

**Community Meeting for the Proposal to Close Williams Elementary and Williams Middle and Relocate Drake Elementary to 2710 S. Dearborn Ave. and to Co-locate Drake and Urban Prep – Bronzeville**

April 15, 2013; 5:00pm – 8:00pm

Location: Dunbar High School, 3000 South King Drive

**CPS Staff in Attendance:**

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

Robert Boik, Chief of Staff, Office of the CEO

Ginger Ostro, Officer, Budgets and Grants

**Also in Attendance:**

Robert Heard, Technology Manager

**CPS Presentation:**

Robert Boik, Chief of Staff for the CEO, welcomed those in attendance and introduced the meeting. He noted that there was a court reporter, note taker, Spanish translator and sign language interpreter. He asked if anyone required translation services and the Spanish translator introduced herself to the audience. Boik then presented an overview of the proposal and reviewed the materials available to meeting attendees. Ginger Ostro, Officer of Budgets and Grants, then explained the meeting rules and procedures. The meeting was then opened for public comment.

**Brief Summary:**

The purpose of this meeting was to receive public comment on the proposal to close Williams Elementary and Williams Middle and relocate Drake Elementary to 2710 South Dearborn Avenue and to co-locate Drake and Urban Prep – Bronzeville, in accordance with 105 ILCS 5/34-230. There were approximately 31 people in attendance, 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:

- Stated that Williams has only been on probation for two years not five
- Belief that utilization reports for Williams are inaccurate
- Stated that students should be taught by teachers that they know
- Belief the schools closures are already decided
- Felt that schools have been setup to fail
- Frustrated that transition teams are already inschools that are proposed to be closed
- Appreciated the opportunity to voice concerns at the meeting
- Concerned that the special education classrooms were not being counted appropriately
- Worried about the transition for special education students
- Confused about what school impacted students will attend in the fall
- Questioned why children werebeing turned away from Williams if they are underutilized
- Noted that classrooms at Williams are already overcrowded
- Asked about the registration process for students, particularly the impact on Options for Knowledge students

- Felt the action is a takeover of Williams
- Wanted the school to keep the Williams name
- Questioned the credentials of teachers at Drake
- Think CPS should provide more support to schools
- Wondered what the schools in the area will be an option for families given Williams will no longer be an Options for Knowledge school
- Felt the handout provided by CPS is too negative and should be more positive
- Resented the fact that CPS is claiming students are trapped in under resourced schools
- Concerned about split classes
- Belief that Drake is not a higher performing school because it is only two points higher on the performance policy
- Frustrated that CPS continues to not answer questions at the community meetings
- Wondered how the land at Williams could be used to improve utilization
- Asked if families will be able to meet the new principal and staff prior to students attending Drake
- Frustration at the process overall
- Belief that dissolving the LSC should be illegal
- Curious about curriculum improvements
- Worried about increased traffic and parking challenges at Williams
- Pointed out a correlation between schools proposed for closure and the availability of low-income housing in an area
- Do not believe families have been provided with all of the information necessary to make decisions
- Asked about academic intervention programs
- Confusion about how the performance policy is calculated
- Belief that Urban Prep co-location is disruptive to current Williams students
- Asked to speak to Barbra Byrd-Bennett directly
- Belief testing is another reason for closure that is not being discussed
- Curious about the average student to teacher ratio after the proposed closure
- Concerns about violence
- Suggested consolidating high schools instead of elementary schools
- Belief that budget crisis is overstated and closing schools is going to cost more money than it will save
- Asked when the comprehensive safety plans will be available
- Wondered when Urban Prep is moving out of the Williams building permanently