

# Transcript of the Testimony of

**Date:** April 23, 2013

**Case:** CPS Public Hearing Proposed Closure of Kate S.  
Buckingham Special Educator Center

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April 23, 2013

Page 1

CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOLS

PUBLIC HEARING TO CONSIDER  
THE PROPOSED CLOSURE OF  
KATE S. BUCKINGHAM SPECIAL  
EDUCATOR CENTER SCHOOL

April 23, 2013  
COMMENCING AT 5:30 P.M.

HON. CHERYL STARKS  
HEARING OFFICER

	SPEAKER	
1		
2	Gabriela Brizuela	4
	Benjamin Felton	8
3	Markay Winston	16
	Alderman Fioretti	29
4	Otis Taylor	35
	Gregory Johnson	37
5	Rosie Sutton	41
	Student A	43
6	Victoria Jackson	43
	Diantha Hudson-Garcia	45
7	Student B	47
	Nikkitoya Roberts	48
8	Martin Ritter	50
	Student C	53
9	Student D	54
	Carolyn McNeil	54
10	Kathleen Murray	57
	Tally Jacobson	59
11	Stephen Hyman	62
	Carrie Patterson	64
12	William Calloway	66
	Jackson Potter	68
13		
14		
15		
16		
17		
18		
19		
20		
21		
22		
23		
24		

1 HEARING OFFICER STARKS: Good evening, ladies  
2 and gentlemen. At this time this hearing will be  
3 called to order, pursuant to the applicable statute  
4 of the Illinois School Code.

5 And before we proceed, I would just like  
6 to first indicate that we have a Spanish  
7 interpreter, if you're in need of interpretation.  
8 He'll stand. Also, we have a sign language  
9 interpreter as well.

10 Okay, before we proceed, the way this will  
11 proceed, first the Chicago Public Schools will be  
12 represented, the CEO will be represented by the  
13 attorney from the Chicago Public School Law  
14 Department, and that is Brizuela.

15 MS. BRIZUELA: Yes.

16 HEARING OFFICER STARKS: After which once the  
17 CPS has put up all of their evidence, I will then  
18 take comments and statements from the general  
19 public.

20 Now, if you have written down your  
21 statement, and you wish to have it admitted as an  
22 exhibit, then you must give it to the court  
23 reporter. She will then mark it as an exhibit,  
24 Public Exhibit 1, 2, 3 and so forth.

1           Additionally, any children who will be  
2     testifying, you may state your name, for the record;  
3     however, your name will be deleted from the record,  
4     and you will be simply referred to as Student A, B,  
5     C, and so forth.

6           Okay, if there is nothing else at this  
7     time, Ms. Brizuela, you may proceed.

8           MS. BRIZUELA: Thank you.

9           HEARING OFFICER STARKS: Oh, just for the  
10    record, this is regarding the closing of Kate S.  
11    Buckingham Special Education Center.

12          MS. BRIZUELA: Good evening, Your Honor. My  
13    name is Gabriela Brizuela, G-a-b-r-i-e-l-a  
14    B-r-i-z-u-e-l-a. I'm an attorney in the Chicago  
15    Board of Education's Law Department.

16                I am appearing before you today in  
17    connection with the proposal of Chief Executive  
18    Officer, or CEO, of the Chicago Public Schools to  
19    close Kate Buckingham Elementary School, or  
20    Buckingham, and welcome returning students at Moses  
21    Montefiore Special School, or Montefiore.

22                I have tendered to you and ask that you  
23    admit into the record the CEO's compiled Exhibit 1 a  
24    binder of documents being submitted for

1 consideration in support of the proposal. A copy of  
2 the binder is also available here in Board Chambers  
3 on the ledge behind me for public viewing.

4 The binder consists of the documentary  
5 evidence and written statements demonstrating that  
6 the CEO's proposal complies with the requirements of  
7 the Illinois School Code and the CEO's Guidelines  
8 for School Actions.

9 Specifically, the written statements and  
10 documents demonstrate the following: At tab A --

11 HEARING OFFICER STARKS: Oh, before you  
12 finishes, let me. Can everyone hear out there?

13 We're having difficulty up here hearing  
14 you. Okay, go ahead.

15 MS. BRIZUELA: At tab A, the binder includes  
16 notice letters to the parents and guardians of  
17 students, school staff members, and local school  
18 council members at Buckingham and Montefiore,  
19 accompanied by draft transition plans.

20 The notice letters and draft transition  
21 plans describe the basis of the proposal, explaining  
22 how the proposal meets the criteria of the  
23 guidelines, identifies the supports for students'  
24 safety and security, academic, social and emotional

1 needs, and specific supports for students with  
2 disabilities, students in temporary living  
3 situations, and English language learners; and it  
4 identifies the student's option to enroll in a  
5 higher-performing school, provide information on  
6 choice of schools, and identify transportation where  
7 practicable.

8 Tab A also includes the notice of the  
9 scheduled community meetings and hearings published  
10 in the newspaper, and affidavits attesting to the  
11 delivery of notice to Buckingham and Montefiore  
12 parents or guardians, school staff, local school  
13 council members and elected officials.

14 Tab -- finally, tab A includes an  
15 affidavit attesting to proper publication of the  
16 list of qualified independent Hearing Officers and  
17 Draft Guidelines for School Actions before  
18 November 1st, the finalized Guidelines for School  
19 actions following a 21-day public comment period,  
20 and proposals before March 31st, and at least 15  
21 calendar days before the first community meeting,  
22 and summaries for community meetings within five  
23 days after the meetings.

24 At tab B, the binder includes the Illinois

1 School Code provisions, designating the powers of  
2 the Board and outlining the process for school  
3 actions. This tab also includes the Board's policy  
4 on school performance, remediation and probation for  
5 the 2011-2012 school year.

6 Also at tab B are the Chicago Public  
7 Schools' Space Utilization Standards and CEO's  
8 Guidelines for Schools Actions for 2012-2013 school  
9 year.

10 Finally, tab B includes the CEO's  
11 procedure for public hearings on proposed school  
12 closings. At tab C, the binder includes written  
13 evidence, in support of the CEO's proposal.

14 Tab C contains the transcript and  
15 summaries from two community meetings to elicit  
16 public comment held at locations convenient to the  
17 Buckingham and Montefiore School communities.

18 Tab C also includes the written statement  
19 of Benjamin Felton, the accompanying presentation  
20 demonstrating Buckingham's underutilization and the  
21 space available at Montefiore facility to welcome  
22 students without exceeding its enrollment efficiency  
23 range, and a map of the proposed attendance boundary  
24 change.

1           Finally, tab C includes the written  
2 statement of Ms. Markay Winston, and accompanying  
3 documents demonstrating Montefiore's status as a  
4 higher performing school, and outlining the supports  
5 that will be offered to students as they transition.

6           At this time I request that the CEO's  
7 compiled Exhibit 1 be admitted into the record.

8           HEARING OFFICER STARKS: Okay. The CPS  
9 compiled Exhibit No. 1 will be admitted.

10          MS. BRIZUELA: Thank you.

11          HEARING OFFICER STARKS: You may call your  
12 first witness.

13          MS. BRIZUELA: Your Honor, I would now like to  
14 introduce the CEO's representative, Mr. Benjamin  
15 Felton, who will make a statement in support of the  
16 proposal. His statement is located in the binder at  
17 tab 20.

18          MR. FELTON: Good evening, Your Honor.

19          HEARING OFFICER STARKS: Okay, Mr. Felton.

20          MR. FELTON: I'm battling a bit of a head cold,  
21 so I appreciate your bearing with me.

22          HEARING OFFICER STARKS: Okay.

23          MR. FELTON: My name is Benjamin Felton,  
24 B-e-n-j-a-m-i-n F-e-l-t-o-n, and I'm a Portfolio

1 Planner for the Chicago Public Schools. I've been  
2 in this position since July of 2012. As a Portfolio  
3 Planner, I manage strategic planning to improve the  
4 efficient utilization of CPS facilities.

5 Prior to becoming a Portfolio Planner, I  
6 worked as a teacher at CPS. I then joined the  
7 Tennessee Department of Education, where I focused  
8 on teacher and principal recruitment and contributed  
9 to the development of the department's five-year  
10 strategic plan.

11 I have a Bachelor of Science from  
12 Vanderbilt University. I've been asked to appear at  
13 this hearing today to convey to you, the parents and  
14 the community, as well as interested members of the  
15 public in attendance, information regarding the  
16 space utilization of the Buckingham facility, with  
17 respect to the proposal to close Buckingham.

18 Accordingly, Chief Executive Officer's  
19 Guidelines for the 2012-2013 school year, the CEO  
20 may propose to close a school if it's underutilized,  
21 based on CPS Space Utilization Standards, and  
22 student enrollment numbers recorded on the 20th  
23 attendance day for the 2012-2013 school year.

24 The CEO may only propose a closure if the

1 impacted students have the option to enroll in a  
2 higher-performing school, and the resulting space  
3 utilization after the closure will not exceed the  
4 facility's enrollment efficiency range, as defined  
5 by the CPS Space Utilization Standards.

6 I will discuss the details regarding the  
7 space utilization proposal, while my colleague,  
8 Dr. Markay Winston, will discuss the performance of  
9 the welcoming school and highlight the supports  
10 being offered in the draft transition plans.

11 Buckingham is currently located at 9207  
12 South Phillips Avenue. Buckingham is an elementary  
13 school that as of the 20th day of attendance for  
14 2012-2013 school year, serves 35 students in grades  
15 2 through 8.

16 To understand the enrollment efficiency  
17 range of a facility, Chicago Public Schools utilizes  
18 its Space Utilization Standards, which are located  
19 in your binder at tab B13. The enrollment  
20 efficiency range is plus or minus 20 percent of the  
21 facility's ideal enrollment.

22 For typical elementary school buildings,  
23 the ideal enrollment is defined as the number of  
24 allotted homerooms multiplied by 30. The number of

1 allotted homeroom classrooms is approximately 76 to  
2 77 percent of the total classrooms available.

3 As an elementary school's enrollment  
4 increases above the efficiency range, a school may  
5 be considered overcrowded, as programming options  
6 are reduced or compromised.

7 As an elementary school's enrollment  
8 decreases below the efficiency range, a school may  
9 be considered underutilized as classrooms are unused  
10 or poorly programmed, making the use of limited  
11 resources less effective.

12 A typical elementary school building has a  
13 total of 39 classrooms. Therefore, the number of  
14 allotted homerooms, approximately 76 to 77 percent  
15 of 39, is 30 classrooms. Multiplying 30 classrooms  
16 by 30 equals the ideal enrollment of the number of  
17 900.

18 Finally, the enrollment efficiency range  
19 is plus or minus 20 percent of 900, which is between  
20 720 and 1,080. If a school in this typical  
21 elementary school building had an enrollment below  
22 720, it would be considered underutilized.  
23 Alternatively, if the school's enrollment was above  
24 1,080, it would be overcrowded.

1           There are seven total classrooms within  
2 the Buckingham facility. Approximately 76 to  
3 77 percent of this number is 5, the number the  
4 allotted homerooms. This number, multiplied by 30,  
5 yields the ideal enrollment of the facility, which  
6 is 150. As such, the enrollment efficiency range of  
7 Buckingham facility is between 120 and 180 students.

8           As I stated, the enrollment of Buckingham  
9 as of the 20th day of attendance for the 2012-2013  
10 school year is 35. This number is below the  
11 enrollment efficiency range; and thus, the school is  
12 underutilized.

13           While the Buckingham facility is  
14 considered underutilized per the Chicago Public  
15 School Space Utilization Standards, I want to  
16 acknowledge the fact that Buckingham is a specialty  
17 school that serves a population of students with  
18 disabilities that require a separate instructional  
19 setting; and thus, the additional flexibility must  
20 be given for the use of space.

21           Therefore, for schools where all students  
22 enrolled are students with disabilities who require  
23 a separate school placement, such as Buckingham, the  
24 ideal enrollment is the number of allotted homerooms

1 multiplied by 13. However, even when the multiplier  
2 of 13 is used, the Buckingham facility remains  
3 underutilized.

4 As I stated, there are 7 total classrooms  
5 within the Buckingham facility. Approximately 76 to  
6 77 percent of this number is 5 for the number of  
7 allotted homerooms. This number, multiplied by 13,  
8 yields the ideal enrollment of the facility, which  
9 is 65.

10 As such, the enrollment efficiency range  
11 of the Buckingham facility is between 52 and 78  
12 students. The enrollment of Buckingham, as of the  
13 20th day of attendance for the 2012-2013 school  
14 year, is 35. This number is below the enrollment  
15 efficiency range; and thus, the school is  
16 underutilized.

17 The CEO has proposed that the students  
18 from Buckingham be welcomed at Moses Montefiore  
19 Special Elementary School, or Montefiore, located at  
20 1310 South Ashland Avenue.

21 If this proposal is approved by the Board  
22 of Education for the City of Chicago, the resulting  
23 space utilization will not exceed Montefiore's  
24 enrollment efficiency range. Montefiore has 21

1 total classrooms. Approximately 76 to 77 percent of  
2 this number is 16, the number of allotted homerooms.  
3 Again, this number is multiplied by 13 to  
4 accommodate the additional flexibility that this  
5 school needs to serve their students.

6 Multiplying 16 by 13 yields the ideal  
7 enrollment of this facility, which is 208. As such,  
8 the enrollment efficiency range of the Montefiore  
9 facility is between 167 and 249 students.

10 Montefiore currently has 27 students enrolled.

11 To fully explain the enrollment trend  
12 associated with these schools, I would like to  
13 direct your attention to the screen. The related  
14 closure -- in a related closure proposal presented  
15 separately this evening, the CEO is proposing the  
16 students from the Near North Elementary School also  
17 be welcomed at Montefiore.

18 Projected is a slide that shows the  
19 enrollment trend at Buckingham, Montefiore and Near  
20 North Elementary School, green-hashed lines showing  
21 the enrollment efficiency range of the Montefiore  
22 facility and a circle representing the combined  
23 projected enrollment for 2013-2014.

24 Buckingham's current enrollment of 35

1 students, Near North's current enrollment of 90  
2 students, and Montefiore's current enrollment of 27  
3 students, combined to a total of 152 students within  
4 the enrollment efficiency range of the Montefiore  
5 facility.

6 Further, for the 2013-2014 school year,  
7 the projected enrollment of Buckingham is 30. The  
8 projected enrollment of the Near North is 94, and  
9 the projected enrollment for Montefiore is 24.

10 Even the combined projected 2013-2014  
11 enrollment for these three schools is within  
12 Montefiore's enrollment efficiency range. Thus,  
13 there is enough space within Montefiore building --  
14 within the Montefiore building for students from  
15 Buckingham and students from Montefiore.

16 You will next hear from my colleague,  
17 Dr. Markay Winston, who will discuss the performance  
18 of Montefiore and highlight the proposed transition  
19 efforts.

20 Thank you, Your Honor. This concludes my  
21 statement.

22 HEARING OFFICER STARKS: Okay, thank you. All  
23 right, Ms. Brizuela, you may call your next witness.

24 MS. BRIZUELA: Your Honor, I would now like to

1 introduce the CEO's next representative, Dr. Markay  
2 Winston, who will make a statement in support of the  
3 proposal. This statement is located in the binder  
4 at tab 22.

5 HEARING OFFICER STARKS: And, Ms. Winston, you  
6 may proceed when you're ready.

7 DR. WINSTON: Good evening, your Honor.

8 HEARING OFFICER STARKS: Good evening.

9 DR. WINSTON: My name is Markay Winston. I am  
10 the Chief Officer of Diverse Learner Supports and  
11 Services. In this capacity, I oversee the  
12 District's efforts to serve approximately 53,000  
13 students with disabilities.

14 My office supports individual students in  
15 all schools, to ensure diverse learners receive  
16 meaningful and relevant access to grade level core  
17 instruction, suited to their unique learning needs  
18 within their neighborhood school, school of choice,  
19 or the school closest to their residence.

20 I have been the Officer of this department  
21 since September of 2012. By way of background,  
22 prior to being appointed to my current role, I  
23 served as the Director of Student Services for the  
24 Cincinnati Public Schools for the past ten years.

1 Prior to that, my experience has included  
2 positions as a school psychologist, mental health  
3 consultant and Adjunct Professor. I have a Bachelor  
4 of Arts, a Master's Degree in Education, and a  
5 Doctorate. My Master's and Doctorate Degrees are  
6 from the Department of School Psychology and  
7 Counseling at the University of Cincinnati.

8 As you have already heard, Buckingham fits  
9 the criteria of the Chief Executive Officer's  
10 Guidelines for School Actions, because it is  
11 underutilized based on CPS Space Utilization  
12 Standards and students enrollment numbers recorded  
13 on the 20th attendance day for the 2012-2013 school  
14 year.

15 Buckingham students will be welcomed by  
16 Montefiore, located at 1310 South Ashland Avenue.  
17 The facility at 1310 South Ashland Avenue has enough  
18 space to welcome the Buckingham students, and the  
19 resulting combined enrollment will not exceed the  
20 facility's enrollment efficiency range.

21 When Buckingham students are welcomed by  
22 the Montefiore administration, staff and students,  
23 they will be attending a higher-performing school,  
24 based on the CEO's Guidelines for School Actions.

1           While this action is not being proposed  
2 because of performance, we must follow our CEO's  
3 Guidelines, which require that students from a  
4 proposed closure are welcomed at a higher-performing  
5 school.

6           We acknowledge that there is a perception  
7 that schools that serve students with disabilities  
8 should not be held to the same high quality standard  
9 we hold all other schools to.

10           However, this cannot and should not be the  
11 case, as the District must provide grade level core  
12 instruction, with appropriate commendations,  
13 modifications and considerations for students with  
14 special needs to ensure that they succeed.

15           In order for diverse learners to fully  
16 achieve, we believe that we must have high  
17 expectations and hold them to higher standards that  
18 are aligned to the common core. The CEO's  
19 Guidelines for School Actions define a higher  
20 performing elementary school to be a school  
21 receiving a higher level on the Performance Policy  
22 for the 2011-2012 school year.

23           The CEO's Guidelines also define a higher  
24 performing elementary school if the Performance

1 Policy level is equal to be a school performing  
2 higher on the majority of four performance metrics  
3 for the 2011-2012 school year.

4 Both Buckingham and Montefiore received a  
5 level 3 rating in 2011-2012. Thus, the higher  
6 performing school under the guidelines is the one  
7 that performed higher on the majority of four  
8 performance metrics.

9 The four performance metrics analyzed are  
10 the percentage of points the school received on the  
11 performance policy, the ISAT composite meets or  
12 exceeds scores, the Value-Added score in reading,  
13 and the Value-Added score in math.

14 I will explain each of these metrics  
15 below, and explain how Montefiore performed higher  
16 than Buckingham in 2011-2012.

17 The first metric to compare is the  
18 school's percentage of points received on the  
19 Performance Policy. The Performance Policy bases  
20 its rating on a point system. Points are received  
21 for the school's current level of performance, and  
22 improvement over time on standardized tests and  
23 attendance, as well as the growth of individual  
24 students from year to year on the state test.

1 For 2011-2012, Montefiore received  
2 38.9 percent of available points, and Buckingham  
3 received 30.6 percent of available points. Thus,  
4 Montefiore received a higher percentage of points on  
5 the Performance Policy.

6 The second metric is the ISAT meets or  
7 exceeds composite score, which is the combined  
8 result of the ISAT reading, mathematics, and science  
9 assessments. Montefiore's ISAT meets or exceeds  
10 composite score was 26.2 percent, while Buckingham's  
11 meets or exceeds composite score was 10.6 percent.

12 The third and fourth metrics are the  
13 school's Value-Added score in reading and math.  
14 Value-Added is a component of the performance policy  
15 that compares student academic growth on the ISAT at  
16 a school with a growth of similar students across  
17 the District.

18 This is done through a regression  
19 methodology that controls for nine student level  
20 factors, including grade level, prior performance on  
21 the ISAT, free or reduced lunch eligibility, race or  
22 ethnicity, mobility, participation in the Students  
23 in Temporary Living Situations Program,  
24 Individualized Education Program, or IEP status,

1 English language learner status, and gender.

2 Controlling these factors allows us to see  
3 how much impact the school had on its average  
4 student over the past year. Because we control for  
5 prior performance, this metric allows us to identify  
6 schools with low test scores where growth is rapid,  
7 and schools with high test scores where growth is  
8 slow.

9 The Value-Added metric is a standardized  
10 measure with a mean of zero. Standardization means  
11 that the score is reported in standard deviation  
12 units, which is a measure of how far away the school  
13 score is from the District's average.

14 A positive number means that the students  
15 at the school are growing at a faster pace than  
16 similar students in the district.

17 For example, a positive one indicates that  
18 the school is one standard deviation above the mean,  
19 meaning that the school students are growing at a  
20 faster pace than the approximately 84 percent of  
21 schools in the District.

22 A score near zero means that the students  
23 at the school are growing at about the same pace as  
24 similar students in the District, and a negative

1 score means that the students at the school are  
2 growing at a slower pace than similar students in  
3 the District.

4 As you can see, Montefiore's reading  
5 Value-Added score was .7 in 2012, and Buckingham's  
6 reading Value-Added score was zero. This means  
7 that, on average, students at Montefiore grew at a  
8 faster pace in reading, when compared to students at  
9 Buckingham.

10 Montefiore's mathematics Value-Added score  
11 was 1.6 in 2012, and Buckingham's Value-Added score  
12 was negative .7. This means that, on average,  
13 students at Montefiore grew at a faster pace in  
14 mathematics when compared to students at Buckingham.

15 To summarize, Montefiore performed higher  
16 than Buckingham in 2011-2012 on all four of the  
17 metrics identified in the CEO's Guidelines for  
18 School Actions; and thus, Montefiore is a  
19 higher-performing school.

20 If this proposal is approved, students  
21 will receive additional supports at Buckingham  
22 during the remainder of the school year and at  
23 Montefiore next year.

24 CPS has developed a plan dedicating

1 additional resources to address any safety concerns,  
2 and to fulfill students' academic, social and  
3 emotional, and other individual needs. The draft  
4 transition plan explaining these additional  
5 resources was sent home to all families affected by  
6 this proposal, and is located in your binder at tab  
7 A1.

8 CPS will publish final transition plans,  
9 if the Board approves this proposal, which will  
10 incorporate feedback from community meetings, this  
11 hearing, and additional input received.

12 The Office of Diverse Learner Supports and  
13 Services has been working with families of  
14 Buckingham students since early April to discuss how  
15 best to support students in the transition and  
16 consider alternative options for placement, should  
17 this proposal be approved by the Board.

18 The Office of Diverse Learner Supports and  
19 Services is working with its non-public school  
20 partners to identify alternatives for students whose  
21 individualized education program, IEP, requires  
22 separate settings.

23 Our office is also coordinating school  
24 tours of welcoming schools for families of students

1 with disabilities and hosting transition planning  
2 meetings to discuss supports and to address any  
3 concerns.

4 Schools welcoming students with  
5 disabilities, including Montefiore, will host meet  
6 and greets for families to meet with teachers at the  
7 new school. During these meet-and-greet events,  
8 parents and teachers will be able to review  
9 Individualized Education Programs, IEPs, together  
10 and discuss individual student's needs.

