

**For the Proposed Co-location of Belmont-Cragin Elementary School with Northwest Middle School****I. Introduction**

Chicago Public Schools (CPS) is committed to ensuring that every student, in every community, has access to a high-quality, well-rounded education in order to graduate from high school ready to succeed in college, career, and life. From investments in early childhood education and a full school day to ensuring that there are effective principals and teachers in our schools, CPS is doing everything possible to provide Chicago's children with a 21st century education that helps them thrive and succeed. It is our obligation to work every day on behalf of our children's future.

However, our District faces a \$1 billion deficit, which threatens everything in our system by making it difficult to provide the robust supports and services that all children deserve. Our District's financial crisis is significantly challenged by underutilization, resulting in financial resources being invested in half-empty buildings that are costly to maintain and repair. Currently, CPS is financing schools and buildings with a capacity for 511,000 students while only serving 403,000 students. This utilization crisis is spreading our already scarce financial resources much too thin.

To address this crisis, CPS is proposing a plan to address underutilization based on significant input from partners including parents, students, teachers, principals, community and faith leaders, the independent Commission on School Utilization, the Chicago Police Department, and the Department of Family and Support Services. Through these collaborative efforts, CPS' plan represents a new day for Chicago Public Schools, and a fresh start for our students in Fall 2013.

The plan proposes to close or co-locate schools that are underutilized. These actions will enable CPS to maximize resources by supporting a reduced number of school buildings, which will improve our capacity to provide all children with greater access to critical resources and supports such as libraries, technology, playgrounds, nurses, and counselors.

In order to more effectively utilize our building space, CPS proposes to co-locate Belmont-Cragin Elementary School (Belmont-Cragin) with Northwest Middle School (Northwest) in a shared facility located at 5252 W. Palmer St. This decision is based on the underutilization of Northwest in accordance with the [Chief Executive Officer's Guidelines for School Actions](#) (Guidelines).

The transition plan outlined below summarizes the proposal, identifies the supports that will be provided to impacted students to create a smooth and safe transition process, and notes opportunities for commenting on the action.

**II. Summary of Action**

CPS is proposing to co-locate Belmont-Cragin with Northwest in the same CPS facility located at 5252 W. Palmer St. within the Fullerton Elementary Network of CPS. Northwest is located in a CPS-owned facility and serves 692 students in 6th-8th grades. Belmont-Cragin is located in two leased facilities and serves 613 students in pre-kindergarten through 8th grades. Belmont-Cragin's kindergarten through 8<sup>th</sup> grades will co-locate with Northwest while the pre-kindergarten grades will remain at the Socrates building at 6041 W. Diversey Ave. The enrollment of Belmont-Cragin's kindergarten through 8<sup>th</sup> grades is 256 students.

The proposed co-location meets the criteria of the Chief Executive Officer's Guidelines for School Actions because the combined projected enrollment is within the facility's enrollment efficiency range, as defined by the CPS' Space Utilization Standards, and the facility can support the academic programming of both schools. If this proposal is approved, Northwest and Belmont-Cragin will operate as separate, independent schools while sharing the facility and will be expected to adhere to the Board's Shared Facility Policy (Board Report 05-0126-P01). CPS will make the necessary capital investments to ensure the successful operation of each independent school within the same facility. The proposed investments CPS will make for affected students at both Northwest and Belmont-Cragin, as described in

this draft transition plan, will provide students with a supportive learning environment and ease the transition process as much as possible.

### **III. Facility Details**

As stated in the Board's 2005 Shared Facility Policy, it is in the best interest of the Board, students and the community to identify buildings that are underutilized and to improve the use of those facilities. One way to do this is to transform a single school facility into a shared facility by bringing one or more additional schools into the building.

The facility at 5252 W. Palmer St. has enough space to accommodate the combined classrooms required to serve Northwest and Belmont-Cragin. In accordance with the CPS Shared Facility Policy, CPS will work to program the space to create a clear boundary between the campuses and will create separate administrative offices as needed. The 5252 W. Palmer St. facility has sufficient space to accommodate the needs of both schools for academic courses, lunch, physical education, administrative offices, and other programming. If the proposed co-location is approved, Northwest and Belmont-Cragin may need to share space in some common areas. Further, a specific memorandum of understanding (MOU) to allocate space between the two schools will be drafted in accordance with the Board's 2005 Shared Facility Policy.

