

1 PUBLIC HEARING TO CONSIDER  
2 THE PROPOSED CLOSURE OF  
3 NATHAN R. GOLDBLATT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

4 APRIL 29, 2013

5 COMMENCING AT 5:30 P.M.

6  
7 HONORABLE CLIFFORD MEACHAM

8  
9 SPEAKERS ON BEHALF OF THE BOARD

10 WERE THE FOLLOWING:

11  
12 JENNIFER CHAN

13 BENJAMIN FELTON

14 WANDA WASHINGTON

15  
16 SPEAKERS ON BEHALF OF THE PUBLIC

17 WERE THE FOLLOWING:

18  
19 YVETTE CURINGTON

20 ADJORA STEVENS

21 DELORES SMITH

22 KATHLEEN MURRAY

23 CLINETTA CLARK

24

1           THE HEARING OFFICER: This will call  
2 to order the matter of the closure of  
3 Goldblatt Elementary School. My name is  
4 Clifford Meacham. I'm a retired judge from  
5 the Circuit Court of Cook County.

6           The procedure we will follow  
7 today will involve presentation from the  
8 Chicago School Board attorneys and other  
9 personnel. We also expect to have input  
10 from those of you who have signed up to  
11 speak.

12           You will note we have both a  
13 Spanish language interpreter and a sign  
14 language interpreter for those of you who  
15 might need it. This proceeding will be  
16 recorded, and the recording will be posted  
17 on the Chicago School Board Website.

18           After the conclusion of the  
19 hearing, the record will remain open until  
20 5:00 o'clock tomorrow for those of you who  
21 might wish to supplement your comments or  
22 introduce additional information. To the  
23 extent that there may be someone out there  
24 who has documents, if you would be good

1 enough to present a copy of the documents  
2 to our court reporter, that would be very  
3 helpful. Our court reporter is Ms. Anderson.  
4 Our timekeeper is Mario. Mario will be  
5 showing you from time to time how much time  
6 you have left. I would appreciate it if  
7 you confine your remarks within the time  
8 period that has been allotted.

9 If you do have documents, it's  
10 not essential that you speak; but if you  
11 wish to speak, of course, you are invited  
12 to do so. If there are any questions, I  
13 will be happy to entertain them now, and I  
14 would also ask that you direct any comments  
15 or questions to the bench or in this case  
16 to the hearing officer as opposed to  
17 colloquy between one another.

18 I see that we have a number of  
19 people who have signed up to speak; and  
20 again, after the School Board presentation,  
21 we will be happy to hear from all of you.  
22 Seeing no questions (indicating).

23 MS. CHAN: Good evening, your Honor,  
24 my name is Jennifer Chan, J-e-n-n-i-f-e-r

1 C-h-a-n.

2 I'm an attorney in the Chicago  
3 Board of Education's Law Department. I'm  
4 appearing before you today in connection  
5 with the proposal of the Chief Executive  
6 Officer or CEO of the Chicago Public  
7 Schools to close Nathan R. Goldblatt  
8 Elementary School or Goldblatt and welcome  
9 returning students at Helen M. Hefferan  
10 Elementary School or Hefferan.

11 At this time, I would like to  
12 tender to you and ask that you admit into  
13 the record the CEO's compiled Exhibit  
14 Number 1, a binder of documents being  
15 submitted for your consideration in support  
16 of this proposal.

17 A copy of the binder is also  
18 available here in board chambers on the  
19 ledge behind me for public viewing. The  
20 binder consists of documentary evidence and  
21 written statements demonstrating that the  
22 CEO's proposal complies with the  
23 requirements of the Illinois School Code  
24 and the CEO's guidelines for school

1 actions.

2 Specifically, the written  
3 statements and documents demonstrate the  
4 following:

5 At Tab A, the binder includes  
6 notice letters to the parents and guardians  
7 of students, school staff members, local  
8 school council members at Goldblatt and  
9 Hefferan accompanied by draft transition  
10 plans.

11 The notice letters and draft  
12 transition plan (1) describe the basis of  
13 the proposal, (2) explain how the proposal  
14 meets the criteria of the guidelines, (3)  
15 identifies supports for students' safety  
16 and security, academics, social and  
17 emotional needs and specific supports for  
18 students with disabilities, students in  
19 temporary living situations and English  
20 language learners; and (4) identifies the  
21 student's option to enroll in a higher  
22 performing school, provide information on  
23 the choice of schools and identify  
24 transportation where practicable. Also

1 included are the affidavits attesting to  
2 the delivery of notice via mail, personal  
3 delivery, electronic mail and newspaper  
4 publication.

