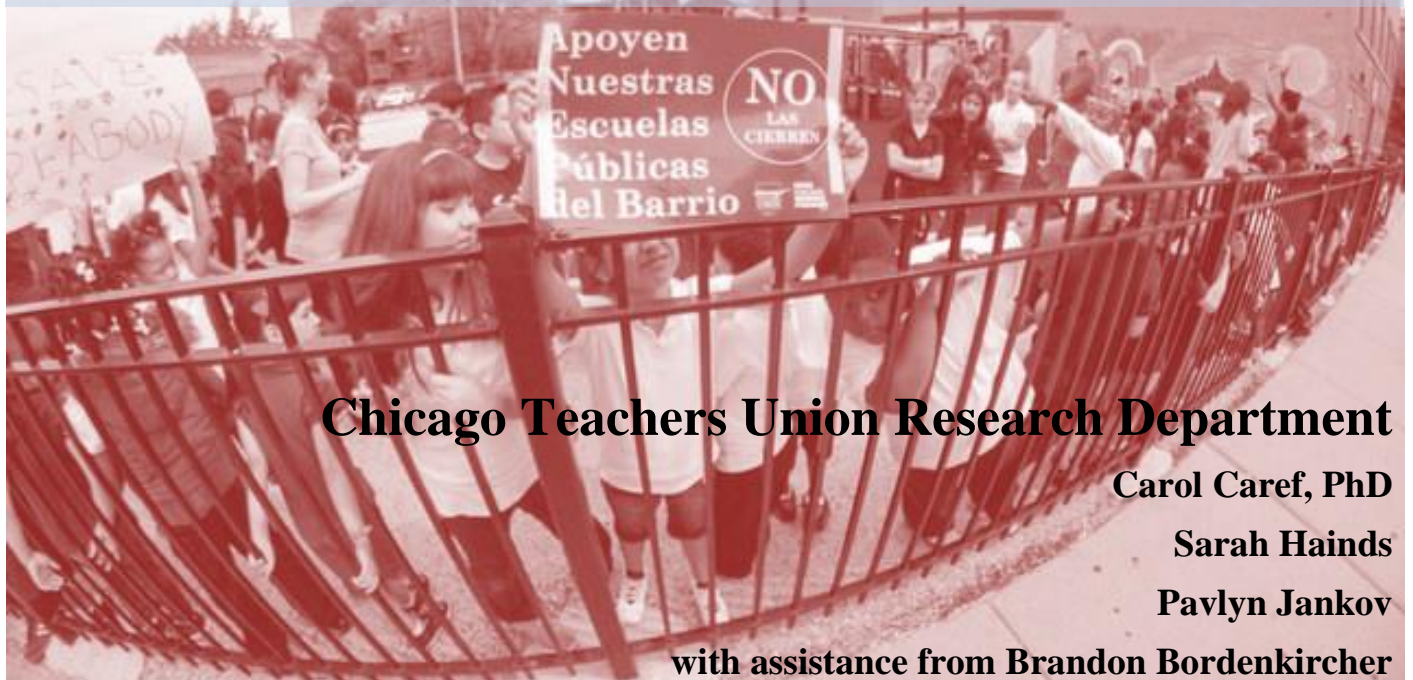


# Twelve Months Later: The Impact of School Closings in Chicago



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## Executive Summary

On May 22, 2013, The Chicago Board of Education voted to close 50, “turn around” five, and co-locate 17 elementary schools. Faced with widespread opposition to these actions, CPS promised hundreds of millions of dollars in capital improvements and transition supports for schools receiving students from closed schools. However, CTU’s examination of the evidence finds that the promises made to receiving schools were hollow in many cases and only partially fulfilled in others. Receiving schools are still disproportionately under-resourced compared to other elementary schools. Students were moved to schools with libraries, but funds weren’t available to hire librarians. Just 38%

of receiving schools have librarians on staff, whereas across CPS, 55% of elementary schools have librarians. Computer labs were upgraded at receiving schools but only one-fifth of these schools have technology teachers. CPS touted iPads for all receiving-school students, but included few related professional learning opportunities for teachers. CPS spent millions on large-scale programmatic changes at 30 elementary schools, but the success and continued funding of STEM and IB programs remain to be seen.

The widely-promoted \$78 million of funding for the closings process were transition investments, both for the schools and for the costs incurred by CPS. Additional funding,

to change the chronic under-resourcing that students from closed schools in particular have experienced, never materialized. Furthermore, receiving schools will have no extra supports during school years to come, even though they will continue to have unmet needs due to the disproportionate disadvantages their students face.

