

Community Meeting for the Proposal to Close Bontemps Elementary School

April 13, 2013; 12:30-2:30pm

Location: Harper High School 6520 S. Woods St.

CPS Facilitators:

Jennie Huang, Treasurer

Melinda Gildart, Controller

CPS Presentation:

Jennie Huang, CPS Treasurer, welcomed those in attendance and introduced the meeting. Ms. Huang provided an overview of the information that attendees received in regards to the proposal to close Bontemps Elementary School. In addition, she explained that every receiving school will have safe passage, increase security, and additional safety equipment. Ms. Huang introduced Melinda Gildart, CPS Controller. Ms. Gildart explained the meeting rules and procedures, and opened the meeting for public comment.

Brief Summary:

The purpose of this meeting is to receive public comment on the proposal to close Bontemps Elementary School in accordance with 105 ILCS 5/34-230. There were approximately six community members in attendance and 14 speakers (some spoke multiple times). The speaker comments focused on a variety of topics including:

- Concerns that Nicholson is not a higher performing option
- Testimonials about the dedication of the Bontemps staff and students
- Requests that CPS withdraw this proposal
- A letter on behalf of Alderman Thompson that stated her opposition to the proposed closure of Bontemps
- Testimonials about the culture and climate of Bontemps; how the school is like a family to the students and teachers
- Testimonials about the qualifications of the Bontemps teachers; references to multiple degrees, awards and certifications that the Bontemps staff holds
- Concerns about the effectiveness of Safe Passage routes
- Concerns that CPS is not actually engaging the community, that they are a “show” and that is why the community is not attending these meetings
- Requests to keep Bontemps open
- Concerns about violence in the community; concerns about sexual assaults in the community and other violent crime
- Concerns about the economic impact that the closures will have on Englewood; fears that excellent teachers will not want to come to Englewood if the schools are constantly closing
- Accusations that the private companies of Chicago are to blame for the city’s financial position, and that children are those who are paying for the financial community’s mistakes
- Concerns about transitioning students with special needs