

Community Meeting for the Proposal to Close King Elementary School

April 6, 2013; 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

Location: Whitney Young High School, 211 S. Lavin St.

CPS Staff in Attendance: Myetie Hamilton – Chief Officer for the School Support Center, Paul Osland – Executive Director of Transportation, Shonda Huery Hardman – Chief of Schools, Fulton Elementary Network, Chip Johnson - Deputy Chief of Schools, Garfield-Humboldt Elementary Network

Brief Summary: The purpose of the meeting was to receive public comments on the proposal to close King elementary in accordance with 105 ILCS 5/34-230. At about 12:30 p.m., the meeting was adjourned.

CPS Presentation

Myetie Hamilton welcomed those in attendance and stated that the meeting was the first of three meetings before the CPS board votes. Paul Osland welcomed those in attendance and explained the meeting rules and procedures. The meeting was opened for public comment at ~10:05 a.m.

Public Comment

Nakea Pierce, Parent

Ms. Pierce stated that King is not underutilized. She remarked that the school is number one in reading and number five in Math. Based on these statistics, she wanted to know why King is closing. She mentioned that Jensen has safety issues that it would not be good for children to walk the path to Jensen.

Marlene Edwards, Parent and LSC member

Ms. Edwards stated her concern about the safety issues – the gangs and homeless people that her kids would have to cross.

JA and AE, King students

One student stated that they have a bilingual program at King. She also mentioned that walking to Jensen would be very scary because there are abandoned buildings. The other student mentioned that King has a good algebra teacher and they learn new things. She emphasized that she did not want their school to close.

Nancy, Parent (Surname not given)

She stated that King offers a lot of programs including preschool, full day kindergarten, and after school programs. Her daughter participates in a medical program. She remarked that CPS has not offered tuition help for private school, just transportation. She mentioned that CPS should take a walk to Jensen before closing King to see how it is.

Response from Mr. Osland

Mr. Osland stated that existing King students that attend Jensen will have shuttle bus service until they graduate.

Martin Ritter, Whitney Young LSC

Mr. Whitter stated that when something happens to children it is on CPS hands. Mr. Whitter rhetorically asks, “Is there anyone present today from CPS who will make that decision?”

Lakecha Green, Parent

Ms. Green stated that kids will pass by so many gang members going to school at Jensen. She also mentioned that King has many academic programs. She remarked that King helped her son make a tremendous turnaround from his anger issues. She also mentioned that she has a baby and 3 yr old and would have to walk the kids to school.

Carol Johnson, Parent

Ms. Johnson volunteers and works with King parents. She stated that parents love the school and the community. She is fearful that the school will be taken away from them. Ms. Johnson stated that if you walk through King you will see that the classrooms are overcrowded. She stated that Jensen has fewer students than King and that King is not underutilized. She said Jensen is underutilized. She also mentioned that Bilingual parents are terrified of going to Jensen and that the demographics in that area should be considered. Ms. Carol mentioned that her family has been living in the area of King Elementary all their lives.

Joy Clendenning, Parent (students at other CPS schools)

Ms. Clendenning is concerned about busing. She stated that something more than busing is needed for current students – what about siblings? She also said that she thought the community meeting would be a time to dialogue and conversation, not just share comments.

Response by Mr. Osland

Mr. Osland stated existing students at King will have shuttle bus service to Jensen until they graduate.

Speaker 9 (Name not stated)

He wants to know why CPS is proposing closing King, yet also proposing to expand LEARN charter school two blocks away from King. He stated that specific LEARN campus’ growth, test scores have not been proven to be any better or worse than King He questioned why LEARN is getting investment while CPS is proposing to divest from King and move those students to

Jensen. He stated community organizations are canvassing the area around King asking parents to send their students to a higher performing charter school. He invited CPS leadership to attend the walk around Jensen. He said every school should have art, music and a library.