A large portion of the transition budget went to the web of supports made necessary to manage the chaos of the largest school closures the district, or any school district, has ever undergone. More students were affected by school actions in one year than had been affected over the prior decade of closures, turnarounds, consolidations and phase-

outs. CPS spent a large portion of the roughly \$80 million in school closing operational expenditure on the “Safe Passage” program, logistical/moving expenses (more than triple their original budget), central office services, closing-school audits, and expenses related to staff layoffs.

The direct funding that CPS gave to receiving schools to use at their discretion for student needs was just one-tenth of the transition support expenditure. On a per-pupil basis, these funds pale in comparison to what charter schools received last-year as start-up funding. Expanding charters received \$2,770 per pupil in start-up funds, whereas direct transition supports for students affected by school closures was ten times less, just \$230 per pupil. Similarly, the capital investment in receiving schools is considerably smaller than what is projected to be spent on the newly announced expansion and opening of three selective enrollment schools. Per-pupil expenditure on selective enrollment expansion is nearly \$70,000 whereas investment in receiving schools amounted to less than \$4000 per affected student.

Despite the economies of scale that CPS touted would come from being in a larger school, class sizes in the receiving schools have not been reduced. Meanwhile schools have to make do with little space for after-school activities, community rooms, or other important uses. Furthermore, CPS has not ensured that receiving schools are appropriately staffed. Position vacancies were more prevalent in receiving schools than other elementary schools, especially for special education-related positions. Paraprofessional vacancies were nearly twice as likely at receiving schools as other elementary schools. 56% of receiving schools had at least one special edu-

cation teacher vacancy, compared to 47% at other schools. Position vacancies were not only more prevalent, but remained vacant for longer periods at receiving schools. The average duration of a special education teacher vacancy was 22 weeks at receiving schools, compared to 14 weeks at other elementary schools.

Additionally, receiving schools are not getting the clinician support they need to service their students’ needs. Despite consolidating schools, CPS did not sufficiently increase the allotment of social workers to affected schools to keep up with the increase in special education students. The majority of receiving schools now have higher ratios of special education students to social workers than before their consolidation with closed schools. Similarly, nurse allotments were not sufficiently increased.

Additional funding for under-resourced schools did not materialize, and the bevy of pronouncements rang hollow when it came to implementation and making sure that schools had the staffing and resources they needed to make the best of new investments. CPS dedicated over a quarter of a billion dollars in capital and operational investments in the name of addressing an under-utilization “crisis” in the city’s south and west sides, yet they continue to spend money on expanding charters in the same neighborhoods, and expanding selective enrollment schools near downtown.

## Introduction

On May 22, 2013, The Chicago Board of Education voted to close 50 schools, “turn around” five schools, and co-locate 17 schools. This happened even after massive protests, including 20,000 people who attended community hearings, hundreds who participated in a three day march that rallied from one potentially closing school to the next, and culminated in a rally attended by thousands of parents, teachers, and members of the community outraged by CPS plans. The closings were opposed by academic researchers, news reporters and journalists, parent groups, teachers, and other supporters from all over the world. Even hearing officers, hired by CPS to rubber stamp closings, decided that 13 of the schools proposed for closure should be allowed to stay open. Eleven were closed anyway.

The Chicago Teachers Union (CTU) attacked the plans for CPS closures, saying the Board’s excuse of “under-utilization” was a lie, exposing the disparate impact of closures on African American students, countering CPS claims that the closures were necessary for financial reasons, and predicted that these school actions would worsen the educational experience for impacted students. The CTU also expressed skepticism that CPS promises for extra supports made to receiving schools (those that would take students from the closed schools) would overcome the negative consequences of school closings. We cited the findings of the Chicago Consortium on School Research (CCSR) which concluded that students from earlier school closings did not benefit academically from changing schools. CTU’s publication, *The Black and White of Education in Chicago’s Public Schools*<sup>1</sup>

also exposed the failure of the CPS policy of closing neighborhood schools and opening charter schools, stating:

“The main driver of excess capacity, however, is the District’s aggressive charter proliferation campaign, the construction of new buildings, and the acquisition of others. It is dishonest for the District to talk about under-utilization when it has acquired or constructed space to educate almost 50,000 additional students in the last ten years and has plans to open another 60 charter schools over the next several years.”

*Catalyst Chicago*<sup>2</sup> exposed these facts about closed schools and their neighborhoods:

- Within the attendance boundaries of closed schools, more money has been spent on incarceration (\$2.7 billion) than on schools (\$2.2 billion)
- 59% of closed schools have higher than average special education populations and 43% have had two or more principals in five years
- The median income of families who live in the attendance boundaries of closed schools is \$36,649, compared to \$53,313 in all other schools

This list echoes some of the major issues highlighted by CTU in *The Schools Chicago’s Students Deserve*.<sup>3</sup> Instead of closing neighborhood schools and opening charters, CPS needs to provide adequate social service supports in the schools. It needs to provide a stable situation, instead of changing principals and closing schools. CPS needs to recognize that poverty and racism play a significant role in education and take a page from Finland, the country that developed first class schools by striving for equity in education. Ironically, many of the “underuti-

lized” schools had programs housed in their building to address issues related to poverty, such as parent centers or after-school programs for students — however, these important usages of space were disregarded in CPS calculations.

