

Parents 4 Teachers

Standing up for teachers means standing up for our kids

www.parents4teachers.net

The Truth about CPS School Closings

CPS claims half of Chicago's schools are "underutilized" and as many as 80 of them may need to be closed to "right size" the district and help address a supposed \$1 billion deficit. Parents are skeptical of these claims, with good reason.

CPS is closing neighborhood schools, while opening new charter schools.

In the last 10 years, CPS has closed 100 neighborhood schools, primarily on the south and west sides of the city, while opening 60 private charter schools. CPS may close as many as 140 neighborhood schools next year—at the same time it opens 13 new charters. This makes no sense.

In the past, schools were closed for poor "academic performance," even though charter schools don't perform, on average, any better. This year, CPS has a new excuse for closing schools: under utilization.

Are Chicago schools as under used as CPS claims?

No. The formula CPS uses to determine whether a school is under enrolled assumes 30 students per class—an excessive class size by any standards. But by adding an additional 20 percent—making the maximum class size 36—the formula exaggerates the number of under enrolled schools and under states the number of overcrowded classrooms. Leave it to CPS to come up with a plan that results in **overcrowded classrooms in supposedly "under enrolled" schools.**



The utilization rate for each school is an arbitrary number that bears little resemblance to what's happening on the ground in real schools. It doesn't reflect the number of separate special ed or bilingual classrooms, the actual physical size of classrooms or the space dedicated to extra curricula activities or community programs that serve students.

CPS students deserve small class sizes like private and suburban schools.

If CPS used the average class size at the Lab School, which the mayor's kids attend, or many suburban schools, **virtually no CPS schools would be labeled under enrolled.** In rare cases of truly empty classrooms, those spaces should be dedicated to activities and programs that serve students and community needs. Schools are—and should remain—the hub of community life.

School closings aren't about saving money.

CPS CEO Barbara Byrd-Bennett admitted, during a meeting with P4T and other community and parent groups, that closing schools will not save much money. That's not the point, she said. In fact, studies show school closings save, on average, under \$1 million per school. With a budget of \$5 billion, that's a drop in the bucket for CPS. Plus, historically, CPS has greatly inflated its "projected deficits." If school closings aren't about saving money, what's the real motive?

School closings are the cornerstone of the city's privatization schemes.

Closing neighborhood public schools and replacing them with private charter schools hands the keys of the school district over to the mayor's wealthy corporate and political backers, like Juan Rangel and Bruce Rauner. *It also serves their ultimate goal of breaking the teachers' union.* But it destroys communities, puts thousands of children in harms way and decimates a dedicated, experienced teaching force.

CPS policies inflict the most harm on children and communities of color.

Over the last 10 years, school closings and other privatization schemes have targeted schools serving primarily poor and working class Black and Latino students. They have hit the south and west sides of Chicago hard, leaving huge swaths of the city with NO public neighborhood school. Research shows children lose an average of six months learning each time they switch schools. Many Chicago children are victims of multiple school closings already. They deserve better.

All of Chicago needs to fight to Save Our Schools.

Every Chicago child deserves a quality public school in their own neighborhood, with small classes, a rich curriculum and the resources and support children need. Public education, when done right, can be the great equalizer: lifting students out of poverty, teaching them to think creatively and critically about the world and inspiring them to make it a better place. But the mayor, CPS, and our unelected school board have created an unequal, two-tiered school system bent on destroying that vision.

How can you help fight back?

The forces pushing to close schools are powerful. But by joining together, parents, teachers, students and communities across the city can fight back and win.

Organize—Get parents, teachers, students and neighbors involved in fighting back. Team up with other schools and communities.

Speak Out—Call CPS at 773-553-1500 and say you oppose closing ANY public schools this year. Call the mayor, your alderman and other elected officials, too.

Take Action—Attend rallies, demonstrations and other activities in support of our schools. Host a meeting at your school, church or community center. Contact info@parents4teachers.net to get involved.

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