5 Finally, Tab A includes an  
6 affidavit attesting to proper publication  
7 of (1) the draft guidelines for school  
8 actions by October 1, (2) finalized  
9 guidelines for school actions following a  
10 21-day public comment period, (3) the list  
11 of qualified independent hearing officers  
12 by November 1st, (4) proposals before  
13 March 31st and at least 15 calendar days  
14 before the first community meeting, and (5)  
15 summaries from community meetings within  
16 five days after the meeting.

17 At Tab B, the binder includes the  
18 Illinois School Code provisions designating  
19 the powers of the Board and outlining the  
20 process for school actions. This tab also  
21 includes the Board's policy on school  
22 performance, remediation and probation for  
23 the 2011/2012 school year and the policy on  
24 the review and the establishment of the

1 school attendance boundaries.

2 Also at Tab B are the Chicago  
3 Public Schools space utilization standards  
4 and the CEO's guidelines for school actions  
5 for the 2012/2013 school year.

6 Finally, Tab B includes the CEO's  
7 procedures for public hearings on proposed  
8 school closings. At Tab C, the binder  
9 includes written evidence in support of the  
10 CEO's proposal. Tab C contains the  
11 transcripts and summaries from the two  
12 community meetings to elicit public  
13 comments held at a location convenient to  
14 the Goldblatt and Hefferan School  
15 Communities.

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

1                   Tab C includes the written  
2                   statement of Wanda Washington and  
3                   accompanying documents demonstrating  
4                   Hefferan's status as a higher-performing  
5                   school and outlining the supports that will  
6                   be offered to students as they transition.

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

10                   THE HEARING OFFICER: Admitted,  
11                   allowed.

12                   MS. CHAN: (Tendered.)

13                   THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you.

14                   MS. CHAN: Your Honor. I would now  
15                   like to introduce the CEO's representative,  
16                   Benjamin Felton, who will make a statement  
17                   in support of the proposal. This statement  
18                   is located in the binder at Tab C21.

19                   MR. FELTON: Good evening, your  
20                   Honor. My name is Benjamin Felton,  
21                   B-e-n-j-a-m-i-n F-e-l-t-o-n. I'm a  
22                   portfolio planner for the Chicago Public  
23                   Schools. I have been in this position  
24                   since July of 2012.



1                   As a portfolio planner, I manage  
2                   strategic planning to improve the efficient  
3                   utilization of CPS facilities. Prior to  
4                   becoming a portfolio planner, I worked as a  
5                   teacher at CPS. I then joined the  
6                   Tennessee Department of Education where I  
7                   focused on teacher and principal  
8                   recruitment and contributed to the  
9                   development of the department's five-year  
10                  strategic plan. I have a bachelor's of  
11                  science from Vanderbilt University.

12                  I have been asked to appear at  
13                  this hearing today to convey to you, the  
14                  parents and the community as well as the  
15                  interested members of the public in  
16                  attendance information regarding the space  
17                  utilization of the Goldblatt facility with  
18                  respect to the proposal to close Goldblatt.

19                  According to the Chief Executive  
20                  Officer's guidelines for the 2012/2013  
21                  school year, the CEO may propose to close a  
22                  school if it is underutilized based on CPS  
23                  space utilization standards and student  
24                  enrollment numbers recorded on the 20th

1 attendance day for the 2012/2013 school  
2 year.

3 The CEO may only propose a  
4 closure if the impacted students have the  
5 option to enroll in a higher performing  
6 school and the resulting space utilization  
7 after the closure will not exceed the  
8 facility's enrollment efficiency range as  
9 defined by the CPS space utilization  
10 standards.

11 I will discuss the details  
12 regarding the space utilization of this  
13 proposal while my colleague, Wanda  
14 Washington, will discuss the performance of  
15 the welcoming school and highlight the  
16 supports being offered in the draft  
17 transition plan.

18 Goldblatt is currently located at  
19 4257 West Adams Street. Goldblatt is an  
20 elementary school that as of the 20th day  
21 of attendance for the 2012/2013 school year  
22 serves 236 students in prekindergarten  
23 through eighth grades.

24 To understand the enrollment

1 efficiency range of a facility, Chicago  
2 Public Schools utilizes its space  
3 utilization standards, which are in your  
4 binder at Tab B14.

5 The enrollment efficiency range  
6 is plus or minus 20 percent of the  
7 facility's ideal enrollment. For  
8 elementary school buildings, the ideal  
9 enrollment is defined as the number of  
10 allotted homerooms multiplied by 30. The  
11 number of allotted homeroom classrooms is  
12 approximately 76 to 77 percent of the total  
13 classrooms available.