11 Our office has commenced a series of  
12 trainings for Montefiore staff members to share  
13 behavior and instructional strategies, related to  
14 the students they will be welcoming.

15 Additionally, my team is currently  
16 counseling families, as they consider their options,  
17 and we will continue to assist them through this  
18 transition process.

19 We will also ensure that any necessary  
20 equipment is available at Montefiore, prior to the  
21 start of the school; and once school resumes, our  
22 office will monitor IEP implementation and make any  
23 staffing adjustments that may be required.

24 The CPS Office of Safety and Security, or

1 OSS, has worked with the Chicago Police Department,  
2 the Department of Family and Support Services, local  
3 community groups, and faith partners, elected  
4 officials, and other sister agencies, to develop a  
5 plan for the safe transition of students.

6 If this proposal is approved, OSS will  
7 take the following steps: First, OSS will review  
8 and update school safety audits, security personnel  
9 allocations and school safety technology systems to  
10 make enhancements as appropriate.

11 Second, OSS will be available to address  
12 specific safety concerns raised by students and  
13 staff.

14 Additionally, students will receive  
15 academic supports as they transition, including the  
16 following: First, a principal transition  
17 coordinator, or a PTC, will be assigned to help the  
18 principal of Buckingham for the remainder of the  
19 school year and ensure a smooth transition to  
20 Montefiore.

21 PTCs are former principals, or other  
22 administrators with significant experience, who will  
23 be a resource for the administration and ensure  
24 continuity of support for faculty and students.

1           Second, the Montefiore administration will  
2 receive comprehensive students-specific data on all  
3 transitioning students, to allow staff to  
4 pro-actively identify individual student needs and  
5 prepare to meet those needs.

6           Third, principals will receive  
7 discretionary resources to provide direct academic  
8 support to students. For example, these funds may  
9 be used to provide an instructional coach, teacher,  
10 leader, or to obtain an academic tutoring position  
11 or program for students in reading and math. The  
12 principals will be supported as they consider how to  
13 use these resources.

14           Students will also receive social and  
15 emotional supports to help them adjust to a new  
16 school environment, including the following: First,  
17 CPS will help school staff members facilitate  
18 intervention groups or peace circles aimed at  
19 helping students work through concerns associated  
20 with the transition.

21           Second, CPS will help staff members  
22 implement restorative practices, such as peer  
23 circles and peer juries, to encourage peer-to-peer  
24 problem solving and resolution.

1 Third, groups of students in need of more  
2 individualized attention will be provided with  
3 highly -- excuse me, will be provided with access to  
4 highly-structured interventions.

5 Fourth, to foster an environment that is  
6 both supportive and inclusive for all students, CPS  
7 will provide resources to the Montefiore leadership  
8 to implement culture-building activities, such of as  
9 staff luncheons and team- and trust-building  
10 activities.

11 Resources will also be provided to sponsor  
12 activities, such as school visits for families,  
13 coffee chats with the principal, picnics, field  
14 trips, or parent meetings to help transitioning  
15 families get to know their new school.

16 In conclusion, Buckingham is  
17 underutilized. The combined enrollment of  
18 Buckingham and Montefiore students at the 1310 South  
19 Ashland Avenue facility will not exceed the  
20 facility's enrollment efficiency range, and  
21 Montefiore is a higher-performing school.

22 The CEO believes that this proposed school  
23 closure will help the District better serve all  
24 students and is prepared to assist students with

1 additional supports as they transition.

2 Thank you for your time and attention.

3 This concludes my statement.

4 HEARING OFFICER STARKS: Okay, thank you. Is  
5 there anything else that the Board wishes to  
6 present?

7 MS. BRIZUELA: Your Honor, this concludes the  
8 presentation in support of the CEO's proposal. If  
9 you have any questions, we are available to answer  
10 them. Thank you for your time and attention.

11 HEARING OFFICER STARKS: Okay. Thank you.  
12 Ladies and gentlemen, at this time we'll now open  
13 the floor to the general public, and you have  
14 approximately two minutes to speak.

15 So, you might want to hit your high points  
16 first; and if you have any documents that you wish  
17 to present, please give it to the court reporter  
18 over here on my left-hand side, and she'll mark it  
19 as an exhibit. And that way, your testimony, your  
20 statements, will be given all due consideration in  
21 this matter.

22 At this time is Leslie Reicht, Alderman  
23 for the second ward present. Okay. Did you want to  
24 speak?

1 ALDERMAN FIORETTI: Yes.

2 HEARING OFFICER STARKS: Okay.

3 ALDERMAN FIORETTI: I'm the alderman. Leslie  
4 was signing in for me. She's my aide on these  
5 matters.

6 MR. RECHT: And I've got a copy of the  
7 statement. Can I give it to the court reporter?

8 HEARING OFFICER STARKS: Yes, please step up,  
9 and she'll get it. And I also have a copy at this  
10 time.

11 She's going to mark it as Public  
12 Exhibit 1. No, this should be Public Exhibit No. 1.  
13 I guess people do it differently, but we're going to  
14 do it separate. Public Exhibit 1, again, it's from  
15 Alderman Fioretti.

16 ALDERMAN FIORETTI: Thank you. Madam Hearing  
17 Officer, Council for the Board, Mr. Felton, Ms.  
18 Winston.

19 I believe it would be a mistake to close  
20 both therapeutic day schools. As Alderman of the  
21 2nd Ward, I've worked closely with Montefiore  
22 Therapeutic Day School located on Ashland just south  
23 of Roosevelt Road.

24 The school was chartered by the Board of

1 Education in 1929 as a school for boys with severe  
2 emotional and behavioral issues. Today the students  
3 at Montefiore have individual education plans, IEPs  
4 that require them to be placed in a school with  
5 special provision for their safety and education.

6 I've worked with the community to increase  
7 the capacity that CPS has to accommodate students  
8 with this kind of disability. In response, CPS has  
9 renovated the Montefiore building, but they have not  
10 added additional students that we know have these  
11 disabilities.

12 Three years ago, I initiated hearings at  
13 the City Council to find out what steps CPS has  
14 taken to determine which children need IEPs. I  
15 continued to receive complaints from community  
16 members that CPS is not providing IEPs to the  
17 children that need them.

18 I have also continued to receive  
19 complaints that children are disrupting classrooms  
20 across the city, rather than getting the help they  
21 need for their disabilities.

22 The charge is that CPS is refusing to  
23 evaluate children in an effort to save money. I'm  
24 asking you today to work with me, and with aldermen

1 across the city, to show what CPS is doing to  
2 protect these children, to provide IEPs to those who  
3 need them, and to provide children who need  
4 therapeutic help with the resources that they need.

5 This hearing is to review the CPS proposal  
6 to combine essentially two other therapeutic day  
7 schools, Near North and Buckingham, into Montefiore  
8 building and school.

9 The parents of the students in these  
10 schools have resisted this proposal, because it  
11 would require their children to travel long  
12 distances by bus every day and would disrupt  
13 programs that are working.

14 Children who need therapeutic help are  
15 particularly fragile and can be damaged when they  
16 are moved into new situations with new people. I  
17 support these concerns, but CPS has not addressed  
18 them all.

19 In addition, it is dangerous for children  
20 from these schools to be put on buses for long  
21 periods of time. By eliminating two of the schools  
22 that serve these students, CPS is requiring many  
23 students to be bussed across the city twice each  
24 day, which will take hours for many students.

1           This is likely to endanger these students,  
2 who often have a low tolerance for the stress of  
3 these long commutes. CPS has not indicated what it  
4 will do about these number of aides on each bus,  
5 what number of buses will be used to move the  
6 children to Montefiore, and what plans have been  
7 made to protect the children in their new  
8 environment at Montefiore.

9           These are all important questions; and  
10 without answers, I support the request that many  
11 families members that are here today that CPS stop  
12 these proposed school closings.

13           CPS needs to work with the families of IEP  
14 children. The testimony at prior hearings shows  
15 that CPS has failed to work with parents of the  
16 children at Buckingham, Montefiore and Near North on  
17 the plans to combine these schools.

18           Montefiore has a great local school  
19 council and a principal at Montefiore is new and has  
20 been assigned on a temporary basis. If CPS goes  
21 ahead with its plans to combine these schools, it is  
22 imperative that CPS work with the parents and LSCs  
23 involved on any transition plans are made.

24           My staff will make ourselves available to

1 work with all parties in this situation, in whatever  
2 way we can for the benefit of the affected students  
3 and their families.

4 I submit these written remarks. However,  
5 Madam Hearing Officer, I do want to bring to your  
6 attention we did have significant hearings in the  
7 City Council about three years ago, dealing with the  
8 lack of children being sent to Montefiore.

9 It was quite clear that across this city,  
10 we could have filled up not only Montefiore, not  
11 only Buckingham, not only Near North, with children  
12 of the special needs.

13 We have -- CPS cannot even keep track, as  
14 it turned out, of the students at Nancy B.  
15 Jefferson. Within one year of time, they lost  
16 contact with them all. That was present in the  
17 hearing by CPS officials.

18 You know, I wish I had a chart in front of  
19 you where Buckingham is located, where Montefiore is  
20 located, where all the children from at each of  
21 these schools are located; and how many would be in  
22 each of these areas within a two-mile radius, if not  
23 a five-mile radius of each school, how many children  
24 need these special programs.

1 I would ask you to consider --

2 HEARING OFFICER STARKS: Alderman, are you  
3 saying there are students out there, and they are  
4 not being serviced currently?

5 ALDERMAN FIORETTI: Yes, absolutely.

6 HEARING OFFICER STARKS: So, you're saying  
7 there are IEPs that are not being identified that  
8 are qualified for these schools?

9 ALDERMAN FIORETTI: Yes, they would.

10 HEARING OFFICER STARKS: Okay.

11 ALDERMAN FIORETTI: And we heard it, and I wish  
12 I had the testimony from the City Council; and, yes,  
13 that was three years ago, but it hasn't changed.

14 And, in fact, it seems like CPS is not  
15 allowing students who need this help and this type  
16 of educational assistance; and I have to tell you,  
17 I'm so concerned about the bus ride, and how we get  
18 these kids from the far south side to the middle of  
19 this city.

20 It will take sometimes hours to have those  
21 children in that school. I really ask you to  
22 consider the overall impact on children who need  
23 this special kind of care. Thank you.

24 HEARING OFFICER STARKS: Okay, thank you.

1 We'll now hear from Otis Taylor, the principal of  
2 Buckingham.

3 MR. TAYLOR: Good evening, madam, can you hear  
4 me?

5 HEARING OFFICER STARKS: Good evening. You may  
6 proceed.

7 MR. TAYLOR: Thank you. My name is Dr. Otis  
8 Taylor. I'm principal of Buckingham Special  
9 Teaching Center. I've been a principal there for  
10 past -- this is my fourth year.

11 You know, when this utilization stuff came  
12 out, you know, I never thought that we would be  
13 sitting here right now. We don't control the  
14 utilization of our school. Students are referred to  
15 us.

16 You know, over the past few years, as  
17 Alderman Fioretti just stated, we have talked, we've  
18 talked to the administrators that are above us,  
19 about referrals. We know that the students are out  
20 there.

21 I have colleagues at several of my  
22 meetings telling me we have kids who can use your  
23 service, 13 kids in a class, teachers and  
24 paraprofessionals, a dedicated staff that wants to

1 work with these kind of kids and build the  
2 challenges they're doing every day.

3 I'm asking you, madam, please reconsider  
4 this, reconsider, because sending those kids to  
5 Montefiore, yeah, I'm a former APA at Montefiore.  
6 Montefiore is a great school, really far away, far  
7 area on the southeast side. This school is home for  
8 these kids.

9 You know, we have dance classes. We take  
10 them to Springfield. These students would not have  
11 the opportunity to do that, they would not.

12 And to the Dr. Winston, I know she had the  
13 report discussing our academic achievements, when  
14 our students are referred to us, these students a  
15 lot of times are broken behaviorally and  
16 academically.

17 When they come into our school, they have  
18 been suspended. They have not been in class. We  
19 are working diligently to make sure that they have  
20 the education they need and deserve.

21 So, I do have high standards. I work with  
22 my chief trying to get there; and if given a  
23 reprieve, if given that, we will, you know, work  
24 diligently to make sure these kids get the education

1 they deserve. All right, thank you.

2 HEARING OFFICER STARKS: Before you go, what is  
3 the approximate distance between your school and  
4 Montefiore?

5 MR. TAYLOR: Approximately 15 miles.

6 HEARING OFFICER STARKS: 15 miles?

7 MR. TAYLOR: From Montefiore to Buckingham. I  
8 live by Montefiore, so I know it's about 15 miles.

9 HEARING OFFICER STARKS: Okay. All right.  
10 Thank you.

11 MR. TAYLOR: Thank you.

12 HEARING OFFICER STARKS: Gregory Johnson.

13 MR. JOHNSON: I'm Gregory Johnson, special ed  
14 teacher at Buckingham. I meet repeat some of the  
15 same things. All right.

16 One of the things I wanted to point out  
17 all during this process, it was indicated that  
18 utilization, or the lack of utilization, was the  
19 major thing. Now it's about academics.

20 When you deal with academics with the type  
21 of population that we work with, you have a lot of  
22 elements. You have mobility. You have children  
23 coming from disadvantaged homes.

24 So, all this has an affect on how they

1 learn. Now, this is not to make any excuses for the  
2 teachers, because we work as hard as we can with  
3 these students, but you cannot -- you have to  
4 realize all the impact of the different things of  
5 the environment they come from, the situation they  
6 came from when they came to our school. They had  
7 been suspended. They were in fights, they didn't  
8 get a chance to learn at the gen ed schools.

9 The time they had a chance to learn was  
10 when they came to our school, Buckingham. We  
11 listened to them. We talked to them. When they  
12 came there, we told them they had a clean slate.  
13 Forget about whatever thing you done in the past,  
14 you're going to start fresh here.

15 We have a point a system that is very  
16 positive. It is a reinforcement, and you have to  
17 look at the social emotional feelings of these  
18 children that come to our school.

19 As far as that number goes, right now we  
20 are at 39. So, it was estimated that we would be at  
21 30, but now we're at 39; and again, the reason we  
22 don't have the students there, because they have not  
23 been referred.

24 I was a case manager at one time. You can

1 say I had good conversations with the Special  
2 Services Office, and they would send students over;  
3 but now we get calls, we get calls from parents who  
4 are looking to get into our school, because they  
5 heard about it.

6 The heard about the job that we've done  
7 here, and now we would have a waiting list because  
8 what happens is we sent -- we had to send those  
9 parents back to the Offices of Diverse Learning; and  
10 for some reason, we never hear from them again.

11 The other thing is it's the environment.  
12 Our kids come to school, they come to a middle class  
13 community. When they get off the bus, they see  
14 grass, they see plants, they see flowers. You're  
15 not going to see this at Montefiore.

16 They have an opportunity that they have  
17 planted things in front of the building. You're not  
18 going to see that at Montefiore.

19 HEARING OFFICER STARKS: Okay. So that you  
20 know, kind of just wrap it up, because your time I  
21 believe is completed.

22 MR. JOHNSON: I will.

23 HEARING OFFICER STARKS: Thank you.

24 MR. JOHNSON: So, what I want to say is we need

1 to take the time, the time that we take to send  
2 these students to a magnet school. We need to take  
3 that same amount of time to send them to a special  
4 school like Buckingham.

5 Now, the Board should understand if you  
6 have a child or a grandchild, you want to send your  
7 child to a decent school that really helps him. We  
8 help them academically, and we help them social and  
9 emotionally.

10 So, what I'm asking is that when they take  
11 their vote, they should vote not only with their  
12 minds and logic, but vote compassionately with their  
13 hearts to keep Buckingham open. Thank you.

14 HEARING OFFICER STARKS: Okay, thank you.  
15 Aqueta Sands.

16 MS. SANDS: I just want to give this to the  
17 court reporter.

18 HEARING OFFICER STARKS: Okay, please step up.  
19 And again, ladies and gentlemen, we ask that you  
20 stick to -- there's a time keeper here, and she'll  
21 flash and let you know how much time you have left;  
22 and we would like to give everyone a chance to  
23 speak, because this hearing will have to conclude  
24 within two hours, because we do have another hearing

1 scheduled. Okay?

2 Okay, Ms. Sands, you're not speaking then,  
3 you're presenting your --

4 MS. SANDS: That's correct.

5 HEARING OFFICER STARKS: Okay. We'll mark that  
6 as Public Exhibit No. 2. Rosie Sutton.

7 MS. SUTTON: Good afternoon and good evening.  
8 My name is Rosie M. Sutton. I'm a 40 year -- well,  
9 41 year educator. I have worked with the Board for  
10 21 years. I am retired.

11 I've worked at Buckingham for three years.  
12 I've been a teacher for 10. I've been reading  
13 coordinator for 15 years, and administrator for  
14 four.

15 I'm coming on behalf of Buckingham School.  
16 When I was still an administrator downtown,  
17 Buckingham was my school, and I went there; and I  
18 didn't like really what was going on at the time,  
19 different administration and different reading  
20 specialist.

21 But then when I was asked to go there, as  
22 a reading specialist, I did. We placed a lot of  
23 emphasis on reading. Those students at Buckingham,  
24 when they came from different schools, I was the

1 general ed person, when they came from neighborhood  
2 schools, some of the students could not read nor  
3 write.

4 We have students right now who are coming  
5 from neighborhood schools who cannot read. You are  
6 asking children, who cannot read, to take a  
7 standardized test and score as well as children who  
8 have been in school every day.

9 These students have been out of school,  
10 expelled, not coming to school. Now they're at  
11 Buckingham. They are bussed in. They are coming  
12 every day. They are in a safe environment. They  
13 love to come.

14 When I go into a classroom now, the kids  
15 are asking me, "Mrs. Sutton, where are the books?  
16 Can we get some more books?" We have reading charts  
17 up where they are enthusiastically reading books.

18 I would hate to see these children  
19 diverted back. We're talking about kids on the  
20 street. These children we may see on the street.  
21 These are potential dropouts, if we don't help them.

22 We have to give these children all the  
23 effort, all the love that we are giving any other  
24 child, and I plead with you do not do that to these

1 students. Thank you.

2 HEARING OFFICER STARKS: Okay, thank you.  
3 Okay, we have (redacted name), who will be referred  
4 to as Student A. Is he here?

5 STUDENT A: My name is (redacted name). Please  
6 don't close my school.

7 HEARING OFFICER STARKS: Thank you, Matthew.  
8 Next we have Victoria Jackson.

9 MS. JACKSON: Good evening.

10 HEARING OFFICER STARKS: Good evening.

11 MS. JACKSON: My is Victoria Jackson,  
12 V-i-c-t-o-r-i-a, Jackson, J-a-c-k-s-o-n.

13 I believe the people that are making  
14 decisions to close Buckingham and Near North have no  
15 clue about therapeutic day schools. You say that  
16 you have the kids' best interest in mind, but that  
17 doesn't appear to be the case.

18 Here are some of the reasons that I feel  
19 CPS should not close these schools. There should be  
20 at least one CPS therapeutic day school on the south  
21 side, and one on the west side; and many of the  
22 reasons have already been stated, the length of time  
23 and so forth.

24 The curriculum for CPS therapeutic day

1 schools follow a much more rigorous curriculum than  
2 non-CPS therapeutic day schools. Although there  
3 aren't enough resources and services for our special  
4 needs students at CPS, there will be even less if  
5 they are sent to non-CPS therapeutic schools.

6 When the dust settles from schools  
7 closing, the receiving schools will probably be  
8 overcrowded or very close to capacity. The students  
9 that have been identified as severely emotionally  
10 disturbed, will need a good CPS therapeutic day  
11 school like Buckingham, not a warehouse, which is  
12 what non-CPS therapeutic day schools are.

13 Not to mention if the Office of Diverse  
14 Learners will properly place severely emotionally  
15 disturbed students where they belong, there will be  
16 enough students to fill all the therapeutic schools,  
17 CPS and non-CPS.

18 As a teacher that has taught at Buckingham  
19 Special Education Center for the past nine years, I  
20 have witnessed so many students and families that  
21 have benefited greatly from the expertise and  
22 knowledge of the Buckingham staff.

23 Therefore, it would be a travesty to close  
24 this great institution. Please reconsider and vote

1 to keep Kate S. Buckingham Special Education Center  
2 open.

3 HEARING OFFICER STARKS: Okay, thank you,  
4 ma'am.

5 MS. JACKSON: Thank you.

6 HEARING OFFICER STARKS: Diantha Hudson-Garcia.

7 MS. HUDSON-GARCIA: Good evening and thank you,  
8 Your Honor. I'm going to try not to be too emotional  
9 so I could speak clearly.

10 HEARING OFFICER STARKS: And don't forget you  
11 have two minutes.

12 MS. HUDSON-GARCIA: Okay, I am aware. Okay.  
13 First, I want to just tell you a little bit about me  
14 and my family. I'm going to keep it real brief, and  
15 particularly my son, Joshua Garcia.

16 My son came to me as an adopted child  
17 through D.C.F.S. There are many of these kids  
18 within the system that have not been identified as  
19 ED.

20 Many of them have other disorders, such as  
21 fetal alcohol syndrome, such as ADHD, bipolar, and  
22 they have not been identified. What I cannot  
23 understand why we have two systems, CPS and  
24 D.C.F.S., that have not worked together to

1 identify these kids. Now to try to bridge this?

2 I don't think any of these therapeutic  
3 schools should be closed, not one. This is the  
4 reason why: You won't have a net big enough to  
5 catch these babies. They're going to fall through  
6 the cracks.

7 Joshua would have been one of these kids  
8 that fell through the cracks. He started to attend  
9 Buckingham years ago. Before Joshua was admitted  
10 into Buckingham, start to attend Buckingham, he was  
11 about to -- I mean, he was fighting.

12 He was all over the place. There was no  
13 control. There was nothing that the school system,  
14 itself, in a regular classroom could do for him. He  
15 made it to Buckingham.

16 Joshua isn't on his way out. This is what  
17 I need to get across, there should not be one school  
18 that closed; but if by chance you decide to do so,  
19 what are you going to do to keep these kids from  
20 being moved again?

21 There should be a moratorium, no other --  
22 not no other schools, because utilization is not a  
23 utilization problem, it's a funding problem.  
24 Utilization is just used to prop us up.

1 In conclusion, there should not be a  
2 school closed, but if there is, it needs to be a  
3 moratorium to keep from moving these kids. There  
4 may be funds now, there may not be funds later.  
5 Thank you very much.

6 HEARING OFFICER STARKS: Thank you. Student B,  
7 (redacted name).

8 STUDENT B: Hello, my name is (redacted name)  
9 and I attend Buckingham School. I know you all low  
10 on money and all, but I think you all should keep  
11 Buckingham School open.

12 Before I got here, I was getting in fights  
13 with kids. I was cussing out teachers. I was  
14 fighting teachers. I went to the hospital three  
15 times.

16 When I went to Buckingham, that was  
17 helping. That was very supportive. They was  
18 helping me control my anger; and before I got to  
19 Buckingham, I didn't do no work. I couldn't read,  
20 and I couldn't do my math.

