

## **Community Meeting for the Proposal to Close Buckingham Elementary School**

April 6, 2013; 12:30-2:30pm

Location: Harlan HS, 9652 South Michigan Ave.

**CPS Staff in Attendance:** Thyatira Towns, Annette Gurley, Markay Winston, LaTanya McDade, John Scott, Joseph Sobus, Valerie Butron, Natalie Hill, Terri Kelly, Gail Ratliff, Reynardo Martinez, Chuck Swirsky, and Anisha Joshi

**Brief Summary:** The purpose of the meeting was to receive public comments on the proposal to close Buckingham Elementary School, in accordance with 105 ILCS 5/34-230. CPS officials stated the purpose for today's meeting, introduced the CPS staff at the meeting, and reviewed the handouts provided to the community. There were about 30 community members present.

---

### **CPS Presentation:**

Annette Gurley, Chief of Teaching and Learning, welcomed those in attendances and introduced the CPS staff present. Dr. Markay Winston, Chief Officer of Diverse Learner Support and Services, explained the meeting rules and procedures. She explained the handout given out to the community members.

### **Public Comment:**

#### **Victoria Jackson, Teacher at Buckingham for 9 years**

Ms. Jackson stated that Buckingham holds special place in her heart. Ms. Jackson noted that Buckingham is not a neighborhood school, but that students are referred to them. She believes that the utilization of the school is out of the school's control. She also thinks that the cost for busing will increase given the distance to travel.

#### **Dr. Otis Taylor, Principal of Buckingham for 4 years**

Dr. Taylor noted that the school's students are referred to Buckingham after a determination made by the Office of Specialized Services. He noted how talented Buckingham students are. Taking these students away from their school would be disrespectful. Change is difficult for our students. Dr. Taylor reiterated that the school is not underutilized.

#### **Kathy Murray, Chicago Teacher's Union representative**

Ms. Murray stated that this proposal is unkind to students and their families. She noted the long commute for these students. She thinks that message from CPS continue to change and that no new services will be provided. She encouraged those in attendance to speak up.

**Jordan Tracey, parent of a two students at Buckingham**

Ms. Jordan noted that her children have shown great improvement since being at Buckingham. Ms. Jordan fears that if they go to an environment where the number of students triples, that their behavior will regress. She thinks the current environment is what is best for her children, although she will be looking into other options for them as well.

**Clarice Berry, President of the Chicago Principals and Administrators Association**

Ms. Berry supports Buckingham. She knows the principal very well. In addition she was a former special needs teacher and has a child with special needs. She thinks that closings would be unnecessary, if CPS had a facility plan for ten years the way other districts do. Planning is necessary. She feels very sad for this school, as it got caught in CPS' negligence.

**John Travaglini, Police Officer**

Officer Travaglini's wife works at Buckingham Elementary. He has noticed a family environment at this school and has seen connections and bonds among the staff and students. He thinks the teachers and staff go far beyond what is expected. He is very proud of his wife, the principal, the Assistant Principal, and all the staff.

**Carolyn McNeil, Clerk at Buckingham**

Ms. McNeil noted that the school is open to taking students. She thinks that the Office of Specialized Students should send them the number of students equal to the number graduating. She thinks her school is not under-utilized and that they are a family. They provide everything their students need. These students will have to travel longer to Montifiore. She thinks students will not be able to learn because of daily commuting stress.

**Mary Mason, great-grandparent of a student at Buckingham**

Ms. Mason noted that her great grandson's behavior, personality and demeanor have changed for the better since he has been at Buckingham. Her great grandson is worried about having to go to a new school. She worries about her great grandson's emotions and notes that when children have emotional issues, a change of setting is very hard on them.

**Tiffany House, parent of a student at Buckingham**

Ms. House's student's educational journey has been a rough one. Her son has been at many schools. Since he has been at Buckingham, she has seen tremendous change in him.

**J.J., 5th grade student**

J.J. said that his school is a good school. He should be able to stay there.

**J.J., 3rd grade student**

J.J. said that Buckingham should not be closed because it is a good school.

**Tally Jacobson, Counselor and Case Manager at Buckingham**

Ms. Jacobson noted that Buckingham is close to her heart. She stated that kids have shown tremendous improvement since they have been at the school. Buckingham is a small school. While she understands the financial constraints the District faces, she thinks it is important to continue the family environment at Buckingham. She fears that the students will not be provided what they need if they transition to the new school. Ms. Jacobson noted that they are able to do a lot of things because they are a small school and that it is important that the students continue to receive services at Buckingham.

**Mr. Mak, Teacher at Buckingham**

Mr. Mak is worried about the safety of the students. He has ten kids and it is tough teaching them and worries that they will get lost in a bigger classroom. He does not think they will get the services they need.

**Delores Samuels, parent of a student at Buckingham**

Ms. Samuels has a child attending Buckingham. She does not believe that students should travel far to get education. She believes closing Buckingham will be a terrible decision.

**Carrie Patterson, parent of a student at Buckingham**

Ms. Patterson does not think that Montifiore is an option for her son. She believes that CPS did not take into consideration the safety of special education students. She had to fight to get her son into Buckingham. Her son has made progress because of Buckingham. She does not think Buckingham should close.

**J.G., student at Buckingham**

J.G. stated that Buckingham should not be closed. At Buckingham he has been able to control his anger. He thinks that it will be bad if the students go to Montifiore because those students fight every day and they won't be able to defend themselves.

**Diantha Garcia, parent of a student at Buckingham and LSC president**

Ms. Garcia explained the special needs of her child. She thinks combining the two schools will cause more problems. She believes closing schools should not be a solution to budge deficit. Her child needs his school. She requested that Buckingham not be closed.

**Nikki Roberts, parent of a student at Buckingham**

Ms. Roberts stated that her son was excited to start at Buckingham. To my dismay he had a rough start. However over the year that has changed. He has been more acclimated at this school that anywhere he has been. She worries whether students from another school will welcome her son. She thinks that this proposal is not fair to her son – they need this school. She requested that Buckingham not be closed.

**M.W., student**

He does not think his school should be closed, because he is improving at Buckingham.

**M.R., student at Buckingham**

M.R. stated that before he attended Buckingham, his behavior was not good. At Buckingham, he has changed. The staff has helped him. He has worked hard to be where he is and worries that at a new school he would have to start all over.

**Maria Affinita, Teacher at Buckingham**

Ms. Affinita is a first year teacher and has had a wonderful experience. The children are intelligent and amazing. She hopes that Buckingham is not taken away from them.

**K.G., student at Buckingham**

K.G. does not want Buckingham to close down because of all his experiences with his friends.

**Valerie Travaglini, Teacher at Buckingham**

Ms. Travaglini feels like the Buckingham students are just like her kids. She feels like this proposal is a disservice to the students and that CPS is not thinking about them as individuals.

**Steve Hyman, Physical Education Teacher at Buckingham**

Mr. Hyman talked about the joy the students get from gym class and sports activities. Sports help build teamwork skills and relationships that the kids could have for the rest of their lives. He worries that if these students move to Montifiore, they won't have this outlet. He does not think that the school is underutilized. He worries about safety and the distance students will have to travel. He requested not to close Buckingham.