



Englewood Community Meeting #1
Proposed Closure of Harper, Hope, Robeson, and Team Englewood

January 10, 2018
Kennedy-King College
6:00-8:00 pm

CPS Staff in Attendance

Chip Johnson, Megan Hougard, Julious Lawson, Lauro Roman, Hope Sharp, Luis Rodriguez, Sean Smith, Erinn Boone, Liz Kirby, Pedro Soto, Sade Stockdale, Kevin Connors.

CPS Presentation

Chip Johnson, Chief Officer of Family and Community Engagement in Education:

Mr. Johnson began his remarks at 6:05 after allowing more guests to enter the auditorium. He stated that he would like to get started in order to allow the audience to have time for their comments. Mr. Johnson stated that he and fellow CPS representatives are here on behalf of Acting CEO Jackson in order to hear feedback on the proposed action. Following a CPS summary of the action, Mr. Johnson stated that the audience would have an opportunity for public comment.

Mr. Johnson then stated that should an audience member not have an opportunity to make a comment they may visit the public website, cps.edu/transitions, to submit their comment. Meeting summaries will be available online at cps.edu/transitions within five days of the meeting.

Mr. Johnson continued that this community meeting is part of a longer timeline for proposed action that began October 1. At this time CPS published draft guidelines, followed by community input. On December 1st, CPS proposed a draft transition plan and school actions. Following two community meetings, this being the first, the Board will vote in February or later on the proposed school action.

Mr. Johnson stated that everyone's voice is important and asked for the audience to be respectful while voicing opinions and passions. He noted that this session is being recorded by a court reporter for review by the Board and that notes from the meeting would be posted publicly.

Megan Hougard and Julious Lawson, Chief and Deputy Chief of Network 11:

Ms. Hougard stated that a request for proposal was received in June for a new high school in Englewood. Following this request, the proposal was made public and a steering committee comprised of community stakeholders was formed to guide the

decision making process. Ultimately, the steering committee was tasked to make recommendations to CPS regarding a potential action and transition plan. The proposed high school in Englewood was originally an estimated \$75M investment. Ms. Hougard stated that today it is estimated to be \$85M.

Ms. Hougard continued by saying that the steering committee discussed proposals around the logistics of a transition, as well as programming and academic options at the potential new high school. Furthermore, during this recommendation period by the steering committee, each Englewood high school was visited by CPS to discuss with staff the impacts of persistent and significant declining enrollment, the driving factor in this proposed action.

Two options were presented and subsequently voted on: Close all four schools at the end of this school year or close them over a two year period. The committee voted convincingly to close at the end of this year.

Ms. Hougard presented a timeline and transition plan for opening the new school. The new high school would open in the fall of 2019 with the 9th grade. It would be a brand new facility with significant supports and investment, such as partnerships with Kennedy-King College, a health center, and increased academic options.

Mr. Lawson stated that the proposed closure would include an \$8.3M investment to support this transition for parents and students. This would include the following in spring 2018:

- Workshops to help parents and students identify their school choices
- Individualized transition plans, including academic readiness and safety plans
- Tutoring and academic supports
- Enhanced monitoring of instructional quality
- Designated resources for specific students
- Principal and school-based support in order to execute on this work

In summer 2018 the following supports would also become available:

- Each student from Englewood schools will have the option to attend summer academic remediation and the option for a paid summer job
- Students will have the opportunity to meet with staff of their new school

Ms. Hougard stated that nearly everything the steering community requested is included in the transition plan. In addition to the supports previously mentioned, the following are ongoing supports:

- Free CTA cards for transitioning students to travel to and from schools for three years
- Staging of CTA buses and expansion of safe passage to ensure safe travel to and from school
- Academic supports for schools that accept transitioning students
- Social emotional supports for schools that accept transitioning students
- Safety plans for all students

Ms. Hougard stated that the new Englewood high school is a brand new, open enrollment public high school. She noted that this is an investment in the Englewood community.

Chip Johnson: Mr. Johnson thanked Ms. Hougard and Mr. Lawson and then informed the audience of logistics. He also noted that prior to public comment, public officials were offered an opportunity to speak but declined. He acknowledged that they were in the audience, however. He also acknowledged the presence of students in the audience. For logistics, Mr. Johnson stated that each audience commenter would have two minutes. There would be a clock and speakers will be notified. Speakers were required to use the microphones to ensure the audience and court reporter could hear. In the interest of time, Mr. Johnson stated there would likely not be a response by CPS to the public comments. He also noted that speakers must have registered at the table before speaking and that speakers should start remarks with their name and association. Public commenters will begin with speakers 1-5, then 6-10 and so on. There are 50 speakers registered for tonight's meeting.