### **IV. Safety and Security**

CPS has engaged multiple experts regarding school safety to make decisions that will ensure children have a seamless transition next year. The Office of Safety and Security (OSS), Chicago Police Department, the Department of Family and Support Services, and community and faith partners were all consulted as part of the safety planning process.

CPS has prepared a plan for the safety of students and staff impacted by the proposed co-location of Northwest and Belmont-Cragin. OSS will continue to partner on an on-going basis with local community groups, elected officials, sister agencies, and the Chicago Police Department to maintain a smooth and safe transition of students to a new school environment. As part of the transition process, OSS will:

- Review and update school safety audits
- Review security personnel allocations to ensure proper coverage
- Review school safety technology and enhance systems as appropriate
- Address any safety concerns raised by students and staff
- As deemed necessary by OSS, in collaboration with the community, CPS will also provide a transition security officer to assist with safety and security needs.

### **V. Supports for Students and Schools**

CPS is committed to ensuring a successful transition for the 2013-2014 school year. To accomplish this, CPS will provide the following supports to meet the academic, social and emotional, and specific learning needs of affected students. These resources may be further customized as feedback is obtained at community meetings and a public hearing regarding this action. Additionally, resources may be adjusted to meet the unique needs of affected students if deemed necessary by the Chief of Schools overseeing this Network.

#### ***Academic Needs for Students***

To ensure students receive high-quality academic instruction throughout the transition, schools will receive:

- Principal Transition Coordinator (PTC): PTCs are former principals, or other administrators with significant experience, who will be a resource to help the principals of Northwest and Belmont-Cragin ensure a smooth transition.
- Network Chief Office Hours: Network Chiefs, who oversee a geographic network of schools, will set aside dedicated time to discuss concerns and educational options with families and students affected by this action. For specific dates and times, please contact your school or Network office.

- Support in Campus Sharing: CPS acknowledges that sharing space requires a delicate balance of separation and interaction. CPS will help school leaders coordinate to create a safe, positive learning environment for each school and mediate the use of potential shared space. CPS will also guide school leaders in the creation of the memorandum of understanding (MOU).

### ***Social Emotional Needs of Students***

CPS understands that whenever students transition to a new environment, additional support is needed to help them adjust. CPS will provide resources and work with schools to design a school-specific program of support which may include items such as:

- Focus groups: Discussions of general climate with some students within each grade level will be conducted by school- or Network-based staff to help school personnel understand students' needs and identify effective transition supports.
- Student Leadership and Culture Building Activities: To foster an environment that is both supportive and inclusive for all students, CPS will provide resources to school leadership to help create positive relationships among students and implement culture-building activities (such as peer to peer mediation support, staff luncheons, and team- and trust-building activities).

### ***Support for Specific Students Needs***

To ensure students at Northwest and Belmont-Cragin who have unique needs or circumstances are adequately supported in this transition, CPS will provide the Network with additional resources to work directly with families and assist in explaining their school options. Additionally, CPS will provide the following:

#### ***Students with Diverse Learning Needs***

- Students with disabilities at both schools will continue to be provided instructional support both in the general education classroom and in small group or individual settings, in accordance with their Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) for the 2012-2013 school year.
- Once students transition to the facility at 5252 W. Palmer St., all instructional, clinical and related services will continue to be provided in accordance with their IEPs. All specialized services, including nursing, speech, occupational therapy, physical therapy, social work, psychology, assistive technology support, and special education instruction will continue to be provided in the manner stated on each student's current IEP.
- CPS will work with administration and staff at both schools to ensure classrooms are set up to meet student needs, to schedule all students in accordance with IEPs, and to ensure there is adequate staff to fully implement student IEPs.
- The facility at 5252 W. Palmer St. currently is not accessible to persons with disabilities according to the Americans with Disabilities Act. As part of the facility upgrades explained in more detail below, CPS will begin renovations at the facility to provide all floors with a basic level of access. For more information about a particular school, contact the CPS Director of ADA Policy at (773) 553-2158.

#### ***Students in Temporary Living Situations***

- The CPS Office of Students in Temporary Living Situations (OSTLS) will continue the supports currently provided to Students in Temporary Living Situations (STLS) as required by law and as they transition to a new building. These include free school meals, enrollment support, provision of required school uniforms and school supplies as needed, transportation assistance when eligible, and waiver of all school related fees.
- Under this action, returning STLS students may choose to continue attending their school or meet with OSTLS staff to identify enrollment options available. For families currently enrolled in the STLS program, younger siblings may attend the same school that their older sibling elects under this proposed action.
- Additionally, CPS will provide professional development and support to staff on providing transition services for STLS students.