21 Now that I'm at Buckingham, I'm an A and B  
22 student, and sometimes Cs, and I haven't been in a  
23 fight. I haven't been to the hospital, and I  
24 haven't been cussing out teachers.

1 I'm just saying Buckingham is a good  
2 school. I don't want to take a longer trip to  
3 Montefiore, and by the time I get there, I'm  
4 probably going to be sleepy. I mean, it's a long  
5 trip. I live on the west side.

6 And I don't get it, like, it's a good  
7 school. Why would you all want to close it? It's  
8 because we don't got a lot of kids doesn't mean  
9 nothing. Like they help us a lot, and I can read a  
10 lot. That's all. Thank you.

11 HEARING OFFICER STARKS: Thank you. Okay.  
12 Nikkitoya Roberts.

13 MS. ROBERTS: Good evening. My name is  
14 Nikkitoya Roberts. I am not only a parent at  
15 Buckingham, I'm also a former school bus driver for  
16 Chicago for 15 years.

17 I want to speak briefly on the transition  
18 that these kids will be making. I feel that it will  
19 not be easy. Everyone would like to think that  
20 their child or children are perfect; but what I  
21 found out is no matter how hard we try to do the  
22 right thing, some things are just simply out of our  
23 control.

24 Birth defects and learning disabilities

1 are simply things we cannot control. We love our  
2 children, born by us or given to us. This is a  
3 delicate situation, and it does require all of our  
4 full attention and consideration.

5 My child has worked hard at Buckingham to  
6 adjust and adapt to this routine. It has not been  
7 easy, but he is climbing mountains. He went from  
8 being the new kid considered fresh meat in May of  
9 2011, to getting perfect attendance.

10 But back to being the new child at any  
11 school is hard, but when you have learning obstacles  
12 are set against you, it's even harder.

13 These children are picked on, spit on, hit  
14 on, books thrown at them, personal property  
15 destroyed, and just to push their buttons and to see  
16 if you can break them. These are our babies.  
17 They're not even in high school yet. We are trying  
18 to fight back for these three schools to be left  
19 alone.

20 We have four -- we have approximately 40,  
21 they have approximately 20, and the other one has,  
22 which I just heard, 90. That is a massive  
23 disruption with the type of children we are talking  
24 about.

1           The bus ride will be longer, more  
2 children. What happens when there is a spare driver  
3 who doesn't know the route and, God forbid, there is  
4 no attendant?

5           Are you prepared to deal with the  
6 backlash? New children and new spaces sometimes  
7 feel threatened. All children feel territorial.  
8 It's simply not a good fit. Please reconsider.

9           HEARING OFFICER STARKS: Okay. Thank you,  
10 Ms. Roberts.

11          MS. ROBERTS: And in the winter, it ain't gonna  
12 be no pleasant trip either.

13          HEARING OFFICER STARKS: Okay. Again, we ask  
14 that you please adhere to the time limits. Next we  
15 have Martin Ritter.

16          MR. RITTER: My name is Martin Ritter. I'm an  
17 organizer for the Chicago Teachers Union, former  
18 eight-year teacher in CPS.

19          CPS and CEO Barbara Byrd-Bennett claim  
20 this year that students in closing schools will end  
21 up at better schools; but as the Sun Times and the  
22 Tribune have both reported, this does not seem to be  
23 the case.

24          According to the Tribune, nearly half of

1 the closing schools we send their students to  
2 schools with the same performance rating, as the  
3 case of this school action.

4 You have heard testimony from elected  
5 officials, school leadership, parents, children, and  
6 teachers, saying that there appears to be 15 miles  
7 between the two schools. That is not an  
8 educationally-sound plan.

9 It would be great if educators actually  
10 came up with any of these plans, but there is  
11 actually random third-party consulting groups  
12 designing these plans.

13 This makes no sense, first of all, and I  
14 would like to ask our new special education  
15 coordinator what neighbor is Buckingham in? I'm not  
16 trying to call you out, but I have to, because the  
17 leadership of CPS keeps changing.

18 HEARING OFFICER STARKS: Excuse me, if you have  
19 any questions, you have to address the hearing  
20 officer not the CPS.

21 THE WITNESS: Okay. Excuse me for doing that.  
22 But leadership of not only CPS here, but every  
23 department keeps changing every six months, every  
24 three months, every month.

1 I mean, we have a board member that hasn't  
2 even been replaced in two months, that's a whole  
3 nother story. Let me get back to the point. The  
4 people making these decisions for these extremely  
5 fragile boys have no idea what goes on in these  
6 classrooms, have no idea what neighborhood these  
7 schools are in.

8 Montefiore is a great school, but it's  
9 emotionally damaging and traumatic to move kids 10  
10 to 15 miles because of some ridiculous budget number  
11 that CPS concocted to manufacture a crisis that  
12 never really existed. Okay?

13 You are subjecting yourself to not only  
14 the envy of thousands and thousands of parents, not  
15 you particularly, but the leadership, okay, sorry  
16 for that, but lawsuits, legislation, and most  
17 importantly, parents throughout the city organizing  
18 to remove this unelected, non-accountable school  
19 Board, and its mayor who appointed them, from  
20 leadership in two years. Thank you.

21 HEARING OFFICER STARKS: All right, thank you.

22 Also, ladies and gentlemen, I understand  
23 your enthusiasm, and we have some very good speakers  
24 here this afternoon.

1           However, the court reporter has to take  
2 down what they're saying. So, if you would just  
3 hold -- you can applaud. We're not going to stop  
4 you from doing that, but can you wait until they  
5 finish speaking?

6           So the court reporter, it's very important  
7 she gets everything down, so that I, as a Hearing  
8 Officer, can take everything into consideration.  
9 Okay? Thank you.

10           All right. Next we have (redacted name).  
11 I'm sorry, Student C. And just so everyone knows,  
12 these students have to be referred to, because  
13 they're minors, by A, B, C or D. So, that's why I'm  
14 calling them that.

15           And I'm only calling their names so  
16 they'll know who's up to speak, but the court  
17 reporter is deleting that name from the record.  
18 Okay? All right, you may proceed.

19           STUDENT C: Please do not close Buckingham down  
20 because when I used to be at my old school, I used  
21 to get all Fs until I came here. I get As, Bs and  
22 Cs. Since I came back, I'm good in my math and  
23 reading. Thank you.

24           HEARING OFFICER STARKS: Okay, we have Student

1 D, and that will be (redacted name).

2 STUDENT D: Hi. My name is (redacted name).  
3 Please do not close my school. My teacher, Mr. Mak  
4 and Ms. Christian, help us very much.

5 Dr. Taylor, Mrs. Riley is the best  
6 principal we ever had. Lots of fun and activities  
7 and memories. My test scores improved and grades.  
8 I love my school.

9 We have pets, Bronco Buck, social store,  
10 fun field trips. Mr. Hyman is the best gym teacher.  
11 thank you.

12 HEARING OFFICER STARKS: Thank you. Carolyn  
13 McNeil.

14 MS. McNEIL: Good evening, Your Honor.

15 HEARING OFFICER STARKS: Good evening.

16 MS. McNEIL: I am Carolyn McNeil, spelled  
17 M-c-N-e-i-l. I've been with the Board of Education  
18 for 18 years. I am a clerk at Buckingham. I've  
19 been serving there for 15 years.

20 The Chicago Board of Education says, and I  
21 just heard utilization report, about the homerooms  
22 and things like that. I do think we need to clarify  
23 that.

24 We have five homeroom classrooms. We have

1 one art room and one computer lab. So, it's really  
2 not seven classrooms; and out of the five classrooms  
3 that we have, Dr. Smith, who was over Specialized  
4 Services a couple of years ago, told us to make one  
5 of them a common classroom. So, that cut out our  
6 five rooms and made it four classrooms. So, please  
7 adjust the records to reflect.

8 Chicago Board of Education states that in  
9 the interest of the students, they will offer  
10 schools close to their homes, providing a safe  
11 passage, quality schools, science labs, libraries in  
12 every room, iPads and air conditioning.

13 Well, for our first community meeting at  
14 Harlan High School, the Board had decided they were  
15 going to combine the special ed schools. They  
16 didn't take into consideration the space, the ride  
17 for our students from point A to point B.

18 So, then, after they found that out, they  
19 said, "Well, let's switch it and do something else."  
20 Now, they're going along with the test scores and  
21 things like that.

22 So, hopefully, you know, we can get real  
23 true facts about Buckingham School, and the other  
24 special ed schools.

1 Buckingham School, Therapeutic Day School,  
2 offers full pay free field trips to all students,  
3 including a trip to Springfield for the upper  
4 graders, catered lunches on special occasions for  
5 all students.

6 You're telling me to conclude. Okay, I'll  
7 have to give you -- let me give you some more facts.

8 I think five years ago in 2005, the Board  
9 of Education closed four elementary schools and  
10 displaced 467 students. CPS can now cannot account  
11 for the whereabouts of 51 of those students. That's  
12 slightly more than 1 in 10 students.

13 Now what about the multiplier effect with  
14 54 students instead of more?

15 THE TIMEKEEPER: Please conclude.

16 MS. McNEIL: How can you build more schools and  
17 close schools at the same time.

18 The Board of Education has become a real  
19 estate business, but they are not doing well,  
20 because they have now at least 10 buildings that  
21 have not been sold from previous school years,  
22 previous school year closings, and 14 vacant lots.

23 HEARING OFFICER STARKS: Okay, Ms. McNeil just  
24 wrap it up, because your time is up.

1 MS. McNEIL: Okay. To CPS, our children are  
2 not students, they are commodities. That's the way  
3 our Board feels, they're commodities. To us they  
4 are students.

5 Let's save our school and keep our  
6 children in a nurtured learning environments, which  
7 is really what children first means. Thank you so  
8 much. I would like to submit this because I had  
9 more to say on here.

10 HEARING OFFICER STARKS: That's fine.

11 MS. McNEIL: That I couldn't get to, so I'm  
12 submitting this. Also, we have a parent, Amanda  
13 Wallace, her son goes to Buckingham School, she  
14 could not make the meeting. She would also like her  
15 notes submitted also. Thank you so much.

16 HEARING OFFICER STARKS: Okay. We'll mark  
17 those. Thank you. Okay, Kathleen Murray.

18 MS. MURRAY: Good evening. I'm Kathleen Murray  
19 with the Chicago Teachers Union. That's  
20 K-a-t-h-l-e-e M-u-r-r-a-y.

21 I am speaking out I'm opposed to the  
22 closing of Buckingham Elementary School and moving  
23 the kids across the city to Montefiore. I'm also  
24 opposing to closing Near North as well to do the

1 same purpose.

2           These are small children. I mean, CPS,  
3 first of all, didn't want to touch the high schools  
4 because, quote-unquote, when you close high schools,  
5 it's a mess, Fenger, okay.

6           So, they didn't want to touch the high  
7 schools, so 54 elementary schools are going to be  
8 closed. We have enough issues at all the other  
9 hearings with children walking up to a mile to their  
10 new neighborhood school.

11           These children have special needs, and we  
12 know how important it is, you know, not to disrupt  
13 special needs students.

14           In this case, CPS is doing that. They're  
15 going to be shipping these kids, and I'm going to  
16 call it shipping, busing these students to the other  
17 side of the city to start a new school, to start at  
18 a new school next year, and they will all have to be  
19 readjusted.

20           Some of the staff at Buckingham may or may  
21 not go with these children as well. Another  
22 disruption. We already have a seven-hour day for  
23 students citywide. Now these young children, some  
24 of them coming from the hundreds, as I call them,

1 across the city an hour bus ride, they are going to  
2 have a nine-hour day at school. Nine hours, if you  
3 consider the commute they will be taking, and that  
4 is in good weather conditions.

5 So, I want the Board to reconsider this  
6 action on these schools between Buckingham, Near  
7 North and Montefiore, and I want them to reconsider  
8 it and to consider keeping all three schools open.  
9 Thank you.

10 HEARING OFFICER STARKS: Thank you. Okay,  
11 Tally Jacobsen.

12 MS. JACOBSEN: Good evening. Hi. My name is  
13 Tally Jacobsen, spelled T-a-l-l-y, and I've been a  
14 counselor and case manager at Buckingham Special  
15 Education Center for the last five years.

16 Buckingham is not a typical school, and  
17 the students here are not your typical student.  
18 They are students who have a primary diagnosis of  
19 emotional disorder among, some others with diagnosis  
20 of oppositional defiance, ADHD, intermittent  
21 explosive disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder,  
22 bipolar, mood disorder, LD, they are learning  
23 disabled, psychotic disorder, just to name a few.

24 Again, they are not your typical student,

1 and our school should not be compared or evaluated  
2 based on your typical CPS school. We are a small  
3 family located on the very south side of Chicago.  
4 They work on their educational deficits in  
5 controlling and managing their behavior, so they can  
6 eventually return back into the general education  
7 setting and become more productive members of  
8 society.

9 Our school works on a positive behavior  
10 modification point system that the students move  
11 through levels 1 through 4, before considered for  
12 reintegration back into a general education setting.

13 We have nine students on level 34, which  
14 is close to 25 percent of our population, and there  
15 are several more students closely behind. Those  
16 students have proven that they are making successful  
17 progress and are almost ready to be integrated back.

18 If we close, these students will have to  
19 start from the beginning, in order to prove that  
20 they are ready to be in a less restrictive  
21 environment.

22 So, if you're putting these child's needs  
23 first, because we are, and we will continue to do so  
24 if we remain open. As a case manager, I attend

1 monthly meetings with other case managers in my  
2 network. Without fail, I'm told at each of these  
3 meetings that there are students ready to be placed  
4 at our school, but yet I have not received any  
5 notification for these placements.

6 And just this week alone, I have received  
7 already two students that are awaiting placement  
8 that other schools have sent down to the Board.  
9 Saying that we're underutilized is not accurate. We  
10 are very utilized, and we are very open.

11 This school year alone we have been  
12 referred already 11 students, which amounts to a  
13 39 percent increase. So, according to all the  
14 reports, we have four classrooms that are utilized  
15 with certified teachers.

16 So, that already puts us at above the  
17 70 percent rate, at a 75 percent rate, if you  
18 consider those four rooms.

19 THE TIMEKEEPER: Please conclude.

20 MS. JACOBSEN: But if you consider that fifth  
21 room, because it's only five actually, we only need  
22 9 more students to be considered utilized; and there  
23 is, according to the Catalyst Report, there is over  
24 900 students that are referred to private placement

1 at a cost of about 30,000 a student.

2 And if you think about the answer to the  
3 problem is obvious.

4 THE TIMEKEEPER: Please conclude.

5 MS. JACOBSEN: Thanks. Please keep the  
6 schools -- these students in the public schools so  
7 funding can be utilized where it should be.

8 So at the end of the day, Buckingham  
9 students, as well as other CPS students alike, are  
10 not just numbers and dollar signs, they are human  
11 beings who deserve to actually be first. Thank you.

12 HEARING OFFICER STARKS: Thank you.

13 MS. JACOBSEN: I would like to submit this for  
14 the record.

15 HEARING OFFICER STARKS: That would be marked  
16 as Public Exhibit -- I think we are at about 5.  
17 Stephen Hyman. You may proceed.

18 MR. HYMAN: Okay. How you doing? Name is  
19 Steve Hyman. I'm the physical education teacher at  
20 Buckingham School. In the short time I have been  
21 there, I have learned a lot.

22 I have learned that some of these students  
23 come from homes where they have no parents, and  
24 they've grown up in our school for three to five

1 years. The closest thing they've had to a parent  
2 could be a principal or a lunch lady, anyone, an  
3 aide.

4 They maybe have seen us more often than  
5 they have seen their father or their mother or  
6 either. Along with this, I am able to, regardless  
7 of athletic ability, reward them with basketball  
8 teams, football teams and being involved in the  
9 Special Olympics. These children otherwise would  
10 never have been given this chance.

11 Earlier this year -- I should start off  
12 I've played organized sports my entire life for a  
13 good, like, 15 years. I've coached for the last  
14 four or five.

15 When we won a game this year, it was the  
16 most rewarding experience of my entire life. Our  
17 children were glowing not for a day, not for a week,  
18 I would say almost for a month.

19 This experience is something they would  
20 not have if they move on to Montefiore, because as I  
21 found out, they do not offer this because our  
22 sporting events take place during the day.

23 Because they come from all over the city,  
24 in order to have them to be able to play in this,

1 they will not be bussed back at the end of the day,  
2 they would have to find their own way home.

3 So, for safety reasons, we have it during  
4 the day. Montefiore does not offer this because  
5 their administration does not believe that they  
6 should be allowed to leave during school.

7 So, these we rewarding experiences that  
8 they have, building team work, building  
9 relationships, they will no longer have them. This  
10 will be the end of it.

11 I am a very, very worried also about the  
12 safety, about them being transported from -- one of  
13 our students I believe is about 123rd to 15th or  
14 13th Street, I should say. That is a very, very,  
15 very long ride. I would very, very, like you to  
16 consider -- you guys to rethink this over. Thank  
17 you very much.

18 HEARING OFFICER STARKS: Okay. Thank you.  
19 Carrie Patterson.

20 MS. PATTERSON: Good evening, you all. My name  
21 is Carrie Patterson, Carrie like the movie,  
22 P-a-t-t-e-r-s-o-n. I'm going to try to keep this  
23 brief and to the point. Those who know me know I'm  
24 very blunt, so if I offend anybody, I apologize.

1 Bottom line is this: You all can sell  
2 this whitewash about Montefiore. Coming from the  
3 west side, I know Montefiore as the bad boy school.  
4 It's a gladiator school.

5 My son will not make it out of eighth  
6 grade if he was to attend Montefiore, but that's not  
7 an option. My son is not going to Montefiore.

8 With that being said, you all need to  
9 really take into consideration not only the busing  
10 of the school, but the Safe Passage Program that you  
11 all keep pushing, that you all are going to  
12 increase.

13 Why don't you all try to do research on  
14 how some of these people are quitting because they  
15 are not being paid?

16 They're not being paid on time, so a lot  
17 of them are quitting. A lot of them can't dodge  
18 bullets. They can't save the children from bullets,  
19 and I know this to be true because as I was taking  
20 two of my younger children to school, they were  
21 shooting on 51st and Prairie, and all you saw was  
22 those lime green jackets running.

23 So, they can't barely protect themselves,  
24 let alone children. Okay? Let's be clear on that

1 with the Safe Passage Program.

2 My son is not a number. He is not a  
3 report. His name a Jalen Patterson, son of Carrie  
4 Patterson. And as I stated at the first meeting at  
5 Harlan, which I think it was you that spoke,  
6 Ms. Wilson, is her name. Dr. Winston, I apologize.

7 God forbid if do relent and choose to send  
8 my son to Montefiore, and something happens to him  
9 because of your negligence, of taking his safety  
10 into consideration instead of really looking at the  
11 mismanagement of CPS funds of these kids --

12 HEARING OFFICER STARKS: Okay. Ms. Patterson,  
13 Ms. Patterson, okay, do not address the Board  
14 personnel.

15 MS. PATTERSON: In conclusion, what I'm saying  
16 to you is you all really need to take these  
17 children's lives into consideration, because there  
18 is not enough CPD or United States Military that's  
19 going to keep me from snapping if something happens  
20 to my son. The end. Thank you, you all.

21 HEARING OFFICER STARKS: Thank you. William  
22 Calloway.

23 MR. CALLOWAY: Good evening.

24 HEARING OFFICER STARKS: Good evening.

1 MR. CALLOWAY: My name is William Calloway.  
2 I'm a current ESPI substitute right now, and I  
3 actually last Thursday I had the privilege of  
4 subbing at Buckingham last Thursday.

5 I've been with the Board for about a year  
6 now. I'm a displaced TA. I was phased out from a  
7 turn-around school, but one of the students that I  
8 had one-on-one support with, I actually saw him at  
9 Buckingham last Thursday.

10 And it was a real privilege for me to see  
11 him, and see the progress that he's made since he's  
12 been at Buckingham, and with his teacher and his  
13 current TA now.

14 And it was so, you know, such a delight  
15 for me, because I seen how far he has come, you  
16 know, and I definitely give high praises to  
17 Buckingham, to their principal down with the staff  
18 and what they're doing now.

19 I just wanted to come out and just say  
20 that I think the school should be, you know, it  
21 should remain open, you know, for what they do for  
22 the students, and I just think that the Board do  
23 need to look more into what they do.

24 Because I don't think none of the Board --

1 they're not in the field, and they -- probably most  
2 of their kids don't have, you know, are in Chicago  
3 Public Schools, so they might not even understand  
4 what's going on.

5 But for me and for us, we actually are.  
6 So, I just want to definitely recommend that the  
7 school stay put open and they're doing their job.  
8 All right.

9 HEARING OFFICER STARKS: Okay, thank you.  
10 Jackson Potter.

11 MR. POTTER: I'm Jackson Potter with the  
12 Chicago Teachers Union. I'm the staff coordinator.  
13 I used to teach at Englewood High School before it  
14 was closed, and I would offer that this is a  
15 perverse situation.

16 We have the District saying they want to  
17 give parents choice. Raise your hand if you want  
18 Buckingham to stay open. Okay. Raise your hand if  
19 you want Buckingham to close. That is case closed,  
20 in terms of parent choice and school choice.

21 We're talking about raising class size to  
22 13 students, if students are stuffed in the  
23 classrooms at Montefiore. These are students that  
24 are the most vulnerable, precious, at-risk students

1 in the entire system. That's got to be a  
2 consideration. Why would you do that?

3 They have individualized programs they  
4 have intimate relationships with staff that are  
5 going to be broken and disrupted and really put  
6 their academic progress at risk and their emotional  
7 stability in harm's way.

8 I would implore you to look at the school  
9 code beyond the limited purview that the Board has  
10 provided.

11 Not simply do you have right to close the  
12 school, but if there's anything that involves child  
13 endangerment, you've heard plenty of testimony  
14 tonight that would suggest these children are at  
15 risk and in harm's way, if this decision is made.

16 Anything in the school code that pertains  
17 to that should be part of your decision. We cannot  
18 continue to treat students like pawns on a chess  
19 board.

20 Would this have been done to the mayor's  
21 children? Would this have been done to the children  
22 that have parents in high-income brackets?

23 I would like, if you have time, for you to  
24 share what is your purview in determining how this

1 school should be kept open or closed so that the  
2 parents are informed and then let us prepare for  
3 next steps.

4 If you're interested in filing a lawsuit,  
5 on behalf of your child, so that this doesn't  
6 happen, please see Victoria Jackson, and she can  
7 take down your information.

8 We'll keep that in mind. Also, on  
9 May 13th, you sign up for the last Board meeting the  
10 people who actually make the decisions are not here  
11 today.

12 So, I really want to encourage everyone  
13 here to sign up on my 13th in the morning. You have  
14 to sign up before 8:00 a.m.

15 HEARING OFFICER STARKS: Mr. Potter,  
16 Mr. Potter.

17 MR. POTTER: Yes.

18 HEARING OFFICER STARKS: You're supposed to  
19 make comments. This is not a community meeting.  
20 It's a little differently.

21 MR. POTTER: Okay.

22 HEARING OFFICER STARKS: What I'm here to do is  
23 to take comments to make a decision as to whether  
24 the Board has complied with the statute. Okay?

