south. It can't start at the loop, from the loop to the lake to -- I have --between the boundary talking about now, I actually have over 4,352 constituents that I'm responsible for. That's just the head of households, not counting children. Maybe about 12,000 people. I have Bridgeport, Canaryville, Ickes, all the way -- from the lake all the way over to Cicero. Anything in that area from 24th to --

HEARING OFFICER DOLAN: Your time is up. If there's more information, you can submit it by 5:00 o'clock tomorrow. Thank you so much for your time here.

Sheila Garrett

I just want to commend Dr. Jackson and the Board on getting a high school in the South Loop. It's been 45 years since I've been in that area, and there hasn't been a high school. I think the kids deserve to have a quality standard, all the opportunities that they have on the north side in South Loop. They deserve that.

And when people get up here to talk about not having a high school in the community, I will tell them sit down somewhere and what about the kids. Kids can adapt fast. Older people can't. Teenagers, young parents, they can adapt. Stop worrying about your children you ain't have not had yet. Worry about the kids that are there and give them exactly what they need, and that's a top education in a high school in the community where they could be at home where they know.

Maner Wiley

Hilliard Homes Resident

I represent public housing, and I was one of the people that supported NTA being built.

My thing is I strongly support the high school. First of all, a building don't make the school. It's the people in there. If these teachers saying they want to teach our kids, show me, put your money where your mouth is. There are all these grammar schools, a brand new grammar school is being built. What's the problem? If you're really interested, really interested and really strongly want to support teaching our kids and keeping them at grade Level 1, turn your rear end and go to the new school.

I transferred from Haines school to South Loop to NTA. Guess what, there was no high school. Ask me what's the percentage of kids, other nationalities other than African-American go to Dunbar, go to Phillips, or go to Tillman. You might have 1 percent, maybe 1 percent other nationality go there. They would change their address and take their kids elsewhere.

I raised six kids at Hilliard. I raised 15 grandkids. My granddaughter's first one walked through NTA. I fought hard for NTA. I'm going to fight hard to make it a high school. My kids deserve a good high school. Will they all allow their kids to go to Dunbar, Phillips, or Tillman? I don't think so, because I know this for a fact.

Now, how come my kid can't be at a Level 1 high school? Other people came late after we tore our bricks down to build this school. You don't know the sweat. My husband died while I supported this school fighting hard to build NTA. Bricks don't make a school

James Miller

South Loop resident and NTA parent

I'm a South Loop resident and NTA parent.

The role of CPS should be to improve education, not property values. The achievement of all students should be the goal. This plan is not trying to achieve that goal. No NTA community involvement was in this plan before May of 2016. Alderman Dowell did not include us in any of the pre-conversations.

This was a pushed-to-the-back-room deal by PDNA, a back room deal bragged about by John Jacoby, PDNA board member, at the first town hall meeting in May, the same man who in 2012 bragged that the SLD scores improved because they regrew the boundaries and dropped the low-income population from 91 percent to 37 percent in a Crain's article from March 2012.

This plan was pushed by a small group of property owners to get a temporary price increase, not to improve educational outcomes for children. By removing the low-income children from the test population in the neighborhood high school over time, they are trying to improve their property values.

A CPS employee who has a personal economic interest that would benefit from the testimony in support of a plan is in violation of the Illinois Ethics Code and for them to be involved in this case. As such, the NTA community calls on James Dispensa to recuse himself from this case given his economic interest as a property holder in the region that is projected to realize economic specifically real estate appreciation as a result of this proposal.

Rosemary Garrett

Bronzeville resident

I would like to urge all of the decision makers in this process to please use your right reasoning and good governance because what has gone on prior to this meeting has been a lot of hate, someone who actually put out a flier that encouraged the Hunger Games for the people who supported this project, which I don't think is a value any school wants.

And I agree with the previous speakers that it's not the building, it's not the block, it's the people inside that make a school great. I actually was a certified Chicago Public School teacher a million years ago. I substituted for the first couple of months when I graduated from Chicago Teachers College. And I saw that it's the people inside the building that make a school great.

And I applaud the parents on both sides of this issue who want the best education for their kids. I've lived in the Bronzeville area since 1999. I am not a racist, but I think that the school, the high school is needed in this community. And it's the right thing to do.

Will Woodley

Development Director for the Community Builders Chicago Office

I'm the development director for the Community Builders Chicago Office. We are a nonprofit committed to helping create and support mixed-income communities. Personally I'm also the father of two small children and myself trying to figure out how to get them the best education possible as they grow up in Chicago. So I understand that tonight's topic is both challenging and emotionally charged.

Because I believe it will benefit thousands of children in the long run, particularly those from disadvantaged lower-income families, I am here to speak in support of the CPS proposal. The Community Builders' mission is to help build and sustain communities where people of all incomes can achieve their full potential. Providing access to the highest quality education possible is a key goal for our work.

We are the developer of Oakwood Shores in Bronzeville where for 15 years we have helped to create a high-quality mixed-income neighborhood. We now will be doing the same as the developer for the remaining vacant blocks of the former Harold Ickes Homes, which are just east of NTA. There we will help build a mixed-income neighborhood that includes hundreds of homes for CHA families and other families with lower incomes. A top priority will be securing access to educational and economic opportunity for those families.

The work that Community Builders has done for decades across the country and in Chicago informs us on the importance of providing quality neighborhood schools and embracing diversity in order to build strong mixed-income communities. CPS's current proposal will give the families we directly serve as well as hundreds of others access to high quality public education, pre-K through high school, and what will be one of the most diverse student populations in the city.

Erica Clark

Parents for Teachers

I'm with the group called Parents for Teachers, a citywide parent group. We're here to talk about why we believe the proposed action for NTA does not meet the law or CPS's own selection guidelines, which we believe is what your job is here tonight, is to look at the evidence, consider it all, and write a recommendation as to whether or not the proposal meets those guidelines. We believe that the facts tonight will show that it doesn't and that you should recommend against this proposal.

First of all, it's not a boundary change, okay? Think about it this way. If this proposal goes through, NTA will close. It will still be a school, but it will not be an elementary school. If you stop at Aldi's on your way home tonight and you buy groceries and then you go back to Aldi's next week to pick something up and it's a Target or a Payless, it's still a store, but it's not a grocery store. Aldi's has been closed. NTA is being closed with this proposal. As such, you should consider the guidelines for school closings, not a boundary change.

So what does the school closing guidelines say? They say that first of all the students need to go to a higher performing school. Now, despite Mr. Johnson's mental gymnastics here, NTA has the highest level a school can achieve. It's a Level 1+ school. There's no higher rating. South Loop is a great school. It has the same rating. But it's not significantly better than NTA. So this proposed action fails to meet that guideline.

The second question is, is this a community supported proposal? When CPS announced these plans, they said they were only going to consider school actions that were supported by the community. There is a tab on the CPS Web site that says community-generated proposals. NTA is not listed as one of them.

I think you're going to hear tonight that the NTA community, the parents, the staff, and the students at that school are opposed to this plan. They did not generate this plan. They do not want this plan. And as such, that is the community that should take center stage and whose voices should be listened to.

Scott Clark

Parent of CPS students and Resident of the South Loop

I've been a resident of the South Loop for almost 18 years now. I have twin girls that are currently in 7th grade at a CPS school and living in the neighborhood, having children, and going

through the process. We've seen dozen of our friends' families move out primarily because of the lack of educational opportunities.

I understand it's a difficult transition for the folks that are at NTA now, but myself, my wife, and a lot of our neighbors strongly support this, converting the NTA. The amended transition plan I think will be helpful.

CPS has known for years, with the growth in the South Loop, we're going to need a neighborhood high school. The current plan is not perfect. I've been to several other community meetings. I know the NTA supporters are very loud and very local. But at the end of the day, the greater good of the community I think outweighs the emotional attachment that they have to their school. And we strongly -- hopefully my daughters will be able to attend there as freshmen in 2019.

It's not perfect, but as Abraham Lincoln reportedly said, a good settlement or a good resolution is when everybody walks away a little unhappy. It's not the best solution, but I think it's the only solution that makes sense at this time going forward. We strongly support it.

I think the diversity that the proposed boundaries and transition will allow will provide greater educational opportunities for all of the children currently in the neighborhood and in the future, particularly given the growth of the South Loop community.

So we would strongly support the proposal. We applaud the alderman's support of it and the other community leaders who do support the plan.

Tanya Skelton

Parent of NTA student

I am a parent at NTA. I am here to stand with NTA. I oppose the plan to close NTA. My son is a 1st grader in the neighborhood program as we live in the boundary. He loves his school. He loves his friends. He loves learning and is excited every day to be at the school. The culture of the school is amazing.

My husband and I consciously decided to send my son to a majority black school that is in line with our values and feel diversity is important. We have not been disappointed. I told my son I would be talking tonight to save his school and asked him if there was anything he wanted me to say. His response, go NTA.

Several friends that are at South Loop Elementary or I should say several parents of South Loop Elementary kids are against this proposal. Many NTA families or most of us are against this proposal. Who is for this plan? You should strongly consider other options. There has to be a better plan. There is a better plan.

Amara Enyia

Resident and Organizer

I am a resident and organizer. My background, I have a master's degree in education, a law degree and a Ph.D. in education policy.

For context for this conversation, I've had the privilege of working with community groups that have experienced a lot of the systematic destabilization and disruption that often occurs and affects the most marginalized communities in the city. I was also one of the primary consultants on the Ogden/Jenner merger, which is being executed as we speak. So it's another example of communities who are grappling with what to do in transformative spaces and how we can talk about issues of diversity and equity and so on and so forth.

I'm here representing a group of colleagues, both professionally but also in the community, who were tasked with serving on an equity committee to assess this proposal, not just through the lens of diversity but through the lens of equity, which is absolutely important, especially when we're considering groups that have historically been marginalized when school actions have been taken.

This group has met repeatedly and also engaged in conversations with community members, and a few of the points that we just wanted to highlight in this proposal is that, No. 1, as a matter of policy and practice, we must counter any policy decision making that undercuts quality schools. And more specifically black and brown faces should never be expendable, and yet all too often they are. Again, this issue of equity.

This group is tasked with thinking creatively about how to leverage existing resources and what kinds of investments we can make that will mitigate the disruptive factors that are at play whenever a school action such as a closing in this case occurs.

And so after deliberation and conversations with the community, we have developed a proposal that assesses the current landscape and the current proposal but also puts on the table an alternative that requires investments in existing high schools in the area, in particular Dunbar High School –

HEARING OFFICER DOLAN: Your time is up. Thank you so much.

Anika Matthews-Feldman

NTA supporter

I am an NTA supporter. I'm against the plan. The plan assumes many things. It assumes that CPS is obligated to give a third high school in South Loop. Regardless of the testimony you've heard, there is a neighborhood high school already assigned to the area. That is Phillips. Phillips has 1,134 seats that are available right now.

CPS has claimed that this is not a high-quality school still, however, it is sending Englewood kids, if their closures go through, to Phillips. If it's good enough for the Englewood kids, it

should be good enough for South Loop elementary families. And, again, 1,134 seats that are available right now.

Also, we have Perspective. Perspective is a charter school, but it also receives funding from CPS. They can add a neighborhood component to this school like they do Jones Prep. Again, that's many seats that could be available right now.

Also, integration. We have heard a lot about how this plan is about bringing diversity and integration. However, Dr. Jackson has said in a Board meeting that some of NTA's classrooms are black, and that is a problem. However, in the district there are 278 schools that are all black. They're not a problem for CPS. They're not doing anything about them. They're just calling out NTA for being majority black. That is a problem.

Also, what community has is matrix. What community has elementary kids sharing space with high school kids? That is not done. There's a difference in their development as well as their behavior. That's why it's not done. CPS hasn't even shown us where this is done in the district currently having elementary kids share space with high school kids. That is against the best interest of the NTA community and any community housing elementary kids. That's why it's not done.

Wendy Miller

Parents of NTA students

CPS's proposal is not one of a boundary reassignment. It is a forced closure of a top-rated school that is doing everything right for our children. This proposal will ruin the educational continuity of over 700 elementary school children. Expecting NTA families to sacrifice their school for the benefit of other communities is inconsiderate. The needs of one community are not more important than the needs of another.

There is no way to recreate or preserve the family and community we have at NTA, a culture that knows its students, families, and all of their backgrounds. If our children are moved to an 1800-student, three-building elementary school campus, they will suffer.

I have had children at both South Loop Elementary and NTA. We left South Loop Elementary because the attitude of the administration and staff did not reflect the values I expect my children to learn well from. My child was overlooked in the classroom. NTA staff knows my children and the rest of our children beyond the classroom, and this knowledge helps our school to provide our students with a great education. We take care of our families, and all children are valued equally.

Students are empowered to speak with their own strong, confident voice. NTA ignites momentum. We're building future leaders that are culturally aware and strive for a just society, which we need. NTA is special in a way that should be a beacon in CPS for families that need a better school opportunity.

This proposal sacrifices a very special, very unique community to create the city's largest elementary school and disperses kids to a giant three-building campus. This proposal is not the best CPS can do for all of our communities. They avoided input from NTA even before they made their plan public, and they should reassess this plan because there are better options that the larger community could put forth.

Student A

NTA student

Since 2013, my mom and other 13 parents have added to the school gardens. Gardening at NTA is done by parents and teachers. We get to go out of the classroom and learn about growing and harvesting vegetables that we plant. Some of our classrooms learn how to make compost and plant seeding and raised beds that we build with our classrooms.

Two of our teachers took a training class in order for us to pick and serve our vegetables in the cafeteria. This past fall the little kids have picked parsley, collards, kale, and Swiss chard to have at our school lunch. One of our moms is a master gardener. We know she knows a lot about growing plants and helps kids who haven't planted anything before.