14 As an elementary school's  
15 enrollment increases above the efficiency  
16 range, a school may be considered  
17 overcrowded as programming options are  
18 reduced or compromised.

19 As an elementary school's  
20 enrollment decreases below the efficiency  
21 range, a school may be considered  
22 underutilized as classrooms are unused or  
23 poorly programmed making the use of limited  
24 resources less effective.

1                   A typical elementary school  
2                   building has a total of 39 classrooms.  
3                   Therefore, the number of allotted  
4                   homeroms, approximately 76 to 77 percent  
5                   of 39 is 30. Multiplying 30 classrooms by  
6                   30 equals the ideal enrollment number of  
7                   900.

8                   Finally, the enrollment  
9                   efficiency range is plus or minus 20  
10                  percent of 900, which is between 720 and  
11                  1,080. If a school in this typical  
12                  elementary school building had an  
13                  enrollment below 720, it would be  
14                  considered underutilized.

15                  Alternatively, if the school's  
16                  enrollment was above 1,080, it would be  
17                  overcrowded. There are 34.5 total  
18                  classrooms within the Goldblatt facility.  
19                  The .5 indicates the presence of one or  
20                  more small classrooms. Approximately 76 to  
21                  77 percent of this number is 26, the number  
22                  of allotted homeroms. This number  
23                  multiplied by 30 yields the ideal  
24                  enrollment of the facility, which is 780.

1           As such, the enrollment  
2 efficiency range of the Goldblatt facility  
3 is between 624 and 936 students. As I  
4 stated, the enrollment of Goldblatt as of  
5 the 20th day of attendance for the  
6 2012/2013 school year is 236. This number  
7 is below the enrollment efficiency range  
8 and thus the school is underutilized.

9           The CEO has proposed that the  
10 students from Goldblatt be welcomed at  
11 Helen M. Hefferan Elementary School or  
12 Hefferan.

13           If this proposal is approved by  
14 the Board of Education for the city of  
15 Chicago, the resulting space utilization  
16 will not exceed Hefferan's enrollment  
17 efficiency range as defined by the CPS  
18 space utilization standards.

19           Hefferan has a total of 28.5  
20 total classrooms. Approximately 76 to 77  
21 percent of this number is 21, the number of  
22 allotted homerooms. This number multiplied  
23 by 30 yields the ideal enrollment of a  
24 facility, which is 630. As such, the

1 enrollment efficiency range of the Hefferan  
2 facility is between 624 and 936 students.  
3 Hefferan currently has 251 students  
4 enrolled.

5 To fully explain the enrollment  
6 trend associated with these schools, I  
7 would like to direct your attention to the  
8 screen. Projected is a slide that shows  
9 the enrollment trend of Goldblatt and  
10 Hefferan, green-hashed lines showing the  
11 enrollment efficiency range of the  
12 Hefferan facility and a circle representing  
13 the combined projected enrollment for the  
14 2013/2014 school year.

15 Goldblatt's current enrollment is  
16 236 students, and Hefferan's current  
17 enrollment is 251 students, which combines  
18 to a total of 487 students below the  
19 enrollment efficiency range of the Hefferan  
20 facility.

21 Further, the projected enrollment  
22 of Goldblatt for the 2013/2014 school year  
23 is 227 and the projected enrollment for  
24 Hefferan for next year is 242 for a total

1 of 469 students, which is still below the  
2 Hefferan enrollment efficiency range.  
3 Thus, there is enough space within the  
4 Hefferan facility for students from  
5 Goldblatt and students from Hefferan.

6 If Goldblatt is closed, the CEO  
7 is also proposing that Goldblatt's  
8 attendance area be reassigned to Hefferan  
9 at 4409 West Wilcox Street at the end of  
10 the current school year.

11 A map showing the proposed  
12 boundary change is located in your binder  
13 at Tab C23 and copies of the map were  
14 available tonight at the registration desk.

15 In proposing the boundary change,  
16 several factors were considered as outlined  
17 in the review and establishment of School  
18 Attendance Boundaries Policy, including,  
19 but not limited to, the capacity of  
20 Hefferan, geographic barriers, travel time,  
21 distance traveled and program  
22 considerations.

23 You will next hear from my  
24 colleague, Wanda Washington, who will

1 discuss the performance of Hefferan and  
2 highlight the proposed transition efforts.  
3 Thank you, your Honor. That concludes my  
4 statement.

5 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you,  
6 Mr. Felton. Ms. Washington.

7 MS. CHAN: Your Honor, I would now  
8 like to introduce the CEO's next  
9 representative, Wanda Washington, who will  
10 make a statement in support of the  
11 proposal. This statement is located in the  
12 binder at Tab C24.