Public Comments

Renee Collins: Thanked the organizers and stated that while she did not support closing four schools in Englewood, but she did support a new school in Englewood because students deserve one. As an educator in CPS, she met with CPS and was assured that the community would be involved in the decision-making process for this proposed action. Ms. Collins then stated that the Mayor's office convened a steering committee that lacked sufficient transparency and representation to determine path forward. She concluded by stating that members who voted on this decision did not establish a collaborative and authentic relationship between the Englewood community and CPS.

Chip Johnson (in response to Ms. Collins): Mr. Johnson thanked Ms. Collins and reiterated to the audience the importance of staying within the two minute allowance in order to allow each speaker to have time to make their remarks.

Cederall Petties, school leader in CPS: The speaker acknowledged the disappointment to convene for this purpose but stated that people must think about what is in the best interest of our students. The speaker stated that the partnership between CPS and the City Colleges is very good resource for Englewood students. Dual enrollment would enable students to access college content with no cost, which is not currently an option in the Englewood community. The speaker also stated that he had an opportunity to visit High Tech High in California and believed that this new school is an opportunity to create a similar environment for Englewood.

Erica Dunlap, parent of Harper High School students, LSC member: Speaker stated that students should not have to attend a new high school to get the education they deserve. Her children stay at Harper until 7:00 at night to stay busy and be

involved. They call Harper High School their second family. The speaker wondered whether Harper could receive more funding, hire more teachers, or gain more supports and funding for special education. The speaker also stated the proposed closure is impacting her children's ability to focus on school. She feared forcing her children to attend a new school may cause them to feel left behind because Harper is their family.

Antonio Artis, Englewood Area Director for Boys and Girls Club: Speaker stated that there is a common bond and love for the community among each side. He also stated that he was in favor of the new school, citing how Robeson was built when it was his last year of his own high school experience. The new school inspired him and his peers. He stated people must view this opportunity as a beacon of hope rather than a negative. He also cited all of the progress in Englewood, including new STEM programs, extra community supports, and thriving elementary schools. He said that Englewood students in the elementary level were being prepared at a high level that can be met by this new school. He concluded by saying that everyone believes that they are doing what's best, but the community must keep the best interests of all students in Englewood, PreK-12, in the heart.

Gregory Goodman, 7th grade teacher at Lindblom HS: Speaker stated that before he was a teacher he was a PhD student at University of Chicago. He then cited research on how the lack of physical environment and structure can have a negative impact on relationships and human behavior. He cited relationships as a critical component to a healthy development, but that neighborhood schools are needed to foster relationships. He stated that the failure to have a neighborhood school in Englewood until 2019 is not acceptable. He concluded stating that while Dr. Jackson states that it is inhumane to have the level of supports currently at these schools, it is more inhumane to not fund these schools at a level they deserve.

Edward Ford, resident: Speaker began by saying that he is legally blind and does not want people to judge him on that. The speaker continued by saying that he had two sons and when deciding which schools his sons would attend he was struggling to find a school. Some of the schools he visited were ones he previously knew, but he discovered that many had been closed. He cited an example of Johnson College Prep being renamed from Walter Reed Prep. The speaker finished by saying that politicians are not speaking up for Englewood and need to represent their members. The speaker supported keeping the four schools open.

A.R., student at Harper High School: The student stated that she believed the \$85M for the new school should instead be put into the current schools. She stated that a new school shouldn't have to be built to get more students to attend. She cited her own example of growth in that she entered Harper as a freshman with all Fs but now is on track to graduate. She described how Harper was a second family for her. She finished by stating CPS was hurting a lot of people by shutting down the four schools and needs consider student and family voices.

Coretta J. Pruitt, resident: Speaker provided a history of her family in Englewood, beginning with a Harper graduate in 1966. The speaker is also a CPS parent of six children and a member of the steering leadership committee. The speaker stated that it was not easy for the steering committee to make this decision, whether the closures happened this year or the end of next year. The speaker reiterated that the current schools do not have the supports that the children need to achieve their dreams and a decision had to be made, even as difficult as it was.