We have volunteers who help with classrooms when they plant plants and pick vegetables. My mom helped with that. Over the summer we helped take care of the gardens, and families can come to pick vegetables. Two years ago we planted a pollenating garden to help the bees.

Student B

NTA student

NTA used to have a full-time librarian, but that teacher left a few years ago. When I came to school, some parents decided to try to reopen the children's library. One of our moms organized volunteers from the school to re-alphabetize books, update books, and organize the furniture. She also spent a lot of time researching the computer equipment needed to set up the library so that the children could check out books.

We also had book fairs. Our parents have helped our teachers by buying the books at fairs from a wish list. The library is awesome because kids get to meet people in our community.

Our neighbors are Queen Chapel, the oldest African-American church in Chicago, is near NTA. I got to visit Queen Chapel on a field trip. The men of Queen came to NTA to read books to the little kids. That way they get to know our neighbors. They are working on opening the bigger kids' libraries that I will be able to check books out too.

Tina Feldstein

Prairie District Neighborhood Alliance

I'm here today representing one of the most active community organizations in the near south side, the South Loop, it's called the Prairie District Neighborhood Alliance. I'm the president and founding member.

Our Board unanimously supports this plan. This conversation didn't start in 2017 or '16 or '15. This conversation about how are we going to address the needs of our community, the education needs, started back when our organization was founded in 2006.

We host a lot of very large events for our community. And back in 2007 our events would typically have maybe 25 children attend. Those same events annually each year now are attracting thousands of families, thousands. We can't even fit the number of people that want to participate in our community.

Now, we have seen over the years the overcrowding of South Loop Elementary School, and we have consistently seen the families of our community leave our community because there is no viable opportunity for them. They don't want to go to an overcrowded school. And they know they're going to be facing high school.

When we started back in 2006, most of the children were 3, 4, 5, 6 years old. We have now seen all those children become high school students. Many of the parents cannot afford to go to private schools and/or are able to get into many of the selective enrollment schools. May I add that Jones is a school that our tax dollars paid for, and many of the students in our area can't even get into that school.

Kathryn McKechnie

**South Loop parent/resident and Member
of Phillips Academy LSC**

I'm a South Loop mom currently serving on the Phillips Academy LSC.

Tonight I want to talk about CPS's investment in Phillips, Tilden, and Dunbar. At its June 20th meeting, CPS provided handouts detailing a combined \$55 million investment in these three schools since the year 2000. Since the financial analyst in me loves a challenge, I decided I would dig into whatever numbers I would find on the CPS Web site. This is what I discovered.

Since 2006 CPS has invested \$34.7 million in these three schools combined, not the \$55 million detailed in the handouts. Of the \$34.7 million spent, Phillips received a little over \$900,000. That is the neighborhood South Loop school. \$722,000 was spent on a district-wide initiative to bring air-conditioning to all classrooms. CPS has invested a paltry \$188,000 in Phillips mainly spent on operations and maintenance. Dunbar received a \$32 million investment, including nearly \$4 million for IT, educational programs, and other projects. Dunbar, however, is not a neighborhood school.

This follows the district's typical pattern of investing heavily in selective enrollment classrooms like nearby Jones and other non-neighborhood schools. On the north side, we could find true neighborhood investments, \$19 million in Taft and \$32 million in Lincoln Park. Converting NTA to a high school will further the trend of disinvesting in neighborhood high schools, especially those in predominantly black and low-income areas of Chicago.

The South Loop is one of the few racially integrated neighborhoods in Chicago. If CPS chooses to truly invest in Phillips like it has in Lincoln Park or Taft, we could create a high school with a racially and economically diverse student population. If the Board chooses to move forward with its plan to convert NTA, it will signal loud and clear what has been whispered for years.

Paul Kent

Pediatrician at Rush University Medical Center

I'm a pediatrician at Rush University Medical Center. My background is in physics and math at Harvard and then Mayo Clinic, University of Chicago, Lurie Children's Hospital. My wife is also a pediatrician, and she is head of and one of the two medical directors for Department of Children and Family Services.

I have no dog in this fight. I'm not from Chicago. I'm not from NTA. My children live and we live in River Forest because we can. We're rich enough to move, to make a choice, and get the best schools we possibly can. We're able to have our own neighborhood school that is outstanding.

I wanted to correct a couple misconceptions here. My wife and I, as I said, are both experts in the field of child welfare. She in fact is head of Child Protective Services and probably will be for the State of Illinois shortly.

The first is that adverse childhood experiences, the harms that are done to children by psychological and emotional displacement, a person says kids can adapt better than adults. That is 100 percent wrong. The harms that children face, especially psychological harms, increase the risk by threefold, carrying a weapon, using alcohol, sexual activity. It lowers your IQ by about ten points.

The children behind me are all smoking a pack of cigarettes a day. That's actually not true. But if they lose the type of educational advantage they have, it will be the equivalent of one pack of cigarettes a day. That is the harm that is being chosen to inflict on these children to the benefit of someone else.

My child, African-American, DCFS, drug-exposed, HIV positive at birth went from 1 percentile to the 27th percentile in reading because I'm at an outstanding school. If you look at the equity analysis, you'll see black male children, like my son Isaiah, went from 17 percentile to 56th percentile equivalent to the white children, not for the rest.

Autumn Laidler

**Speaking on behalf of the teachers and staff at
National Teachers Academy**

I'm here to speak on behalf of the teachers and staff at National Teachers Academy.

I'm here because the consequences to our children are greater than any consequence that any one of us could face by standing up and speaking out. So what is happening inside NTA is most

important. NTA is not an asset, it is not a location. It is students, families, and staff. The true asset of NTA is the members of this thriving community.

As teachers and staff, we know black lives matter. We teach our children to stand up to injustice, and we listen to families. Through their educational and life experience, our students have faced down adversity and achieved in the classroom and out. Our entire class last year in 2017 was accepted at Level 1+ and Level 1 schools of their choice.

NTA is a promise that was made to our community by the city. CPS is breaking a promise to families and hundreds of students already displaced who have remain committed to NTA and will be displaced again if NTA is broken apart.

We have worked to create a purposefully integrated school within our building and community. CPS has said in the proposed plan it's time to integrate our schools. Intention is not action. This is an issue not just of race but of race and class. It is systemic. To quote Ta-Nehisi Coates, the point of this language of intention on personal responsibility is broad exoneration. Mistakes were made. Bodies were broken. People were enslaved. We meant well. We tried our best. Good intention is the hall pass through history. We refuse to let our children be the victims of good intentions which result in these harmful outcomes. Our children are not disposable. Their education matters. Their bodies matter. Their black lives matter. NTA is a Level 1+ school with 75 percent African-Americans students that are 75 percent – if this was a Level 1+ white school, would this proposal be up?

Lisa Riffenburg

Educator at NTA

I am an educator at NTA. I received my bachelor's from Yale University and my master's in elementary education from Northwestern. I've been a teacher, artist, administrator, and an educator in three public school systems.

So many of my students, the parents that I work with have come up here since the beginning in June, and they have stood up because they have integrity. One of our core values at NTA is that we do the right thing always, except I have never come up and spoken before. And if I teach them all of the time just by my words, it's not enough. So that's why I'm standing up today to talk with you. I'm teaching them by example.

I wish you could see NTA. NTA is the most magical place. I have worked at many CPS schools all over the city, and NTA is, hands down, the best that I have ever worked at. Any of the fellow teachers in the city, they ask you where you work, I say NTA, they go, “ohhhh”, NTA. Because, as I said, it's the best.

It's a home. It's a haven. It's a place of brilliant teachers, the hardest working in the city, specifically because of the students that we serve. There's been a lot of discussion about academic rigor that is supposedly not at NTA. I take personal offense to that. My 12-hour, 13-, 14-hour days for the past four years at NTA? My students are experiencing an academically

rigorous education where they are learning many grade levels above where they are because of them, because of their parents, and because of me.

Students are not just standardized test scores. The students at NTA receive the arts, they receive social and emotional education, and they receive needed services.

David Wu

Pui Tak Center: offers ESL classes to Chinese immigrants in Chinatown

I work for an organization that offers ESL classes to Chinese immigrants in Chinatown. Because these immigrants can't speak English, don't have college education, and have limited job skills, almost all work in Chinese restaurants.

These immigrants, Mr. Moy, Mrs. Lee, Mr. Chan leave Chinatown around 10:00 o'clock in the morning and get home around 10:00 at night. Some work as far as Gurney, Aurora, Northwest Indiana. They do this six days a week. They came to the United States so that their children and not themselves can have a better life. They hope that through education the lives of the children can be better.

For decades some Chinatown families, 40, 50 years ago immigrants in Chinatown have worried about where their children will go for high school. My wife's family immigrated when she was in elementary school after being held back so she can learn English. My wife and her oldest sister went to Lindbloom. Her parents never went to Lindbloom until graduation day partially because it was far, partially because they worked so many long hours. It was their wish that their children could go to a high school closer. It's the same wish that immigrant families in Chinatown have today.

I support the conversion of the NTA into a high school as it finally provides a nearby high school for Chinatown, especially children of recent immigrants that won't get into selective enrollment schools. But this high school also serves the growing needs of those living in South Loop and North Bronzeville.

I'd like to submit into the record letters from over 250 adult ESL who support a high school but can't attend tonight because they're working tonight even after the hearing is over to provide for their families.

Charles Riffenburg,

For the past four years I have seen the amazing work that is done at NTA. And I've been coming to many of these meetings. I followed this entire process. I've seen this false choice that's put before the neighborhood of you can either have a high school or you can't.

It has been shown by the amount of money that CPS has put in all of these proposals that they could build a high school if they wanted to without destroying the amazing community at NTA, but they have chosen not to do that. I grew up in a small community. I went to small schools. And I can tell you that a small school like NTA serves its students' needs better than a 1,500- to 2,000-student school ever could. Students will get lost in a three-building campus.

But when you have a campus where such amazing personal attention is given to every child like it is at NTA, you can't replicate that. The community is not just the building, but by destroying NTA, you are destroying that community and all of the good that goes with it.

Cybal Wong

Parent of three CPS Alumni and member of Pui Tak Center

I am the parent of three CPS alumni. I come from immigrated parent too. I have worked with organizations and also the churches that serve the immigrant youth and children. I understand the difficult they have to go through to find a high school.

Also, I have three letters written by high school kids who can't be here because they are all at home studying for their final semester exams that start tomorrow.

One letter is from Student A that attends Kelly High School. She arrived in this country last year October 2017. She went to a high school and elementary school near her house because there are many people that live in Chinatown and around it. So having a close high school to Chinatown is a good idea for many students. It's the shortest way to go to stool.

Student B said she, also, went to Haines Elementary School and currently attends Lane Tech High School. It's very far away. She would really love to have a high school around Chinatown so it's more convenient. It would mean less time for traveling so she can have more time to study.

Bernie Wong

Social worker

I'm a social worker by background. Early last year I retired as a founder and CEO of Chinese American Service League. I have held this position for the last 39 years. I'm also a proud parent and grandparent of CPS.

In the past months we have heard many, many testify as to the urgent need for a good high school, neighborhood high school. This is substantiated by the Chinatown Vision Plan developed by the Coalition for Better Chinese American Community in collaboration with the Chicago Metropolitan Agency and Alderman Solis.

I just want to share with you what I personally have observed in the last 40 years. Over and over again I watched the pain and worries of our parents. The children have to change multiple buses often in the dark, early hours, and heavy snow so that they could get a better education than the

one assigned in the neighborhood. Every parent wants the best education for his or her child, including all the participants in this room, whether they are opposed or for a high school.

I can understand how they feel. This is challenging situation. But as someone who is seen as a long-time activist in my community, I can't forget the many pleas of the thousands of parents in our community over the past four decades for a larger built high school in our area.

After so many months of hearing and fact-finding, I hope CPS could come up with a viable plan for our children that this will create a vibrant, ethnically and economically diverse high school. And I also hope that they will look for long-term solution for the high school besides their creating of NTA.

Leonard James Brock

I was listening to everything that was being said, so I was wondering what I could say that would be applicable and germane to everything that's going on and something that's comprehensible.

I respect and applaud the management and the performance of the high school that's going on with the high school students and all of that. That's very vital. Education is very vital.

I think another thing that should be taken into great consideration, I'm in support of the NTA organization, and I believe that we should be considering what's going to be bestowed upon the young children and also the parents. The displacement that's going to be put on them to have this taken place, you know what I'm saying? We should consider all of that.

From a religious perspective, the Bible says to whom much has been given, much is required. I think the older kids can probably take home more responsibility, but to put children under that strain and then their parents when they're working could create extreme hardship. So that should be considered.

Elisabeth Greer

Chair of the NTA Local School Council

I'm the chair of the Local School Council at NTA and very strongly against this proposal.

I'm here to speak on the record about the Near South Steering Committee. Initially I was sent an e-mail by Pedro Soto, Dr. Janice Jackson's chief of staff, requesting the names of three people who I would recommend serve on the committee. Our principal, Mr. Isaac Castelaz, and the executive director of Chicago United for Equity, Niketa Brar, were also asked for three names each. Ultimately no one from my list or from Niketa's list were chosen, and only one person Mr. Castelaz recommended was on the committee.

Additionally, out of the four people chosen by CPS to represent NTA, two of the names on the list were not immediately recognized by Mr. Castelaz or myself. We eventually discovered that they were NTA parents but neither were actively involved in the fight to save our school.

How did their names end up on the list? Both parents told me that they didn't know. Someone from CPS called them and asked them to be on the committee. Neither of these parents attended any of the Near South Steering Committee meetings effectively whittling down NTA's representation to two people.