13 MS. WASHINGTON: Good evening, your  
14 Honor. My name is Wanda Washington,  
15 W-a-n-d-a W-a-s-h-i-n-g-t-o-n. I am the  
16 chief of schools for the Chicago Public  
17 Schools Garfield-Humboldt Elementary School  
18 Network.

19 Chicago Public Schools are  
20 divided up into networks. Network offices  
21 are run by a chief and provide support and  
22 oversight for the schools assigned to them  
23 on behalf of the CEO. Hefferan is within  
24 the Garfield-Humboldt Elementary network,



1 and I am responsible for the support and  
2 oversight of Hefferan on behalf of the CEO.

3 I have been the chief of Hefferan  
4 since 2012. I have been with the Chicago  
5 Public Schools for over 20 years as a  
6 teacher, assistant principal and director.

7 For the last six years, I have  
8 had executive-level responsibility for  
9 multiple schools. In September of 2012  
10 after serving as the deputy chief, I became  
11 the chief of school for the Garfield-Humboldt  
12 network.

13 In this role, I supervise and  
14 provide strategic guidance for 24 schools  
15 in the areas of instructional practices in  
16 the classroom and professional development  
17 for the teaching staff.

18 I have a bachelor's in mass  
19 communications from Illinois State  
20 University and a master's in educational  
21 leadership from Concordia University.

22 As you have already heard,  
23 Goldblatt fits the criteria of the Chief  
24 Executive Officer's guidelines for school

1 actions because it is underutilized based  
2 on CPS space utilization standards and  
3 student enrollment numbers recorded on the  
4 20th attendance day for the 2012/2013  
5 school year.

6 Goldblatt students will be  
7 welcomed by Hefferan located at 4409 West  
8 Wilcox Street. The facility at 4409 West  
9 Wilcox Street has enough space to welcome  
10 the Goldblatt students, and the resulting  
11 combined enrollment will not exceed the  
12 facility's enrollment efficiency range.

13 When Goldblatt students are  
14 welcomed by the Hefferan administration,  
15 staff and students, they will be attending  
16 a higher performing school based on the  
17 CEO's guidelines for school actions.

18 One way that the CEO's guidelines  
19 for school actions define a higher  
20 performing school is if the school received  
21 a higher level on the Performance Policy  
22 for the 2011/2012 school year.

23 Under the CPS performance policy  
24 located in your binder under Tab 13, each

1 school receives an annual rating based on  
2 its performance on a variety of student  
3 outcome measures including standardized  
4 test scores and student attendance.

5 District-wide schools designated  
6 as Level 1 are the highest performing, and  
7 schools designated as Level 3 are the  
8 lowest performing.

9 Goldblatt received a Level 2  
10 rating based on its performance during the  
11 2011/2012 school year while Hefferan  
12 received a Level 1 rating. The performance  
13 policy reports reflecting these levels are  
14 included in the binder of documents that  
15 you've received at Tab C25.

16 Please note that the performance  
17 policy ratings from the 2011/2012 school  
18 year appear under the 2012/2013 header on  
19 these reports as these ratings are used to  
20 determine each school's accountability  
21 status for the 2012/2013 school year.

22 If this proposal is approved,  
23 students will receive additional supports  
24 at Goldblatt during the remainder of this

1 school year and at Hefferan next year, and  
2 the network will provide assistance to ease  
3 the transition process as much as possible.

4 CPS has developed a plan  
5 dedicating additional resources to address  
6 any safety concerns and to fulfill  
7 students' academic, social and emotional  
8 and other individual needs.

9 The draft transition plan  
10 explaining these additional resources was  
11 sent home to all families affected by this  
12 proposal and is located in your binder at  
13 Tab A1.

14 CPS will publish final transition  
15 plans if the Board approves this proposal,  
16 which will incorporate feedback from  
17 community meetings, this hearing and  
18 additional input received.

19 The CPS Office of Safety and  
20 Security or OSS has worked with the Chicago  
21 Police Department, Department of Family and  
22 Support Services, local community groups  
23 and faith partners, elected officials and  
24 other sister agencies to develop a plan for

1 the safe transition of students.

2 If this proposal is approved, OSS  
3 will take the following steps:

4 First, OSS will review and update  
5 school safety audits, security personnel  
6 allocations and school safety technology  
7 systems to make enhancements as  
8 appropriate.

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

12 Third, OSS will provide safe  
13 passage supports for students and staff  
14 traveling to and from school. Safe passage  
15 workers wear identifiable vests and stand  
16 on designated street corners to monitor  
17 students' safety during their travel to  
18 school in the morning and home in the  
19 afternoon.