1           So, if you want to recruit individuals for  
2 a lawsuit, you may do so after the hearing, you  
3 know, when we finish here, but you can't do it from  
4 the podium.

5           MR. POTTER: I just want to make sure people  
6 know how the process unfolds, and that their rights  
7 are fully expressed. So, May 22nd is the last day,  
8 and then there's going to be a march to save our  
9 schools.

10           So pay attention to that, that's going to  
11 be an important march. In terms of the statute,  
12 which parts of the statute are you allowed to look  
13 at, the entire statute, or just limited to whether  
14 or not they can close schools?

15           HEARING OFFICER STARKS: Okay. I am what you  
16 call an independent Hearing Officer.

17           MR. POTTER: Okay.

18           HEARING OFFICER STARKS: I'm a former judge,  
19 and I will look at the law; and my job is to look at  
20 the statute and make sure that the Board complied  
21 with the statute.

22           Whatever my decision is, all this will be  
23 posted on the Board's website; and again, ladies and  
24 gentlemen, do not attack the representatives from

1 the Board.

2 They're here in their capacity doing their  
3 job. They don't make the decisions. So, when you  
4 address, address it to me your frustration. Address  
5 it to me as the Hearing Officer.

6 I'm kind of like the buffer between this  
7 because the Board, they sent these individuals here  
8 to present their information and materials to let  
9 you know why they're making their decisions, and  
10 that's posted on the website.

11 If you go on the website, you will see  
12 everything there. Also, the school code is up there  
13 as well, and you will have all this information.  
14 It's posted in the website. Okay? Thank you very  
15 much, sir.

16 MR. POTTER: Thank you.

17 HEARING OFFICER STARKS: I believe that is all  
18 the hearings, all the individuals we have signed up  
19 for today.

20 So, at this time we're going to call this  
21 hearing to a close, and it's approximately 7:02.  
22 Thank you all for coming out.

23 (WHICH WERE ALL THE PROCEEDINGS HAD.)  
24

1 STATE OF ILLINOIS )  
2 ) SS:  
3 COUNTY OF C O O K )

4 PAMELA A. MARZULLO, C.S.R., being first duly sworn,  
5 says that she is a court reporter doing business in the city  
6 of Chicago; that she reported in shorthand the proceedings  
7 had at the Proceedings of said cause; that the foregoing is  
8 a true and correct transcript of her shorthand notes, so  
9 taken as aforesaid, and contains all the proceedings of said  
10 hearing.

11 \_\_\_\_\_  
12 PAMELA A. MARZULLO  
13 License No. 084-001624

14 SUBSCRIBED AND SWORN TO  
15 before me this \_\_\_\_\_ day  
16 of \_\_\_\_\_ 2013.

17 Notary Public  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24



50:6	50:21	<b>bridge</b> 46:1	47:9,11,16	<b>Byrd-Benn...</b>	4:11 35:9
<b>bad</b> 65:3	<b>beyond</b> 69:9	<b>brief</b> 45:14	47:19,21	50:19	44:19 45:1
<b>Barbara</b>	<b>big</b> 46:4	64:23	48:1,15		59:15
50:19	<b>binder</b> 4:24	<b>briefly</b> 48:17	49:5 51:15	<b>C</b>	<b>CEO</b> 3:12
<b>barely</b> 65:23	5:2,4,15	<b>bring</b> 33:5	53:19 54:18	<b>C</b> 2:8 4:5	4:18 9:19
<b>based</b> 9:21	6:24 7:12	<b>Brizuela</b> 2:2	55:23 56:1	7:12,14,18	9:24 13:17
17:11,24	8:16 10:19	3:14,15 4:7	57:13,22	8:1 53:11	14:15 27:22
60:2	16:3 23:6	4:8,12,13	58:20 59:6	53:13,19	50:19
<b>bases</b> 19:19	<b>bipolar</b> 45:21	5:15 8:10	59:14,16	73:2	<b>CEO's</b> 4:23
<b>basis</b> 5:21	59:22	8:13 15:23	62:8,20	<b>C.S.R</b> 73:4	5:6,7 7:7,10
32:20	<b>Birth</b> 48:24	15:24 28:7	67:4,9,12	<b>calendar</b>	7:13 8:6,14
<b>basketball</b>	<b>bit</b> 8:20 45:13	<b>broken</b> 36:15	67:17 68:18	6:21	16:1 17:24
63:7	<b>blunt</b> 64:24	69:5	68:19	<b>call</b> 8:11	18:2,18,23
<b>battling</b> 8:20	<b>board</b> 4:15	<b>Bronco</b> 54:9	<b>Buckingha...</b>	15:23 51:16	22:17 28:8
<b>bearing</b> 8:21	5:2 7:2	<b>Bs</b> 53:21	7:20 14:24	58:16,24	<b>certified</b>
<b>becoming</b> 9:5	13:21 23:9	<b>Buck</b> 54:9	20:10 22:5	71:16 72:20	61:15
<b>beginning</b>	23:17 28:5	<b>Buckingham</b>	22:11	<b>called</b> 3:3	<b>challenges</b>
60:19	29:17,24	1:5 4:11,19	<b>budget</b> 52:10	<b>calling</b> 53:14	36:2
<b>behalf</b> 41:15	40:5 41:9	4:20 5:18	<b>buffer</b> 72:6	53:15	<b>Chambers</b>
70:5	52:1,19	6:11 7:17	<b>build</b> 36:1	<b>Calloway</b>	5:2
<b>behavior</b>	54:17,20	9:16,17	56:16	2:12 66:22	<b>chance</b> 38:8,9
24:13 60:5	55:8,14	10:11,12	<b>building</b>	66:23 67:1	40:22 46:18
60:9	56:8,18	12:2,7,8,13	11:12,21	67:1	63:10
<b>behavioral</b>	57:3 59:5	12:16,23	15:13,14	<b>calls</b> 39:3,3	<b>change</b> 7:24
30:2	61:8 66:13	13:2,5,11	30:9 31:8	<b>capacity</b>	<b>changed</b>
<b>behaviorally</b>	67:5,22,24	13:12,18	39:17 64:8	16:11 30:7	34:13
36:15	69:9,19	14:19 15:7	64:8	44:8 72:2	<b>changing</b>
<b>beings</b> 62:11	70:9,24	15:15 17:8	<b>buildings</b>	<b>care</b> 34:23	51:17,23
<b>believe</b> 18:16	71:20 72:1	17:15,18,21	10:22 56:20	<b>Carolyn</b> 2:9	<b>charge</b> 30:22
29:19 39:21	72:7	19:4,16	<b>bullets</b> 65:18	54:12,16	<b>chart</b> 33:18
43:13 64:5	<b>Board's</b> 7:3	20:2 22:9	65:18	<b>Carrie</b> 2:11	<b>charted</b>
64:13 72:17	71:23	22:14,16,21	<b>bus</b> 31:12	64:19,21,21	29:24
<b>believes</b>	<b>books</b> 42:15	23:14 25:18	32:4 34:17	66:3	<b>charts</b> 42:16
27:22	42:16,17	27:16,18	39:13 48:15	<b>case</b> 18:11	<b>chats</b> 27:13
<b>belong</b> 44:15	49:14	31:7 32:16	50:1 59:1	38:24 43:17	<b>CHERYL</b>
<b>benefit</b> 33:2	<b>born</b> 49:2	33:11,19	<b>buses</b> 31:20	50:23 51:3	1:12
<b>benefited</b>	<b>Bottom</b> 65:1	35:2,8 37:7	32:5	58:14 59:14	<b>chess</b> 69:18
44:21	<b>boundary</b>	37:14 38:10	<b>business</b>	60:24 61:1	<b>Chicago</b> 1:1
<b>Benjamin</b> 2:2	7:23	40:4,13	56:19 73:5	68:19	3:11,13
7:19 8:14	<b>boy</b> 65:3	41:11,15,17	<b>busing</b> 58:16	<b>Catalyst</b>	4:14,18 7:6
8:23	<b>boys</b> 30:1	41:23 42:11	65:9	61:23	9:1 10:17
<b>best</b> 23:15	52:5	43:14 44:11	<b>bussed</b> 31:23	<b>catch</b> 46:5	12:14 13:22
43:16 54:5	<b>brackets</b>	44:18,22	42:11 64:1	<b>catered</b> 56:4	25:1 48:16
54:10	69:22	45:1 46:9	<b>buttons</b>	<b>cause</b> 73:7	50:17 54:20
<b>better</b> 27:23	<b>break</b> 49:16	46:10,10,15	49:15	<b>Center</b> 1:5	55:8 57:19

60:3 68:2	30:13,20	46:18 47:2	41:15 42:4	<b>completed</b>	61:20 64:16
68:12 73:6	31:1,23	56:9 58:8	42:10,11	39:21	<b>considerati...</b>
<b>chief</b> 4:17	33:7,9	68:14,19	58:24 65:2	<b>complied</b>	5:1 28:20
9:18 16:10	34:12,19	70:1	72:22	70:24 71:20	49:4 53:8
17:9 36:22	52:17 57:23	<b>closely</b> 29:21	<b>commenced</b>	<b>complies</b> 5:6	55:16 65:9
<b>child</b> 40:6,7	58:17 59:1	60:15	24:11	<b>component</b>	66:10,17
42:24 45:16	63:23 73:5	<b>closest</b> 16:19	<b>COMMEN...</b>	20:14	69:2
48:20 49:5	<b>citywide</b>	63:1	1:8	<b>composite</b>	<b>considerati...</b>
49:10 69:12	58:23	<b>closing</b> 4:10	<b>commenda...</b>	19:11 20:7	18:13
70:5	<b>claim</b> 50:19	44:7 50:20	18:12	20:10,11	<b>considered</b>
<b>child's</b> 60:22	<b>clarify</b> 54:22	51:1 57:22	<b>comment</b>	<b>comprehen...</b>	11:5,9,22
<b>children</b> 4:1	<b>class</b> 35:23	57:24	6:19 7:16	26:2	12:14 49:8
30:14,17,19	36:18 39:12	<b>closings</b> 7:12	<b>comments</b>	<b>compromis...</b>	60:11 61:22
30:23 31:2	68:21	32:12 56:22	3:18 70:19	11:6	<b>consists</b> 5:4
31:3,11,14	<b>classes</b> 36:9	<b>closure</b> 1:4	70:23	<b>computer</b>	<b>consultant</b>
31:19 32:6	<b>classroom</b>	9:24 10:3	<b>commodities</b>	55:1	17:3
32:7,14,16	42:14 46:14	14:14,14	57:2,3	<b>concerned</b>	<b>consulting</b>
33:8,11,20	55:5	18:4 27:23	<b>common</b>	34:17	51:11
33:23 34:21	<b>classrooms</b>	<b>clue</b> 43:15	18:18 55:5	<b>concerns</b>	<b>contact</b> 33:16
34:22 37:22	11:1,2,9,13	<b>coach</b> 26:9	<b>communities</b>	23:1 24:3	<b>contains</b> 7:14
38:18 42:6	11:15,15	<b>coached</b>	7:17	25:12 26:19	73:9
42:7,18,20	12:1 13:4	63:13	<b>community</b>	31:17	<b>continue</b>
42:22 48:20	14:1 30:19	<b>code</b> 3:4 5:7	6:9,21,22	<b>conclude</b>	24:17 60:23
49:2,13,23	52:6 54:24	7:1 69:9,16	7:15 9:14	40:23 56:6	69:18
50:2,6,7	55:2,2,6	72:12	23:10 25:3	56:15 61:19	<b>continued</b>
51:5 57:1,6	61:14 68:23	<b>coffee</b> 27:13	30:6,15	62:4	30:15,18
57:7 58:2,9	<b>clean</b> 38:12	<b>cold</b> 8:20	39:13 55:13	<b>concludes</b>	<b>continuity</b>
58:11,21,23	<b>clear</b> 33:9	<b>colleague</b>	70:19	15:20 28:3	25:24
63:9,17	65:24	10:7 15:16	<b>commute</b>	28:7	<b>contributed</b>
65:18,20,24	<b>clearly</b> 45:9	<b>colleagues</b>	59:3	<b>conclusion</b>	9:8
69:14,21,21	<b>clerk</b> 54:18	35:21	<b>commutes</b>	27:16 47:1	<b>control</b> 21:4
<b>children's</b>	<b>climbing</b>	<b>combine</b> 31:6	32:3	66:15	35:13 46:13
66:17	49:7	32:17,21	<b>compare</b>	<b>concocted</b>	47:18 48:23
<b>choice</b> 6:6	<b>close</b> 4:19	55:15	19:17	52:11	49:1
16:18 68:17	9:17,20	<b>combined</b>	<b>compared</b>	<b>conditioning</b>	<b>controlling</b>
68:20,20	29:19 43:6	14:22 15:3	22:8,14	55:12	21:2 60:5
<b>choose</b> 66:7	43:14,19	15:10 17:19	60:1	<b>conditions</b>	<b>controls</b>
<b>Christian</b>	44:8,23	20:7 27:17	<b>compares</b>	59:4	20:19
54:4	48:7 53:19	<b>come</b> 36:17	20:15	<b>connection</b>	<b>convenient</b>
<b>Cincinnati</b>	54:3 55:10	38:5,18	<b>compassio...</b>	4:17	7:16
16:24 17:7	56:17 58:4	39:12,12	40:12	<b>consider</b> 1:4	<b>conversatio...</b>
<b>circle</b> 14:22	60:14,18	42:13 62:23	<b>compiled</b>	23:16 24:16	39:1
<b>circles</b> 26:18	68:19 69:11	63:23 67:15	4:23 8:7,9	26:12 34:1	<b>convey</b> 9:13
26:23	71:14 72:21	67:19	<b>complaints</b>	34:22 59:3	<b>coordinating</b>
<b>city</b> 13:22	<b>closed</b> 46:3	<b>coming</b> 37:23	30:15,19	59:8 61:18	23:23