Conversely, South Loop Elementary was represented by four actively engaged members, including two LSC members and one member of their Space Planning Committee. NTA was at a distinct disadvantage, and this disadvantage continued as I discovered that in several instances my e-mail address was left off of CPS's vital communications about the committee. And a meeting was even convened without my knowledge.

I also want to be clear that the agendas of all the meetings focused on what to do when the proposal was enacted. We were not tasked to determine whether or not the proposal should be enacted.

On a different note, I want to urge that this plan not be carried through on the basis that CPS is proposing to create a 2,000-seat, three-building, one administration "Frankenschool". There is no academic evidence that larger schools are good for children. In fact, all evidence points to the contrary.

The new South Loop Elementary School will be the largest in CPS and, as such, it will probably struggle in maintaining academic outcomes for students, and it will drop from its coveted Level 1+ rating.

Elizabeth Vanopstal

Parent of NTA student

I am a NTA mother and a pediatrician. I teach both ethics and evidence-based medicine.

Let me state this simply. I think this plan is not evidence based, and I do not think it's moral. It furthers patterns of racism and classism that favors some and not others.

First, we have presented tons of evidence against the plan. The detriments to education for both NTA and South Loop kids when you create massive elementary, there's evidence behind that. The importance is breaking down data into fair comparisons, and I don't think that CPS is accurately giving you information. When we've had independent people look at test score data, there are major discrepancies. And we've talked about the health effects and even mortality effects of adverse childhood events.

But more importantly, to the core of my being, I think this plan is immorally wrong. And it breaks do not harm as a principle. Many of our kids have been displaced multiple times. First there were the promises of the Ickes being told that this would be their school forever, and then that was taken away. Then there were Long Grove and Hilliard kids getting kicked out of South Loop Elementary and their borders being redrawn. And later when South Loop is overcrowded,

they wanted to have a school within a school at NTA rather than making the boundaries different then. So I ask how is this equitable?

Another thing is the community meetings. They say they have community engagement, but what does that mean? It's not the NTA community. When you go to the community engagement meetings, they don't tell you the history of the racism and the displacement that has affected these kids.

And so it's not fair to say that they're offering something new when these kids in these other communities have nothing to lose. That's not a fair choice. It's like offering medicine and making people struggle for the choices that are available when NTA already belongs to a family. It's a cruel plan which does not value equity.

I wanted to submit I also have video testimonials from families.

Beatriz Frausto-Sandoval

Parent of NTA student

I'm a parent of a child at NTA, and I am opposed to the plan to convert to a high school, which is, in essence, a closure plan as other parents and opponents have stated tonight.

I think we've heard many very valuable arguments tonight as far as why this plan is not in the best interest of any of the students involved, whether they're students from NTA or the students from the neighboring communities where, yes, a quality high school is needed.

I agree that Chinatown, Bridgeport, Armour Square, and Bronzeville need a high school. Everybody needs a good high school. But there is, as other people have said, over 1,000 seats in Phillips and very little investment in Phillips to date.

Because I am also an attorney, I just need to refute some of the things that have been said tonight by the people from the Board of Ed and the alderman regarding diverse school communities. NTA is an extremely diverse school community.

Pat Dowell stated that the most academically positive option is this merger of NTA in South Loop academy, which we have already stated will result in a three-building campus of over 2,000 seats. The research fares out that larger schools are not a positive thing for learning.

The gradual conversion that the CPS Board proposes as a way to ameliorate the effects of this plan really doesn't eliminate the problem that this is going to create a mega school. This is going to create displacement of our students, many of which have already been displaced several times as we've stated.

And it is going to destroy the community of NTA. People have come up here and said that a school is not the bricks. And that is right, a school is the people. But if you take these people out of the schools, we will not have our principal. We will not have --

HEARING OFFICER DOLAN: Excuse me, I am going to have to ask you to submit anything else you'd like to say if you'd like to. Thank you so much.

Kate Gladson

Legal Assistance Foundation

I'm from the Legal Assistance Foundation, and I'm here with Candace Moore from Chicago Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights.

We're here on behalf of concerned parents of NTA and Chicago United for Equity to speak against this proposal. We've prepared a written statement which we will be submitting for your review, and Candace and I will summarize it now.

In order for the Board of Education to approve any school action, CPS must prove that its proposal complies with Illinois law and complies with its own guidelines. In this case CPS's proposal fails to comply with both.

Turning first to the law, CPS's proposal violates Illinois law in at least four separate ways. First of all, its proposal includes both a boundary change and a phase-out, so the gradual cessation of grades in NTA's elementary school.

CPS's proposal includes both of these actions, yet CPS's guidelines fail to include any criteria for a phase-out this year. Without criteria for a phase-out, the CEO cannot permissibly propose a phase-out, and the Board of Education cannot approve a phase-out.

Second, CPS must provide students with an opportunity to attend a higher performing school after a school action. In this case NTA students will not have that opportunity. NTA and South Loop Elementary are both Level 1+ schools.

Third, the transition plan that CPS has generated fails to commit specific resources to provide NTA students with a comparable level of support services after this action. Specifically this transition plan fails to address how students will receive additional support for the loss of their school-based health center and for the community center on site, and for their free extracurricular activities.

Lastly, CPS failed to include the NTA community in arriving at this decision, which also violates the law. Turning to the guidelines, this request did not come from NTA parents, principal, or community, therefore it fails to meet the guidelines.

Additionally, there have not been –

HEARING OFFICER DOLAN: Thank you very much.

Candace Moore

Chicago Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights

I'm from the Chicago Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights.

Following Kate's comments, I want to make a few additional points. The first point is that it's important that the full scope of community feedback and comments be considered. Many students, parents, and community members make time to come out and speak out hoping that this time, unlike so many others, would be a real moment when the powers that be at CPS would actually listen to them.

This is why we are formally requesting that Your Honor rely strictly on the transcripts of the community meetings and not the summaries of the meetings. In reviewing the summaries, we found a number of inconsistencies that we have documented in our request, and I'll submit that, that make them wholly unreliable.

Additionally, as you consider the best interest of the communities at issue, I want to make a couple points. One, NTA is a resource. Beyond its academic excellence, it offers a number of different community benefits. It has the UIC health clinic that provides health care services to students and community members, including uninsured and underinsured families.

It has a wonderful partnership with the Chicago Park District, which offers recreational programs, including swimming, affordable child care.

Additionally, the Chicago Housing Authority, in their plan for transformation, specifically acknowledges NTA as a resource and investment to support the Hilliard Homes and the Ickes redevelopment.

The final point I want to make is closing this school does more than just take a good thing away. It actually creates additional harms. It, once again, displaces communities who already were asked to bear this burden when they were cut out of the South Loop's boundaries years ago and those who were displaced in the historic 50-school closing.

It imposes a burden on this community while many of the supporters that were listed tonight benefit while losing very little or nothing at all. It destroys the school community of educators, parents, community members who came together and worked hard to turn things around for their students and achieve the success we now see at NTA.

It is for these reasons and the others outlined in our statement that we'll be submitting that that is our position.

Niketa Brar

Executive Director of Chicago United for Equity

I'm the Executive Director of Chicago United for Equity, which is a Chicago-based organization focused on promoting more jobs to equitable inclusive city building bridges across race, class, and geography.

Our organization became involved in this proposal in response to community sentiments that this was not in line with community requests or interest, which was demonstrated after 1500 signatures were submitted in opposition of this plan and over 470 letters were submitted to state legislatures requesting an assessment of this proposal through a racial equity assessment tool.

Our organization has spent the last three months conducting a racial equity assessment engaging over 300 members of the Chinatown, South Loop, and near south community. This is more than any of the other community organizations, and it is also a more diverse offering than any of the organizations that you've heard speak today.

Overwhelmingly people supported the goals of diversity and high-quality school options. And overwhelmingly the community decided that this was a proposal that would meet the Chinatown community's needs to a certain respect, and that community has been underserved for nearly 40 years. However, the community also found that this disproportionately burdened three specific groups, all of which are low income and African-American students.

And that in response there were six different proposals that were developed that would meet the same needs for diversity, that would meet the same needs for high-quality high school options but would not disproportionately impact African-American students, would not create disruptions that are unnecessary, and would not systematically create a segregation border for Phillips High School, which currently has the ability to enroll a diverse offering of students and would not be able to if it was limited to the population.

Jessica Schneider

Chicago Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights

I'm with the Chicago Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights. And alongside my colleagues who spoke before me, I'm here to express opposition to this proposal.

I want to focus on and build on one aspect of this inequitable proposal that has already been mentioned. We have heard throughout this process that there needs to be a separate neighborhood high school and that Phillips High School is not a viable option. It is supposedly too far, it is not a quality option, and it won't work.

However, at this same moment CPS is considering a proposed school action that will send students in Englewood to Phillips High School when their schools close. It is in fact farther for students in Englewood to travel to Phillips than it would be for South Loop students, so why is it not too far for them?

South Loop is 3.4 miles from Phillips High School. Hope High School in Englewood is 3.3 miles away. And Robeson High School in Englewood is 4.7 miles away. Students from South Loop at farthest would have to travel 27 minutes by public transportation, yet the students from Hope and Robeson would have to travel 35 minutes by bus and train from Hope and 37 minutes by train from Robeson.

So I ask, when this is clearly an inequitable result, why is CPS operating in this way with this proposal? I submit it is because CPS has always operated in a way where what's a good enough option for one community of students is not good enough for another. Simply put, CPS is willing to reroute low-income black students but not others.

Children know when you don't think their community is worth the investment. This proposal will affect not just current students but generations of students. In a district that overwhelmingly underserves low-income black students, why close this over-performing Level 1+ school? These children are exceeding all their standards and expectations, and they should be able to continue to do so.

Aiko Habino

I have an undergrad degree in policy management and master degree majoring in governing studies. I am a Ph.D. candidate at University of Chicago in Sociology. I'm currently teaching sociology at the School of the Art Institute at Chicago, specifically a class on the focus on inequity in the Foodscape in the world, the US, especially the City of Chicago.

So I'm against this CPS proposal because this is following a concerning pattern of CPS, the current operations, which is racial inequity in Chicago is increasing as a result of current school construction and closures. CPS school infrastructure spending is more inequitable than the education spending formula.

Before funding reform, CPS received 76 cents for every dollar that majority white districts received and asked for reform, yet Chicago gave its own majority black school just 38 cents, I repeat, just 38 cents for every dollar spent on building and maintaining majority white school in Chicago from 2011 to 2015.

Moreover, majority white school received funds to drive community development. Majority black schools on the other hand get funding to patch programs. The most common type of spending on majority black schools was for interior renovation such as paint upgrades, security cameras, and metal detectors. The most common type of spending at the majority white schools was new construction for 60 percent of these schools. Not a single segregated black school ever received new construction funds from fiscal year 2011 to 2015.

So this is a concerning pattern. This proposal is one of the typical case of this. I'm against this proposal.

Kiku Hibino

Parent of NTA student

My child is a student at NTA, a Level 1+ Title 1 school where he is excelling due to the wonderfully dedicated work of the administrators, teachers, and parents. NTA was not consulted as required by Policy Manual Section 703.2, Section 3. Because we would have expressed our opposition to this change.

Our concern is regarding the massive impact to our school's performance, community, and enrollment numbers. I request that you meet with NTA parents to clarify this boundary change and to discuss the future plan to maintain this strong academic community and the high performing school.

We do not feel that our interests are being well served with this move and that this has not been conducted in the spirit of the MCLV Title 1, Parental Involvement Policy, Section 801.3.

Student C

NTA 3rd grader

I am a third grader in NTA. I am against the proposal because I think it is wrong. It's not fair to NTA. It's another school CPS is destroying. NTA is a Level 1+, and we have a gym, a pool, a park, mostly everything. All of that will be great for high school, but there are still schools who have not even finished kindergarten. It would distract the young kids' education. It would put the next generation of kids in trouble.

NTA is the best school for everyone, black or white or Asian like me. Please do not close NTA.

Pauline Lipman

Professor of Education Policy at UIC

I'm a Professor of Education Policy at UIC.

I'm a researcher, and I work with data, but I'm not going to discuss CPS data. I've been testifying at school closing hearings since 2004. Every year parents, teachers, students, and researchers like me come with testimonies and data for why a school should not be closed. But the mayor and his appointed ward are not weighing data, no disrespect to you, sir.

There is no way to understand the Board's proposal to close NTA and shuffle students to South Loop outside the larger context of race, real estate, and privatization. So-called disparities between South Loop and NTA are negligible. That's smoke and mirrors.

Here are some data we should pay attention to. Since 2001, CPS has closed, phased-out, consolidated, or turned around 160 schools, almost all in black and brown communities. 87 percent of all students affected have been African-American. Meanwhile CPS authorized 130 charter schools and spent money for that.

Students shuffle from school to school away from families and trusted adults out of their neighborhood. Students from Price were shuffled to NTA. Now NTA students are going to be shuffled again. The NTA closing is tied to closing the only neighborhood high schools in Englewood. While CPS invests in schools in affluent and white north side, they disinvest in neighborhood black schools.

This is part of an assault on low-income black Chicagoans that has driven 240,000 African-Americans out of Chicago since 2000 and cut the black teaching force almost in half. Our data show that school closings have not improved education and have been destabilizing for children and families and communities.

Latasha Watkins

CPS student (undisclosed school)

Is this really about a boundary change? If so, then a separate hearing really should be held regarding the high school portion of this. It's not the building that makes the school, it's the people is what I heard. As long as the people are white enough. Why don't current families within NTA boundaries send their children to NTA now, is the question?

