

Community Meeting for the Proposal to Close Pope Elementary

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

Location: Manley High School 2935 W. Polk Street

CPS Staff in Attendance

Bob Boik – Chief of Staff to the CEO, Susan Kajiwar-Ansai - Professional Learning Officer, Chandra James – Chief of Schools, Austin-North Lawndale Elementary Network

CPS Presentation

Bob Boik introduced himself and stated that he is here on behalf of Barbara Byrd-Bennett and that we are here to listen to the community on the proposed closing of Pope School with the students welcomed by Johnson Elementary. He referenced a handout given to the participants at registration titled “Providing a Better Education for All Students: Pope and Johnson Elementary School”

Brief Summary

The purpose of the meeting was to receive public comments on the proposal to close Pope Elementary, in accordance with 105 ILCS 5/34-230. There were about 15 community members in attendance and 45 comments. The speakers ranged from parents and teachers to interested stakeholders. The speaker comments focused on a variety of topics including the following:

- Pope’s student achievement data. Composite score similar to Johnson
- Pope being 2 points away from being a Level 2 school
- Pope’s rising enrollment trends
- Pope’s culture and safe and welcoming environment
- Pope’s status at a neighborhood school while other schools in the area are charter or selective enrollment
- Pope’s preschool program with a waiting list, after school programs, Saturday and holiday programs
- Pope’s computer lab, science lab, and art lab
- Pope’s America’s Scores grant of \$1.5 million. Johnson has the same grant but doesn’t serve all of their students as Pope does. Concern that if Pope’s students go to Johnson that money will not follow the students.
- Pope’s 100% graduation rate for the last two years
- Support provided by Pope teachers and staff to their students and the nurturing environment of the school
- Work of the juvenile protection agency to support Pope students
- Concern of creating overcrowding by closing schools
- Distance to welcoming school and walking across major streets, gang territory and a mental hospital
- Leaving Pope as a vacant building next to expensive homes
- Belief that performance of AUSL schools in Lawndale in reading being lower than CPS

- Concern that student attendance will drop if Pope students go to Johnson because of the distance and gang issues
- Pope's discipline rate is 46% and Johnson's is 82%
- Pope has a 90% teacher retention rate
- 40% air conditioning at Pope
- Pope teachers gave students uninforms and pick them up to take them to school
- Pope facility is ADA accessible
- Pope is not less than half full
- Belief that CPS says there is no money, but there was a surplus in the budget at the end of the summer
- Request to give Pope another year
- Pope's art teacher securing numerous free field trips
- Question of the role of the community meeting vs. public hearing