<b>coordinator</b> 25:17 41:13 51:15 68:12	51:20,22 52:11 56:10 57:1 58:2	42:12 43:15 43:20,24 44:2,10,12	<b>delight</b> 67:14 <b>delivery</b> 6:11 <b>demonstrate</b> 5:10	<b>diligently</b> 36:19,24 <b>direct</b> 14:13 26:7	20:17 21:16 21:21,24 22:3 27:23 68:16
<b>copy</b> 5:1 29:6 29:9	58:14 60:2 62:9 66:11	56:1 58:22 59:2 62:8 63:17,22	<b>demonstrat...</b> 5:5 7:20 8:3 <b>department</b> 3:14 4:15	<b>Director</b> 16:23 <b>disabilities</b> 6:2 12:18	<b>District's</b> 16:12 21:13 <b>disturbed</b> 44:10,15
<b>core</b> 16:16 18:11,18	<b>cracks</b> 46:6,8 <b>crisis</b> 52:11 <b>criteria</b> 5:22	64:1,4 71:7 73:14 <b>days</b> 6:21,23	<b>department</b> 9:7 16:20 17:6 25:1,2	<b>disabilities</b> 12:22 16:13 18:7 24:1,5	<b>diverse</b> 16:10 16:15 18:15
<b>correct</b> 41:4 73:8	17:9 <b>Cs</b> 47:22 53:22	<b>deal</b> 37:20 50:5 <b>dealing</b> 33:7	51:23 <b>department's</b> 9:9	30:11,21 48:24 <b>disability</b> 30:8	23:12,18 39:9 44:13 <b>diverted</b> 42:19
<b>cost</b> 62:1	<b>culture-bui...</b> 27:8 <b>current</b> 14:24	<b>decide</b> 46:18 <b>decided</b> 55:14	<b>describe</b> 5:21 <b>deserve</b> 36:20 37:1 62:11	59:23 <b>disadvanta...</b> 37:23	<b>Doctorate</b> 17:5,5 <b>documentary</b> 5:4
<b>council</b> 5:18 6:13 29:17	15:1,2 16:22 19:21 67:2,13	<b>decisions</b> 43:14 52:4 70:10 72:3	<b>designating</b> 7:1 <b>designing</b> 51:12	<b>discretionary</b> 26:7 <b>discuss</b> 10:6	39:9 44:13 <b>diverted</b> 42:19 <b>Doctorate</b> 17:5,5
30:13 32:19 33:7 34:12	<b>currently</b> 10:11 14:10 24:15 34:4	<b>decisions</b> 43:14 52:4 70:10 72:3	<b>designing</b> 51:12 <b>destroyed</b> 49:15	59:23 <b>disadvanta...</b> 37:23	<b>documentary</b> 5:4 <b>documents</b> 4:24 5:10
<b>counseling</b> 17:7 24:16	<b>curriculum</b> 43:24 44:1 <b>cussing</b> 47:13	72:9 <b>decreases</b> 11:8	<b>destroyed</b> 49:15 <b>details</b> 10:6	<b>discuss</b> 10:6 10:8 15:17 23:14 24:2	8:3 28:16 <b>dodge</b> 65:17 <b>doing</b> 31:1
<b>counselor</b> 59:14	<b>cut</b> 55:5	<b>dedicated</b> 35:24 <b>dedicating</b> 22:24	<b>determine</b> 30:14 <b>determining</b> 69:24	24:10 <b>discussing</b> 36:13 <b>disorder</b>	36:2 51:21 53:4 56:19 58:14 62:18 67:18 68:7
<b>COUNTY</b> 73:2	<b>D</b> 2:9 53:13 54:1,2	<b>defects</b> 48:24 <b>defiance</b> 59:20	<b>determine</b> 30:14 <b>determining</b> 69:24	<b>discussing</b> 36:13 <b>disorder</b> 59:19,21,21	67:18 68:7 72:2 73:5 <b>dollar</b> 62:10 <b>downtown</b> 41:16
<b>couple</b> 55:4	<b>D.C.F.S</b> 45:17,24 <b>damaged</b> 31:15	<b>deficits</b> 60:4 <b>define</b> 18:19 18:23	<b>develop</b> 25:4 22:24 <b>developed</b> 22:24	59:22,23 <b>disorders</b> 45:20 <b>displaced</b> 56:10 67:6	58:14 62:18 67:18 68:7 72:2 73:5 <b>dollar</b> 62:10 <b>downtown</b> 41:16
<b>court</b> 3:22 28:17 29:7	<b>damaging</b> 52:9 <b>dance</b> 36:9	<b>defined</b> 10:4 10:23 <b>definitely</b> 67:16 68:6	<b>development</b> 9:9 <b>deviation</b> 21:11,18	<b>discussing</b> 36:13 <b>disorder</b> 59:19,21,21	53:4 56:19 58:14 62:18 67:18 68:7 72:2 73:5
40:17 53:1 53:6,16	<b>dangerous</b> 31:19 <b>data</b> 26:2	<b>degrees</b> 17:5 <b>deleted</b> 4:3 <b>deleting</b> 53:17	<b>development</b> 9:9 <b>deviation</b> 21:11,18	59:22,23 <b>disorders</b> 45:20 <b>displaced</b> 56:10 67:6	58:14 62:18 67:18 68:7 72:2 73:5 <b>dollar</b> 62:10 <b>downtown</b> 41:16
73:5 <b>CPD</b> 66:18	<b>day</b> 9:23 10:13 12:9 13:13 17:13	<b>delicate</b> 49:3	<b>development</b> 9:9 <b>deviation</b> 21:11,18	59:22,23 <b>disorders</b> 45:20 <b>displaced</b> 56:10 67:6	58:14 62:18 67:18 68:7 72:2 73:5 <b>dollar</b> 62:10 <b>downtown</b> 41:16
<b>CPS</b> 3:17 8:8 9:4,6,21	<b>degrees</b> 17:5 <b>deleted</b> 4:3 <b>deleting</b> 53:17		<b>development</b> 9:9 <b>deviation</b> 21:11,18	59:22,23 <b>disorders</b> 45:20 <b>displaced</b> 56:10 67:6	58:14 62:18 67:18 68:7 72:2 73:5 <b>dollar</b> 62:10 <b>downtown</b> 41:16
10:5 17:11 22:24 23:8	<b>delicate</b> 49:3		<b>development</b> 9:9 <b>deviation</b> 21:11,18	59:22,23 <b>disorders</b> 45:20 <b>displaced</b> 56:10 67:6	58:14 62:18 67:18 68:7 72:2 73:5 <b>dollar</b> 62:10 <b>downtown</b> 41:16
24:24 26:17 26:21 27:6	<b>delicate</b> 49:3		<b>development</b> 9:9 <b>deviation</b> 21:11,18	59:22,23 <b>disorders</b> 45:20 <b>displaced</b> 56:10 67:6	58:14 62:18 67:18 68:7 72:2 73:5 <b>dollar</b> 62:10 <b>downtown</b> 41:16
30:7,8,13 30:16,22	<b>delicate</b> 49:3		<b>development</b> 9:9 <b>deviation</b> 21:11,18	59:22,23 <b>disorders</b> 45:20 <b>displaced</b> 56:10 67:6	58:14 62:18 67:18 68:7 72:2 73:5 <b>dollar</b> 62:10 <b>downtown</b> 41:16
31:1,5,17 31:22 32:3	<b>delicate</b> 49:3		<b>development</b> 9:9 <b>deviation</b> 21:11,18	59:22,23 <b>disorders</b> 45:20 <b>displaced</b> 56:10 67:6	58:14 62:18 67:18 68:7 72:2 73:5 <b>dollar</b> 62:10 <b>downtown</b> 41:16
32:11,13,15 32:20,22	<b>delicate</b> 49:3		<b>development</b> 9:9 <b>deviation</b> 21:11,18	59:22,23 <b>disorders</b> 45:20 <b>displaced</b> 56:10 67:6	58:14 62:18 67:18 68:7 72:2 73:5 <b>dollar</b> 62:10 <b>downtown</b> 41:16
33:13,17 34:14 43:19	<b>delicate</b> 49:3		<b>development</b> 9:9 <b>deviation</b> 21:11,18	59:22,23 <b>disorders</b> 45:20 <b>displaced</b> 56:10 67:6	58:14 62:18 67:18 68:7 72:2 73:5 <b>dollar</b> 62:10 <b>downtown</b> 41:16
43:20,24 44:4,10,17	<b>delicate</b> 49:3		<b>development</b> 9:9 <b>deviation</b> 21:11,18	59:22,23 <b>disorders</b> 45:20 <b>displaced</b> 56:10 67:6	58:14 62:18 67:18 68:7 72:2 73:5 <b>dollar</b> 62:10 <b>downtown</b> 41:16
45:23 50:18 50:19 51:17	<b>delicate</b> 49:3		<b>development</b> 9:9 <b>deviation</b> 21:11,18	59:22,23 <b>disorders</b> 45:20 <b>displaced</b> 56:10 67:6	58:14 62:18 67:18 68:7 72:2 73:5 <b>dollar</b> 62:10 <b>downtown</b> 41:16
	<b>delicate</b> 49:3		<b>development</b> 9:9 <b>deviation</b> 21:11,18	59:22,23 <b>disorders</b> 45:20 <b>displaced</b> 56:10 67:6	58:14 62:18 67:18 68:7 72:2 73:5 <b>dollar</b> 62:10 <b>downtown</b> 41:16
	<b>delicate</b> 49:3		<b>development</b> 9:9 <b>deviation</b> 21:11,18	59:22,23 <b>disorders</b> 45:20 <b>displaced</b> 56:10 67:6	58:14 62:18 67:18 68:7 72:2 73:5 <b>dollar</b> 62:10 <b>downtown</b> 41:16
	<b>delicate</b> 49:3		<b>development</b> 9:9 <b>deviation</b> 21:11,18	59:22,23 <b>disorders</b> 45:20 <b>displaced</b> 56:10 67:6	58:14 62:18 67:18 68:7 72:2 73:5 <b>dollar</b> 62:10 <b>downtown</b> 41:16
	<b>delicate</b> 49:3		<b>development</b> 9:9 <b>deviation</b> 21:11,18	59:22,23 <b>disorders</b> 45:20 <b>displaced</b> 56:10 67:6	58:14 62:18 67:18 68:7 72:2 73:5 <b>dollar</b> 62:10 <b>downtown</b> 41:16
	<b>delicate</b> 49:3		<b>development</b> 9:9 <b>deviation</b> 21:11,18	59:22,23 <b>disorders</b> 45:20 <b>displaced</b> 56:10 67:6	58:14 62:18 67:18 68:7 72:2 73:5 <b>dollar</b> 62:10 <b>downtown</b> 41:16
	<b>delicate</b> 49:3		<b>development</b> 9:9 <b>deviation</b> 21:11,18	59:22,23 <b>disorders</b> 45:20 <b>displaced</b> 56:10 67:6	58:14 62:18 67:18 68:7 72:2 73:5 <b>dollar</b> 62:10 <b>downtown</b> 41:16
	<b>delicate</b> 49:3		<b>development</b> 9:9 <b>deviation</b> 21:11,18	59:22,23 <b>disorders</b> 45:20 <b>displaced</b> 56:10 67:6	58:14 62:18 67:18 68:7 72:2 73:5 <b>dollar</b> 62:10 <b>downtown</b> 41:16
	<b>delicate</b> 49:3		<b>development</b> 9:9 <b>deviation</b> 21:11,18	59:22,23 <b>disorders</b> 45:20 <b>displaced</b> 56:10 67:6	58:14 62:18 67:18 68:7 72:2 73:5 <b>dollar</b> 62:10 <b>downtown</b> 41:16
	<b>delicate</b> 49:3		<b>development</b> 9:9 <b>deviation</b> 21:11,18	59:22,23 <b>disorders</b> 45:20 <b>displaced</b> 56:10 67:6	58:14 62:18 67:18 68:7 72:2 73:5 <b>dollar</b> 62:10 <b>downtown</b> 41:16
	<b>delicate</b> 49:3		<b>development</b> 9:9 <b>deviation</b> 21:11,18	59:22,23 <b>disorders</b> 45:20 <b>displaced</b> 56:10 67:6	58:14 62:18 67:18 68:7 72:2 73:5 <b>dollar</b> 62:10 <b>downtown</b> 41:16
	<b>delicate</b> 49:3		<b>development</b> 9:9 <b>deviation</b> 21:11,18	59:22,23 <b>disorders</b> 45:20 <b>displaced</b> 56:10 67:6	58:14 62:18 67:18 68:7 72:2 73:5 <b>dollar</b> 62:10 <b>downtown</b> 41:16
	<b>delicate</b> 49:3		<b>development</b> 9:9 <b>deviation</b> 21:11,18	59:22,23 <b>disorders</b> 45:20 <b>displaced</b> 56:10 67:6	58:14 62:18 67:18 68:7 72:2 73:5 <b>dollar</b> 62:10 <b>downtown</b> 41:16
	<b>delicate</b> 49:3		<b>development</b> 9:9 <b>deviation</b> 21:11,18	59:22,23 <b>disorders</b> 45:20 <b>displaced</b> 56:10 67:6	58:14 62:18 67:18 68:7 72:2 73:5 <b>dollar</b> 62:10 <b>downtown</b> 41:16
	<b>delicate</b> 49:3		<b>development</b> 9:9 <b>deviation</b> 21:11,18	59:22,23 <b>disorders</b> 45:20 <b>displaced</b> 56:10 67:6	58:14 62:18 67:18 68:7 72:2 73:5 <b>dollar</b> 62:10 <b>downtown</b> 41:16
	<b>delicate</b> 49:3		<b>development</b> 9:9 <b>deviation</b> 21:11,18	59:22,23 <b>disorders</b> 45:20 <b>displaced</b> 56:10 67:6	58:14 62:18 67:18 68:7 72:2 73:5 <b>dollar</b> 62:10 <b>downtown</b> 41:16
	<b>delicate</b> 49:3		<b>development</b> 9:9 <b>deviation</b> 21:11,18	59:22,23 <b>disorders</b> 45:20 <b>displaced</b> 56:10 67:6	58:14 62:18 67:18 68:7 72:2 73:5 <b>dollar</b> 62:10 <b>downtown</b> 41:16
	<b>delicate</b> 49:3		<b>development</b> 9:9 <b>deviation</b> 21:11,18	59:22,23 <b>disorders</b> 45:20 <b>displaced</b> 56:10 67:6	58:14 62:18 67:18 68:7 72:2 73:5 <b>dollar</b> 62:10 <b>downtown</b> 41:16
	<b>delicate</b> 49:3		<b>development</b> 9:9 <b>deviation</b> 21:11,18	59:22,23 <b>disorders</b> 45:20 <b>displaced</b> 56:10 67:6	58:14 62:18 67:18 68:7 72:2 73:5 <b>dollar</b> 62:10 <b>downtown</b> 41:16
	<b>delicate</b> 49:3		<b>development</b> 9:9 <b>deviation</b> 21:11,18	59:22,23 <b>disorders</b> 45:20 <b>displaced</b> 56:10 67:6	58:14 62:18 67:18 68:7 72:2 73:5 <b>dollar</b> 62:10 <b>downtown</b> 41:16
	<b>delicate</b> 49:3		<b>development</b> 9:9 <b>deviation</b> 21:11,18	59:22,23 <b>disorders</b> 45:20 <b>displaced</b> 56:10 67:6	58:14 62:18 67:18 68:7 72:2 73:5 <b>dollar</b> 62:10 <b>downtown</b> 41:16
	<b>delicate</b> 49:3		<b>development</b> 9:9 <b>deviation</b> 21:11,18	59:22,23 <b>disorders</b> 45:20 <b>displaced</b> 56:10 67:6	58:14 62:18 67:18 68:7 72:2 73:5 <b>dollar</b> 62:10 <b>downtown</b> 41:16
	<b>delicate</b> 49:3		<b>development</b> 9:9 <b>deviation</b> 21:11,18	59:22,23 <b>disorders</b> 45:20 <b>displaced</b> 56:10 67:6	58:14 62:18 67:18 68:7 72:2 73:5 <b>dollar</b> 62:10 <b>downtown</b> 41:16
	<b>delicate</b> 49:3		<b>development</b> 9:9 <b>deviation</b> 21:11,18	59:22,23 <b>disorders</b> 45:20 <b>displaced</b> 56:10 67:6	58:14 62:18 67:18 68:7 72:2 73:5 <b>dollar</b> 62:10 <b>downtown</b> 41:16
	<b>delicate</b> 49:3		<b>development</b> 9:9 <b>deviation</b> 21:11,18	59:22,23 <b>disorders</b> 45:20 <b>displaced</b> 56:10 67:6	58:14 62:18 67:18 68:7 72:2 73:5 <b>dollar</b> 62:10 <b>downtown</b> 41:16
	<b>delicate</b> 49:3		<b>development</b> 9:9 <b>deviation</b> 21:11,18	59:22,23 <b>disorders</b> 45:20 <b>displaced</b> 56:10 67:6	58:14 62:18 67:18 68:7 72:2 73:5 <b>dollar</b> 62:10 <b>downtown</b> 41:16
	<b>delicate</b> 49:3		<b>development</b> 9:9 <b>deviation</b> 21:11,18	59:22,23 <b>disorders</b> 45:20 <b>displaced</b> 56:10 67:6	58:14 62:18 67:18 68:7 72:2 73:5 <b>dollar</b> 62:10 <b>downtown</b> 41:16
	<b>delicate</b> 49:3		<b>development</b> 9:9 <b>deviation</b> 21:11,18	59:22,23 <b>disorders</b> 45:20 <b>displaced</b> 56:10 67:6	58:14 62:18 67:18 68:7 72:2 73:5 <b>dollar</b> 62:10 <b>downtown</b> 41:16
	<b>delicate</b> 49:3		<b>development</b> 9:9 <b>deviation</b> 21:11,18	59:22,23 <b>disorders</b> 45:20 <b>displaced</b> 56:10 67:6	58:14 62:18 67:18 68:7 72:2 73:5 <b>dollar</b> 62:10 <b>downtown</b> 41:16
	<b>delicate</b> 49:3		<b>development</b> 9:9 <b>deviation</b> 21:11,18	59:22,23 <b>disorders</b> 45:20 <b>displaced</b> 56:10 67:6	58:14 62:18 67:18 68:7 72:2 73:5 <b>dollar</b> 62:10 <b>downtown</b> 41:16
	<b>delicate</b> 49:3		<b>development</b> 9:9 <b>deviation</b> 21:11,18	59:22,23 <b>disorders</b> 45:20 <b>displaced</b> 56:10 67:6	58:14 62:18 67:18 68:7 72:2 73:5 <b>dollar</b> 62:10 <b>downtown</b> 41:16
	<b>delicate</b> 49:3		<b>development</b> 9:9 <b>deviation</b> 21:11,18	59:22,23 <b>disorders</b> 45:20 <b>displaced</b> 56:10 67:6	58:14 62:18 67:18 68:7 72:2 73:5 <b>dollar</b> 62:10 <b>downtown</b> 41:16
	<b>delicate</b> 49:3		<b>development</b> 9:9 <b>deviation</b> 21:11,18	59:22,23 <b>disorders</b> 45:20 <b>displaced</b> 56:10 67:6	58:14 62:18 67:18 68:7 72:2 73:5 <b>dollar</b> 62:10 <b>downtown</b> 41:16
	<b>delicate</b> 49:3		<b>development</b> 9:9 <b>deviation</b> 21:11,18	59:22,23 <b>disorders</b> 45:20 <b>displaced</b> 56:10 67:6	58:14 62:18 67:18 68:7 72:2 73:5 <b>dollar</b> 62:10 <b>downtown</b> 41:16
	<b>delicate</b> 49:3		<b>development</b> 9:9 <b>deviation</b> 21:11,18	59:22,23 <b>disorders</b> 45:20 <b>displaced</b> 56:10 67:6	58:14 62:18 67:18 68:7 72:2 73:5 <b>dollar</b> 62:10 <b>downtown</b> 41:16
	<b>delicate</b> 49:3		<b>development</b> 9:9 <b>deviation</b> 21:11,18	59:22,23 <b>disorders</b> 45:20 <b>displaced</b> 56:10 67:6	58:14 62:18 67:18 68:7 72:2 73:5 <b>dollar</b> 62:10 <b>downtown</b> 41:16
	<b>delicate</b> 49:3		<b>development</b> 9:9 <b>deviation</b> 21:11,18	59:22,23 <b>disorders</b> 45:20 <b>displaced</b> 56:10 67:6	58:14 62:18 67:18 68:7 72:2 73:5 <b>dollar</b> 62:10 <b>downtown</b> 41:16
	<b>delicate</b> 49:3		<b>development</b> 9:9 <b>deviation</b> 21:11,18	59:22,23 <b>disorders</b> 45:20 <b>displaced</b> 56:10 67:6	58:14 62:18 67:18 68:7 72:2 73:5 <b>dollar</b> 62:10 <b>downtown</b> 41:16
	<b>delicate&lt;/</b>				

<b>dust</b> 44:6	17:20 27:20	68:13	<b>equipment</b>	<b>exhibit</b> 3:22	<b>fact</b> 12:16
<hr/> <b>E</b> <hr/>	<b>efficient</b> 9:4	<b>English</b> 6:3	24:20	3:23,24	34:14
<b>Earlier</b> 63:11	<b>effort</b> 30:23	21:1	<b>ESPI</b> 67:2	4:23 8:7,9	<b>factors</b> 20:20
<b>early</b> 23:14	42:23	<b>enhanceme...</b>	<b>essentially</b>	28:19 29:12	21:2
<b>easy</b> 48:19	<b>efforts</b> 15:19	25:10	31:6	29:12,14	<b>facts</b> 55:23
49:7	16:12	<b>enroll</b> 6:4	<b>estate</b> 56:19	41:6 62:16	56:7
<b>ed</b> 37:13 38:8	<b>eight-year</b>	10:1	<b>estimated</b>	<b>existed</b> 52:12	<b>faculty</b> 25:24
42:1 45:19	50:18	<b>enrolled</b>	38:20	<b>expectations</b>	<b>fail</b> 61:2
55:15,24	<b>eighth</b> 65:5	12:22 14:10	<b>ethnicity</b>	18:17	<b>failed</b> 32:15
<b>education</b>	<b>either</b> 50:12	<b>enrollment</b>	20:22	<b>expelled</b>	<b>faith</b> 25:3
4:11 9:7	63:6	7:22 9:22	<b>evaluate</b>	42:10	<b>fall</b> 46:5
13:22 17:4	<b>elected</b> 6:13	10:4,16,19	30:23	<b>experience</b>	<b>families</b> 23:5
20:24 23:21	25:3 51:4	10:21,23	<b>evaluated</b>	17:1 25:22	23:13,24
24:9 30:1,3	<b>elementary</b>	11:3,7,16	60:1	63:16,19	24:6,16
30:5 36:20	4:19 10:12	11:18,21,23	<b>evening</b> 3:1	<b>experiences</b>	27:12,15
36:24 44:19	10:22 11:3	12:5,6,8,11	4:12 8:18	64:7	32:11,13
45:1 51:14	11:7,12,21	12:24 13:8	14:15 16:7	<b>expertise</b>	33:3 44:20
59:15 62:19	13:19 14:16	13:10,12,14	16:8 35:3,5	44:21	<b>family</b> 25:2
<b>Education's</b>	14:20 18:20	13:24 14:7	41:7 43:9	<b>explain</b> 14:11	45:14 60:3
4:15	18:24 56:9	14:8,11,19	43:10 45:7	19:14,15	<b>far</b> 21:12
<b>educational</b>	57:22 58:7	14:21,23,24	48:13 54:14	<b>explaining</b>	34:18 36:6
34:16 60:4	<b>elements</b>	15:1,2,4,7,8	54:15 57:18	5:21 23:4	36:6 38:19
<b>educationa...</b>	37:22	15:9,11,12	59:12 64:20	<b>explosive</b>	67:15
51:8	<b>elicit</b> 7:15	17:12,19,20	66:23,24	59:21	<b>faster</b> 21:15
<b>educator</b> 1:5	<b>eligibility</b>	27:17,20	<b>events</b> 24:7	<b>expressed</b>	21:20 22:8
41:9	20:21	<b>ensure</b> 16:15	63:22	71:7	22:13
<b>educators</b>	<b>eliminating</b>	18:14 24:19	<b>eventually</b>	<b>extremely</b>	<b>father</b> 63:5
51:9	31:21	25:19,23	60:6	52:4	<b>feedback</b>
<b>eduction</b>	<b>emotional</b>	<b>enthusiasm</b>	<b>evidence</b> 3:17	<hr/> <b>F</b> <hr/>	23:10
54:17,20	5:24 23:3	52:23	5:5 7:13	<b>F-e-l-t-o-n</b>	<b>feel</b> 43:18
55:8 56:9	26:15 30:2	<b>enthusiasti...</b>	<b>example</b>	8:24	48:18 50:7
56:18 60:6	38:17 45:8	42:17	21:17 26:8	<b>facilitate</b>	50:7
60:12	59:19 69:6	<b>entire</b> 63:12	<b>exceed</b> 10:3	26:17	<b>feelings</b>
<b>effect</b> 56:13	<b>emotionally</b>	63:16 69:1	13:23 17:19	<b>facilities</b> 9:4	38:17
<b>effective</b>	40:9 44:9	71:13	27:19	<b>facility</b> 7:21	<b>feels</b> 57:3
11:11	44:14 52:9	<b>environment</b>	<b>exceeding</b>	9:16 10:17	<b>fell</b> 46:8
<b>efficiency</b>	<b>emphasis</b>	26:16 27:5	7:22	12:2,5,7,13	<b>Felton</b> 2:2
7:22 10:4	41:23	32:8 38:5	<b>exceeds</b> 19:12	13:2,5,8,11	7:19 8:15
10:16,20	<b>encourage</b>	39:11 42:12	20:7,9,11	14:7,9,22	8:18,19,20
11:4,8,18	26:23 70:12	60:21	<b>excuse</b> 27:3	15:5 17:17	8:23,23
12:6,11	<b>endanger</b>	<b>environme...</b>	51:18,21	27:19	29:17
13:10,15,24	32:1	57:6	<b>excuses</b> 38:1	<b>facility's</b> 10:4	<b>Fenger</b> 58:5
14:8,21	<b>endangerm...</b>	<b>envy</b> 52:14	<b>Executive</b>	10:21 17:20	<b>fetal</b> 45:21
15:4,12	69:13	<b>equal</b> 19:1	4:17 9:18	27:20	<b>field</b> 27:13
	<b>Englewood</b>	<b>equals</b> 11:16	17:9		54:10 56:2

68:1	<b>five-year</b> 9:9	<b>Fs</b> 53:21	63:17	<b>grass</b> 39:14	49:11
<b>fifth</b> 61:20	<b>flash</b> 40:21	<b>fulfill</b> 23:2	<b>go</b> 5:14 37:2	<b>great</b> 32:18	<b>harder</b> 49:12
<b>fight</b> 47:23	<b>flexibility</b>	<b>full</b> 49:4 56:2	41:21 42:14	36:6 44:24	<b>Harlan</b> 55:14
49:18	12:19 14:4	<b>fully</b> 14:11	58:21 72:11	51:9 52:8	66:5
<b>fighting</b>	<b>floor</b> 28:13	18:15 71:7	<b>God</b> 50:3	<b>greatly</b> 44:21	<b>harm's</b> 69:7
46:11 47:14	<b>flowers</b> 39:14	<b>fun</b> 54:6,10	66:7	<b>green</b> 65:22	69:15
<b>fight</b> s 38:7	<b>focused</b> 9:7	<b>funding</b>	<b>goes</b> 32:20	<b>green-hash...</b>	<b>hate</b> 42:18
47:12	<b>follow</b> 18:2	46:23 62:7	38:19 52:5	14:20	<b>He'll</b> 3:8
<b>filing</b> 70:4	44:1	<b>funds</b> 26:8	57:13	<b>greet</b> s 24:6	<b>head</b> 8:20
<b>fill</b> 44:16	<b>following</b>	47:4,4	<b>going</b> 29:11	<b>Gregory</b> 2:4	<b>health</b> 17:2
<b>filled</b> 33:10	5:10 6:19	66:11	29:13 38:14	37:12,13	<b>hear</b> 5:12
<b>final</b> 23:8	25:7,16	<b>Further</b> 15:6	39:15,18	<b>grew</b> 22:7,13	15:16 35:1
<b>finalized</b> 6:18	26:16	<hr/>	41:18 45:8	<b>groups</b> 25:3	35:3 39:10
<b>finally</b> 6:14	<b>football</b> 63:8	<b>G</b>	45:14 46:5	26:18 27:1	<b>heard</b> 17:8
7:10 8:1	<b>forbid</b> 50:3	<b>G-a-b-r-i-e...</b>	46:19 48:4	51:11	34:11 39:5
11:18	66:7	4:13	53:3 55:15	<b>growing</b>	39:6 49:22
<b>find</b> 30:13	<b>foregoing</b>	<b>Gabriela</b> 2:2	55:20 58:7	21:15,19,23	51:4 54:21
64:2	73:7	4:13	58:15,15	22:2	69:13
<b>fine</b> 57:10	<b>forget</b> 38:13	<b>game</b> 63:15	59:1 64:22	<b>grown</b> 62:24	<b>hearing</b> 1:4
<b>finish</b> 53:5	45:10	<b>Garcia</b> 45:15	65:7,11	<b>growth</b> 19:23	1:12 3:1,2
71:3	<b>former</b> 25:21	<b>gen</b> 38:8	66:19 68:4	20:15,16	3:16 4:9
<b>finishes</b> 5:12	36:5 48:15	<b>gender</b> 21:1	69:5 71:8	21:6,7	5:11,13
<b>Fioretti</b> 2:3	50:17 71:18	<b>general</b> 3:18	71:10 72:20	<b>guardians</b>	6:16 8:8,11
29:1,3,15	<b>forth</b> 3:24 4:5	28:13 42:1	<b>gonna</b> 50:11	5:16 6:12	8:19,22
29:16 34:5	43:23	60:6,12	<b>good</b> 3:1 4:12	<b>guess</b> 29:13	9:13 15:22
34:9,11	<b>foster</b> 27:5	<b>gentlemen</b>	8:18 16:7,8	<b>guidelines</b>	16:5,8
35:17	<b>found</b> 48:21	3:2 28:12	35:3,5 39:1	5:7,23 6:17	23:11 28:4
<b>first</b> 3:6,11	55:18 63:21	40:19 52:22	41:7,7 43:9	6:18 7:8	28:11 29:2
6:21 8:12	<b>four</b> 19:2,7,9	71:24	43:10 44:10	9:19 17:10	29:8,16
19:17 25:7	22:16 41:14	<b>getting</b> 30:20	45:7 48:1,6	17:24 18:3	31:5 33:5
25:16 26:16	49:20 55:6	47:12 49:9	48:13 50:8	18:19,23	33:17 34:2
28:16 45:13	56:9 61:14	<b>give</b> 3:22	52:23 53:22	19:6 22:17	34:6,10,24
51:13 55:13	61:18 63:14	28:17 29:7	54:14,15	<b>guys</b> 64:16	35:5 37:2,6
57:7 58:3	<b>fourth</b> 20:12	40:16,22	57:18 59:4	<b>gym</b> 54:10	37:9,12
60:23 62:11	27:5 35:10	42:22 56:7	59:12 63:13	<hr/>	39:19,23
66:4 73:4	<b>fragile</b> 31:15	56:7 67:16	64:20 66:23	<b>H</b>	40:14,18,23
<b>fit</b> 50:8	52:5	68:17	66:24	<b>half</b> 50:24	40:24 41:5
<b>fits</b> 17:8	<b>free</b> 20:21	<b>given</b> 12:20	<b>grade</b> 16:16	<b>hand</b> 68:17	43:2,7,10
<b>five</b> 6:22	56:2	28:20 36:22	18:11 20:20	68:18	45:3,6,10
54:24 55:2	<b>fresh</b> 38:14	36:23 49:2	65:6	<b>happen</b> 70:6	47:6 48:11
55:6 56:8	49:8	63:10	<b>graders</b> 56:4	<b>happens</b> 39:8	50:9,13
59:15 61:21	<b>front</b> 33:18	<b>giving</b> 42:23	<b>grades</b> 10:14	50:2 66:8	51:18,19
62:24 63:14	39:17	<b>gladiator</b>	54:7	66:19	52:21 53:7
<b>five-mile</b>	<b>frustration</b>	65:4	<b>grandchild</b>	<b>hard</b> 38:2	53:24 54:12
33:23	72:4	<b>glowing</b>	40:6	48:21 49:5	54:15 56:23