I feel like the problem of overcrowding at South Loop is a created problem when 40 percent of the children are from outside of South Loop's neighborhood boundary. The school is not overcrowded if it only admits the students within its boundary.

I asked Alderman Dowell specifically about whether we would do an attendance assessment, and I think respectfully she said, no, we're not going to do that. Why? Why is that not being done to understand whether we really need to build, number one, a new school? And then, two, whether we need to sacrifice NTA for a high school.

We already talked about what community members generated this proposal, which were not those from NTA who have not been involved in creating a proposal.

And why have no other alternatives been seriously considered? For instance, why are Chinatown or South Loop or Bridgeport not offering one of their buildings for this conversion? What about investing in Dunbar and Phillips to better impact more CPS students, specifically those that are black and brown. What about building a new high school building structure instead of a new elementary school for South Loop?

As an NTA community, we're not against communities having a high school that they well deserve. We're not against diversity. In fact, diversity is occurring naturally at NTA already. What we are against is sacrificing our students, who why should they bear the burden of this change? Why should they be displaced and do so at their academic risk? Personally I am a CPS student.

Chris Hall

I oppose the plan. This deal has been described as not perfect but good. However, in reality a good deal is one where sacrifice and hardship are shared. When you list out the sacrifices in this deal, NTA students are the ones who lose their school building. NTA students are the one who lose their teachers. NTA students are the ones who lose the administration that has lifted their school to its current 1+ height.

NTA students are the only ones who lose. However, this has always been known since the plan was devised. The reality is that the current proposal offers political benefits that outweigh the cost to the community and especially those born solely by the students and families at NTA.

The question then is is there a solution within the current proposal that could make it at least a good one? I believe there is. If the building at Cermak and State is the only viable high school option for the communities involved, then the new building at 16th and Clark should become the new NTA.

Now, this solution is still far from perfect. Ask anybody from the NTA community if they want to be forced from their school. Furthermore, it still inherits the issues with the current plan, most notably that both schools will suffer from overcrowding in the very near future. However, this common sense change to the proposal is also fair and has precedence.

Dr. Janice Jackson has said the proposal was to write the wrong committed by CPS just ten years ago. Alderman Dowell said this as well. This statement is disingenuous at best. But if there is any honesty to this, this change would be a huge leap closer to that goal.

Furthermore, this solution, unlike the first ever a closing of a Level 1+ school, is not without precedent. It is the exact same solution that CPS implemented at South Loop Elementary for the first time the same vulnerable families were displaced from their school.

At the last meeting a representative from PDNA noted that the schools are the community's assets, and the community needs to decide how they're best utilized. I agree with that sentiment, let the community decide. Is my proposal perfect? No, but neither is the current one.

Leonard E. Mc Gee

President of the GAP Community Organization.

I'm the president of the GAP Community Organization.

First of all, I'd like for you to consider the boundaries to be that of the TIF boundaries. The TIF which was back in 1998 under Madeline Habecock, who's the one that actually paid the \$38 million to build the school, which is built by black money, not South Loop. The school belongs to the TIF. And we are in support of bringing in the high school, and the key word here, is quality, a quality high school.

They have talked about a lot of high schools in the area, but the issue is quality. We would like to make sure that the TIF boundary, the people who paid for it -- and those are black people who paid for it, tax increment financing over the last 20 years have actually put up \$38 million. Most of the people here didn't put a dime into the school.

So we would like to have our building back. We're already at the table. We want the boundaries to reflect what the TIF is. And anybody else who wants to sit at the table, we welcome them. But the African-American community that built it and paid for it should have access to the high school.

Johannetta Diming

Parent and resident of Bronzeville

I'm here as a parent and a resident of the low-income community of Bronzeville. I'm here because all this stuff that we're talking about, can none of this make sense to half the people that's trying to make the decision. The only thing I'm asking is that whatever decisions you all make, could you all just think about us, think about us because our kids, they need a chance too.

We're trying to do what we can to make sure our kids have equal rights like everybody else. We're trying to do the right thing by our kids. We're asking you all the same thing, just do right by our kids. Our kids deserve it. They didn't do nothing wrong. Thank you.

STUDENT D

NTA 7th grader

I am 12 years old in the 7th grade, and I am a proud NTA scholar and a proud member of NTA Student Congress where we are taught to be leaders and advocates for our school. I have been attending NTA since I was in kindergarten. In my eight years at NTA, being an only child, I have met so many amazing teachers, staff. And, most of all, I have built friendships with my peers.

I've gone from a kid who was shy to a teen who has been taught by my teachers to believe in myself. NTA is not just an elementary school to me. It's my second home. More than anything, NTA is where I began learning life skills to prepare me for my future.

I feel this proposal is racist and unjust towards African-American students and should not be continued. CPS does not listen to how the students, families, and staff feel. They only care about making change for South Loop and other communities and breaking apart our NTA family.

I have said this before, and I will say it again. CPS needs to be building up schools, not tearing them down. Black students lives and their education matter, but they obviously can't see that. Our principal, Mr. Castelaz, is an amazing principal who believes in all of his students. NTA needs to remain a Level 1+ elementary school and nothing less. NTA is here to stay.

Milda Saunders

Parent of NTA students,

I'm an NTA parent of two children, a physician, and a lifelong Chicagoan. NTA is a Level 1, predominantly African-American, predominantly low-income school. We should be studied and emulated, not closed or boundary changed out of existence. We support diverse schools both racially and socioeconomically. We welcome families to join us. But to close a high-functioning school because it sits on prime real estate, that's not integration, that's colonization.

As a lifelong south-sider, I agree that the near south side should have a high school option, but this is not the way. Has CPS ever closed a Level 1 school? I sympathize with parents in Chinatown, Bridgeport, near south, and even the South Loop. Your struggles are important, but our children matter too.

NTA has school supports, medical clinics, and, more importantly, staff and faculty who have always wanted them there and have always supported. We are better than this, Chicago. We are better than this, CPS. This is a false choice. This proposal does not make sense. We shouldn't close Level 1+ schools. We shouldn't build a high school that will rapidly be too small for all of the communities that it proposes it will serve. And we don't let one community take a school from another community just because they want it.

Let's come up with an equitable and rational plan. Let's consider Dunbar, King, Phillips, or other schools other than this plan. We're better than this.

STUDENT E

NTA 3rd grader

I am a third grade student at NTA. I have been there since I was in kindergarten. I have so many friends at NTA I can't even count them. Many of them are not even in my grade. It's like a second family to me. NTA has the most amazing teachers. They make learning exciting and fun. They are always there to help.

We have a program called second step which helps us learn with kids in other classes and get to know them. This has helped to make new friends outside of my regular homeroom. We can compare how I like one thing and they might like another thing. They encourage you to be partners across classrooms. We have an awesome pool with great swim classes. And I know I'm a much better swimmer than I used to be.

I think the plan to convert NTA to a high school is wrong. It will hurt many families, including mine. I have two younger siblings. My sister is here at NTA in kindergarten, and my brother is two years old. Like many families, we'd be split apart. I would stay at NTA, my sister has to go to South Loop, and my brother can't go to either one.

Because the plan requires a lot of construction, I'm afraid I would lose a lot of friends because who wants to learn in a construction zone. It can't be good for any student's education to deal

with that in class. I'd lose the pool as well. My sister definitely loses the pool because South Loop does not have one. And also the health center.

I take public transit with my dad and get to school, my dad and sister to get to school. We're not sure how that will work when my building is ten blocks away from hers. I'm afraid CPS would be tearing apart the NTA community that I love. This plan will hurt many families, including destroying the community.

Isaac Castelaz

Principal at NTA

I'm the principal at National Teachers Academy. Back in 1966, nearly to this day, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., moved into a west side apartment to join a movement designed to desegregate Chicago. During this time in our city, Dr. King came to see that more than passing new laws, the crisis Chicagoans faced could only be solved once we learn to "desegregate our minds."

In so doing, he called for "a coalition of conscience", brave people of every race and background working together to serve the cause of equity. He said, "our power is in our unity, the force of our souls, and the determination of our bodies."

This proposal reminds us of the conditions King spoke of so long ago. We are told this plan could right a historical wrong in which the boundary of South Loop school was moved to exclude poor black children who were sent to NTA, a new unproven school at that time. However, this proposal won't right that wrong because NTA has righted that wrong all by itself.

Whereas the boundary-ship years ago denied poor black children a quality education at South Loop Elementary School, those same students today have a quality, high-quality option at NTA, which has risen from a Level 3 to a Level 1+ school in four years. NTA is a product of not only the kind of coalition Dr. King sought but also the power of the kind of unity he envisioned so many years ago.

The process of considering this proposal has shown us just how powerful the NTA community is. But I also think that hidden beneath it all is an opportunity, an opportunity to do something truly remarkable. Let's do as Dr. King urged and form a coalition of conscience between our communities. I call for us all, NTA, South Loop, Chinatown, CPS, and, yes, City Hall, to reconsider this proposal together and explore alternatives which work for everyone.

Patricia Crosby

**Biological, foster and adoptive parent of 6
former and current NTA students**

I'm a proud NTA biological foster and adoptive parent of six young brilliant young men, and I have two left at NTA. We're a Level 1+ elementary school. Our children, the teachers, staff, and parents work extremely hard to get to that level status. Now, usually when you achieve this major accomplishment, you're rewarded. But instead it feels as if we're being punished.

When I think about NTA, I think about it takes a village to raise a child. That's what NTA has been doing. One of my children who's in seventh grade now, he was my foster son, now he's my adopted son, he went to two schools prior to this, and he was labeled as learning disabled. But being at NTA, he thrived. Now, I already knew he was a genius, but being at NTA, he thrived. Right now his grades -- he's in seventh grade. His grades are As and Bs, and they're trying to get him into a select enrollment school.

It's unfortunate -- I mean, I agree -- I respect everyone's opinion, but what people have to understand is that we have to think about the children. NTA children, they need that elementary school. Please try not to turn NTA into a high school.

Student F

It makes no sense to put NTA students in a different environment. This will affect students mentally and academically. This will make NTA students feel as though they are inferior since they are not being considered at all. This will make it less convenient for NTA families. Should you really take away someone's home because their scores are slightly lower than people from families that have more money and resources?

Grammar school is where a student develops the most. Would you want to put fourth graders in the same environment as high-schoolers? Even eighth graders have trouble transitioning to high school. You give fourth graders the burden of having to live with this four years early. Think back to your fourth grade year where you probably barely managed to make friends and all of a sudden having to be put near high-schoolers who have completely different ways than you do.

What would become of your teachers' and our students' future? It is true that people must travel out of their way to go to high school, but now we have to go out of our way to go to school. Students in the South Loop will have an opportunity to be successful, but another community won't. So you are prioritizing another community over us.

How would you feel if you had a current home ripped away from you and you were told to go somewhere else, a home that you had for most of your life taken away by people who don't even know you just because they can. Just because your peers scored slightly lower so the outcome of your life just got completely changed because of someone else's test score, not yours, and nothing that you say or do could change that.

We are not numbers or letters that could be measured and placed in boxes. We are people. Thanks to our great teachers, our scores are rapidly growing, and at this rate we'll soon surpass the South Loop. Your Honor, I'm almost done, so can I just please have --

HEARING OFFICER DOLAN: Sir, I have to move you along. I still have half more to go. Thank you so much.

Student G

NTA 6th grader

I'm a sixth grader attending the school NTA. Our school shouldn't be shut down just because people want it for their kids. But my classmates and my peers and I, we deserve a quality education also.

I'm kind of a problem child at school, and staff at my school do all that they can to make it better for me and the rest of the kids at NTA. Over the past four years that I've been attending NTA, people have been helping me and giving me chance after chance, which shows that they do care. Because if they didn't, I would probably be expelled.

So I appreciate the staff, Ms. Brown, Ms. Brooks, Mr. Castelaz, and a former staff member, Mr. Valencia, and other staff members. NTA is our second home. We all live here, so don't destroy it. Thank you, and have a good night.

Shantel Boston

Parent of three NTA students

I am a parent of three children who currently attend NTA. The current proposal that presents the idea to close NTA and scatter our children into three separate buildings is a huge inconvenience to my family and me. Even though I became a mother at a very young age, I have always aimed to give my children a sense of stability wherever I chose to reside. I have always aimed to do whatever was necessary to assure just that.

Even in the time where we lived in a group home clear across town, I traveled miles to get them to a quality school on time every day and walked them to school every day to ensure their safety when we were living in a gang-infested neighborhood. Now we live in a much better neighborhood where our children are allowed to walk by themselves to school.

And now with them being separated to different buildings, my children will have to travel to and from school without the protection of each other, especially my 5-year-old son who will have to travel alone to school.

There's room for over 4,000 students at Wendell Phillips High School and also Dunbar High School for residents of the community. The said proposal is supposed to accommodate the high school students to attend currently, and I don't understand why small children will be forced to make a further commute for school when the high school students are at an appropriate age to commute back and forth to school using public transportation.

The fact that these children and their families have made the decision not to attend their neighborhood high school is a choice they have made. But the schools are there and available to all of these communities that are requesting for another school at the cost of our school, NTA, and it is totally unacceptable.

My point in all that I have said is that all of our young school age generations deserve a quality education, but must it be at a cost of the inconvenience to some but a convenience to others? I am and will always be opposed to the current proposal of closing NTA.

Oliva Shelton

Grandmother of NTA student

I'm here to oppose closing NTA. I am a grandmother. My grandson Amil, he's in third grade. Amil used to be an introvert. Since we came to NTA, Amil has really grown. He has been on the honor roll at least for two years.

