

Community Meeting for the Proposal to Close Ross Elementary

April 12, 2013 7:30pm-9:30pm

Location: Kenwood High School, 5015 South Blackstone Avenue

CPS Staff in Attendance:

Denise Little, Chief Officer of Networks

Tom Tyrell, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer

Erick Pruitt, Deputy Chief of Elementary Schools, Burnham Park Network

Ellen Lindsey, Toni DeLuca Campbell (note taker),

CPS Presentation

Tom Tyrell, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer, welcomed those in attendance and introduced the meeting. He introduced the sign language interpreters and Spanish translators. He asked if anyone required Spanish translation. Tyrell then presented an overview of the proposal and reviewed the materials available to meeting attendees. Denise Little, Chief Officer of Networks, then explained the meeting rules and procedures. The meeting opened for public comment at 7:40pm.

Brief Summary:

The purpose of the meeting was to receive public comment on the proposal to close Betsy Ross Elementary, in accordance with 105 ILCS 5/34-230. There were about 47 attendees, a number of whom also spoke. The speakers ranged from parents and teachers to interested stakeholders. The speaker comments focused on a variety of topics including the following:

- Submitted a petition to not close Ross with approximately 500 signatures
- Worried about students crossing gang lines
- Stated that Ross is like a family and second home for the students
- Described the resources at Ross like technology and the library
- Discussed the partnerships Ross has fostered with multiple organizations including the Joffrey Ballet
- Felt their students receive a good education at Ross
- Expressed support for the principal Dr. Shabazz and his positive impact on the school
- Understand the district's need to manage the budget but felt that closing schools is not the solution
- The continuing connection of Ross alumni
- Stated the one grade level of growth seen in math and reading for special education students
- Improvements have been made to the school such as new technology, a playground, air conditioning, and painting at no cost
- Concerned about violence in the community
- Belief that the utilization report for Ross is incorrect and that the utilization should be between 70-75%
- Parents with multiple children concerned that not all children will attend the same school
- Upset about the letters sent home regarding the proposed closure
- Strong parental involvement

- Spoke about the Chicago Cares and Daniel Murphy scholarships offered at Ross
- Concerned that Dulles is an underperforming school
- Frustrated by statements made by alderman
- Concerned because some families came back to Ross after their students were not making progress at Dulles
- Spoke of the excellent special education program for preschool students
- The growth of the 8th grade students on the ISAT and the overall increases in NWEA scores