### ***English Language Learners***

- Current and future ELLs attending either school will receive state mandated transitional bilingual program services which include, depending on the number of ELLs enrolled, certified Bilingual and English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers and/or support from the Department of Language and Cultural Education (DoLCE).
- Schools that welcome newcomers to the United States will be provided student orientation kits and will receive assistance from CPS to coordinate with resettlement centers, translation/interpretation services, tutoring services in the native language, and social-emotional supports tailored to their specific needs.

### ***Early Childhood Participants***

- This action will not affect early childhood programming. The early childhood program at Belmont-Cragin will remain at the Socrates building at 6041 W. Diversey Ave.

### ***Transportation***

- Provisions for specific student populations (i.e., student with disabilities, Students in Temporary Living Situations, and NCLB qualifying students), as determined by the CPS transportation policy, will continue to apply.

### ***Facilities Investment***

CPS will enhance the overall learning environment with facilities improvements, which may include upgrades such as:

- Converting existing classrooms or offices into new administrative space;
- Providing signage that reflects newly allocated spaces;
- Adding independent Telecommunication and Intercom systems so that each school maintains separation;
- Upgrading existing science, computer, and art labs, or creating new labs as needed; and
- Providing a second library, when space is available.
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## **VI. Information Regarding Choice of Schools**

Northwest and Belmont-Cragin assignments will not be impacted by the proposed co-location. However, CPS is committed to providing educational options that fit each student's unique learning needs and each family's priorities. To support families in this decision, information from the Office of Access & Enrollment is available:

- Online ([www.cps.edu](http://www.cps.edu) or [www.cpsoae.edu](http://www.cpsoae.edu)),
- By email ([oea@cps.edu](mailto:oea@cps.edu)),
- By phone (773-553-2060), and
- In person (125 S. Clark St., 10<sup>th</sup> Floor).

Additionally, as described above, Network Chiefs will set aside time specifically to discuss concerns and educational options with families and students affected by this action. Parents and guardians will also have the option of visiting schools of choice prior to making their enrollment decision. This will be facilitated by the Network Office in accordance with all applicable policies.

Recognizing that many families would have applied for other options if they had known their school was going to be affected by school actions, CPS will reopen the application period for students affected by school actions. Students affected by school actions will be given the chance to apply to magnet cluster and neighborhood schools that have available seats. Students must apply and submit an application to the Office of Access & Enrollment by the deadline of April 19, 2013 to be considered. The application has been sent home with your child and is also available at [www.cpsoae.org](http://www.cpsoae.org), by calling (773) 553-2060, or in person at 125 S. Clark St., 10<sup>th</sup> floor.

## VII. Public Comment

### ***Community Meetings and Public Hearings:***

CPS will hold two community meetings and one formal public hearing regarding this action. Public comment will be accepted during each meeting or hearing. CPS is committed to considering community feedback and will amend this draft transition plan accordingly.

#### **Community Meeting 1**

Saturday, April 06, 2013  
10:00am-12:00pm  
Prosser High School  
2148 North Long Avenue

#### **Community Meeting 2**

Thursday, April 11, 2013  
5:00pm-7:00pm  
Prosser High School  
2148 North Long Avenue

#### **Public Hearing**

Saturday, April 20, 2013  
11:30am-1:30pm  
CPS Central Office  
125 S. Clark St.

### ***Further Questions and Concerns:***

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this proposal and the draft transition plan, please call 311 (City Services) or visit [www.cps.edu/qualityschools](http://www.cps.edu/qualityschools).

### ***Definitions***

“Co-location” means two separate, independent schools with their own school leader(s) co-existing within a Chicago Public School facility.

“School action” means any school closing; school consolidation; co-location; boundary change that requires reassignment of students, unless the reassignment is to a new school with an attendance area boundary and is made to relieve overcrowding; or phase-out.

“Space Utilization Standards” mean the Chicago Public Schools’ Space Utilization Standards, found at: [http://www.cps.edu/About\\_CPS/Policies\\_and\\_guidelines/Documents/SpaceUtilizationStandards.pdf](http://www.cps.edu/About_CPS/Policies_and_guidelines/Documents/SpaceUtilizationStandards.pdf), establishing standards for determining enrollment efficiency, overcrowding, and underutilization.