I'm older. I am committed because Amil is committed to going to school, being at school on time. Amil is committed to being in his class. Amil is committed to not wanting to miss anything. Now, why does he feel like that? Because he loves the school.

I love the school by observing and participating. And, most importantly, NTA is a community. Amil is taught -- I love the way they position their classes. It's like a community. It's in a round table. He's learning not just academics, he's learning life lessons, how to be in the community and how to be an individual. I really love that.

Also, my grandson has asthma. And the clinic, it's a lifesaver. He has had several episodes. The clinic was able to take care of it just like that. I didn't have to go anywhere. They knew what to do. They have his records on file, and they knew what to do.

Secondly, I just think that CPS and everybody else needs to know there's never a wrong time to do the right thing. Please do the right thing when it comes to NTA because it's just not fair. It's just not fair. And everybody that stands on the sidelines and don't speak up, you're guilty. You should always say something when you have an opportunity.

Sarah Bush

Parent of two NTA students

I am a parent of two daughters at NTA. I want to talk about the process here. First of all, despite a number of what can only be described as pro forma community meetings, there's been very little community input, especially from NTA. As Ms. Feldstein pointed out, this was a plan that was hatched long ago, long before anyone at NTA was consulted.

Meanwhile, at the community meetings we've heard speaker after speaker raising concerns about the destruction of our wonderful community, yet the plan before you scatters our students across four different campuses splitting up families and destroying that community.

Speakers have pointed out that the proposed high school does not really meet the needs of the full near south community, Chinatown, Bronzeville, Bridgeport. Many are left out. It's simply too small. We've heard about how fast this community is growing. It's going to be overcrowded almost immediately. Students are being forced into a school built for a grammar school.

We've asked the Board to consider other options to meet that need in the near south community. Just this past week we've requested that the Office of Family and Community Engagement facilitate a meeting between NTA parents and those in the South Loop, and we were refused that meeting. That should have been the first step in any community-driven process, considering many alternatives.

I want to turn then to the personal side. Like many NTA families, my family has already felt the impact of a school closing. My daughter will be one of those fourth graders sent to school with high school students. Simply not acceptable. This instability created by this plan is bad for children, bad for families, and bad for this city.

What kind of a school district closes a high-functioning well loved school community? This process has been deeply flawed from the very beginning, and this plan is a terrible one. I stand before you in strong opposition to the plan to close NTA.

Joy Clendenning

Parent of a CPS student

I'm honored and humbled to stand here with the amazing people in this room and the amazing people in the overflow room.

I'm a CPS parent. It's my 16th year. I'm a former public high school teacher. I have a BA from Harvard in history and a master's in education policy from UIC. I'm the managing director for Raise Your Hand for Illinois Public Education, a parent advocacy group, which advocates for equitable and adequate public education funding and education policies which provide quality education to all children.

Over the past eight years, we have worked with parents, students, and schools about facilities and programs at their schools throughout CPS and Illinois. We've read and analyzed the various criteria year after year, the various formulæ applied, the legal code.

Our conclusion: Without a robust authentic community engagement process that creates a real comprehensive citywide facilities plan, CPS should put a hold on closing and opening schools. Speaking specifically to the case of NTA, Your Honor, this proposal should not move forward because this is not a community developed and community supported proposal, therefore it does not meet that criteria.

And the proposal is not in the best interest of the students. NTA students are at a wonderful school which meets their needs, and they are doing well. Moving them is not in their best interest.

You have the chance, Your Honor, to make the right and just recommendation, tell CPS that this school action should not move forward.

Priya Shah

CPS teacher and Parent of NTA student

I stand before you today as both a veteran CPS teacher and parent to a 2nd grader at NTA. NTA's boundaries should not be decimated, nor should it be closed and converted to a high school.

As an educator, I'm deeply offended that this proposal even exists. The proposal is rooted in racism and blatantly ignores the tremendous achievement that NTA has shown during its tenure as a Chicago public school.

Working in a high-achieving selective enrollment school on the north side, I'm painfully aware that these types of proposals never attempt to destroy school communities in more affluent areas. As a parent, the options that have been presented for my son and his peers are unacceptable.

I reject Option 1, to send him to a school that spans three buildings and has 1800 plus students. There's no data that supports 6,000 schools that are so immensely large, especially for low-income minority students.

I also reject Option 2, keeping him at NTA. The prospect of keeping him at a school that is slowly being destroyed and reduced year by year while half of his schoolmates are transferred to another school is equally unacceptable. As the youngest grade in the building, he would be a 4th grader. My son would no longer have opportunities to shine as a mentor to younger students as our phenomenal NTA middle-schoolers who are behind me do on a daily basis.

Your Honor, my message to you is this: Encourage the Chicago Board of Education to vote against this proposal. Show integrity by asking them to visit NTA to see firsthand the magic that occurs there on a daily basis. Have the courage to view the proposal objectively without the influence of politics and those with wealth and power. Finally, do what is right for my child and NTA's children.

Kevin Staniel

Resident of the GAP

I'm a resident of the GAP, which is between 31st-35th Michigan and King Drive, for over 25 years. Personally my 18-year run at CPS ends this spring when my daughter graduates from high school, my youngest daughter graduates from high school. At no time did either of my daughters have a good high school option. I'm here not for myself, I'm here for all of my neighbors so that they don't have to travel very far or pay for private high schools as they do right now.

In the GAP we have eight high schools within six blocks of our neighborhood, five citywide charters, two military academies, two alternative schools, an all girls school, an all boys school. All of those schools but one are Level 2 or 2+.

In your press release for this, Pastor Earl Grandberry is quoted saying all of our kids deserve access to a high-quality high school in their community. If this plan is approved, students from

the North Bronzeville area will no longer have to travel far outside their community to reach their dream school.

Well, in my neighborhood they won't. We're in the preference enrollment boundary. If you choose to go forward with this plan, I ask that you include the Pershing boundaries within this plan. Because the thing is -- and let me say that as a proud Pershing graduate also.

According to your numbers, the GAP and Lake Meadows have a total of 87 students. So you're telling me that you can't find -- using about 31 percent of the students would attend, you cannot find about 45 seats for the students in our communities?

Anna Lundvick

Two Chicagos. When Dr. King delivered his "I Have a Dream" speech, he challenged a promise made in the Declaration of Independence. We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal with certain unalienable rights, life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Dr. King said it is obvious that America has defaulted on this promissory note.

Instead of honoring this sacred obligation, American has given the Negro people a bad check, a check that has come back marked insufficient funds.

Two Chicagos. The plan to close NTA centers around one school, Phillips, a Level 2 high school who students are majority of black and economically disadvantaged. A powerful South Loop community leader shared with the media that Phillips is not an option and that it's no wonder South Loop parents scramble to find a better high school for their children.

CPS supports the belief that Phillips is not quality in a letter to South Loop families stating that converting NTA to a high school provides, "a continuum of high-quality school options". And at the same time CPS is declaring that Phillips is quality for displaced black students from Englewood.

In a letter to Englewood families, CPS states that Phillips provides Englewood students with a, "higher performing high school that is a good match for their needs". Their needs? Whose needs? Black students' needs? Definitely not white students' needs.

Two Chicagos. CPS promises a commitment to every child from every community, but do they really? Where else but in Chicago would a school Board close a top-rated school transforming the lives of black students. Where else but in the city CNN reported as the most segregated in a nation would a school board close a school where black students grow more than 75 percent of students nationwide. This is another bad check, another promissory note coming back marked insufficient funds.

Two Chicagos. Eliminating NTA in order to provide a high-quality school option --

HEARING OFFICER DOLAN: Thank you very much.

C.W. Chan

**Chairperson, Coalition for Better Chinese
American Committee and Chinatown Steering
Committee**

I'm chairperson for the Coalition for Better Chinese American Committee, also chairperson for Chinatown Steering Committee that's in charge of development of the community.

So how long we been talking about this issue of the high school issue? A few months ago when the community came to the public hearings, me as a parent, put up these T-shirts saying that we've been waiting for 40 years. 40 years only indicate these people, the parents that experience. 40 years means a lifetime for them. I have talked to people over 80 years old. 60 some years ago they already were talking about the experience of taking two hours to go to high school while growing up in Chinatown.

Recently Chinatown was discussing the community's centennial celebration of a few years ago, which means we have been at the same location for over a hundred years. Very few people realize that.

Look at the City of Chicago. As an ethnic community, I think we've been at the same location longer than anybody else. So we have experienced, we have seen the history of neglect and inequities. For the whole hundred years, we never had a high school. So when we engaged in this recent plan, we interviewed about 2,000 people in the community.

The high school issue came out to be one of the top concerns for the whole community. That brought us to come to the hearing for the last few months. We have been to every single public hearing and board meeting for the last few months just to state our case.

We started with several approaches. We came up with data statistics. It was never questioned that we had a need. But then I think nothing happened. So we started having emotional response like is it because we've been advocating --

HEARING OFFICER DOLAN: Sir, thank you for your time here this evening.

Heidi Chan

Resident of Chinatown

I've been living in Chicago over 50 years, and I have seen a lot of problems in Chinatown area and also social problems. Now it's come to the school. When I saw my friends and some people younger than me or some nephew or nieces, they finish school, they could not go to a local high school. And they have to travel so far away, more than one hour, more than three miles to go. They have to get up so early. So we have the problem.

Chinatown is already 100 years old, and we've been waiting for about 40 years to get a high school. And now we have a chance to hear that we have a high school. But I'm for that.

And I agree all the people in this area, they try to help the kids to go to a quality high school. And also the length of traveling. So I'm for this because when I heard the people say you can go to Phillips, Dunbar or something, but when you finish school, would you send your kid to Dunbar or Phillips or something else?

Cathy Nieng

Parent of a NTA student

I'm standing here today to strongly oppose this proposal when I should be in bed recovering from the flu. I am the parent of a NTA student and a 14-year South Loop resident.

It's interesting to me that many people who are for this proposal go on and talk about how they're not racist or that this is not a racist plan. So I would like to talk about something that everybody can get behind, and that is traffic, that is transportation.

As a resident who lives north of Roosevelt Road, when my husband and I drive our daughter to and from school, we pass by where the new South Loop school is going to be. There is a Mariano's there. There is also a Daystar Elementary School, a private Christian school that is also planning on expanding.

Because of this, there is going to be a severe traffic and congestion issue in this area. There's nothing I can do personally to stop this school from being built, but because of this plan, the students from NTA who are going to be displaced are going to be displaced -- the youngest ones are going to be displaced to the old building at 1212 South Clinton.

Considering the fact that many students have already been displaced from Ickes and the Hilliard Homes had the opportunity to walk to NTA and be able to do that. The youngest, most vulnerable of them would have to travel that much further without the help of being in the neighborhood and having to take public transportation.

This is not fair to the students who are the most vulnerable and would need the most help to do this. This is one very practical reason that I oppose this plan.

Sara Strasser

Parent of NTA students

I just want to start off by saying good evening and how much I really don't want to be here tonight. My daughter is really sick. She called me crying on the way down here. This has been an enormous strain on my family. The amount of meetings that we have had to attend is something that no family he should have to do.

But I'm here to talk about how this plan affects my family and families like mine with more than one child. I am here with a final attempt to get you to listen and to allow me to keep my children together.

I have three kids. They're all three years apart. This plan splits my kids apart. My son, he would stay at NTA. My daughter has to go to South Loop. And my young child would not be able to go to either one. NTA is the school that my husband and I chose for them. We visited many schools. We ranked NTA No. 1, and we chose NTA.

Sometimes people ask why didn't I choose my neighborhood school, and I'm going to add a small fact here. Aside from the fact that they're on their fourth principal in four years, CPS tried to do a very similar thing to my neighborhood school. Last year they proposed consolidating and overcrowding two majority black schools, one which was my neighborhood school, to relieve overcrowding at a nearby school that just happened to be 85 percent white.

I am trying, CPS, but we are really going to become one of those families that are all too familiar in this city that have given up and left CPS for the sanity of their families. I ask that you not allow this boundary change as it splits apart many families just like mine.

Milica Medved.

Parent of NTA student

My son is in kindergarten at NTA. I first of all want to say that this proposal is a wrong solution because it's wrong and it's also a solution for a wrong problem because everybody keeps saying we need a high school, we need a high school. There is a high school. Everybody has a high school.

Okay, so apparently there's a problem with Phillips. Why is there a problem with Phillips? We had the Prairie District Neighborhood Association come here on record to state that they have been working on this problem since 2006. So that's 12 years. That's 12 years of opportunity to work with CPS, to invest in a neighborhood school, to ask for money and investment. Look at all this energy and all the money and all the investments and all the construction that is involved in this proposal. A lot of grief could have been avoided if that money were invested in Phillips. So there's that.

On the other hand, I wanted to put it on record that I have been to NTA to check whether or not that's a good school for my son. I happened to walk into the open house, and I looked at the data that was presented, and it was really astounding. I have seen the growth charts for students, 5th, 6th, 7th, 8th grade, this is neighborhood students which are growing two or three times more than the projected growth based on the testing standards. That is huge.

This is how you pick schools. You don't pick a South Loop school because the students test well. You pick a school where children will grow. And this is what NTA gives their students, an opportunity to grow.

Hannah El-Amin

I want to speak to the idea or the notion that the results of the proposal are not harmful. The 3rd Ward where NTA is housed has had more closures and more displacement of African-American economically disadvantaged students than any other ward in Chicago.

Research shows the ill-effects of displacement, again, in one year before displacement and lasts up to three years after in terms of attendance, academic performance, college attendance as well. Merge that data with the fact that many NTA families have already lived through displacement two to three times, including getting kicked out of the very school community that is now asking them to move once again to use our building for their needs shamelessly and comically cloaking this in righting a wrong. Also previous mergers in the ward have been shown to drop the ratings of low-performing schools, including Pershing Elementary.