20 Prior to the start of the  
21 2013/'14 school year, OSS will work with  
22 the Hefferan administration and the  
23 community to designate specific  
24 intersections for safe passage supports.

1                   Additionally, students will  
2 receive academic supports as they  
3 transition, including the following:

4                   Beginning this fall, CPS will  
5 offer students attending Hefferan with an  
6 opportunity to participate in the science,  
7 technology, engineering and mathematics or  
8 STEM program.

9                   The STEM program aims to build  
10 engaging learning environments and trains  
11 students to become problem solvers and  
12 critical thinkers on a global level capable  
13 of developing and designing multiple  
14 solutions for complex real world situations  
15 and grounding their decisions in  
16 evidence-based reasoning.

17                   Second, a principal transition  
18 coordinator or PTC will be assigned to help  
19 the principal of Goldblatt maintain  
20 academic rigor for the remainder of the  
21 school year and ensure a smooth transition  
22 to Hefferan.

23                   PTCs are former principals or  
24 other administrator with significant

1           experience who will be a resource for the  
2           administration and ensure continuity of  
3           support for faculty and students.

4                       Third, the Hefferan  
5           administration will receive comprehensive,  
6           student-specific data on all transitioning  
7           students to allow staff to proactively  
8           identify individual student needs and  
9           prepare to meet those needs.

10                      Fourth, in addition to the  
11           network's general availability, I will be  
12           holding specific office hours on  
13           Wednesdays, May 1st, 8th and 15th between  
14           1:00 p.m. and 3:00 p.m. at the 2908 West  
15           Washington address for families and  
16           students affected by this action to discuss  
17           concerns and educational options.

18                      Fifth, the principals will  
19           receive discretionary resources to provide  
20           direct academic support to students. For  
21           example, these funds may be used to provide  
22           an instructional coach, teacher leader or  
23           to obtain an academic tutoring position or  
24           program for students in reading and math.

1           I will support the principals as  
2 they consider how to use these resources  
3 and approve their selections once decisions  
4 are made.

5           Students will also receive social  
6 and emotional supports to help them adjust  
7 to a new school environment, including the  
8 following:

9           First, CPS will help school staff  
10 members facilitate intervention groups or  
11 peace circles aimed at helping students  
12 work through concerns associated with the  
13 transition.

14           Second, CPS will help staff  
15 members implement restorative practices  
16 such as peer circles and peer juries to  
17 encourage peer-to-peer problem solving and  
18 resolution.

19           Third, groups of students in need  
20 of more individualized attention will be  
21 provided access to highly structured  
22 interventions.

23           Fourth, to foster an environment  
24 that is both supportive and inclusive for



1 all students, CPS will provide resources to  
2 the Hefferan leadership to implement  
3 culture-building activities such as staff  
4 luncheons and team- and trust-building  
5 activities.

6 Resources will also be provided  
7 to sponsor activities such as school visits  
8 for families, coffee chats with the  
9 principal, picnics, field trips or parent  
10 meetings to help transitioning families get  
11 to know their new school community.

12 Finally, additional transition  
13 supports will be provided to ensure that  
14 Goldblatt students who have unique needs or  
15 circumstances are adequately supported in  
16 this transition, including students with  
17 diverse learning needs, students in  
18 temporary living situations, English  
19 language learners and early childhood  
20 participants.

21 These additional supports are  
22 described in more detail in the draft  
23 transition plan located in your binder at  
24 Tab A1.

1                   In conclusion, Goldblatt is  
2                   underutilized. The combined enrollment of  
3                   Goldblatt and Hefferan students at the  
4                   4409 West Wilcox Street facility will not  
5                   exceed the facility's enrollment efficiency  
6                   range, and Hefferan is a higher performing  
7                   school.

8                   The CEO believes that this  
9                   proposed school closure will help the  
10                  district better serve all students and is  
11                  prepared to assist students with additional  
12                  supports as they transition.

13                  Thank you for your time and  
14                  attention. This concludes my statement.

15                  THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you,  
16                  Ms. Washington.

17                  MS. CHAN: Your Honor, this concludes  
18                  the presentation in support of the CEO's  
19                  proposal. If you have any additional  
20                  questions, we will be available to answer  
21                  them. Thank you for your time and  
22                  attention.

23                  THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you.  
24                  Yvette Curington. You can clap. It's

1           okay.

2           MS. CURINGTON: Good afternoon. Do I  
3           have to follow and say my first and last  
4           name and spell it as the chief also did?