Duane Stowers, Harper graduate '94: The speaker began by saying that he would support any addition to the neighborhood. He noted that children are leaving Englewood for multiple reasons, including crime and better opportunities elsewhere. He then addressed the steering committee and stated that while he was not against the opening of the new school, he disagreed with closing the four schools. He said that you do not have to add by subtraction. He insisted that the community and CPS should work together to build up each other and the community.

Commander Kenneth Johnson of 7th District of Englewood Chicago Police Department: The Commander stated that his and CPD's role and purpose was to stand with the community. He informed the audience that no matter which decision is made, the CPD is committed to adapting, assisting, and providing any service that is needed for a successful outcome. He concluded by acknowledging that people have common purpose and believe in the children and community members of Englewood.

Aaron Brown, Assistant Principal at Parker: The speaker began by stating that his role at Parker is to identify students who need supports and provide that support. The speaker cited social emotional learning as an example. He then used Parker as an example, saying that Parker is top school because there are opportunities for students and many supports. He said Englewood high school students must be afforded those same resources and opportunities.

Sandra Pierce, Parent in Englewood: She speaker raised four sons in West Englewood. The speaker focused on the issue of safety. For young men especially, she stated that bus cards were not sufficient, namely because of gang activity. She stated that CPS needed to bus kids all the way to and from their schools next year. She reiterated that safe passage and bus cards were not sufficient. She was concerned about safety, welfare, and lives of young men and women if they were to leave Englewood to attend other schools

Curly Hall, West Englewood association: The speaker stated that he favored the new school. He cited the fact that Englewood has four STEM elementary schools, the most in the city of Chicago. He wondered why the community would punish graduating 8th graders by sending them to four high schools that are under resourced. He argued that the community should support an investment in a new school that would give these students the opportunity to attend a school with sufficient resources. He stated that currently students often have to leave their neighborhoods because the programs are not available.

Audience interruption

Chip Johnson: Mr. Johnson reiterated the need to remain respectful but empathized with everyone's passion.

Jennie Biggs, CPS parent, Communication Director of Raise Your Hand: Speaker stated that Raise Your Hand stood with the four high schools in opposing this plan. Speaker stated that leaving no neighborhood high school for an entire school year is unacceptable and sends a poor message. The speaker claimed that this is a "push out" plan. She continued by saying that many parents felt they had no voice in this process. Speaker requested for CPS to pause this action and cited how Bogan HS and Phillips HS were five miles from Englewood. She continued by saying that President Clark in 2013 said the closing of high schools was too dangerous and that today it is just as dangerous.

Dwayne Royster, West Englewood association: The speaker said students in Englewood deserved same resources and opportunities that other cities and communities had. He said that Harper did not have the resources and that this would not change. He cited the size of Harper and how under-enrolled it is. He said a new high school would give students a better chance at success.

Audience interruption. Some chanting for a new school. Others respond.

Chip Johnson: Called for the meeting to resume and for everyone to return to their seats.

Chris Baehrend, ChiActs, speaking on behalf of Urban Prep Englewood: He stated that educators were shocked at the declining investment in Englewood. He stated that when CPS closes a school it fails a community and that bus passes are not good enough. He expressed that students take a school closure personally and may even think of themselves as "bad kids" as a result. He said that a community school is needed where everyone feels welcome and has a voice. He continued by saying that choice is democracy for people without power. He opposed the closing of the schools and instead advocated for the \$85M to be reinvested in the current schools.

Donald Seals Sr., owner of People's Choice Groceries: Speaker moved into area in 1949 and has served many of the audience's children and stated that many in the audience likely know him. The speaker is happy to see something good come into Englewood. He stated that Englewood needed a new high school and needed to see Englewood residents employed.

Andre Smith, Chicago Against Violence: The speaker shared the story of his grandmother, who was the first African American woman to file a law suit for violation of equal rights in West Virginia in 1864. He stated that he opposed any school being closed and that it would be a violation of equal rights. The speaker also cited the \$8.3M set aside for social emotional learning support, among other needs. He said those funds indicated that there will be some issues with the transition. Instead he advocated for the \$85M to be reinvested into the four current schools.

Darryl Smith, Englewood Political Taskforce: Mr. Smith stated that he was a 48 year resident of Englewood and graduate of Harper. He agreed with the previous speaker's suggestion of putting the \$85M into the current four high schools. He stated that the schools need to be attractive and appealing to students if the goal is to increase enrollment. He concluded by referencing the common phrase of "it takes a village," but he stated that there wasn't a member from Englewood included in the voting process.