57:10,16	17:23 18:4	54:10 62:17	54:7	30:12	43:11,11,12
59:10 62:12	22:19 27:21	62:18,19	<b>improveme...</b>	<b>input</b> 23:11	45:5 68:10
62:15 64:18	<b>highlight</b>		19:22	<b>institution</b>	68:11 70:6
66:12,21,24	10:9 15:18	<b>I</b>	<b>included</b> 17:1	44:24	<b>Jacobsen</b>
68:9 70:15	<b>highly</b> 27:3	<b>idea</b> 52:5,6	<b>includes</b> 5:15	<b>instruction</b>	59:11,12,13
70:18,22	<b>highly-stru...</b>	<b>ideal</b> 10:21	6:8,14,24	16:17 18:12	61:20 62:5
71:2,15,16	27:4	10:23 11:16	7:3,10,12	<b>instructional</b>	62:13
71:18 72:5	<b>hit</b> 28:15	12:5,24	7:18 8:1	12:18 24:13	<b>Jacobson</b>
72:17,21	49:13	13:8 14:6	<b>including</b>	26:9	2:10
73:10	<b>hold</b> 18:9,17	<b>identified</b>	20:20 24:5	<b>integrated</b>	<b>Jalen</b> 66:3
<b>hearings</b> 6:9	53:3	22:17 34:7	25:15 26:16	60:17	<b>Jefferson</b>
7:11 30:12	<b>home</b> 23:5	44:9 45:18	56:3	<b>interest</b> 43:16	33:15
32:14 33:6	36:7 64:2	45:22	<b>inclusive</b>	55:9	<b>job</b> 39:6 68:7
58:9 72:18	<b>homeroom</b>	<b>identifies</b>	27:6	<b>interested</b>	71:19 72:3
<b>hearts</b> 40:13	11:1 54:24	5:23 6:4	<b>incorporate</b>	9:14 70:4	<b>Johnson</b> 2:4
<b>held</b> 7:16	<b>homerooms</b>	<b>identify</b> 6:6	23:10	<b>intermittent</b>	37:12,13,13
18:8	10:24 11:14	21:5 23:20	<b>increase</b> 30:6	59:20	39:22,24
<b>Hello</b> 47:8	12:4,24	26:4 46:1	61:13 65:12	<b>interpretat...</b>	<b>joined</b> 9:6
<b>help</b> 25:17	13:7 14:2	<b>IEP</b> 20:24	<b>increases</b>	3:7	<b>Joshua</b> 45:15
26:15,17,21	54:21	23:21 24:22	11:4	<b>interpreter</b>	46:7,9,16
27:14,23	<b>homes</b> 37:23	32:13	<b>independent</b>	3:7,9	<b>judge</b> 71:18
30:20 31:4	55:10 62:23	<b>IEPs</b> 24:9	6:16 71:16	<b>intervention</b>	<b>July</b> 9:2
31:14 34:15	<b>HON</b> 1:12	30:3,14,16	<b>indicate</b> 3:6	26:18	<b>juries</b> 26:23
40:8,8	<b>Honor</b> 4:12	31:2 34:7	<b>indicated</b>	<b>interventions</b>	<b>K</b>
42:21 48:9	8:13,18	<b>Illinois</b> 3:4	32:3 37:17	27:4	<b>K</b> 73:2
54:4	15:20,24	5:7 6:24	<b>indicates</b>	<b>intimate</b> 69:4	<b>K-a-t-h-l-e-e</b>
<b>helping</b> 26:19	16:7 28:7	73:1	21:17	<b>introduce</b>	57:20
47:17,18	45:8 54:14	<b>impact</b> 21:3	<b>individual</b>	8:14 16:1	<b>Kate</b> 1:5 4:10
<b>helps</b> 40:7	<b>hopefully</b>	34:22 38:4	16:14 19:23	<b>involved</b>	4:19 45:1
<b>Hi</b> 54:2 59:12	55:22	<b>impacted</b>	23:3 24:10	32:23 63:8	<b>Kathleen</b>
<b>high</b> 18:8,16	<b>hospital</b>	10:1	26:4 30:3	<b>involves</b>	2:10 57:17
21:7 28:15	47:14,23	<b>imperative</b>	<b>individuali...</b>	69:12	57:18
36:21 49:17	<b>host</b> 24:5	32:22	20:24 23:21	<b>iPads</b> 55:12	<b>keep</b> 33:13
55:14 58:3	<b>hosting</b> 24:1	<b>implement</b>	24:9 27:2	<b>ISAT</b> 19:11	40:13 45:1
58:4,6	<b>hour</b> 59:1	26:22 27:8	69:3	20:6,8,9,15	45:14 46:19
67:16 68:13	<b>hours</b> 31:24	<b>implement...</b>	<b>individuals</b>	20:21	47:3,10
<b>high-income</b>	34:20 40:24	24:22	71:1 72:7	<b>issues</b> 30:2	57:5 62:5
69:22	59:2	<b>implore</b> 69:8	72:18	58:8	64:22 65:11
<b>higher</b> 8:4	<b>Hudson-G...</b>	<b>important</b>	<b>information</b>	<b>J</b>	66:19 70:8
18:17,19,21	2:6 45:6,7	32:9 53:6	6:5 9:15	<b>J-a-c-k-s-o-n</b>	<b>keeper</b> 40:20
18:23 19:2	45:12	58:12 71:11	70:7 72:8	43:12	<b>keeping</b> 59:8
19:5,7,15	<b>human</b> 62:10	<b>importantly</b>	72:13	<b>jackets</b> 65:22	<b>keeps</b> 51:17
20:4 22:15	<b>hundreds</b>	52:17	<b>informed</b>	<b>Jackson</b> 2:6	51:23
<b>higher-perf...</b>	58:24	<b>improve</b> 9:3	70:2	2:12 43:8,9	<b>kept</b> 70:1
6:5 10:2	<b>Hyman</b> 2:11	<b>improved</b>	<b>initiated</b>		

<b>kid</b> 49:8	6:3 21:1	20:19,20	66:10	<b>managing</b>	<b>mean</b> 21:10
<b>kids</b> 34:18	<b>law</b> 3:13 4:15	60:13	<b>lost</b> 33:15	60:5	21:18 46:11
35:22,23	71:19	<b>levels</b> 60:11	<b>lot</b> 36:15	<b>manufacture</b>	48:4,8 52:1
36:1,4,8,24	<b>lawsuit</b> 70:4	<b>libraries</b>	37:21 41:22	52:11	58:2
39:12 42:14	71:2	55:11	48:8,9,10	<b>map</b> 7:23	<b>meaning</b>
42:19 43:16	<b>lawsuits</b>	<b>License</b>	62:21 65:16	<b>march</b> 6:20	21:19
45:17 46:1	52:16	73:12	65:17	71:8,11	<b>meaningful</b>
46:7,19	<b>LD</b> 59:22	<b>life</b> 63:12,16	<b>lots</b> 54:6	<b>mark</b> 3:23	16:16
47:3,13	<b>leader</b> 26:10	<b>lime</b> 65:22	56:22	28:18 29:11	<b>means</b> 21:10
48:8,18	<b>leadership</b>	<b>limited</b> 11:10	<b>love</b> 42:13,23	41:5 57:16	21:14,22
52:9 57:23	27:7 51:5	69:9 71:13	49:1 54:8	<b>Markay</b> 2:3	22:1,6,12
58:15 66:11	51:17,22	<b>limits</b> 50:14	<b>low</b> 21:6 32:2	8:2 10:8	57:7
68:2	52:15,20	<b>line</b> 65:1	47:9	15:17 16:1	<b>measure</b>
<b>kind</b> 30:8	<b>learn</b> 38:1,8	<b>lines</b> 14:20	<b>LSCs</b> 32:22	16:9	21:10,12
34:23 36:1	38:9	<b>list</b> 6:16 39:7	<b>lunch</b> 20:21	<b>marked</b>	<b>meat</b> 49:8
39:20 72:6	<b>learned</b>	<b>listened</b>	63:2	62:15	<b>meet</b> 24:5,6
<b>know</b> 27:15	62:21,22	38:11	<b>luncheons</b>	<b>Martin</b> 2:8	26:5 37:14
30:10 33:18	<b>learner</b> 16:10	<b>little</b> 45:13	27:9	50:15,16	<b>meet-and-g...</b>
35:11,12,16	21:1 23:12	70:20	<b>lunches</b> 56:4	<b>MARZUL...</b>	24:7
35:19 36:9	23:18	<b>live</b> 37:8 48:5		73:4,11	<b>meeting</b> 6:21
36:12,23	<b>learners</b> 6:3	<b>lives</b> 66:17	<b>M</b>	<b>massive</b>	55:13 57:14
37:8 39:20	16:15 18:15	<b>living</b> 6:2	<b>M</b> 41:8	49:22	66:4 70:9
40:21 47:9	44:14	20:23	<b>M-c-N-e-i-l</b>	<b>Master's</b> 17:4	70:19
50:3 55:22	<b>learning</b>	<b>local</b> 5:17	54:17	17:5	<b>meetings</b> 6:9
58:12,12	16:17 39:9	6:12 25:2	<b>M-u-r-r-a-y</b>	<b>materials</b>	6:22,23
64:23,23	48:24 49:11	32:18	57:20	72:8	7:15 23:10
65:3,19	57:6 59:22	<b>located</b> 8:16	<b>ma'am</b> 45:4	<b>math</b> 19:13	24:2 27:14
67:14,16,20	<b>leave</b> 64:6	10:11,18	<b>madam</b> 29:16	20:13 26:11	35:22 61:1
67:21 68:2	<b>ledge</b> 5:3	13:19 16:3	33:5 35:3	47:20 53:22	61:3
71:3,6 72:9	<b>left</b> 40:21	17:16 23:6	36:3	<b>mathematics</b>	<b>meets</b> 5:22
<b>knowledge</b>	49:18	29:22 33:19	<b>magnet</b> 40:2	20:8 22:10	19:11 20:6
44:22	<b>left-hand</b>	33:20,21	<b>major</b> 37:19	22:14	20:9,11
<b>knows</b> 53:11	28:18	60:3	<b>majority</b> 19:2	<b>matter</b> 28:21	<b>member</b> 52:1
53:16	<b>legislation</b>	<b>locations</b>	19:7	48:21	<b>members</b>
<b>L</b>	52:16	7:16	<b>Mak</b> 54:3	<b>matters</b> 29:5	5:17,18
<b>lab</b> 55:1	<b>length</b> 43:22	<b>logic</b> 40:12	<b>making</b>	<b>Matthew</b>	6:13 9:14
<b>labs</b> 55:11	<b>Leslie</b> 28:22	<b>long</b> 31:11,20	11:10 43:13	43:7	24:12 26:17
<b>lack</b> 33:8	29:3	32:3 48:4	48:18 52:4	<b>mayor</b> 52:19	26:21 30:16
37:18	<b>let's</b> 55:19	64:15	60:16 72:9	<b>mayor's</b>	32:11 60:7
<b>ladies</b> 3:1	57:5 65:24	<b>longer</b> 48:2	<b>manage</b> 9:3	69:20	<b>memories</b>
28:12 40:19	<b>letters</b> 5:16	50:1 64:9	<b>manager</b>	<b>McNeil</b> 2:9	54:7
52:22 71:23	5:20	<b>look</b> 38:17	38:24 59:14	54:13,14,16	<b>mental</b> 17:2
<b>lady</b> 63:2	<b>level</b> 16:16	67:23 69:8	60:24	54:16 56:16	<b>mention</b>
<b>language</b> 3:8	18:11,21	71:12,19,19	<b>managers</b>	56:23 57:1	44:13
	19:1,5,21	<b>looking</b> 39:4	61:1	57:11	<b>mess</b> 58:5

<b>methodology</b> 20:19	17:16,22 19:4,15	46:20	54:22 61:21 65:8 66:16	52:18	56:4
<b>metric</b> 19:17 20:6 21:5,9	20:1,4 22:7 22:13,15,18	<b>movie</b> 64:21 <b>moving</b> 47:3 57:22	67:23 <b>needs</b> 6:1 14:5 16:17	<b>non-CPS</b> 44:2,5,12 44:17	<b>offed</b> 62:8 <b>offend</b> 64:24 <b>offer</b> 55:9 63:21 64:4 68:14
<b>metrics</b> 19:2 19:8,9,14 20:12 22:17	22:23 24:5 24:12,20 25:20 26:1	<b>multiplied</b> 10:24 12:4 13:1,7 14:3	18:14 23:3 24:10 26:4 26:5 32:13	<b>non-public</b> 23:19 <b>North</b> 14:16 14:20 15:8	<b>offered</b> 8:5 10:10 <b>offers</b> 56:2 <b>office</b> 16:14 23:12,18,23 24:11,22,24 39:2 44:13
<b>middle</b> 34:18 39:12	27:7,18,21 29:21 30:3	<b>multiplier</b> 13:1 56:13	33:12 44:4 47:2 58:11 58:13 60:22	31:7 32:16 33:11 43:14 57:24 59:7	<b>North's</b> 15:1 <b>Notary</b> 73:16 <b>notes</b> 57:15 73:8
<b>mile</b> 58:9	30:9 31:7	<b>Multiplying</b> 11:15 14:6	<b>negative</b> 21:24 22:12	<b>North's</b> 15:1 <b>Notary</b> 73:16	<b>officer</b> 1:12 3:1,16 4:9 4:18 5:11 8:8,11,19 8:22 15:22 16:5,8,10 16:20 28:4 28:11 29:2 29:8,17 33:5 34:2,6 34:10,24 35:5 37:2,6 37:9,12 39:19,23 40:14,18 41:5 43:2,7 43:10 45:3 45:6,10 47:6 48:11 50:9,13 51:18,20 52:21 53:8 53:24 54:12 54:15 56:23 57:10,16 59:10 62:12 62:15 64:18 66:12,21,24 68:9 70:15 70:18,22 71:15,16,18 72:5,17
<b>miles</b> 37:5,6,8 51:6 52:10	32:6,8,16 32:18,19	<b>Murray</b> 2:10 57:17,18,18	<b>net</b> 46:4 <b>network</b> 61:2 <b>never</b> 35:12 39:10 52:12 63:10	31:7 32:16 33:11 43:14 57:24 59:7	
<b>Military</b> 66:18	33:8,10,19 36:5,5,6		<b>negligence</b> 66:9	<b>Notary</b> 73:16	
<b>mind</b> 43:16 70:8	37:4,7,8 39:15,18	<b>N</b>	<b>neighbor</b> 51:15	<b>notes</b> 57:15 73:8	
<b>minds</b> 40:12	48:3 52:8	<b>name</b> 4:2,3 4:13 8:23 16:9 35:7 41:8 43:3,5 43:5 47:7,8 47:8 48:13 50:16 53:10 53:17 54:1 54:2,2 59:12,23 62:18 64:20 66:3,6 67:1	<b>neighborho...</b> 16:18 42:1 42:5 52:6 58:10	<b>nother</b> 52:3 <b>notice</b> 5:16 5:20 6:8,11 <b>notification</b> 61:5 <b>November</b> 6:18	
<b>minors</b> 53:13	57:23 59:7	<b>names</b> 53:15	<b>net</b> 46:4	<b>number</b> 10:23,24 11:13,16 12:3,3,4,10 12:24 13:6 13:6,7,14 14:2,2,3 21:14 32:4 32:5 38:19 52:10 66:2	
<b>minus</b> 10:20 11:19	63:20 64:4 65:2,3,6,7 66:8 68:23	<b>Nancy</b> 33:14	<b>network</b> 61:2 <b>never</b> 35:12 39:10 52:12 63:10	<b>November</b> 6:18	
<b>minutes</b> 28:14 45:11	<b>Montefiore's</b> 8:3 13:23 15:2,12 20:9 22:4 22:10	<b>near</b> 14:16,19 15:1,8 21:22 31:7 32:16 33:11 43:14 57:24 59:6	<b>new</b> 24:7 26:15 27:15 31:16,16 32:7,19 49:8,10 50:6,6 51:14 58:10 58:17,18	<b>notification</b> 61:5	
<b>mismanage...</b> 66:11	<b>month</b> 51:24 63:18	<b>nearly</b> 50:24	<b>newspaper</b> 6:10	<b>November</b> 6:18	
<b>mistake</b> 29:19	<b>monthly</b> 61:1 <b>months</b> 51:23 51:24 52:2	<b>necessary</b> 24:19	<b>network</b> 61:2 <b>never</b> 35:12 39:10 52:12 63:10	<b>number</b> 10:23,24 11:13,16 12:3,3,4,10 12:24 13:6 13:6,7,14 14:2,2,3 21:14 32:4 32:5 38:19 52:10 66:2	
<b>mobility</b> 20:22 37:22	<b>mood</b> 59:22	<b>need</b> 3:7 27:1 30:14,17,21 31:3,3,4,14 33:24 34:15 34:22 36:20 39:24 40:2 44:10 46:17	<b>new</b> 24:7 26:15 27:15 31:16,16 32:7,19 49:8,10 50:6,6 51:14 58:10 58:17,18	<b>notification</b> 61:5	
<b>modification</b> 60:10	<b>moratorium</b> 46:21 47:3		<b>newspaper</b> 6:10	<b>November</b> 6:18	
<b>modificatio...</b> 18:13	<b>morning</b> 70:13		<b>Nikkitoya</b> 2:7 48:12 48:14	<b>number</b> 10:23,24 11:13,16 12:3,3,4,10 12:24 13:6 13:6,7,14 14:2,2,3 21:14 32:4 32:5 38:19 52:10 66:2	
<b>money</b> 30:23 47:10	<b>Moses</b> 4:20 13:18		<b>numbers</b> 9:22 17:12 62:10	<b>November</b> 6:18	
<b>monitor</b> 24:22	<b>mother</b> 63:5 <b>mountains</b> 49:7		<b>nurtured</b> 57:6	<b>number</b> 10:23,24 11:13,16 12:3,3,4,10 12:24 13:6 13:6,7,14 14:2,2,3 21:14 32:4 32:5 38:19 52:10 66:2	
<b>Montefiore</b> 4:21,21 5:18 6:11 7:17,21 13:18,19,24 14:8,10,17 14:19,21 15:4,9,13 15:14,15,18	<b>move</b> 32:5 52:9 60:10 63:20 <b>moved</b> 31:16		<b>numbers</b> 9:22 17:12 62:10	<b>November</b> 6:18	

<b>Officer's</b> 9:18 17:9	<b>opportunity</b> 36:11 39:16	<b>parent</b> 27:14 48:14 57:12	21:20 60:14 61:13,17,17	<b>placed</b> 30:4 41:22 61:3	19:18,20 20:2,3,4
<b>Officers</b> 6:16	<b>opposed</b> 57:21	63:1 68:20	<b>percentage</b> 19:10,18	<b>placement</b> 12:23 23:16	28:15
<b>Offices</b> 39:9	<b>opposing</b> 57:24	<b>parents</b> 5:16 6:12 9:13	20:4	61:7,24	<b>Police</b> 25:1
<b>officials</b> 6:13 25:4 33:17	<b>oppositional</b> 59:20	24:8 31:9	<b>perception</b> 18:6	<b>placements</b> 61:5	<b>policy</b> 7:3
51:5	<b>option</b> 6:4 10:1 65:7	32:15,22	<b>perfect</b> 48:20 49:9	<b>plan</b> 9:10 22:24 23:4	18:21 19:1
<b>Oh</b> 4:9 5:11	<b>options</b> 11:5 23:16 24:16	39:3,9 51:5	<b>performance</b> 7:4 10:8	25:5 51:8	19:11,19,19
<b>okay</b> 3:10 4:6 5:14 8:8,19	<b>order</b> 3:3 18:15 60:19	52:14,17	15:17 18:2	<b>Planner</b> 9:1,3 9:5	20:5,14
8:22 15:22	<b>organized</b> 63:24	62:23 68:17	18:21,24	<b>planning</b> 9:3 24:1	<b>poorly</b> 11:10
28:4,11,23	<b>organizer</b> 50:17	69:22 70:2	19:2,8,9,11	<b>plans</b> 5:19,21 10:10 23:8	<b>population</b> 12:17 37:21
29:2 34:10	<b>organizing</b> 52:17	<b>part</b> 69:17	19:19,19,21	30:3 32:6	60:14
34:24 37:9	<b>OSS</b> 25:1,6,7 25:11	<b>participation</b> 20:22	20:5,14,20	32:17,21,23	<b>Portfolio</b> 8:24 9:2,5
39:19 40:14	<b>Otis</b> 2:4 35:1 35:7	<b>particularly</b> 31:15 45:15	21:5 51:2	51:10,12	<b>position</b> 9:2 26:10
40:18 41:1	<b>outlining</b> 7:2 8:4	52:15	<b>performed</b> 19:7,15	<b>planted</b> 39:17	<b>positions</b> 17:2
41:2,5 43:2	<b>overall</b> 34:22	<b>parties</b> 33:1	22:15	<b>plants</b> 39:14	<b>positive</b> 21:14,17
43:3 45:3	<b>overcrowded</b> 11:5,24	<b>partners</b> 23:20 25:3	<b>performing</b> 8:4 18:20	<b>play</b> 63:24	38:16 60:9
45:12,12	44:8	<b>parts</b> 71:12	18:24 19:1	<b>played</b> 63:12	<b>post-traum...</b> 59:21
48:11 50:9	<b>oversee</b> 16:11	<b>passage</b> 55:11 65:10	19:6	<b>plead</b> 42:24	<b>posted</b> 71:23 72:10,14
50:13 51:21		66:1	<b>period</b> 6:19	<b>pleasant</b> 50:12	<b>potential</b> 42:21
52:12,15	<b>P</b>	<b>Patterson</b> 2:11 64:19	<b>periods</b> 31:21	<b>please</b> 28:17	<b>Potter</b> 2:12
53:9,18,24	<b>P-a-t-t-e-r-...</b> 64:22	64:20,21	<b>person</b> 42:1	29:8 36:3	68:10,11,11
56:6,23	<b>P.M</b> 1:8	66:3,4,12	<b>personal</b> 49:14	40:18 43:5	70:15,16,17
57:1,16,17	<b>pace</b> 21:15,20 21:23 22:2	66:13,15	<b>personnel</b> 25:8 66:14	44:24 50:8	70:21 71:5
58:5 59:10	22:8,13	<b>pawns</b> 69:18	<b>pertains</b> 69:16	50:14 53:19	71:17 72:16
62:18 64:18	<b>paid</b> 65:15,16	<b>pay</b> 56:2 71:10	<b>perverse</b> 68:15	54:3 55:6	<b>powers</b> 7:1
65:24 66:12	<b>PAMELA</b> 73:4,11	<b>peace</b> 26:18	<b>pets</b> 54:9	56:15 61:19	<b>practicable</b> 6:7
66:13 68:9	<b>paraprofes...</b> 35:24	<b>peer</b> 26:22,23	<b>phased</b> 67:6	62:4,5 70:6	<b>practices</b> 26:22
68:18 70:21		<b>peer-to-peer</b> 26:23	<b>Phillips</b> 10:12	<b>plenty</b> 69:13	<b>Prairie</b> 65:21
70:24 71:15		<b>people</b> 29:13 31:16 43:13	<b>physical</b> 62:19	<b>plus</b> 10:20 11:19	<b>praises</b> 67:16
71:17 72:14		52:4 65:14	<b>picked</b> 49:13	<b>podium</b> 71:4	<b>precious</b> 68:24
<b>old</b> 53:20		70:10 71:5	<b>picnics</b> 27:13	<b>point</b> 19:20 37:16 38:15	<b>prepare</b> 26:5 70:2
<b>Olympics</b> 63:9		<b>percent</b> 10:20 11:2,14,19	<b>place</b> 44:14 46:12 63:22	52:3 55:17	<b>prepared</b> 27:24 50:5
<b>once</b> 3:16 24:21		12:3 13:6		55:17 60:10	
<b>one-on-one</b> 67:8		14:1 20:2,3		64:23	
<b>open</b> 28:12 40:13 45:2		20:10,11		<b>points</b> 19:10	
47:11 59:8					
60:24 61:10					
67:21 68:7					
68:18 70:1					