5           THE HEARING OFFICER: It's not  
6           necessary.

7           MS. CURINGTON: I just wanted to  
8           follow protocol.

9           THE HEARING OFFICER: I have you as  
10          Yvette Curington, C-u-r-i-n-g-t-o-n; is  
11          that right?

12          MS. CURINGTON: That is correct.

13          THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you.

14          MS. CURINGTON: I'm going to shift a  
15          little bit, your Honor, from my statements  
16          that I had previously prepared because, as  
17          I listened to the statements from the  
18          representatives of our CEO, I first would  
19          like to address the space utilization  
20          issue.

21                        Currently, Goldblatt's enrollment  
22                        is 268 students, not 231 or 36 as was  
23                        previously indicated. Also, when we talk  
24                        about space utilization, this year, all

1 schools as you know had to offer recess for  
2 all Chicago Public School students. So  
3 technically, we do have a lot of rooms that  
4 are not considered (sic) not used because  
5 there are days where we have inclement  
6 weather and the students cannot stay  
7 outside for recess; and as a result, we do  
8 have to have rooms in the building where  
9 the students are housed during this  
10 mandatory recess that the students have to  
11 have daily.

12 So we have several rooms. We  
13 have an entire floor that actually houses  
14 students during indoor recess.

15 Also, we have several rooms that  
16 are used for pull-out, small group  
17 instruction to provide intervention and  
18 enrichment for our students and those rooms  
19 are also a part of our space utilization in  
20 addition to parent resource rooms where our  
21 parents come to get on the computer and  
22 engage in activities that allow them to  
23 search for employment, fill out resumes and  
24 get assistance at the school in the parent

1 resource room. We also have a room  
2 designated for our beginning band program.

3 So, you know, to hear  
4 underutilized is a bit disconcerting  
5 because we do have several rooms that are  
6 being used for other purposes besides  
7 classroom instruction.

8 Also, my last point is to say  
9 that, at this point, the staff is a little  
10 bit demoralized. We did have hope with the  
11 previous hearings; but as we continued to  
12 see the media messages and the coverage  
13 with the CEO, Dr. Barbara Byrd-Bennett,  
14 over at Hefferan School saying that our  
15 students will be welcomed over there and  
16 all of the wonderful amenities that the  
17 students will be afforded, it's kind of  
18 hard to understand why we are even here at  
19 this hearing to voice our concerns  
20 regarding the proposed actions when all of  
21 the coverage in the media has already  
22 indicated that the decision regarding  
23 Goldblatt and Hefferan has already been  
24 done.

1 THE HEARING OFFICER: Ms. Curington,  
2 if you have a written submission, I would  
3 be happy to accept it and make it a part of  
4 the record.

5 MS. CURINGTON: Thank you, your  
6 Honor. I think I'm going to plan on adding  
7 some additional information, and I will  
8 probably get that in by the 5:00 o'clock  
9 deadline by tomorrow.

10 THE HEARING OFFICER: I appreciate  
11 it. Thank you. One question if I might.  
12 Do you keep records of the time that the  
13 other classrooms are utilized in terms of  
14 inclement weather and the like?

15 MS. CURINGTON: You are talking about  
16 the minutes time or the actual days?

17 THE HEARING OFFICER: The days.

18 MS. CURINGTON: The days, we don't  
19 have written documentation of that; but  
20 anytime that it's under 32 degrees and it's  
21 raining outside, the students are always  
22 inside the building, and we have to have  
23 classrooms in order to house them because  
24 we can't send them out in the freezing

1 weather and the rain.

2 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you.

3 MS. CURINGTON: Thank you. Adjora  
4 Stevens.

5 MS. STEVENS: My name is Adjora  
6 Stevens, and you have the spelling of it,  
7 A-d-j-o-r-a.

8 THE HEARING OFFICER: S-t-e-v-e-n-s.

9 MS. STEVENS: Yes.

10 THE HEARING OFFICER: And Adjora,  
11 does that sound right?

12 MS. STEVENS: That's correct. And I  
13 just wanted to say that Goldblatt's should  
14 not be closed because it is not a failing  
15 school. It's a school on the rise. It has  
16 moved from a Level 3 to a Level 2. The  
17 attendance has improved; and of all the  
18 schools that are scheduled for closing in  
19 the Garfield-Humboldt Park area, along with  
20 Calhoun, Goldblatt had the highest  
21 performance marks.

22 Another reason why Goldblatt  
23 should not be closed is, as Ms. Curington,  
24 has already stated, it's not really an

1 empty building that's underutilized. We  
2 use the space very well. Although there is  
3 only one class per grade level at this  
4 time, the classes are clustered together so  
5 that the students feel like they are part  
6 of a healthy community and that's very  
7 important.

