

Community Meeting for the Proposal to Phase-Out and Close Attucks Elementary School

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

Location: Paul Laurence Dunbar Career Academy High School, 3000 S. King Dr.

CPS Staff in Attendance:

John Price, Chief of Elementary School, Burnham Park Network

Leslie Fowler, Executive Director, Nutrition Support Services

Pat Taylor, Chief Facilities Officer

Beth Mascitti-Miller, Officer, Early Childhood Education

CPS Presentation:

Pat Taylor, Chief Facilities Officer, welcomed those in attendance and introduced the meeting. She introduced the sign language interpreters and Spanish translators. She asked if anyone required Spanish translation. Ms. Taylor then presented an overview of the proposal and reviewed the materials available to meeting attendees. Leslie Fowler, Executive Director of Nutrition Support Services, explained the meeting rules and procedures. The meeting was opened for public comment promptly at 12:30pm.

Brief Summary:

The purpose of the meeting was to receive public comments on the proposal to phase-out and close Attucks Elementary School, in accordance with 105 ILCS 5/34-230. There were approximately 64 community members in attendance and 44 speakers. The speakers ranged from parents and teachers to interested stakeholders. The speaker comments focused on a variety of topics including the following:

- Concerned about the safety of students as they transition to Beethoven
- The impact of the proposed phase-out and closure of Attucks on the high population of students in temporary living situations
- The discontinuation of academic programs at Attucks
- Statements regarding the generational pride the community feels towards Attucks
- The historical significance of Crispus Attucks and the connection students feel to the historical figure
- Called for the Board of Education to reconsider the proposed phase-out and closure of Attucks
- The safe environment Attucks provides for students
- Stated that CPS has a responsibility to continue teaching African-American history
- Worried that younger students will not have opportunity to graduate from Attucks
- Concerned about sustaining academic process at Beethoven
- Felt that Attucks teachers challenge the students academically
- Questioned why Attucks would be phased-out and closed if they have a pre-kindergarten program and Beethoven does not
- Belief that CPS should not place more value on the financial impact of school closures than the impact on the community
- Concerned that so many schools slated for closure are on the south and west sides of the city

- Discussed how the early childhood learning curriculum at Attucks provides a solid educational foundation for Attucks students
- The mentorship for 6th-8th grade students through the non-profit Mackenzie
- Mentioned that eight students had received scholarships and wondered if these same opportunities will exist at Beethoven
- Worried CPS is not prepared to adequately handle the violence that exists at Beethoven
- Former gang member discussed the culture and climate that prevents students from joining gangs
- Belief that CPS has created an unstable environment for Attucks students by moving students from one building to another in recent years
- Belief that the Board of Education is intentionally destroying job security for union employees by closing schools
- Frustrated that school closure decisions do not adequately involve parents and communities
- Felt that CPS wants schools to fail so that resources can be reallocated elsewhere
- Noted that Attucks has more students in temporary living situations than any other CPS school
- Asked that Beethoven be renamed Attucks
- Wondered if boiler malfunctions were a factor in the decision to phase-out and close Attucks
- Recent improvement in test scores and technology at Attucks
- Requested that Barbra Byrd-Bennet visit Attucks
- Asked if the principal from Attucks had discussed the reasons for not phasing-out and closing Attucks with the Board of Education