

Community Meeting for the Proposal to close John Calhoun North Elementary School

April 9, 2013; 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.

Location: Al Raby High School, 3545 W. Fulton Boulevard

CPS Staff in Attendance: Wanda Washington (Chief, Garfield-Humboldt Network), Tracey Ginwright (Assistant Deputy Chief, Garfield-Humboldt Network), Herald Johnson (Deputy Chief, Garfield-Humboldt Network), Adam Anderson (Officer, Strategy and Planning), Todd Babbitz (Chief Officer, Transformation)

Others in Attendance: Aline Bakhoff (Court Reporter), Allayna Ratliff (note taker), Luretha Phillips (timekeeper)

Brief Summary

The purpose of the meeting was to receive public comments on the proposal to close John Calhoun North Elementary and welcome students at Willa Cather, in accordance with 105 ILCS 5/34-230. There was enough time for speakers to speak more than one time. Several speakers took advantage of the available time.

CPS Presentation

Adam Anderson welcomed the audience to the community action meeting of Calhoun Elementary School and Willa Cather Elementary School. He introduced himself as well as Todd Babbitz, Wanda Washington, and Tracy Ginwright, other participating CPS officials. He acknowledged the presence of Chicago Police Department Representatives, principals in the audience, and other CPS staff. He introduced the court reporter, note taker, and time keeper. He asked if anyone needed translation, nobody in the audience indicated they did. He quickly explained the information on the handouts given to the audience. Mr. Anderson then informed audience members of upcoming meetings regarding both Calhoun and Cather Elementary School. He then introduced Todd Babbitz.

Mr. Babbitz reiterated the purpose of the meeting and then walked through the logistics of the meeting. Mr. Babbitz announced the time and location of the next meeting and the public hearing.

Public Comment

- Concern was voiced about the number of registered sex offenders living in the Cather boundary by multiple community members.
- Calhoun was described as “home” and the staff’s hard work was attributed to the success of the children there. Multiple community members commented on the great staff.
- The CPS utilization formula was criticized. It was stated that Calhoun is using all of its classrooms for instructional purposes.
- Concern was raised about the distance of the walk from Calhoun to Cather by several community members.
- The issue of a student transferring to Calhoun mid-year and affecting Calhoun’s ISAT science scores and therefore affecting their performance policy score was raised by multiple community members.
- The issue of Calhoun currently having greater resources than Cather was brought up by multiple community members.
- Concern was raised that closing the school meant CPS was “walking away” from the CHA development program.
- Concern was raised about break-ins that occurred at Cather.
- Multiple community members cited Calhoun’s performance as a reason to not close the school.
- A grievance was aired about the CEO “not abiding by the CPS residency policy.”
- Alderman Burnett suggested co-locating Calhoun with “the charter school across the street.”
- Concern was raised about the liquor store making the area unsafe.
- The designation of Cather as a higher performing school than Calhoun was challenged.
- Concern was raised about the impact of the school closing on SPED students.
- The nearby charter school was blamed for the enrollment decline at Calhoun.
- Several community members recounted anecdotes about family members being killed by gunfire or otherwise being affected by it.
- The Board’s “vision for African-American students” was requested.