8 Research shows that small schools  
9 of about 250 are best for urban students'  
10 learning; and so if the Board of Education  
11 is thinking about children first, it should  
12 keep schools that are about 250 students  
13 open instead of closing them and combining  
14 two successful schools, Hefferan, a Level 1  
15 school and Goldblatt, a Level 2 combining  
16 them and warehousing them and causing it to  
17 be an overcrowding school maybe not by the  
18 Board of Education's formula but by the way  
19 it will feel and the way it will look and  
20 even the way the students will be on the  
21 playground and coming into the building and  
22 exiting the building and having lunch and  
23 gym and everything else. It will feel  
24 crowded and unhealthy.



1                   Another reason why our school  
2                   should not be closed is that it's been  
3                   providing performing arts and visual arts  
4                   and arts integration activities and  
5                   training for years.

6                   Although STEM programs provide  
7                   critical thinking skills so do the fine  
8                   arts, and that is something that our  
9                   students will be missing if they go to  
10                  Hefferan.

11                  Sending students to Hefferan  
12                  would not be safe. The parents and the  
13                  alderman already testified at other  
14                  community hearings about how unsafe this  
15                  would be because of the drugs in the area,  
16                  the gang problems in the area and the  
17                  problem of Kostner being a line of  
18                  demarkation that makes it very unsafe to  
19                  cross.

20                  Although much has been said about  
21                  the benefits of going to Hefferan, there  
22                  have been no parents that have come to  
23                  testify as to how much they appreciate  
24                  closing Goldblatt School or appreciate

1 getting a free iPad or laptop or whatever  
2 else they are offering. So Goldblatt  
3 should not be closed.

4 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you,  
5 Ms. Stevens. Delores Smith.

6 MS. SMITH: Good evening. My name is  
7 Delores Smith. I'm the school counselor.  
8 I'm going to try and do this without  
9 getting emotional.

10 As a school counselor, I feel  
11 responsible for the social emotional  
12 well-being of our students and our staff.  
13 I wish I could tell them that everything  
14 was going to be all right, but I can't.

15 Since the March 21st  
16 announcement, I have noticed a change in  
17 our students. They are more antsy. They  
18 are concerned about the teachers, about  
19 where we are going, about the principal and  
20 about how things are going to be when they  
21 get to Hefferan.

22 One of our sixth grade students  
23 had to go to summer school last year at  
24 Hefferan but wouldn't go because she said

1 that she didn't get along with them. She's  
2 doing sixth grade again this year because  
3 of that.

4 Just because the numbers will fit  
5 because our 230 or 68 kids will fit in  
6 Hefferan's building does not mean that it  
7 will be a good transition. I'm also the  
8 case manager. I have 34 diverse learner  
9 students. Hefferan has 41 students.  
10 That's 75 students with special needs.  
11 That's all I have to say.

12 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you,  
13 Ms. Smith. Kathleen Murray.

14 MS. MURRAY: I'm Kathleen Murray of  
15 the Chicago Teachers Union. I didn't even  
16 realize I signed up to speak, and I just  
17 made it here in time.

18 The Chicago Teachers Union is  
19 against all school closings and school  
20 actions. Closing 54 schools is the largest  
21 school closing in the nation. Do we  
22 believe that schools will get off the list?  
23 Do we believe that the Board of Education  
24 will listen to some recommendations from

1 the hearing officers? I certainly hope so.

2 If the Chicago Board of Education  
3 does not remove any of the schools off this  
4 list and if it remains and they rubber  
5 stamp, it will just validate our point that  
6 we do need an elected school board and this  
7 was not a democratic process.

8 Everyone has gone through two  
9 community meetings and one official hearing  
10 down here at the Board, and we have been  
11 through this before; and there is very  
12 little faith in the Board of Education  
13 right now in the people of Chicago.

14 So with that being said, I'm  
15 hoping and assuming that the Board of  
16 Education will closely look at all of this  
17 testimony, read and review and meet with  
18 the hearing officers and seriously consider  
19 recommendations because we have all been  
20 sitting through here and following the  
21 process and listening to every one of these  
22 schoolhouses, these people talking that  
23 walk in the schoolhouses and do what's best  
24 for the city of Chicago and the children.

1 Thank you.

2 THE HEARING OFFICER: Clinetta Clark.

3 MS. CLARK: Hi, my name is Clinetta  
4 Clark, and I'm here speaking up for my  
5 second graders and all the students at  
6 Goldblatt School.