This proposal would serve to create the largest elementary school in the CPS school district spread across three to four campuses when school size has been shown to adversely affect academic achievement.

I know that we have been told that the children are being moved to a better school or that South Loop Elementary is a better school than NTA, but the achievements at South Loop Elementary are expected from school with greater economic advantages, access to resources, and no history of the repeated destabilization of their education. Compare that to NTA who has exactly the opposite set of circumstances which has risen from the lowest possible CPS ranking to the absolute highest possible CPS ranking in just three years.

And we're also one of only 18 schools out of over 600 in CPS that serve the African-American community with this academic and community profile in this way, one of only 18, I want to state that again, and are we set to take this away.

You will hear some voices in support of this proposal, but I want to make sure that you're careful to notice that the only support that you hear are those with everything to gain and nothing to lose.

Nadiyah Mohajir

Parent of NTA student

I'm here to express my strong opposition to this plan. I'm here to tell you that this is not about me being emotional. This is actually about doing what's right.

I have three children and have applied to various schools using the central application process for the last eight years. We have had the experience of being registered or enrolled at eight different schools at different times during the last eight years, and we have visited over 26.

I have seen the great work that is happening at NTA, which surpasses any of the other schools that we've been at or visited. Not simply just because of the phenomenal academics but because of the strong social justice curriculum values that they are exposed to since kindergarten.

NTA gives me the hope for not only the kind of citizen my children and their peers will become but for the future of this amazing city. I truly believe that tomorrow's activists and public servants will come from National Teachers Academy. Schools like this should be highlighted, replicated, and improved and not underutilized or closed down.

Unfortunately, though, we're here today because CPS has decided it's in the best long-term interest for the near south community to dismantle this great work that's happening.

Your Honor, tonight I ask you will a new thousand-seat building really serve the needs any better than the existing 4,500 vacancies? What if CPS added an excellent ESL program in bilingual education at one of these schools like Kelly High School has been offering to its students from time to time for decades? Or why not an IB program or STEM partnership with IIT to these underutilized high schools? Invest in the teachers and the administration to make these schools more attractive.

Our children deserve a better plan. Chicago deserves a better plan. And I stand today with the NTA community in calling a pause for this plan because this proposal should not move forward. We cannot sacrifice a successful school and must find alternatives.

Student H.

NTA 5th grader

I'm a fifth grader at National Teachers Academy. I've been there since 1st grade.

I think that this proposal is a bad idea because it will move a lot of kids, and it's already a perfect school for too many people. It will break our community apart. I say community because NTA is more than just a school to us. It's our home, our family. This includes our amazing principal, Mr. Castelaz; our inspired teachers; and our beloved friends.

As with all good families, NTA is a source of stability and confidence. We need to learn and grow in school and outside of school. We do this well and deserve to be supported and not torn apart like how my brother and I will be split between schools.

I want to also share that at NTA we have something that's called the NTA way. The NTA way encourages us to always display courage, commitment, awareness, and integrity. Because of this, even though I used to be a very shy kid, I have developed the courage to speak up here for my school tonight and show my commitment to my school.

And out of the NTA way, I also ask our school leaders to have awareness to be able to see that this plan is hurtful and have integrity to be able to reject it. Please think of us children and do better. We are putting trust in you.

And I would also like to add our slogan, We are NTA, and NTA is here to stay. This might not sound like much, but it demonstrates NTA and its core values. We spent money that we don't

have to promote these slogans, and they're not to be thrown around just like we would with a crass proposal.

Bonnie Sanchez-Carlson

Near South Planning Board

I represent Near South Planning Board, a community-based organization serving the community since 1946.

Our organization was deeply concerned about the boundaries for the plan that was presented before us. In fact, on August 25th we provided a letter to CPS questioning the boundaries proposed for the new elementary school.

In our letter we were adamant that the boundaries be extended south, in particular, south to include what was the former Ickes housing project so that all, former residents and new students, had equitable access to a quality education.

In our most recent review of the updated plans, we were pleased to discover that our recommendations are being considered and have been incorporated in the newly-released proposal. As I mentioned also in our August 2017 letter, the unprecedented growth of our residential population in the past decade with more units proposed for future development necessitated the call for a public high school to serve the community.

In reviewing the recent changes made to the plan and the extension of the boundaries noted in said plan, Near South Planning Board supports the newest version of this plan.

Gregg McClure

To the NTA staff, parents, and our supporters, I applaud and I celebrate you. You took the fight to the very doorsteps of the hidden figures that have drawn up these new boundaries. The city and this neighborhood in which NTA thrives is in the spotlight. But be careful, though, I was once told that all publicity is not good publicity.

I stand here disappointed. I am disappointed for believing in my city, my mayor, the 3rd Ward alderman, and everyone else involved in the decision of kicking out our children of NTA. I mean, kudos to those that are considered powers that be or the people with the money to influence. Your point was proven.

Maybe instead of teaching my children that going to school every day and doing the best in class and in your community and being the best person that you can be is simply not enough. I need to teach them that their money and the people that they form their allegiances with is what really matters.

I gambled five years ago when I chose NTA for my son, not on the school but on CPS. You see, my parents were on to something back in 1980 when they decided to send me to Catholic school

K through college. It wasn't because we were devout Catholics, and it wasn't about the quality of the education, but it was about the instability, the political influence, and the questioning of the true plight of our city schools.

I now get it. NTA was never built for the inhabitants that are in there today. NTA was targeted since 2010 as an important asset to others. My time is splitting up.

I implore the appointed Board to make history today and vote down the measures that CPS leadership is presenting. This is the only way to right this wrong. Leave the NTA children and community be. We've only shined up the jewel that has been sitting in the rough for years, and we only want it to continue to shine.

Mark Lockwood

Parent of NTA student

Throughout these proceedings the NTA families have been characterized as loud, rowdy, even hateful. I'm here to tell you today, Your Honor, that we are not hateful. I would like to ask you to come to NTA for yourself and see the love that is at NTA. It's a very impressive place. We can sit here all night and talk till we're blue in the face about how wonderful NTA is. I wish you would take the opportunity to stop by and see for yourself.

It's very troubling tonight to hear the members who are in favor of this motion to speak about NTA as if it's a vacant building. They are right when they say that it is a very valuable asset. And the asset is inside the walls.

So I want to be clear, we're only here for one fundamental reason. We're here to defend against the closure of a Level 1+ Chicago Public School that serves mostly black low-income children. That's it. We're here to defend against the closure of a Level 1+ CPS school. I don't know if that sounds odd to you, but it's hard for me to wrap my mind around that.

I want to let you know I've been coming here for weeks and weeks and weeks. I object to the hostile takeover of my son's school. I object to being dragged into this contentious situation unwillingly. I object to the CPS leaders using NTA to divide these Chicago communities. We love our community members in Chinatown and in South Loop and Bridgeport. I object to the mayor going on TV and keeping praise upon Forrest Claypool when he should be praising NTA.

Tara Lockwood

Parent of NTA student

I'm here to read a letter that was written to the Chicago Board of Education of the Chicago Public Schools by the parents of students at National Teachers Academy, its Regional Gifted Center, but I'd like to make clear that that isn't a distinction I'm generally comfortable making. For the most part, my child is just another student at NTA; however, CPS makes that distinction.

So it is on our behalf I'd like to say we're writing to address the current proposal to change the South Loop attendance boundary and convert National Teachers Academy into a neighborhood

high school for the South Loop community. This would also involve moving or phasing-out NTA's RGC.

We strongly disagree with this effort and urge you not to move forward with the plan that will erase our school. The decisions that we made for our children's education were deliberate. For many of us, this started with visiting different Regional Gifted Centers across the city, registering and testing our children, and carefully ranking schools. We talked with teachers, administrators, and parents and subsequently selected NTA as the best choice for us.

We had other options. We could have gone with different Regional Gifted Centers, high-performing magnets, or neighborhood programs. But we chose NTA knowing that, unlike some other Chicago RGCs, it is a school that put RGC students and neighborhood students together for lunch, recess, and enrichment.

This was important to us as we saw the school that was racially and socially and economically and religiously diverse. Also, the level of academic rigor at NTA is second to none, and NTA has high expectations for students both academically and socially.

We ask that you keep our NTA's growing RGC intact adding a kindergarten class each year until each grade has an RGC so that we continue to remain a part of the NTA community.

Louis Makarewicz

Representative from Chicago United for Equity

I'm here as one of the representatives from Chicago United for Equity, otherwise known as CUE, which recently produced community reports and racial equity analysis on the NTA question. I also served as one of the authors of that community report and was also a facilitator of the racial equity analysis that engaged over 300 participants from impacted communities over three town hall sessions over the past couple of months.

Some major community concerns that made themselves repeatedly apparent included unequal benefits to burdens on low-income students of color who have been accepting the burden of the sacrifice in this question, and service of advantages, which are largely taken over by more affluent peers.

Additional concerns highlighted the displacement of students, especially within the context of historical legacies of school closures in Chicago as well as the disproportionate impact on poor communities of those closures.

Messaging sent by shutting down a 1+rated program, especially given that existing programs such as Dunbar and Phillips are currently available and have the potential to be strengthened was of additional concern for participants.

Alternative proposals exist, including moving NTA to new independent facilities; investing and strengthening existing high schools, including Dunbar and Phillips; selling the old South Loop

facilities to generate up to \$35 million in capital funding for a new high school; redistributing selective enrollment seats from Jones College Prep and moving on to Phillips and Tillman; and, housing South Loop's K through 6 in the current facility and expanding the 7th through 12th grades in the new building at 16th and Dearborn allowing NTA to persist at its current location. Thank you very much. Alternative proposals exist. The community hopes that they are considered.

STUDENT I

NTA 3rd grader

I am a 3rd grader at NTA. I don't want you to take my school away because I have the best time at NTA. I have learned reading, science, swimming, and math. My school is a Level 1+ school, and I don't want to lose it.

I love the way my classmates are so nice. They made our school a Level 1+ school. My teacher taught me a lot of things, and I don't want that to go away. Please don't take my school away, please.

Denetta Jones

Parent of NTA students

I have two students at NTA. I'm a NTA parent. In 2013 they were displaced from their previous school. The new school that they attended did not bode well for them. They both had academic and emotional problems. I know from experience. They would get frustrated. I would get frustrated.

My prayers were answered when I moved to 2030 South State because NTA is right across the street. When I registered them, I had such the nicest time registering because the staff of NTA is phenomenal.

My daughters went from being D's and F students to A's and B's. They love the school. They love the students there. They love their teachers. My youngest daughter gives everyone a hug at the school.

I'm begging you not, please do not close the school because my daughters have already been through an emotional trauma being displaced from one school. I do not want them to go through that again.

Karen Wong

Resident of Chinatown/Bridgeport

I'm a lifelong Chinatown/Bridgeport resident and attended CPS schools throughout my entire educational career. I'm here to speak to Chinatown's need for a neighborhood high school. I think the greatest need that the high school would address is the issue of language access or lack thereof in our community.

Now, I was lucky enough to test into Walter Payton Prep, but a lot of my families were not as fortunate. My cousin Alex, for instance, immigrated from China to start his sophomore year of high school in Chicago. He did not place into any selective enrollment high school and enrolled at a south side neighborhood high school.

Class material was already difficult on its own but was even harder for Alex to follow due to the fact that the class was taught in the English language, which he was not well versed in at all just having immigrated from China a month ago before school started.

With no access to language support, he started falling behind and was too embarrassed to ask for help or raise his hand in class. He eventually stopped attending class altogether. The weight of the new material he had to learn coupled with the inability to understand the language the classes were taught in in the first place led him to drop out of high school his junior year. That was 2011.

Today it's even harder for kids. Now that there's a rigorous tier system, ESL and ELL children who live in Tier 3 but do not actually have the socioeconomic privilege of Tier 3 must reach impossible standards to get into schools that meet their needs. This is why language access is important. Chinese students deserve an equal opportunity at doing well and succeeding in school even if English is not their first language.

Furthermore, a language access is also important because bilingual language accommodation is important for parents to get involved in their children's education. My parents are small business owners in Chinatown who have always worked until late at night and still do. They simply aren't able to attend community meetings like this. And even if they did, the language barrier would serve as a huge obstacle preventing them from ever speaking out and taking a stand, much like all of you guys are doing today.

We don't all have that same privilege. There's a reason I'm only the fourth person in Chinatown to speak out tonight. This high school will serve as a step in the right direction of ending the cycle perpetuating a language barrier. It shouldn't stop here either.

Germaine Cade

Parent of NTA student

I stand here before you, Your Honor, in strong support of maintaining National Teachers Academy as the elementary school. And I am vehemently opposed to converting it or transforming it into a high school.

There are people who have asked me that are not familiar with NTA, Germaine, your son has access. He has choices. Why do you care so much? A couple reasons.

One, because one child is not the sum of a population of the school.

Two, because NTA has values that we live by. The fact that Principal Castelaz holds not only the staff and teachers accountable, he holds the students and the parents accountable. He leads with

transparency, and we all collectively as a community have come together to make the school what it is today.

I think thirdly, because it's a case of have and have nots and right or wrong. So I've listened to when we talk about we've developed a plan. But when one party of the plan has started developing it years before the other party is privileged to it, it's not right.

And so I think, Your Honor, you are on the precipice. I liken you to Chief Justice Earl Warren. You are in a place where you're going to have to make a decision. You're going to have to make a decision that may be unpopular on the side of politics, but it's the right thing to do when you look at the transcripts of what you've heard today.