Speaker 10 (Name not stated)

She stated King received \$50,000 to have library redone. She also said the computer lab was redone but their computers from 1989 still remain. She mentioned that they do not have iPads. She also gave some statistics from the IL School Report Card:

King: Percent Low Income – 97%, Percent Limited English Proficient 11.1%, Percent IEP 17.3%, Mobility Rate 33%

Jensen – Percent Low Income – 86.3%, Percent limited English Proficient – 0%, Percent IEP – 7.9%, Mobility Rate – 14.7%

Carol Johnson, Parent

Ms. Johnson said she had positive data to share: Jensen parent involvement -93.4%, King’s parent involvement is 100%. Average Class size: King: Kindergarten – 30, 1st – 25, 2nd – 25, 3rd – 32, 4th – 22, 5th – 24, 6th – 27, 7th – 26, 8th – 28. Average class size: Jensen: K – 25, 1st – 15.5, 2nd – 16.5, 3rd – 19.5, 4th – 20.5, 5th – 19.0, 6th – 18.0, 7th – 19.5, 8th – 15.5

According to the data King is not underutilized. Hispanic student population: King – 22.5%, Jensen – 0.3%. African American student population – King – 74.5%, Jensen – 98.6%

Anna Miguel, Community member

Ms. Miguel mentioned that they have been having a lot of trouble with gangs at Jensen. She said there had been a lot of drug selling by Jensen school. As a result of the drug selling, she said she had a friend in the hospital and she did not want to see her children in the hospital because of potential involvement with drugs.

Alison Eichhorn, CPS teacher

Ms. Eichhorn said she wants to know why CPS is just now proposing to give schools air conditioning, iPads, and a library when CPS should have made sure schools had these resources years ago. She said that CPS shows no concern about uprooting children from their community.

Counselor at King

She stated that the staff and faculty have a lot of love and concern for the students at King School. She believes that King would out perform Jensen if King had the resources. King has a family focus program, music and drama. She said King is doing much but has very little.

Alida Diaz, Bilingual and Spanish teacher at King

Ms. Diaz mentioned the danger at Jensen and of children having to travel a long distance which she said is very frightful. She also said that there are gangs and homeless people in the area and the kids would have to be walk to school. She added that teachers are attached to King school

and most of them know all the children by name. She said that no one is in agreement with the closing of school and there are 1,000 signatures to appeal the closing.

Carol Johnson, Parent

Ms. Johnson stated there are two programs that parents would like to see. She said English as a second language, Spanish as a second language and a childcare center. She said parents would like more technology for students and parents. She said that she wants algebra curriculum and other programs expanded. She also stated that she did not think that parents would be as involved at Jensen. She said that she met with the Alderman about the proposed King closing. She said that because she's pay taxes, she should be able to send her child to the school of her choice. She said that there is a lot of love and compassion at King. She stated she chooses to send her child to a neighborhood school because she pays taxes. She said that parents can make a difference and if parents are given the necessary resources, then they can soar.

Martin Ritter, Whitney Young LSC

Mr. Ritter stated that if you put children first there will be money for schools instead of money used in the downtown office. He says we need real educators and an elected school board. He says these policies and practices are not guided by best practices.

Speaker 18 (Name not stated)

She said thanks to CPS for allowing them to express what they are feeling about the school closing. She asked that CPS to truly help. She said it would be a mistake to close schools while more prisons are being opened.

Mr. Flower, Principal

Mr. Flower stated that since he has been at King, the African Americans and Hispanics have been working well together without incidents. He said that his school is integrated and he wants the city to be integrated. He said that we should not segregate something that is together.

Mr. Washington, Parent

Mr. Washington stated that he is the second generation of his family to have attended King. He said the school's performance has increased. He encouraged CPS members to visit the school to see the success.

Patricia Jones, Teacher

Ms. Jones stated that they want their school to stay open. She says King nurtures their students and the students are making great gains in reading and math. She says that their staff is powerful and they want to continue to nurture their students.

Lakecha Green, Parent

Ms. Green stated that if you close King, truancy will going to go up and test scores will go down for their students. She is also concerned about when her children would make it home from school.

Marlene Edwards

Ms. Evers says she has 7 children that have gone to the school and she does not want her children to cross under a bridge to go to school. She wants her last child to graduate from King.

Joy Clendenning, Parent (students at other CPS schools)

Ms. Clendenning wanted to know the current cost for CPS to bus children. She stated that King is a school that works and should be supported. She asked that if you have a school that works why change it.

Speaker 26

She wanted to know about transportation for following years and if the children are being bused for one year.

Response by Mr. Osland

Mr. Osland stated existing students at King will have shuttle bus service to Jensen until they graduate.

Speaker 27 –

She asked if there will be a bus to pick up her preschool child and bring him back to King if he only attends school for 2 hours.

Unidentified Community Member

She stated why would you have your child stand in front of King which would then be an abandoned building?

Response by Mr. Osland

Mr. Osland stated that the logistics will be worked out.