7 My students are very concerned  
8 about being transferred over to Hefferan to  
9 the point where they wanted to write  
10 letters and take action. So I told them, I  
11 said, as long as you feel strongly about  
12 Goldblatt and the education in which you  
13 receive here and how we positively interact  
14 with you, I will stand up and I will speak  
15 for you and I will fight for you.

16 So I have been at Goldblatt for  
17 16 years; and over the years, I have been  
18 awarded the opportunity to serve as the  
19 Goldblatt community, and I have dedicated  
20 my life to developing the entire child,  
21 every child that I come in contact with  
22 academically, emotionally and personally so  
23 they can become highly educated leaders of  
24 the future, and that is what my students

1 look forward to.

2 As my coworkers mentioned before,  
3 our students are concerned as to their  
4 future and our future and just actually  
5 being there without us, that's a very big  
6 concern for them. Their success is of the  
7 utmost importance; and as a staff, we are  
8 truly, truly concerned about them as they  
9 go forward in life if these two schools are  
10 combined. We are concerned about them  
11 crossing the gang lines. We are just  
12 concerned with everything; and in the voice  
13 of one of my students, as they ended one of  
14 their letters to CPS -- I know a lot of  
15 people love to send their children to  
16 schools with smaller class sizes and things  
17 like that. It is working in the Humboldt --  
18 Garfield Humboldt Park Network, and we have  
19 had very good gains, the biggest gains in  
20 the city of Chicago over the past three,  
21 four, five years. So the formula works on  
22 the west side; and my student ended his  
23 letter and this is the way I'm going to end  
24 my comment: If you love your kid's school,

1           then you should love our school and keep it  
2           open. Thank you.

3           THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you,  
4           Ms. Clark. And if your students wish to  
5           put together some correspondence, again,  
6           the record will be open until 5:00 o'clock  
7           tomorrow.

8           A comment for those of you who  
9           have chosen to attend. As a retired judge,  
10          I get to have breakfast with a number of  
11          other appellate court justices and retired  
12          judges on a fairly regular basis. We  
13          usually meet at least two or three times a  
14          week; and when I discussed the fact that I  
15          was going to be a hearing officer for some  
16          of these school closings, it was remarkable  
17          that every single person in attendance had  
18          a teacher or two that reached out to them  
19          and that made a profound difference in  
20          their lives, and I will tell you, you know,  
21          I'm a father. I'm a grandparent times  
22          four. I teach myself at one of the local  
23          law schools, and your contributions are  
24          difficult to underestimate. You make all

1 the difference in the world in students'  
2 lives. So I commend you for it.

3 Again, if there is anything else  
4 you would like to include as part of the  
5 record, I would be happy to review it.  
6 This is a challenging time for all of us.  
7 So I thank you for your time. I thank you  
8 for your attendance. I thank you for your  
9 remarks. Hearing adjourned.

10 (WHEREUPON, proceedings  
11 were left open for  
12 statements to be made on  
13 the recorded record  
14 until 6:30 p.m.)

15 THE COURT: It is now 6:30, and the  
16 public hearing to consider the proposed  
17 closure of Nathan L. Goldblatt Elementary  
18 School is closed. Thank you.

19  
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24



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

4 I, Peggy A. Anderson, a Certified  
5 Shorthand Reporter in the State of Illinois do  
6 hereby certify:

7 That the foregoing transcript was  
8 reported stenographically by me, was thereafter  
9 reduced to typewriting under my personal  
10 direction, and constitutes a true record of the  
11 proceedings had;

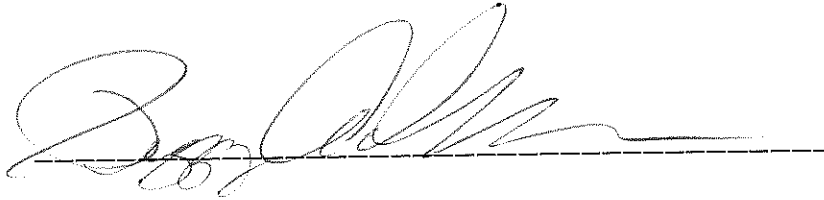
12 That the said proceeding was taken  
13 before me at the time and place specified;

14 That the said proceeding was  
15 adjourned as stated herein;

16 That I am not a relative or employee  
17 or attorney or counsel, nor a relative or  
18 employee of such attorney or counsel for any of  
19 the parties hereto, nor interested directly or  
20 indirectly in the outcome of this action.

21  
22  
23  
24

1                    IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I do hereunto set  
2 my hand at Chicago, Illinois, this 29th day  
3 of April, 2013.  
4

5  
6   
7

8                    Peggy A. Anderson

9                    Certified Shorthand Reporter

10                   License No. 084-003813  
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