Speaker: This speaker referenced debates on school closures four years ago and said that the Board of Education had paid protesters at the meeting.

Audience interruption

Speaker continues: He continued by questioning how CPS has \$85M to invest when the district claims it is broke. He questioned how the district has \$85M to invest for this school but not to support special education students.

Chip Johnson: Mr. Johnson reiterated to the audience the need to be respectful. He asked for the audience's attention so that the court reporter can hear the statements. He stated that the Chicago Board of Education needs to be able to read a transcript of the meeting.

Debby Pope, retired teacher from Gage Park HS: Ms. Pope stated that she believes in neighborhood high schools, but the problem is not building new schools. Every child deserves a new school. The problem is that CPS has been starving the four high schools in Englewood for years. She stated that it is part of the gentrification of Chicago's neighborhoods and that it is unacceptable that Englewood's kids won't have a neighborhood school for next school year. She stated that the District needs to treat the children who are at the current schools with the resources and respect they deserve. She concluded by saying that CPS has favored and fed charter schools and, in turn, starved neighborhood schools.

Speaker, parent of Harper student: The speaker stated that she supported the closure of the schools if they build something for the neighborhood. She cited examples such as housing for the homeless.

Erica Clark, Parents for Teachers group: The speaker, a parent of two CPS graduates, stated that CPS would never treat the families of her children's school the way they treat Englewood's families. She asked the audience to imagine they lived in the suburbs, such as Niles or Arlington Heights, which are similar size to Englewood. She then asked them to imagine a scenario where those suburbs said they were going to close down every school in their town. She then continued by asking why it was necessary to tear something down in order to build something up. She claimed it was wrong to close the four schools and said the community should work together to demand what every student in Englewood deserves. She concluded by stating that in 2013 CPS did not close high schools because they said it was too dangerous. She asked whether the community is any safer in 2018.

Demetrius Nash: Mr. Nash stated that everyone must realize lives are at stake, saying that it is dangerous for Englewood students to be forced to go to other schools. He also said that there is a need for students to build vocational skills or the skills that will help the community. Mr. Nash said he supported the new school but that CPS needed to understand that students will be put in a dangerous position. He said it will not be possible to have enough police or safe passage workers to keep the students safe. The speaker asserted that students need to know how to resolve conflicts and communicate with each other. Without a focus on building these skills, forcing kids to attend new schools will not work. He said there needed to be a better plan.

Alieta Clark, community activist in Englewood, Ms. Clark asked why nobody was discussing the real reason for the bad schools: the educators. She said it is not about a new building. She suggested that the \$85M should be invested in the community instead because the new school and new programs will not automatically solve the problem. She asked what happens when the new school arrives in 2018 and it fails. She questions how it could be safe to have one school to house students from two different schools. She stated that when the city closes schools they build projects. If the schools are closed, the district must be willing to accept responsibility for the crime rise. She said blood will be on the hands of the district when crime increases as a result of the closure of these schools.

Sean Parker, resident: Mr. Parker said that he was a product of the community and a former gang member who is now in the field now working with kids and schools. He holds a masters from DePaul. He stated that his biggest concern is violence. He said that some kids can't go to the schools as they stand today because of the violence. He clarified that there is nothing wrong with a new school but it may be counter-productive. He said the psychological ramifications of closing the schools would be significant for students. He cited his previous experience as a dean at North Lawndale College Prep. He had a former student who said he had never been downtown Chicago. He used this as an example to show how kids are relegated to their neighborhoods and blocks as they stand now. At the least, he said CPS needs to ensure safe transportation. He said bus passes won't work. Instead he said CPS must arrange for a bus to take students to and from school.

Keith Harris, former member of steering committee: Mr. Harris said that he was resigning from his post on the steering committee as a result of this community meeting. He said that when he attended steering committee meetings there were questions that the district didn't answer and that the district ignored alternative plans that were presented. He said that CPS has been lying about community participation. He said there has not been participation from the community and that the proposal is disingenuous. He stated that it is not about our kids but instead is about the mayor getting re-elected. Mr. Harris explained that he attended Robeson high school in 1984 and that now they are wiping out history. He said the district should build the new school but shouldn't close the four current schools. He said the district should invest \$30M in the four schools to boost enrollment and then an additional \$15-20M to improve the schools. He said this would still be under the \$85M. He concluded by saying that CPS will "feel" the community if they to close the schools.