Ben Shanbaum

Parent of NTA and South Loop students

I'm the parent of a child attending South Loop and a child attending NTA. I've spent years of my life and several gray hairs on my beard working with the South Loop community to try to help address its overcrowding problem, and I am vehemently opposed to the solution that has been put forth. It's bad. It manages to be a non-solution to an imminent catastrophe to just about everybody involved.

First, it's clearly bad for NTA. Now, you've heard plenty of people talking here, and it's not the fancy brickwork and the class windows, the lockers. It's not that that makes NTA what it is. It's the hard work and devotion, dedication, purpose of the people who are working there, of Mr. Castelaz, the principal; Mrs. Riffenberg, who you heard from earlier today; that have turned that school from a Level 3 to a Level 1+ in four years.

It's bad for the South Loop community because, as I said before, we've spent years and years fighting an overcrowding problem that has clearly resulted in sacrifices I've witnessed firsthand for my daughter. We end up with a solution that just puts a new school at capacity, potentially overcapacity from day one with the potential it's only going to get worse. It's really not a solution for those who are seeking a good high school.

Now, this is a tempting apple that has been thrown in the direction of this neighborhood; however, we have to look at the numbers and the demographics. NTA, as a building, can house 250 to 300 people per grade level. Right now it's being promised to 500 people per grade level in the guaranteed spot, another 150 per grade level in the preference boundary, and another 350 people per grade level in nearby private schools. It's not a solution for anybody.

Debbie Liu

So I've been able to witness CPS at its best as a proud alum of receiving college prep and at its worse by limiting public education from those who need it. I grew up with three younger sisters. One of the sisters worked hard but struggled with test taking. She wasn't able to grasp the topics as quickly as her peers. Overall she was just a B student.

She did her best, but she was not matched with her chosen selective enrollment. So my parents enrolled her at private school at De La Salle. I remembered she cried for days wondering why she wasn't good enough after receiving the rejection letter. But this story is not coming from any residents in greater Chinatown. CPS should not be in the business of only educating or especially educating high achievers.

Average students like my sisters and new immigrants who barely speak English and have other issues deserve an opportunity to reach college and reach the top echelon of society. However, for residents of Armour Square and Bridgeport growing up in an elementary school that is rated 1+ are left with 2 or lower nearby options, it is no wonder that families are sending their kids to private schools or moving out of the community altogether.

So this NTA conversion is the first serious attempt by CPS to address a long-term serious need of Chinatown. While this plan is beneficial for greater Chinatown, NTA does stand the most to lose. So should this unprecedented proposal pass, thoughtful and considerable long-term and transparent district-wide planning should accompany this and future plans.

Ivy Lam

Former Chinatown resident

We all have a long day today, especially we saw a lot of NTA's students and parents. We respect everybody's thought. Actually, I've been sacrifice for two of my kids, which is back to 1999. Because of the high school issue, I make a decision to moving away from Chicago to west suburb.

But since my kids, when they were still in elementary school because they're 18 months apart, my daughter and my son, and my daughter would say, mommy, I really want to be with my brother in the same school. So we decided to move.

Of course I understand not that many parents can afford to move away from their homeland, Chinatown. Especially me myself, I have to work in Chinatown, so I have to drive every day 45 minutes, and my husband have to drive over two hours to his work. But after that the main thing is my kids lost their childhood friends from elementary school. They have to build their relationship and new friends in their high school.

When they come back to Chinatown, they lost all their connection. Even my daughter just got married. When she came back from New York, she asked me, mommy, we still don't have high school in our neighborhood? I said, yeah. So thank you very much. This is just my experience. I'm in favor on CPS proposal.

Angela Lin

**Community outreach coordinator for CBCC, the
Coalition for a Better Chinese-American
Community**

I'm the community outreach coordinator for CBCC, the Coalition for a Better Chinese-American Community, which is a political advocacy and community development organization in Chinatown.

Despite the Chinese having lived in this area for over 100 years, Chinatown still has needs that are not met and have historically been pushed to later dates. This is not just schools. For example, Harding Square and Stanford Park were the only recreational facilities that serviced Chinatown for a long time. They were torn down in 1962 when the Dan Ryan Expressway was being built, which also split Chinatown in two. That was pretty devastating. And it wasn't replaced until 2000.

In the 40 years that Chinatown was neglected, other park investments were popping up in the rest of Chicago. This neglect applies to schools as well.

Chinatown was on its own in the '60s at a time when there were clear racial lines that were never crossed. Since the '20s, there was Italian Armour Square to the right, Irish Bridgeport to the left, and the Blackbow as it was called to the south. If you crossed any of these lines, you'd get beaten up. And even in the lines many Chinese were still harassed.

Half a century later, immigration policies have changed in Chinatown and Chicago so much, but the high school assignments have not changed to accommodate the ongoing flux of immigrants who are the backbone of the residential and economic community.

But we surveyed 2,000 residents in 2012 for their needs, and education was one of the highest. We've been going to all the NTA meets and racial equity analyses. It's really touching to see the strength that they show even though they have been displaced so many times.

And Chinatown hasn't really been displaced, but it has been neglected. And we do need a high school that fits the language access needs of our community.

Hongbo Wang

Community activist

I'm a community activist. As an educator and a parent, I always strongly, strongly believe that all the children are equal and all the children deserve to receive the best education they should. Children or those students in Chinatown community definitely deserve a high quality neighborhood school, neighborhood high school.

But the more town hall meetings I went to, the sadder I felt because I gradually realized that the satisfaction of one group means sadness of another group. That means when people in one group get something, another group will lose some benefit. I don't think it's fair.

I know CPS is very resourceful and very creative. I believe CPS is able to find a solution which will meet the needs of both communities.

Student J

Kelly High School Junior

I'm a student from Kelly. And I'm a junior this year. It's been over like several hours, and I have a final tomorrow, so I'll go quick.

The last time I spoke was a year ago. This school thing is not done over a year. I really want to say something based on my experience of Kelly's school life. It's not a bad school, but it also provide bilingual program. But I really want to like have a high school in Chinatown because the immigrants keep coming. Kelly is over-containing. There's so many Chinese, and new people keep coming. I think the school is really like out of control sometimes. So I don't think the Chinatown high school is a bad idea.

Further, I also want future immigrant to receive higher education. I really want the high school of Chinatown to have higher quality education.

By the way, like Chinatown is a really awkward location. Kelly is really far away. And I have to get up at 6:00 every morning to get to school on time. So for me I really encourage this school. I think this thing is working for the future immigrants, future high school students who is now going to Haines or James Wood because it's not a bad thing. The location will be really good for the future immigrants.

Rochelle Mc Gee

My statement is that the boundary for the school should include the people that actually paid to build the school initially. Our community would like to have the boundary for NTA to include the TIF. This neighborhood high school option is very good for the community. Your Honor, please consider the expansion of the boundary.

Student K

Kelly High School Freshman

I'm a freshman at Kelly High School and a graduate from James Wood Elementary School. I came from China in 2016. English is not my first language, so going to school here has been difficult. When people told me that Kelly High School had a bilingual program, therefore many recent immigrants like myself often end up attending there.

I took the 62 Archer bus Chinatown to get to school. My commute is about 40 minutes. But it's not the school I am suited for. Although I attend Kelly, I do not like the school. When I was in China, students work very hard to excel in every class. I feel the school environment here is different.

At Kelly I notice that a lot of students were not learning and even skipping class. In my class students are noisy, and I cannot listen to my teacher clearly. Make it more difficult to learn as I do not understand English as well as my peers. Also the facility is not as clean. Also the school study was near the bus stop. This make it hard for me to learn and stay motivated in school.

None of this would have been acceptable back home. And my parents would worry about my future education. But I will still strive for the best. I wish for a school where the environment is safe and filled with hard-working student and staff who understand the needs of immigrant kids as well. I want a school to prepare students for the future.

Student L

Lane Tech High School Freshman

I'm a freshman from Lane Tech College Prep High School, and I graduated from James Wood Elementary School. I spend over 40 minutes going to school on the L compared to a minute walk when I went to James Wood. I've been hearing that NTA is a great school and it should not be taken down for a new high school for the Bridgeport neighborhood. However, I feel bad, and I don't know what else I could do.

All I know is that Chinatown has been asking for a high school for many years, and it is unfair that people are repeatedly putting this need aside. I hope CPS can make a decision with best reasoning.

Aaron Sanders

Parent of NTA students

I'm a parent of two scholars at National Teachers Academy.

Your Honor, I come before you, I know you're relatively new to the process, but I've been going to these various events for a fairly long time. And as someone who works in the business community in Chicago, I have to say I am extremely disappointed with the way that the administration, the way that Chip Johnson has managed the process with respect to the interaction between the different interested parties in this particular process.

So I'm going to talk a little bit about the process for a couple minutes, couple seconds actually. This process has effectively divided four different neighborhoods and all of the interested parties in it. I blame Chip Johnson. I blame Janice Jackson. I blame Alderman Dowell behind me for exactly creating the situation that you have here.

Most of the Chinatown residents, as I've come to understand, badly do need their own neighborhood high school, but they're not actually getting that out of this process. And they were never really contemplated as part of the process either. Neither, for that matter, were the residents within South Loop.

You've only heard from one individual within South Loop who's actually described this plan as a good one for him, and it is, because his kids happen to be in seventh grade right now. So that means that they can immediately jump into this new NTA high school.

Everyone else that you've heard from, the alderman, Tina Feldstein, the other interested parties from South Loop who have come into the town halls, they all have other interests at heart, not necessarily for any of the kids there. You haven't heard anything like this from those parents.

Lastly, I want to talk a little bit about the high school. Someone's already described the numbers, the situation we have here. I happen to work in numbers. The math here really doesn't work, Your Honor. There's over 2,400 individuals. We're only going to talk about 2,000 because of public schools. There's only going to be 1200 seats for these individuals. I urge you to reject this plan and take it back to the board.

David Shapiro

Parent of NTA student

I am the proud father of a first grader at National Teachers Academy. Obviously a whole range of problems with the CPS proposal have been identified tonight. The one I'd like to focus on is that it is reckless and profoundly irrational in the sense that it is sacrificing two known and proven institutions based upon the idea that it will create a fantastic new school in the South Loop and a great new high school.

But the fact is that these hypothetical future institutions, no one knows if they're going to be any good. That's a purely speculative assertion. CPS ought to know that you don't just open a school and be able to assume that it's going to be great. But all of the comments that we've heard in favor of this new high school are just assuming that in a profoundly irrational manner.

Meanwhile an assumption is also being made that you combine National Teachers Academy and South Loop Elementary into a single school, that that's going to be smooth. Who knows? It could be a total failure as evidenced by the other comments that have been made about larger schools being generally less successful.

This is a classic example of the idea that rational people don't trade a bird in a hand for one in the bush. We're talking about shutting down, profoundly transforming two extremely successful 1+ level institutions and replacing them with a total unknown. That is not a rational choice. That is not the sort of recklessness that is appropriate with children.

Simon Shiu

Bridgeport resident

I live in the Bridgeport area for 45 years. My kid goes to Healy. I'm the LSC member and a past chairman. We have 1,500 students over there. And then I got my master's degree at DePaul. I've believe in higher education. Higher education you build from the ground up. Right now we're stuck over here because Healy 8th grade students graduate, they cannot go anywhere. Some students smart, they can go enrollment. Some students not.

In my neighborhood there are Spanish, Italian, people from different countries. But the thing is they are frustrated trying to find a good high school for their own kid.

And then for Healy, the center within a mile. Doesn't matter go east, west, south, or north. I'm hearing that elementary school. I didn't hear any high school at all. I come here 45 years ago. I am frustrated for the high school. I go far away, at least an hour per day. In the wintertime it's about one and a half, two hours one way. If I had spent that time to study instead of playing the game or stuck in traffic, I can go for the Ph.D. But right now I'm stuck there.

I know NTA is a limited seat for all the elementary school. So my proposal is to say go for it and then build a second NTA.

Student M.

NTA 2nd grader

I am a second grader at NTA. I love NTA a lot, so we need to keep it open. One reason is because if NTA turns into a high school, all of the teachers at NTA will lose their jobs. Also, if NTA turns into a high school, I probably will never see all my friends again. And plus there are a lot of enrichment classes that I enjoy.

So please, CPS, please do not convert NTA into a high school.

Mayra Romero

Parent of NTA student

I am a proud NTA parent of a 2nd grader. All her teachers and staff are outstanding. I know her teacher works long hours, including weekends, because she cares about her students. Everyone there has very high standards for all students.

NTA is a Level 1+. Why close a top level school? It is not fair for NTA students. There are other options.

Some parents have complained about their teenagers commute having to take one to two buses or trains. I also took one to two buses or walked for blocks to avoid taking two buses. It's just for four years. That's just what people do here in Chicago to go to school. Most of the people took at least one bus, whether it was a neighborhood or selective enrollment school.

Also, I don't want my young daughter to be in the same building with 14 to 18 year-old boys. Please do not close NTA.

Chris Hacker

First of all, thank you for keeping the session open.

HEARING OFFICER DOLAN: You're welcome.

I don't envy your position. My grandfather, Edgar Jones, served as a labor arbitrator for over 50 years and as Judge Jones on television in the late '50s into the early '60s. He shared many stories about the challenge that he faced during the times that he had to decide against the company, in the case of labor arbitration, that had chosen him due to the scene, the margin facts that were presented to him independent of the ever-present emotional realities.

There are practical issues that have been discussed tonight. I want to highlight three of them as a parent of what will be a rising 4th grader who will be as part of the RGC in the, under the plan, combined hybrid school. The first thing is overcrowding.