<b>present</b> 28:6 28:17,23 33:16 72:8	<b>proceedings</b> 72:23 73:6 73:7,9	<b>propose</b> 9:20 9:24	62:16 68:3 73:16	11:4,8,18 12:6,11	<b>received</b> 19:4 19:10,18,20
<b>presentation</b> 7:19 28:8	<b>process</b> 7:2 24:18 37:17	<b>proposed</b> 1:4 7:11,23	<b>publication</b> 6:15	13:10,15,24 14:8,21	20:1,3,4 23:11 61:4
<b>presented</b> 14:14	71:6	13:17 15:18 18:1,4	<b>publish</b> 23:8	15:4,12 17:20 27:20	61:6
<b>presenting</b> 41:3	<b>productive</b> 60:7	27:22 32:12	<b>published</b> 6:9	<b>rapid</b> 21:6	<b>receiving</b> 18:21 44:7
<b>previous</b> 56:21,22	<b>Professor</b> 17:3	<b>proposing</b> 14:15	<b>purpose</b> 58:1	<b>rate</b> 61:17,17	<b>RECHT</b> 29:6
<b>primary</b> 59:18	<b>program</b> 20:23,24	<b>protect</b> 31:2 32:7 65:23	<b>pursuant</b> 3:3	<b>rating</b> 19:5 19:20 51:2	<b>recommend</b> 68:6
<b>principal</b> 9:8 25:16,18	23:21 26:11 65:10 66:1	<b>prove</b> 60:19	<b>purview</b> 69:9 69:24	<b>read</b> 42:2,5,6 47:19 48:9	<b>reconsider</b> 36:3,4
27:13 32:19 35:1,8,9	<b>programmed</b> 11:10	<b>proven</b> 60:16	<b>push</b> 49:15	<b>reading</b> 19:12 20:8	44:24 50:8 59:5,7
54:6 63:2 67:17	<b>programm...</b> 11:5	<b>provide</b> 6:5 18:11 26:7	<b>pushing</b> 65:11	20:13 22:4 22:6,8	<b>record</b> 4:2,3 4:10,23 8:7
<b>principals</b> 25:21 26:6	<b>programs</b> 24:9 31:13	26:9 27:7 31:2,3	<b>put</b> 3:17 31:20 68:7	26:11 41:12 41:19,22,23	53:17 62:14
26:12	33:24 69:3	<b>provided</b> 27:2,3,11	69:5	42:16,17 53:23	<b>recorded</b> 9:22 17:12
<b>prior</b> 9:5 16:22 17:1	<b>progress</b> 60:17 67:11	69:10	<b>puts</b> 61:16	<b>readjusted</b> 58:19	<b>records</b> 55:7
20:20 21:5 24:20 32:14	69:6	<b>providing</b> 30:16 55:10	<b>putting</b> 60:22	<b>ready</b> 16:6 60:17,20	<b>recruit</b> 71:1 9:8
<b>private</b> 61:24	<b>projected</b> 14:18,23	<b>provision</b> 30:5	<b>qualified</b> 6:16 34:8	61:3 60:17,20	<b>recruitment</b> 9:8
<b>privilege</b> 67:3,10	15:7,8,9,10	<b>provisions</b> 7:1	<b>quality</b> 18:8 55:11	<b>real</b> 45:14 55:22 56:18	<b>redacted</b> 43:3 43:5 47:7,8
<b>pro-actively</b> 26:4	<b>prop</b> 46:24	<b>psychologist</b> 17:2	<b>questions</b> 28:9 32:9	67:10 67:10	53:10 54:1 54:2
<b>probably</b> 44:7 48:4	<b>proper</b> 6:15	<b>Psychology</b> 17:6	51:19	<b>realize</b> 38:4 really 34:21	<b>reduced</b> 11:6 20:21
68:1	<b>properly</b> 44:14	<b>psychotic</b> 59:23	<b>quite</b> 33:9	36:6 40:7 41:18 52:12	<b>referrals</b> 35:19
<b>probation</b> 7:4	<b>property</b> 49:14	<b>PTC</b> 25:17	<b>quitting</b> 65:14,17	55:1 57:7 65:9 66:10	<b>referred</b> 4:4 35:14 36:14
<b>problem</b> 26:24 46:23	<b>proposal</b> 4:17 5:1,6	<b>PTCs</b> 25:21	<b>quote-unq...</b> 58:4	66:16 69:5 70:12	38:23 43:3 53:12 61:12
46:23 62:3	5:21,22	<b>PUBIC</b> 1:1	<b>race</b> 20:21	<b>reason</b> 38:21 39:10 46:4	61:24 61:24
<b>procedure</b> 7:11	7:13 8:16 9:17 10:7	<b>public</b> 1:4 3:11,13,19	<b>radius</b> 33:22 33:23	<b>reasons</b> 43:18,22	<b>reflect</b> 55:7 30:22
<b>proceed</b> 3:5 3:10,11 4:7	13:21 14:14 16:3 22:20	3:24 4:18 5:3 6:19 7:6	<b>Raise</b> 68:17 68:18	64:3 64:3	<b>refusing</b> 30:22
16:6 35:6 53:18 62:17	23:6,9,17 25:6 28:8	7:11,16 9:1 9:15 10:17	<b>raised</b> 25:12	<b>receive</b> 16:15 22:21 25:14	<b>regarding</b> 4:10 9:15
	31:5,10	12:14 16:24 28:13 29:11	<b>raising</b> 68:21	26:2,6,14 30:15,18	10:6 10:6
	<b>proposals</b> 6:20	29:12,14 41:6 62:6	<b>random</b> 51:11		<b>regardless</b> 63:6
			<b>range</b> 7:23 10:4,17,20		<b>regression</b>

20:18	<b>representing</b>	<b>resumes</b>	<b>routine</b> 49:6	13:13,15,19	58:10,17,18
<b>regular</b> 46:14	14:22	24:21	<b>running</b>	14:5,16,20	59:2,16
<b>Reicht</b> 28:22	<b>reprieve</b>	<b>rethink</b> 64:16	65:22	15:6 16:18	60:1,2,9
<b>reinforcem...</b>	36:23	<b>retired</b> 41:10		16:18,19	61:4,11
38:16	<b>request</b> 8:6	<b>return</b> 60:6	<b>S</b>	17:2,6,10	62:20,24
<b>reintegration</b>	32:10	<b>returning</b>	<b>S</b> 1:5 4:10	17:13,23,24	64:6 65:3,4
60:12	<b>require</b> 12:18	4:20	45:1	18:5,19,20	65:10,20
<b>related</b> 14:13	12:22 18:3	<b>review</b> 24:8	<b>safe</b> 25:5	18:20,22,24	67:7,20
14:14 24:13	30:4 31:11	25:7 31:5	42:12 55:10	19:1,3,6,10	68:7,13,20
<b>relationships</b>	49:3	<b>reward</b> 63:7	65:10 66:1	20:16 21:3	69:8,12,16
64:9 69:4	<b>required</b>	<b>rewarding</b>	<b>safety</b> 5:24	21:12,15,18	70:1 72:12
<b>relent</b> 66:7	24:23	63:16 64:7	23:1 24:24	21:19,23	<b>school's</b> 11:3
<b>relevant</b>	<b>requireme...</b>	<b>ride</b> 34:17	25:8,9,12	22:1,18,19	11:7,23
16:16	5:6	50:1 55:16	30:5 64:3	22:22 23:19	19:18,21
<b>remain</b> 60:24	<b>requires</b>	59:1 64:15	64:12 66:9	23:23 24:7	20:13
67:21	23:21	<b>ridiculous</b>	<b>Sands</b> 40:15	24:21,21	<b>schools</b> 1:1
<b>remainder</b>	<b>requiring</b>	52:10	40:16 41:2	25:8,9,19	3:11 4:18
22:22 25:18	31:22	<b>right</b> 15:23	41:4	26:16,17	6:6 7:7,8
<b>remains</b> 13:2	<b>research</b>	35:13 37:1	<b>save</b> 30:23	27:12,15,21	9:1 10:17
<b>remarks</b> 33:4	65:13	37:9,15	57:5 65:18	27:22 29:22	12:21 14:12
<b>remediation</b>	<b>residence</b>	38:19 42:4	71:8	29:24 30:1	15:11 16:15
7:4	16:19	48:22 52:21	<b>saw</b> 65:21	30:4 31:8	16:24 18:7
<b>remove</b> 52:18	<b>resisted</b>	53:10,18	67:8	32:12,18	18:9 21:6,7
<b>renovated</b>	31:10	67:2 68:8	<b>saying</b> 34:3,6	33:23 34:21	21:21 23:24
30:9	<b>resolution</b>	69:11	48:1 51:6	35:14 36:6	24:4 29:20
<b>repeat</b> 37:14	26:24	<b>rights</b> 71:6	53:2 61:9	36:7,17	31:7,10,20
<b>replaced</b> 52:2	<b>resource</b>	<b>rigorous</b> 44:1	66:15 68:16	37:3 38:6	31:21 32:17
<b>report</b> 36:13	25:23	<b>Riley</b> 54:5	<b>says</b> 54:20	38:10,18	32:21 33:21
54:21 61:23	<b>resources</b>	<b>risk</b> 69:6,15	73:5	39:4,12	34:8 38:8
66:3	11:11 23:1	<b>Ritter</b> 2:8	<b>scheduled</b>	40:2,4,7	41:24 42:2
<b>reported</b>	23:5 26:7	50:15,16,16	6:9 41:1	41:15,17	42:5 43:15
21:11 50:22	26:13 27:7	<b>Road</b> 29:23	<b>school</b> 1:5 3:4	42:8,9,10	43:19 44:1
73:6	27:11 31:4	<b>Roberts</b> 2:7	3:13 4:19	43:6,20	44:2,5,6,7
<b>reporter</b> 3:23	44:3	48:12,13,14	4:21 5:7,8	44:11 46:13	44:12,16
28:17 29:7	<b>respect</b> 9:17	50:10,11	5:17,17 6:5	46:17 47:2	46:3,22
40:17 53:1	<b>response</b>	<b>role</b> 16:22	6:12,12,17	47:9,11	49:18 50:20
53:6,17	30:8	<b>room</b> 55:1,12	6:18 7:1,2,4	48:2,7,15	50:21 51:1
73:5	<b>restorative</b>	61:21	7:5,8,11,17	49:11,17	51:2,7 52:7
<b>reports</b> 61:14	26:22	<b>rooms</b> 55:6	8:4 9:19,20	51:3,5 52:8	55:10,11,15
<b>representat...</b>	<b>restrictive</b>	61:18	9:23 10:2,9	52:18 53:20	55:24 56:9
8:14 16:1	60:20	<b>Roosevelt</b>	10:13,14,22	54:3,8	56:16,17
<b>representat...</b>	<b>result</b> 20:8	29:23	11:4,8,12	55:14,23	58:3,4,7,7
71:24	<b>resulting</b>	<b>Rosie</b> 2:5	11:20,21	56:1,1,21	59:6,8 61:8
<b>represented</b>	10:2 13:22	41:6,8	12:10,11,15	56:22 57:5	62:6,6 68:3
3:12,12	17:19	<b>route</b> 50:3	12:17,23	57:13,22	71:9,14

<p><b>science</b> 9:11 20:8 55:11 <b>score</b> 19:12 19:13 20:7 20:10,11,13 21:11,13,22 22:1,5,6,10 22:11 42:7 <b>scores</b> 19:12 21:6,7 54:7 55:20 <b>screen</b> 14:13 <b>second</b> 20:6 25:11 26:1 26:21 28:23 <b>security</b> 5:24 24:24 25:8 <b>see</b> 21:2 22:4 39:13,14,14 39:15,18 42:18,20 49:15 67:10 67:11 70:6 72:11 <b>seen</b> 63:4,5 67:15 <b>sell</b> 65:1 <b>send</b> 39:2,8 40:1,3,6 51:1 66:7 <b>sending</b> 36:4 <b>sense</b> 51:13 <b>sent</b> 23:5 33:8 39:8 44:5 61:8 72:7 <b>separate</b> 12:18,23 23:22 29:14 <b>separately</b> 14:15 <b>September</b> 16:21 <b>series</b> 24:11 <b>serve</b> 14:5</p>	<p>16:12 18:7 27:23 31:22 <b>served</b> 16:23 <b>serves</b> 10:14 12:17 <b>service</b> 35:23 <b>serviced</b> 34:4 <b>services</b> 16:11,23 23:13,19 25:2 39:2 44:3 55:4 <b>serving</b> 54:19 <b>set</b> 49:12 <b>setting</b> 12:19 60:7,12 <b>settings</b> 23:22 <b>settles</b> 44:6 <b>seven</b> 12:1 55:2 <b>seven-hour</b> 58:22 <b>severe</b> 30:1 <b>severely</b> 44:9 44:14 <b>share</b> 24:12 69:24 <b>she'll</b> 28:18 29:9 40:20 <b>shipping</b> 58:15,16 <b>shooting</b> 65:21 <b>short</b> 62:20 <b>shorthand</b> 73:6,8 <b>show</b> 31:1 <b>showing</b> 14:20 <b>shows</b> 14:18 32:14 <b>side</b> 28:18 34:18 36:7 43:21,21</p>	<p>48:5 58:17 60:3 65:3 <b>sign</b> 3:8 70:9 70:13,14 <b>signed</b> 72:18 <b>significant</b> 25:22 33:6 <b>signing</b> 29:4 <b>signs</b> 62:10 <b>similar</b> 20:16 21:16,24 22:2 <b>simply</b> 4:4 48:22 49:1 50:8 69:11 <b>sir</b> 72:15 <b>sister</b> 25:4 <b>sitting</b> 35:13 <b>situation</b> 33:1 38:5 49:3 68:15 <b>situations</b> 6:3 20:23 31:16 <b>six</b> 51:23 <b>size</b> 68:21 <b>slate</b> 38:12 <b>sleepy</b> 48:4 <b>slide</b> 14:18 <b>slightly</b> 56:12 <b>slow</b> 21:8 <b>slower</b> 22:2 <b>small</b> 58:2 60:2 <b>Smith</b> 55:3 <b>smooth</b> 25:19 <b>snapping</b> 66:19 <b>social</b> 5:24 23:2 26:14 38:17 40:8 54:9 <b>society</b> 60:8 <b>sold</b> 56:21 <b>solving</b> 26:24 <b>son</b> 45:15,16</p>	<p>57:13 65:5 65:7 66:2,3 66:8,20 <b>sorry</b> 52:15 53:11 <b>south</b> 10:12 13:20 17:16 17:17 27:18 29:22 34:18 43:20 60:3 <b>southeast</b> 36:7 <b>space</b> 7:7,21 9:16,21 10:2,5,7,18 12:15,20 13:23 15:13 17:11,18 55:16 <b>spaces</b> 50:6 <b>Spanish</b> 3:6 <b>spare</b> 50:2 <b>speak</b> 28:14 28:24 40:23 45:9 48:17 53:16 <b>SPEAKER</b> 2:1 <b>speakers</b> 52:23 <b>speaking</b> 41:2 53:5 57:21 <b>special</b> 1:5 4:11,21 13:19 18:14 30:5 33:12 33:24 34:23 35:8 37:13 39:1 40:3 44:3,19 45:1 51:14 55:15,24 56:4 58:11 58:13 59:14</p>	<p>63:9 <b>specialist</b> 41:20,22 <b>Specialized</b> 55:3 <b>specialty</b> 12:16 <b>specific</b> 6:1 25:12 <b>Specifically</b> 5:9 <b>spelled</b> 54:16 59:13 <b>spit</b> 49:13 <b>spoke</b> 66:5 <b>sponsor</b> 27:11 <b>sporting</b> 63:22 <b>sports</b> 63:12 <b>Springfield</b> 36:10 56:3 <b>SS</b> 73:1 <b>stability</b> 69:7 <b>staff</b> 5:17 6:12 17:22 24:12 25:13 26:3,17,21 27:9 32:24 35:24 44:22 58:20 67:17 68:12 69:4 <b>staffing</b> 24:23 <b>stand</b> 3:8 <b>standard</b> 18:8 21:11 21:18 <b>Standardiz...</b> 21:10 <b>standardized</b> 19:22 21:9 42:7 <b>standards</b> 7:7 9:21</p>	<p>10:5,18 12:15 17:12 18:17 36:21 <b>STARKS</b> 1:12 3:1,16 4:9 5:11 8:8 8:11,19,22 15:22 16:5 16:8 28:4 28:11 29:2 29:8 34:2,6 34:10,24 35:5 37:2,6 37:9,12 39:19,23 40:14,18 41:5 43:2,7 43:10 45:3 45:6,10 47:6 48:11 50:9,13 51:18 52:21 53:24 54:12 54:15 56:23 57:10,16 59:10 62:12 62:15 64:18 66:12,21,24 68:9 70:15 70:18,22 71:15,18 72:17 <b>start</b> 24:21 38:14 46:10 58:17,17 60:19 63:11 <b>started</b> 46:8 <b>state</b> 4:2 19:24 73:1 <b>stated</b> 12:8 13:4 35:17 43:22 66:4 <b>statement</b> 3:21 7:18 8:2,15,16</p>
---	--	--	---	---	---

15:21 16:2 16:3 28:3 29:7 <b>statements</b> 3:18 5:5,9 28:20 <b>states</b> 55:8 66:18 <b>status</b> 8:3 20:24 21:1 <b>statute</b> 3:3 70:24 71:11 71:12,13,20 71:21 <b>stay</b> 68:7,18 <b>step</b> 29:8 40:18 <b>Stephen</b> 2:11 62:17 <b>steps</b> 25:7 30:13 70:3 <b>Steve</b> 62:19 <b>stick</b> 40:20 <b>stop</b> 32:11 53:3 <b>store</b> 54:9 <b>story</b> 52:3 <b>strategic</b> 9:3 9:10 <b>strategies</b> 24:13 <b>street</b> 42:20 42:20 64:14 <b>stress</b> 32:2 59:21 <b>student</b> 2:5,7 2:8,9 4:4 9:22 16:23 20:15,19 21:4 26:4 43:4,5 47:6 47:8,22 53:11,19,24 54:2 59:17 59:24 62:1	<b>student's</b> 6:4 24:10 <b>students</b> 4:20 5:17,23 6:1 6:2 7:22 8:5 10:1,14 12:7,17,21 12:22 13:12 13:17 14:5 14:9,10,16 15:1,2,3,3 15:14,15 16:13,14 17:12,15,18 17:21,22 18:3,7,13 19:24 20:16 20:22 21:14 21:16,19,22 21:24 22:1 22:2,7,8,13 22:14,20 23:2,14,15 23:20,24 24:4,14 25:5,12,14 25:24 26:3 26:8,11,14 26:19 27:1 27:6,18,24 27:24 30:2 30:7,10 31:9,22,23 31:24 32:1 33:2,14 34:3,15 35:14,19 36:10,14,14 38:3,22 39:2 40:2 41:23 42:2 42:4,9 43:1 44:4,8,15 44:16,20 50:20 51:1	53:12 55:9 55:17 56:2 56:5,10,11 56:12,14 57:2,4 58:13,16,23 59:17,18 60:10,13,15 60:16,18 61:3,7,12 61:22,24 62:6,9,9,22 64:13 67:7 67:22 68:22 68:22,23,24 69:18 <b>students-sp...</b> 26:2 <b>stuff</b> 35:11 <b>stuffed</b> 68:22 <b>subbing</b> 67:4 <b>subjecting</b> 52:13 <b>submit</b> 33:4 57:8 62:13 <b>submitted</b> 4:24 57:15 <b>submitting</b> 57:12 <b>SUBSCRI...</b> 73:14 <b>substitute</b> 67:2 <b>succeed</b> 18:14 <b>successful</b> 60:16 <b>suggest</b> 69:14 <b>suited</b> 16:17 <b>summaries</b> 6:22 7:15 <b>summarize</b> 22:15 <b>Sun</b> 50:21 <b>support</b> 5:1	7:13 8:15 16:2 23:15 25:2,24 26:8 28:8 31:17 32:10 67:8 <b>supported</b> 26:12 <b>supportive</b> 27:6 47:17 <b>supports</b> 5:23 6:1 8:4 10:9 16:10 16:14 22:21 23:12,18 24:2 25:15 26:15 28:1 <b>supposed</b> 70:18 <b>sure</b> 36:19,24 71:5,20 <b>suspended</b> 36:18 38:7 <b>Sutton</b> 2:5 41:6,7,8 42:15 <b>switch</b> 55:19 <b>sworn</b> 73:4 73:14 <b>syndrome</b> 45:21 <b>system</b> 19:20 38:15 45:18 46:13 60:10 69:1 <b>systems</b> 25:9 45:23	7:10,12,14 7:18 8:1,17 10:19 16:4 23:6 <b>take</b> 3:18 25:7 31:24 34:20 36:9 40:1,1,2,10 42:6 48:2 53:1,8 55:16 63:22 65:9 66:16 70:7,23 <b>taken</b> 30:14 73:9 <b>talked</b> 35:17 35:18 38:11 <b>talking</b> 42:19 49:23 68:21 <b>Tally</b> 2:10 59:11,13 <b>taught</b> 44:18 <b>Taylor</b> 2:4 35:1,3,7,8 37:5,7,11 54:5 <b>teach</b> 68:13 <b>teacher</b> 9:6,8 26:9 37:14 41:12 44:18 50:18 54:3 54:10 62:19 67:12 <b>teachers</b> 24:6 24:8 35:23 38:2 47:13 47:14,24 50:17 51:6 57:19 61:15 68:12 <b>Teaching</b> 35:9 <b>team</b> 24:15 27:9 64:8 <b>teams</b> 63:8,8	<b>technology</b> 25:9 <b>tell</b> 34:16 45:13 <b>telling</b> 35:22 56:6 <b>temporary</b> 6:2 20:23 32:20 <b>ten</b> 16:24 <b>tendered</b> 4:22 <b>Tennessee</b> 9:7 <b>terms</b> 68:20 71:11 <b>territorial</b> 50:7 <b>test</b> 19:24 21:6,7 42:7 54:7 55:20 <b>testifying</b> 4:2 <b>testimony</b> 28:19 32:14 34:12 51:4 69:13 <b>tests</b> 19:22 <b>thank</b> 4:8 8:10 15:20 15:22 28:2 28:4,10,11 29:16 34:23 34:24 35:7 37:1,10,11 39:23 40:13 40:14 43:1 43:2,7 45:3 45:5,7 47:5 47:6 48:10 48:11 50:9 52:20,21 53:9,23 54:11,12 57:7,15,17 59:9,10
--	---	--	---	---	---