Timothy Jones, resident: The speaker said he is 45 year resident of Englewood. He told a story of how his house burned down a day after Christmas. When he called the alderman there was no response.

Audience interruption

Denise Dyer, resident: Ms. Dyer said that she is the grandparent of CPS students. She said that the elementary grandchildren go to Englewood schools, but that Robeson would not be an option due to its performance. She said that she prefers her grandchildren to go to a 21st century school in order to be prepared for a 21st century career. She then said that declining enrollment was due to the fact that 90% of Englewood parents decided to send their kids outside of Englewood.

Nicole Vaughn, resident. Ms. Vaughn said that she has two children in CPS, attending two different schools. She said that CPS should disperse the \$85M among the current schools. She also said that a new building will not solve problem and that safety is a real issue. She said people are dying every day and that CPS is creating a situation where kids will not attend schools because of safety. She said this will add to the school to prison pipeline. She also stated that meeting should not be had on the back end or at the end of the process. She warned not to play politics with Englewood's kids. She wondered what kind of money CPS is making from this. She said that the community will look at the contracts coming through as part of this project. She concluded by saying that she opposed closing schools and that blood will be on CPS' hands.

Latoya Kimbrough, CTU, 2005 graduate of Englewood High School: Ms. Kimbrough told the story of how it was announced that Englewood High School would close while she was there as a student. She said that others claimed her school was the worst performing school in the US. She was against closure then and now. She said that closing schools is not always the answer. She then addressed a statement made by another speaker. A speaker previously asked why we would hold onto something old

when we can have something new. In response, Ms. Kimbrough said that new isn't always better. Ms. Kimbrough also asked how you can know where you are going if you don't know where you came from. She said we need to invest in the community, not the closure of schools.

Speaker, resident: The speaker did not agree with tearing down the schools. He used the example of an empty gray stone building in Bronzeville. He said it is better to build up the gray stone than build something new because it will be worth more. He then said people don't keep their promises anymore and that many kids already feel like they can't go to their schools for various reasons, including the violence.

Speaker: The speaker said this is becoming young against old, dark against light, educated against uneducated. The speaker said that this is wrong because everyone in the community is family. The speaker said that the community should not let CPS close the schools.

Students from Harper High School: The first student said that it is not right that CPS is trying to close the school. Harper has been a second family. He said he wants to finish his four years there, even though he is only a freshman. He said that walking to the bus stop for a new school won't work. He imagined a scenario where he is at a bus stop and someone asked where he was from. He said students should be able to feel safe when they go to their school. He finished by saying that his principal is the best principal in the world and that Harper took him in.

The next student, a senior, said that it is not right that CPS is trying to close the school either. She questioned the intentions of those from the neighborhood who support the new school. She questioned whether those people had kids of their own. She then noted how it seems that people are switching sides, such as the former principal of Harper who now works for CPS.

The third student started by saying that the community should be unified. The student said that everyone in the community is African American and that everyone should be treated equally. Student then asked why some people are not supporting the students and current schools. The student said people should come to Harper to see how it really is. It is not a bad school. It is a good school for kids to go to.

The final student said that parents put kids in schools that are equal to kids' academic level. The student asked why the current students are not able to finish their four years at their schools. The student asked for at least one school to remain open. The student said Harper would welcome any other school. The student said that Harper will just be an empty lot if it is closed.

Bob Fioretti, Alderman of 2nd ward: Mr. Fioretti said that he is furious that the district is closing the schools. He told the audience that whatever is said in the community meeting doesn't matter and that the decision is already made. He cited six schools in his ward that were scheduled to be closed, and even though there was significant

pushback, the schools were ultimately closed. He stated, however, that the community needs to fight however it can to keep the schools open. He said to fight against gentrification and save the schools.

Audience interruption

Paul Curtis, All the Essentials: Mr. Curtis is a south side resident and father of CPS students. He said that the city needs to build up what is already in place rather than tear schools down.

Audience interruption

Chip Johnson: Mr. Johnson announced that the next community meeting is January 17th and Hamilton Park from 6:00-8:00. He said the meeting was now adjourned and asked the audience to please be respectful of Kennedy King College.

End time: 8:02