The boundaries, and we keep hearing people keep asking for them to be expanded. Aside from that, the model that CPS has used assumes that the retention rate for the local people to attend their neighborhood school will remain the same as it is now with underperforming schools. But the goal here is to produce a high performing school, which if in fact they do that, that retention rate will go up. Those 500 kids, where we can only seat 250 or 300 kids, is going to go way over the top.

The second issue was just spoken about, having my 4th grader sharing schools with kids four to six years older than him.

The last issue that I want to raise with the situation with respect to the plan is that the investment options talked about with respect to Phillips are a false choice. They have been facility's investments, not anything else.

This is a closure. The policies and procedures haven't been followed.

Matsuo Marti

Two Chicagos. CPS promises a commitment to every child from every community, but do they really. Where else but in Chicago would a school board close a top-rated school transforming the lives of black students?

Two Chicagos. Where else but in a city CNN reported as the most segregated in the nation would a school board close a school where black students grow more than 75 percent of students nationwide?

Two Chicagos. Where else but in a city that the term "hyper-segregation" was created to describe would a school board identify the same exact school as not high quality for more affluent, more powerful families and high quality for less affluent, less powerful Englewood families.

Two Chicagos. Where else but in a city divided by the have and have nots would a school board change the rules for school actions to include unnamed requests as a trigger to intentionally close a high-performing school.

Two Chicagos. Where else but in a city known for the Chicago way would a school board claim a lack of city funds to build necessary resources yet have money for a new police academy, new sports arena, and a new Ferris wheel.

Two Chicagos. Eliminating NTA in order to provide a high-quality school option for people that are more affluent and more powerful continues to prove that all men aren't created equal. Chicago has a long history of proving we don't actually live the promise of the Declaration of Independence.

Two Chicagos. Demand a just Chicago. Get woke, and black students matter.

IV. Statement of Determinations

I make the following determinations regarding the proposed reassignment boundary change of National Teachers Academy (“NTA”):

1. Compliance with the provisions of §34-230 (a) requiring the CEO to prepare, publish and submit for public comment “guidelines for actions” has been had. (*Tab 13*)
2. Compliance with the provisions of §34-225 requiring “school transition plans” has been had. (*Tabs 1 through 4*)
3. Compliance with the provisions of §34-230 (d) requiring publication of notice has been had. (*Tab 5*)
4. Compliance with the provisions of §34-230 (e) (1), and (f) (1), (2), (3) requiring a public hearing conducted by a qualified independent hearing officer has been had via the hearing held on January 29, 2018, wherein the undersigned presided.
5. Compliance with the provisions of both §34-230 (f) (requiring: “The independent hearing officer shall issue a written report that summarizes the hearing and determines whether the chief executive officer complied with the requirements of this Section and the guidelines”),

and CPS “Procedures for Public Hearings on Proposed School Closure, Consolidations, Co-Location, Phase-Out or Reassignment Boundary Change” (requiring:

“4. Hearing Officer’s Written Report:

“a. Following the hearing, the hearing officer will prepare and submit to the Chief Executive Officer a written report summarizing the public comments and the documents received at the hearing.

“b. The hearing officer’s report will also determine whether the Chief Executive Officer complied with the requirements of 105 ILCS 5/34-230 and the Chief Executive Officer’s Guidelines for School Actions.”
(*Tab14*)

has been had by this report which was prepared, and is submitted, by the undersigned.

6. Compliance with the provisions of §34-230 (e) (2), and (g) requiring opportunities to elicit other public comment has been had via public community meetings conducted by a representative of the CEO on January 9, 2018, and January 16, 2018 (*Tabs 15 through 18*).

7. Compliance with the provisions of the Guidelines (*Tab 13*), specifically, “III. Notice and School Transition Plans” and CPS “Procedures for Public Hearings on Proposed School Closure, Consolidations, Co-Location, Phase-Out or Reassignment Boundary Change” (*Tab 14*) has been had via compliance with the various provisions of §34-230 as set out hereinabove. (*Tabs 1 through 4*)

8. No additional transportation will be offered as a result of this proposal per the Draft Transition Plan. However, the Draft Transition Plan provides that: “[p]rovisions for specific student populations (i.e., student with disabilities, Students in Temporary Living Situations, and NCLB qualifying students), as determined by the CPS transportation policy, will continue to apply. The Draft Transition Plan, also, includes the possibility of additional transportation assistance:

“Additionally, resources may be adjusted to meet the unique needs of affected students if deemed necessary:

“• Provide a shuttle bus for NTA students who transition to South Loop elementary school....” (*Tab 1&2*)

9. The proposal is a reassignment boundary change of NTA. As part of this proposal, students living in the current NTA boundary will be zoned to South Loop Elementary School, with certain grades being reassigned to South Loop boundary over time. (*Tab 1*) This reassignment of NTA’s boundary is consistent with, and subject to, the Chief Executive Officer’s Guidelines for School Actions (“Guidelines”). (*Tab 13*)

10. The Guidelines require the CEO to consider certain criteria when recommending certain school action governed by the provisions of §34-230. The CEO’s proposed reassignment boundary change of NTA requires consideration of the following criteria set out in the Guidelines:

“II. CRITERIA

“B. Criteria for Reassignment Boundary Change

“The CEO may propose a reassignment boundary change that results in the reassignment of current students from one school to one or more other schools only if:

“the school(s) principal, parents or community members have requested that a reassignment boundary change proposal be considered via the process to request proposals outlined in the definitions section and the resulting space utilization after the reassignment boundary change will not exceed any affected schools’ enrollment efficiency range as defined by CPS’ Space Utilization Standards.

“In determining whether to propose a reassignment boundary change that meets the above-specified condition, the CEO may consider other information, including, but not limited to: safety and security; school culture and climate; school leadership; quality of the facilities; transition

costs; the academic performance of the schools; and the feasibility of impacted students to access options that are higher performing, including the likelihood of admittance and distance of travel required.” (Tab 13)

11. The request for a proposed reassignment boundary change for NTA was received via the following:

- 1) In Alderman Pat Dowell’s letter of July 17, 2017, (Tab 21), which was summarized in Herald Johnson’s statement, she recognizes the proposed reassignment boundary change of NTA as:

“...the most academically positive option for the Near South community. She highlights the fact that while both NTA and South Loop elementary schools provide a high-quality education for their students, South Loop has been consistently rated as one of the top elementary schools in the City of Chicago. Thus, the reassignment boundary change would make it possible for all K-8 students in the area to have the opportunity to enjoy that same academic rigor and access to a new state-of-the-art facility. The Alderman further acknowledges the lack of a neighborhood high school in the Near South area and the problems it has caused for community residents. This proposal would now make it possible for students to have an easily accessible, quality high school option in their community.” (Tab 19)

- 2) The August 25, 2017, and January 22, 2018, letters of the Near South Planning Board, (Tab 22), which were summarized in Herald Johnson’s statement, advise:

“The committee wholeheartedly welcomed the idea of a proposed high school in the Near South Side as it would enhance their community and give students the much needed opportunity to receive an education close to home. They also urged CPS to consider extending the boundary of South Loop further south to include the redevelopment of the Harold Ickes Homes, ensuring that children returning or moving into these buildings also have access to South Loop. The CEO's proposal does exactly this and is in response to this request. The Near South Planning Board subsequently submitted a follow-up letter on January 22, 2018, commending CPS for proposing to extend the boundaries in response to their request.” (Tab 19)

- 3) A petition signed by parents and community members of the Dearborn Homes requesting the proposal was presented to the Board of Education at its July 26,

2017, Board meeting. (Tab 23) The petition, which was summarized in Herald Johnson's statement, urges:

"CPS to convert NTA to a new neighborhood high school. The petition further affirms that the addition of a high school with quality educational opportunities would suit the needs of current and future students. The proposed reassignment boundary change would address this request." (Tab 19)

- 4) In June of 2017, 270 letters in support of the proposal signed by members of the Pui Tak Center in Chinatown were received. Specifically, these letters express support for the proposal to convert the current NTA facility into a neighborhood high school. (Tab 24)

Accordingly, compliance with the criterion requiring requests from the public for a reassignment boundary change as set out in the "Guidelines" at II. B. has been had: "...the school(s) principal, parents or community members have requested that a reassignment boundary proposal be considered via the process to request proposals outlined in the definitions section...."

(Tab 13)

12. The Space Utilization Standards and Methodology, updated as recently as January 19, 2018, require:

"Elementary School Approach:

"For elementary schools, CPS provides an ideal capacity and an enrollment efficiency range based primarily upon the total number of instructional classrooms available in the main/permanent building. Each elementary school building is ideally allotted a number of dedicated K-8 general education homeroom classrooms equaling 77% of the total classrooms available. Each elementary school building is also ideally allotted a number of ancillary classrooms equal to 23% of the total classrooms available. An elementary school building's ideal capacity is derived first by multiplying the total number of physical classroom spaces identified as available for use by 77% and then multiplying the product-which is first rounded down to the nearest whole number-by 30."

“Efficiency Range:

In the past, as a school's enrollment increased above the efficiency range (previously above 120% of ideal capacity), a school was considered overcrowded, and as a school's enrollment decreased below the efficiency range (previously below 80% of ideal capacity), a school was considered underutilized. To reflect the District's strong commitment to enrichment programs, and in acknowledgement of the unique space challenges that confront many schools and the need for greater program flexibility, the enrollment efficiency range going forward is adjusted from 80-120% of ideal capacity to 70-110% of ideal capacity.” (Tab 12)

13. NTA is currently located at 55 West Cermak Road and serves 723 students in grades Kindergarten-8 in addition to its Pre-k program. South Loop serves 780 students in grades K-8 in two different facilities known as the South Loop main building and South Loop branch building.

If the proposed reassignment boundary change is approved, NTA would decrease its grade offering from K-8 currently to grades 4-9 in the 2019-20 school year. Each school year thereafter, NTA would adjust its grade offering such that by the 2024-25 school year, it would offer only high school grades 9-12. (Tab 20)

14. “There will be a total of 69 classrooms available at the South Loop Elementary main and branch facilities. The ideal capacity of these facilities will be 1,590 students, and any enrollment within the efficiency range of 1,113-1,749 would be considered efficient.

“The projected enrollment range of South Loop for the 2019-20 school year, should the Board approve this proposal, is between 1,200-1,500 students, and this projected enrollment range is within the efficiency range of the new South Loop.” (Tab 20)

Accordingly, compliance with the criterion concerning a facility’s enrollment efficiency range for a reassignment boundary change set out in the “Guidelines” at II. B. has been had:

“...the resulting space utilization after the reassignment boundary change will not exceed any affected schools' enrollment efficiency range as defined by CPS' Space Utilization Standards.”

(Tab 13)

15. The Guidelines provide that the CEO may consider other information including, but not limited to, “school culture and climate” in determining whether to propose a reassignment boundary change. *(Tab 13)*

In his statement, James Dispensa noted:

“...the proposed boundary reassignment change will have positive impact on the racial composition and stability of these schools. The option of maintaining the status quo offers a disadvantage over this proposal and the projected increase in racial/ethnic diversity of both schools is included in the report at tab 27. While other alternatives were examined, no alternatives affected the resulting racial ethnic distribution of students as positively as the proposed reassignment boundary change.” *(Tab 20)*

Accordingly, the proposed reassignment boundary change of NTA is enhanced because it will have a positive impact on the racial composition and stability of both NTA and South Loop.

16. The Guidelines provide that the CEO may consider other information including, but not limited to, “...the feasibility of impacted students to access options that are higher performing...” in determining whether to propose a reassignment boundary change. *(Tab 13)*

In his statement, Herald Johnson noted:

“The CEO's Guidelines for School Actions define a higher performing school as a school that received a higher level on the School Quality Rating Policy (“SQRP”) for the 2016-2017 school year. Under the SQRP, located in your binder at tab 10, each school receives an annual rating based on its performance on a variety of student outcome measures, including standardized test scores and student attendance. District-wide, schools designated Level 1+ are the highest performing and schools designated Level 3 are the lowest performing.

“NTA and South Loop both received a Level 1+ rating based on their performance during the 2016-2017 school year. However, in accordance with the

CEO's Guidelines, when schools are designated the same rating, the "higher performing school" is determined based on a variety of metrics including multi-year value added outcomes and standardized test score attainments. While CPS does not calculate district-wide multi-year value added results anymore, it does however, compile standardized test score attainments in accordance with the Guidelines. South Loop meets the definition of "higher performing school" because according to the most recently available data, it performed higher on the majority of the metrics. Charts summarizing this data are located in your binder at tab 25." (Tab 19)

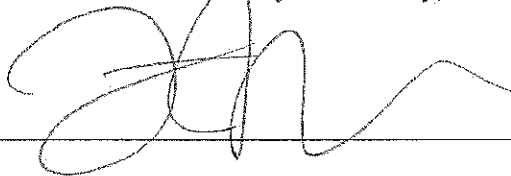
Accordingly, if NTA students transition to South Loop they will be attending a higher performing school based on the CEO's Guidelines for School Actions.

17. It is in the best interest of the Board, students and the community CPS serves to identify facilities that are not being utilized at their full capacity and to improve the use of those facilities. A reassignment boundary change of NTA with students living in the current NTA boundary zoned to South Loop Elementary School, with certain grades being reassigned to the South Loop boundary over time, is in the best interests of the Board, students and the community CPS serves.

V. Conclusion

Based on these determinations, I conclude that the CEO has complied with the requirements of 105 ILCS 5/34-230 and the Chief Executive Officer's Guidelines for School Actions to support her proposal for Reassignment Boundary Change of National Teachers Elementary Academy.

Submitted this 7th day of February, 2018

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'F. Dolan', written over a horizontal line.

Hon. Francis J. Dolan (Ret.)