62:11,12	67:3,4,9	25:19 26:20	<b>two-mile</b>	37:18 46:22	71:5
64:16,18	<b>time</b> 3:2 4:7	28:1 32:23	33:22	46:23,24	<b>wanted</b> 37:16
66:20,21	8:6 19:22	48:17	<b>type</b> 34:15	54:21	67:19
68:9 72:14	28:2,10,12	<b>transitioning</b>	37:20 49:23	<b>utilized</b> 61:10	<b>wants</b> 35:24
72:16,22	28:22 29:10	26:3 27:14	<b>typical</b> 10:22	61:14,22	<b>ward</b> 28:23
<b>Thanks</b> 62:5	31:21 33:15	<b>transportat...</b>	11:12,20	62:7	29:21
<b>therapeutic</b>	38:9,24	6:6	59:16,17,24	<b>utilizes</b> 10:17	<b>warehouse</b>
29:20,22	39:20 40:1	<b>transported</b>	60:2		44:11
31:4,6,14	40:1,3,20	64:12		<b>V</b>	<b>way</b> 3:10
43:15,20,24	40:21 41:18	<b>traumatic</b>		<b>V-i-c-t-o-r-...</b>	16:21 28:19
44:2,5,10	43:22 48:3	52:9	<b>U</b>	43:12	33:2 46:16
44:12,16	50:14 56:17	<b>travel</b> 31:11	<b>understand</b>	<b>vacant</b> 56:22	57:2 64:2
46:2 56:1	56:24 62:20	<b>travesty</b>	10:16 40:5	<b>Value-Added</b>	69:7,15
<b>thing</b> 37:19	65:16 69:23	44:23	68:3	19:12,13	<b>we'll</b> 28:12
38:13 39:11	72:20	<b>treat</b> 69:18	<b>underutiliz...</b>	20:13,14	35:1 41:5
48:22 63:1	<b>TIMEKEE...</b>	<b>trend</b> 14:11	7:20	21:9 22:5,6	57:16 70:8
<b>things</b> 37:15	56:15 61:19	14:19	<b>underutiliz...</b>	22:10,11	<b>we're</b> 5:13
37:16 38:4	62:4	<b>Tribune</b>	9:20 11:9	<b>Vanderbilt</b>	29:13 38:21
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55:21	<b>today</b> 4:16	50:12 56:3	13:16 17:11	43:8,11	72:20
<b>think</b> 46:2	9:13 30:2	<b>trips</b> 27:14	27:17 61:9	70:6	<b>we've</b> 35:17
47:10 48:19	30:24 32:11	54:10 56:2	<b>unelected</b>	<b>viewing</b> 5:3	39:6
54:22 56:8	70:11 72:19	<b>true</b> 55:23	52:18	<b>visits</b> 27:12	<b>weather</b> 59:4
62:2,16	<b>told</b> 38:12	65:19 73:8	<b>unfolds</b> 71:6	<b>vote</b> 40:11,11	<b>website</b> 71:23
66:5 67:20	55:4 61:2	<b>trust-buildi...</b>	<b>Union</b> 50:17	40:12 44:24	72:10,11,14
67:22,24	<b>tolerance</b>	27:9	57:19 68:12	<b>vulnerable</b>	<b>week</b> 61:6
<b>third</b> 20:12	32:2	<b>try</b> 45:8 46:1	<b>unique</b> 16:17	68:24	63:17
26:6 27:1	<b>tonight</b> 69:14	48:21 64:22	<b>United</b> 66:18		<b>welcome</b> 4:20
<b>third-party</b>	<b>total</b> 11:2,13	65:13	<b>units</b> 21:12	<b>W</b>	7:21 17:18
51:11	12:1 13:4	<b>trying</b> 36:22	<b>University</b>	<b>wait</b> 53:4	<b>welcomed</b>
<b>thought</b>	14:1 15:3	49:17 51:16	9:12 17:7	<b>waiting</b> 39:7	13:18 14:17
35:12	<b>touch</b> 58:3,6	<b>turn-around</b>	<b>unused</b> 11:9	<b>walking</b> 58:9	17:15,21
<b>thousands</b>	<b>tours</b> 23:24	67:7	<b>update</b> 25:8	<b>Wallace</b>	18:4
52:14,14	<b>track</b> 33:13	<b>turned</b> 33:14	<b>upper</b> 56:3	57:13	<b>welcoming</b>
<b>threatened</b>	<b>trainings</b>	<b>tutoring</b>	<b>use</b> 11:10	<b>want</b> 12:15	10:9 23:24
50:7	24:12	26:10	12:20 26:13	28:15,23	24:4,14
<b>three</b> 15:11	<b>transcript</b>	<b>twice</b> 31:23	35:22	33:5 39:24	<b>went</b> 41:17
30:12 33:7	7:14 73:8	<b>two</b> 7:15	<b>utilization</b>	40:6,16	47:14,16
34:13 41:11	<b>transition</b>	28:14 31:6	7:7 9:4,16	45:13 48:2	49:7
47:14 49:18	5:19,20 8:5	31:21 40:24	9:21 10:3,5	48:7,17	<b>west</b> 43:21
51:24 59:8	10:10 15:18	45:11,23	10:7,18	58:3,6 59:5	48:5 65:3
62:24	23:4,8,15	51:7 52:2	12:15 13:23	59:7 68:6	<b>whereabouts</b>
<b>thrown</b> 49:14	24:1,18	52:20 61:7	17:11 35:11	68:16,17,19	56:11
<b>Thursday</b>	25:5,15,16	65:20	35:14 37:18	70:12 71:1	<b>whitewash</b>

65:2	7:18 8:1	1 3:24 4:23	7:5 18:22	14:24	76 11:1,14
<b>William</b> 2:12	33:4	8:7,9 29:12	19:3,5,16	37 2:4	12:2 13:5
66:21 67:1	<hr/> <b>X</b> <hr/>	29:12,14	20:1 22:16	38.9 20:2	14:1
<b>Wilson</b> 66:6	<hr/> <b>Y</b> <hr/>	56:12 60:11	<b>2012</b> 9:2	39 11:13,15	77 11:2,14
<b>Winston</b> 2:3	<b>yeah</b> 36:5	<b>1,080</b> 11:20	16:21 22:5	38:20,21	12:3 13:6
8:2 10:8	<b>year</b> 7:5,9	11:24	22:11	61:13	14:1
15:17 16:2	9:19,23	<b>1.6</b> 22:11	<b>2012-2013</b>	<hr/> <b>4</b> <hr/>	78 13:11
16:5,7,9,9	10:14 12:10	<b>10</b> 41:12 52:9	7:8 9:19,23	4 2:2 60:11	<hr/> <b>8</b> <hr/>
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66:6	17:14 18:22	<b>10.6</b> 20:11	13:13 17:13	41 2:5 41:9	8:00 70:14
<b>winter</b> 50:11	19:3,24,24	<b>11</b> 61:12	<b>2013</b> 1:8	43 2:5,6	84 21:20
<b>wish</b> 3:21	21:4 22:22	<b>120</b> 12:7	73:15	45 2:6	<hr/> <b>9</b> <hr/>
28:16 33:18	22:23 25:19	<b>123rd</b> 64:13	<b>2013-2014</b>	467 56:10	9 61:22
34:11	33:15 35:10	<b>13</b> 13:1,2,7	14:23 15:6	47 2:7	90 15:1 49:22
<b>wishes</b> 28:5	41:8,9	14:3,6	15:10	48 2:7	900 11:17,19
<b>witness</b> 8:12	50:20 56:22	35:23 68:22	<b>208</b> 14:7	<hr/> <b>5</b> <hr/>	61:24
15:23 51:21	58:18 61:11	<b>1310</b> 13:20	<b>20th</b> 9:22	5 12:3 13:6	9207 10:11
<b>witnessed</b>	63:11,15	17:16,17	10:13 12:9	62:16	94 15:8
44:20	67:5	27:18	13:13 17:13	<b>5:30</b> 1:8	
<b>wold</b> 36:10	<b>years</b> 16:24	<b>13th</b> 64:14	<b>21</b> 13:24	<b>50</b> 2:8	
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<b>work</b> 26:19	34:13 35:16	<b>14</b> 56:22	<b>21-day</b> 6:19	<b>51st</b> 65:21	
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32:15,22	44:19 46:9	37:6,8	<b>22nd</b> 71:7	<b>53</b> 2:8	
33:1 36:1	48:16 52:20	41:13 48:16	<b>23</b> 1:8	<b>53,000</b> 16:12	
36:21,23	54:18,19	51:6 52:10	<b>24</b> 15:9	<b>54</b> 2:9,9	
37:21 38:2	55:4 56:8	54:19 63:13	<b>249</b> 14:9	56:14 58:7	
47:19 60:4	56:21 59:15	<b>150</b> 12:6	<b>25</b> 60:14	<b>57</b> 2:10	
64:8	63:1,13	<b>152</b> 15:3	<b>26.2</b> 20:10	<b>59</b> 2:10	
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30:6 41:9	<b>young</b> 58:23	<b>167</b> 14:9	<b>2nd</b> 29:21	64 2:11	
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<b>working</b>	<hr/> <b>Z</b> <hr/>	<b>1929</b> 30:1	30 10:24	68 2:12	
23:13,19	<b>zero</b> 21:10,22	<b>1st</b> 6:18	11:15,15,16	<hr/> <b>7</b> <hr/>	
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<b>worried</b>	<b>084-001624</b>	41:6	<b>30,000</b> 62:1	<b>7:02</b> 72:21	
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<b>wrap</b> 39:20	<hr/> <b>1</b> <hr/>	11:19 49:21	<b>31st</b> 6:20	<b>720</b> 11:20,22	
56:24		<b>2005</b> 56:8	<b>34</b> 60:13	75 61:17	
<b>write</b> 42:3		<b>2011</b> 49:9	<b>35</b> 2:4 10:14		
<b>written</b> 3:20		<b>2011-2012</b>	12:10 13:14		
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**ROBERT W. FIORETTI**  
**ALDERMAN – 2<sup>ND</sup> WARD**

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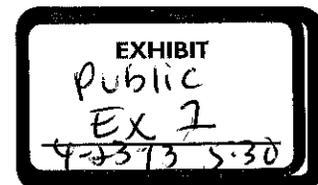
April 23, 2013

**IT IS MISTAKE TO CLOSE TWO THERAPEUTIC DAY SCHOOLS**

As Alderman of the 2<sup>ND</sup> Ward, I have worked closely with Montefiore, a therapeutic day school located on Ashland just south of Roosevelt Road. This school was chartered by the Board of Education in 1929 as a school for boys with severe emotional and behavioral issues. Today, the students at Montefiore have Individual Education Plans (IEPs) that require them to be placed in a school with special provision for their safety and education.

I have worked with the community to increase the capacity that CPS has to accommodate students with this kind of disability. In response, CPS has renovated the Montefiore building, but they have not added the additional students that we know have these disabilities. Three years ago, I initiated hearings at the City Council to find out what steps CPS is taking to determine which children need IEPs. I continue to receive complaints from community members that CPS is not providing IEPs to the children that need them. I have also continued to receive complaints that children are disrupting classrooms across the City rather than getting the help they need for their disabilities.

The charge is that CPS is refusing to evaluate children in an effort to save money. I am asking you today to work with me and with aldermen across the City to show us what CPS is doing to protect these children, to provide IEPs to those who need them, and to provide children who need therapeutic help with the resources that they need.

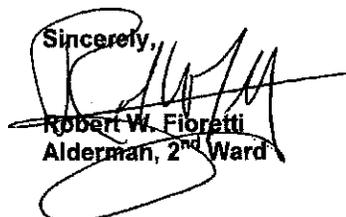


This hearing is to review the CPS proposal to combine two other therapeutic day schools, Near North and Buckingham, into the Montefiore building and school. The parents of the students in these schools have resisted this proposal because it would require their children to travel long distances by bus every day and would disrupt programs that are working. Children who need therapeutic help are particularly fragile and can be damaged when they are moved into new situations with new people. I support these concerns, and CPS has not addressed them at all.

In addition, it is dangerous for children from these schools to be put on buses for long periods of time. By eliminating two of the schools that serve these students, CPS is requiring many students to be bused across the City twice each day, which will take hours for many students. This is likely to endanger these students, who often have a low tolerance for the stress of these long commutes. CPS has not indicated what it will do about the number of aides on each bus, what number of buses will be used to move children to Montefiore, and what plans have been made to protect the children in their new environment at Montefiore. These are all important questions, and without answers, I support the request of many family members that CPS stop these proposed school closings.

### **CPS NEEDS TO WORK WITH THE FAMILIES OF IEP CHILDREN**

The testimony at prior hearings shows that CPS has failed to work with the parents of the children at Buckingham, Montefiore and Near North on the plans to combine these schools. Montefiore has a great Local School Council, and the principal at Montefiore is new and has been assigned on a temporary basis. If CPS goes ahead with its plans to combine these schools, it is imperative that CPS work with the parents and the LSCs involved as any transition plans are made. My staff and I will make ourselves available to work with all parties in this situation, in whatever way we can, for the benefit of the affected students and their families.

Sincerely,  
  
Robert W. Fioretti  
Alderman, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ward



4/23/13

To Whom it may concern,  
my son Ricky O. Griffin Jr is a student @ Buckingham. Since Ricky O. Griffin Jr. has been enrolled @ Buckingham Ricky O. Griffin Jr. has become a better individual overall. Ricky O. Griffin Jr. has better grades and has opened up. My child will continue to blossom with a small class setting. If my son will be forced to attend this other school he will go backwards.

This other school is Not A Good Fit for my son. I don't want my son to be bullied nor picked on by anyone. @ this other school I'm sure that my son will not be in a setting that states for a his IEP.

Please, Please, Please do not close Buckingham. I want my child to continue to learn and be safe. My son is no where

Chicago Board of Education states that in the interest of the students, they will offer:

- Providing a Safe Passage
- Schools Close to their Homes
- Quality Schools
- Science Lab
- Library in every school
- I-Pads
- Air Conditioning

Well for our 1<sup>st</sup> Community meeting at Harlan High School, the Board had decided they would combine all Special Education Schools into Montefiore School, no one realized that this ride for some of our students would mean riding the bus for over an hour each way, and in the winter, not only would the traffic be bad, , but also weather. This is driving into the rush hour traffic each way. Remember, our boundaries are from Roosevelt Road to 127<sup>th</sup> street, for the Lake Front to Midway Airport.

These are some of the things that Buckingham Therapeutic Center offers:

- Fully paid field trips for all students, including a trip to Springfield for the upper graders
- Catered Lunch on Special Occasions for all students
- Gym Uniforms for all students
- Gift Cards for the Reading Program
- A safe Environment, the neighborhood, (we are in a quite area with senior citizens as our neighbors that enjoy our students.)
- Nurturing resourceful learning environment
- Pet Therapy
- New Smart Boards in the Classrooms
- A Physiologist that will assist parents in getting medicine and outside resources for their child when needed.
- Lap Tops and Computer Note books for students to use in the class rooms.
- Dance Classes (Hip-Hop & African Dance)
- Guitar Lessons
- Tap Dance
- A Boys Chorus
- We pay for the full graduation fees for all graduates (Cap & gowns, diploma covers, ribbons, autography book, neck ties, graduation luncheon and graduation field trip.
- Inclusions return bus transportation for students if they are in the inclusion program.



This is just a few of the things that our parking lot monies are used ensuring our students an enriching education at Buckingham.

Remember Special Ed children did not ask to be born, they are here, and we must provide the services needed to better their lives.

In 2005 when the board closed four elementary schools and displaced 467 students, CPS now cannot account for the whereabouts of 51 of those students, that's slightly more than one in 10 students. Now what about the multiplier effect with 54 schools closing instead of four?

The schools set to close this year face a host of social ills in the surrounding community, from homelessness to unemployment. More public money was spent over the past decade to incarcerate residents from those areas than on the schools slate for closure.

How can you build more schools and close schools at the same time? CPS has now turned into a real estate business, but they are not doing to well, because they have now at least 10 buildings that have not been sold from the previous school closing, and 14 vacant lots. To CPS, our children are not students, they are commodities. Let's save our school and keep our children in a nurtured learning environment, which is really what "Children First" means!

Carolyn E. McNeil  
Buckingham School

To Whom it May concern,

My son has been in 3 different schools which none of these schools could handle him in one of the schools he would run out of the classroom and sit with security guard & call me to pick him up <sup>every</sup> ~~day~~ second school he would walk the halls, ride bikes, sharpen pencils, and other errands. and <sup>the third school</sup> he was housed at a ~~detention~~ school where he ~~was~~ locked himself in a vault and ran outside the school it was to the point I couldn't send him to school without being called like everyday. Buckingham is the first school that got my son to where his is today. He actually has a shot. He can write his name + count and his speech has also improved.

Save Buckingham

Amanda Wallace

773-815-3956



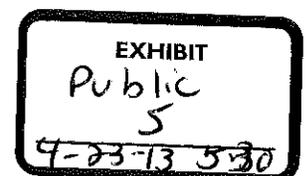
Hi my name is Tally Oz Jacobson and I have been a Counselor and a Case Manager at Buckingham Special Education Center for the last 5 years. Buckingham is not a typical school and the students here are not your typical student. They are students who have the primary diagnosis of Emotional Disorder, among some others with diagnoses of Oppositional Defiance, <sup>AD/HD</sup> Intermittent Explosive Disorder, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, Bi-Polar, Mood Disorder, Learning Disabled, Psychotic Disorder, to name a few. Again, they are not your typical student and our school should not be compared or evaluated based on your typical CPS school. We are a small family located on the very south side of Chicago. They work on their educational deficits and controlling and managing their behavior so they can eventually return back into the general education setting and become productive members of society. Our school works on a Positive Behavior Modification Point System that students move through levels 1-4 before considered for reintegration back into a general education setting. We have 9 students on level 3 and 4, which is close to 25% of our population and there are several more students closely behind. Those students have proven that they have been making successful progress and are almost ready to be reintegrated back. If we close, these students will have to start from the beginning in order to prove that they are ready for a less restrictive environment. So, are you putting these children needs first? Because we are and will continue to do so if we stay open.

As the Case Manager, I attend monthly meetings with other Case Managers in my network. Without fail, I am told in each meeting that there are students ready to be placed at Buckingham, yet I do not receive any placement notifications. Just this week I was told 2 students are awaiting placement.

Saying we are underutilized is not accurate. We are very utilized and open! This school year alone, we have been referred 11 students, which amounts to a **39% increase**.

According to "commission recommendations from their interim report, CPS will remove from potential closure those schools meeting the following criteria: Schools with a **utilization rate of at least 70%** in SY2012-13," More accurately, we currently have only 4 classrooms with Certified Special Education Teachers, which in actuality puts us at around an **actual 75% utilization rate!** If you still want to count the <sup>5th, 6th, 7th, 8th, 9th</sup> extra class room, all we need is 9 more students! According to the catalyst's report, with the 900 students referred to private placement, at a cost of an average of \$30K, I think the answer to this problem is simple and obvious. ***If you want to save money in the budget, utilize the public resources you have and cut spending to private unnecessary placements throughout the city!***

At the end of the day Buckingham students, as well as all other CPS students alike, are not just numbers and dollar signs. They are human beings that deserve to actually be put first. Thank you.



# **Kate S. Buckingham Special Education Center School Utilization Concerns**

**"I Can Succeed in School, I Can Succeed in Life"**

## **Who We Are:**

*We are a special education separate day school that serves students with a primary disability of severe emotional disturbance across the Chicago land area.*

*A majority of the students we service come into our program, functioning several grades behind grade level.*

- *They have been chronically put out of their classrooms;*
- *Have been suspended abundant amount of times;*
- *Eventually put out because their home schools were not able to support them and their needs.*

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**According to the DSM IV (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 4th ed.):**

**Emotional Disorder is a functional impairment that substantially interferes with or limits the child's role or functioning in family, school, or community activities.**

**The National Agenda for Achieving Better Results for Children and Youth with Serious Emotional Disturbance states:**

**"The necessity of addressing the needs of these children and youth has become increasingly apparent. Failure to do so threatens the success of the nation's educational objectives (e.g., GOALS 2000) and limits life-long opportunities for many individuals."**

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## **Buckingham's Mission:**

Our mission is to provide an exemplary LRE (Least Restrictive Environment) considerate education in a technology advanced, academically focused, socio-economically balanced community, encompassing a safe therapeutic environment that will to the maximum extent appropriate, educate children with disabilities if they were not disabled.

### **Buckingham's Approach:**

Buckingham uses a Positive Behavior Modification Point System, which is an approach that is used to focus on social skills and guiding students toward positive behavior to fulfill the school's mission of providing a safe therapeutic environment that will promote positive social-emotional growth.

### **A Closer Look at Buckingham's Numbers:**

- 100% of students are referred to us by the Office of Special Education and Supports.
- This school year alone, we have been referred 11 students, which amounts to a **39% increase**.
- According to "commission recommendations from their interim report, CPS will remove from potential closure those schools meeting the following criteria: Schools with a **utilization rate of at least 70%** in SY2012-13,"  
Source: <http://www.nbcchicago.com/news/local/Chicago-Public-Schools-Announces-Closing-Criteria-191115561.html#ixzz2Ku8ISgKt>
- We currently have only 4 classrooms with Certified Special Education Teachers, which in actuality puts us at around an **actual 75% utilization rate!**

### **Buckingham's Concerns:**

- How many students have not been identified?
- How many identified students have not been referred because of low utilization at their home school?
- We have no control over who is admitted to our school
- What is the referral process?
- How can we be better utilized if we cannot enroll students ourselves?
- What are the students' other options for placement?
  - Are those placements meeting their needs and state expectations more successfully?

## PRIVATE SCHOOLS vs. PUBLIC SCHOOLS

This is info mostly reported through catalyst articles:

<http://www.catalyst-chicago.org/news/2012/04/04/19981/no-place-in-line>

<http://www.catalyst-chicago.org/news/2012/04/04/19988/right-choice>

- CPS gets money for private placements as part of a block grant from the state and they can use this grant for other services related to special education in the Public sector.
- CPS pays \$28,000 to \$32,000 per student per year for private placements
- CPS has roughly 900 students in private placement
- For two-thirds of their private placements, CPS pays a relatively low daily rate for students that are privately placed in therapeutic schools, lower than the rates set by the state, and lower than what other districts pay. ISBE's average rate is \$38,000

-We estimate 2/3 to be 600 ED (Emotionally Disturbed) students.

-Half of that (300—assuming the other 300 is High School and there currently is no Public High Schools in CPS) should be approximately the amount of elementary students not being placed at Buckingham, Near North or even Montefiore.

**-The question we pose is why are CPS's Public school options not a first choice before Private?**

Our Public School options should be able to hold 300 or more students combined!!!

**-Why aren't those resources used in our Public Schools for our students?**

**Over \$18-27 million dollars used out of the budget for Private School Placements!!!**