

**Community Meeting for the Proposal to Close Kohn Elementary School**

April 9, 2013: 5:00pm-7:00pm

Location: Harlan High School, 9652 S. Michigan Avenue

**CPS Staff in Attendance:**

Dr. Karen Saffold, Chief of Elementary Schools, Rock Island Network

Tim Cawley, Chief Administrative Officer

Dr. Stephanie Whyte, Chief Health Officer

**Also in Attendance:**

Captain Daly, Chicago Police Department

Thyathira Towns, FACE Manager, Rock Island Network

**CPS Presentation:**

Dr. Stephanie Whyte, Chief Health Officer, welcomed those in attendance and introduced the meeting. She introduced the sign language interpreters and Spanish translators. Dr. Whyte then presented an overview of the proposal and reviewed the materials available to meeting attendees. Tim Cawley, Chief Administrative Officer, then explained the meeting rules and procedures. The meeting was opened for public comment at 5:14pm.

**Brief Summary:**

The purpose of the meeting was to receive public comments on the proposal to close Kohn Elementary School in accordance with 105 ILCS 5/34-230. There were approximately 40 attendees and 11 speakers including teachers, staff, community members, parents, and students. The speaker comments focused on various topics including the following:

- Concerned for safe passage to multiple welcoming schools given distance
- The need to place additional resources in Kohn School to relieve overcrowded classrooms
- The relationship and rapport between teachers and students at Kohn
- The need to give the Principal more time to work towards improving Kohn since she has only been at the school for eight months
- Commented that CPS officials are misrepresenting the danger of the neighborhood surrounding Kohn versus the danger of neighborhoods surrounding the welcoming schools.
- Programs offered at Kohn such as mentoring, fitness, healthy living
- Concerned and unsure why students have to go to schools that are in similar conditions and that are also level 3
- Commented on the programmatic offerings at Kohn such as mentoring and fitness programs
- Statement from the principal on the potential detriments of moving students to another school and a need for additional academic and social emotional resources
- The need for CPS to have a plan for transitioning students that recognizes their diverse needs
- Teachers worried that class sizes at welcoming schools will double or triple
- Sending students to “rival” schools is a safety concern
- Believed CPS is closing Kohn for reasons besides underutilization and not being honest with the public
- The strength of the parent mentoring program offered at Kohn and that it is one of the only African-American schools to offer this type of program

- Statements about how most schools slated to be closed are in African-American communities
- Concerned about the number of welcoming schools and disruption of student relationships
- Felt that the letter explaining closure to parents was too vague
- Suggested CPS invest in college preparation classes at Kohn such as the AVID program
- Support for the teachers and requested that CPS allow more time for teachers to finish what they started
- Kohn should receive more resources instead of closing
- Concerned that only some children will have bus service depending on their welcoming school
- The nutritional value of meals at welcoming schools is lacking when compared to Kohn
- Felt school closings are unfair and discriminatory towards the African-American community
- Need to investigate Kohn and other schools more fully to determine if they should be closed instead of Kohn
- Concerned that closings are targeted at new principals
- Expressed concern that strangers are harassing female students while walking to school and a suspicious van has also been spotted in the neighborhood which increase safety concerns about students getting to school safely if Kohn closes