A CTU analysis of the 55 schools closed or turned around exposed these facts:

- 90% had a majority Black student population and 71% had a majority Black teaching staff.
- 25% of all CPS schools with both majority Black students and staff were closed.
- Just 2% of schools with a minority Black student population were closed.
- Schools with a majority Black student population and majority Black teaching staff were 10 times more likely to be closed or turned around than schools with a minority Black student population and teaching staff.

One year later, CTU looks at what happened as a result of the massive school closings of 2013. Were CPS promises for the receiving schools kept? How much money was saved, relative to how much CPS said they would save? Did resources increase at affected schools as a result of the savings? Have services increased for special education students in consolidated schools?

For this report, CTU interviewed teachers from seven of the receiving schools, Chopin, Courtenay, Dett, Earle, Nicholson, Otis, and South Shore Fine Arts -- to gather information about the fulfillment of CPS promises. Additionally, researchers reviewed CPS material on the school closures, operating and capital budget documents, position files, vacancy reports, class size data, and other public data.



The opposite of “under-utilization” is overcrowding. In overcrowded schools, resources cannot be put to full use. An art program, for example, can’t reach its potential when students are crammed into make-shift classrooms or hallways, instead of being in a designated art room with the necessary tables, storage, supplies, and equipment, or when teachers teach Art on a cart.

The school closures were meant to fix “under-utilization”. This fall, CPS claimed that their next step is to resolve the overcrowding crisis. This claim rings hollow; in the past year, for every dollar used to directly alleviate overcrowding, \$1.50 has been spent on selective enrollment expansion. The CPS “solution” to overcrowding is to open more charter campuses. However, over half the charters approved this year are not located in communities with overcrowded schools, and three are in communities where school closings just occurred! CPS is doing exactly what they have done since 2004: shutting down neighborhood schools in Black neighborhoods while expanding the number and capacity of charter schools and selective enrollment programs. This expansion, documented in *The Black and White of Education*, played a significant role in making the gap so wide between the number of students and the capacity of school facilities on the South and West sides of the city.

CPS has now committed \$68,571 per student at the new Jones College Prep, the Walter Payton expansion, and the Barack Obama High School.<sup>1</sup> As reported in the Sun Times, since the admissions process

<sup>1</sup> The \$17 million expansion for Payton will create room for 400 students, the \$60 million Obama HS will house 1200 students, and the new Jones HS opened this year was built for \$115 million and accommodates 1200 students.

dropped the criteria of race in 2009, these spaces are increasingly and disproportionately going to White students.<sup>6</sup> Figure 1 illustrates the disparity between the money spent on selective enrollment schools compared to receiving schools.

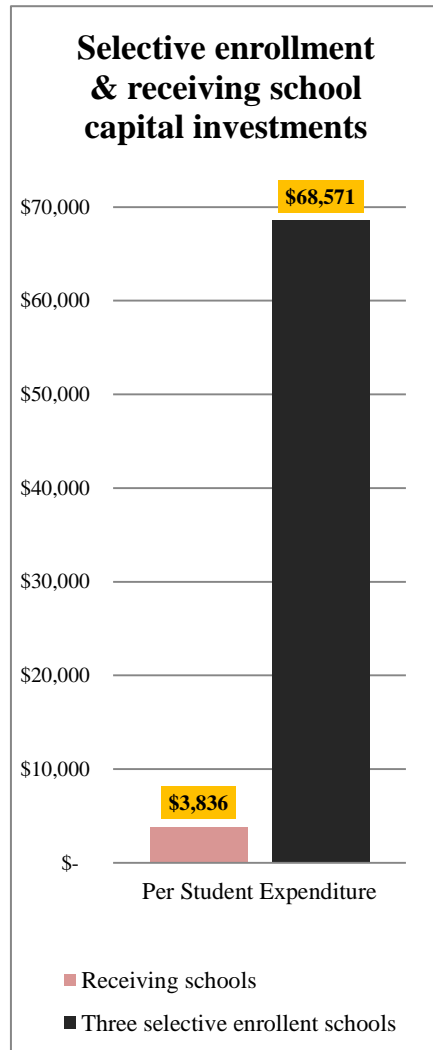


Figure 1. Selective enrollment expansion vs Receiving schools capital investment

This year CPS opened another 11 charter schools, handing them millions of dollars in start-up funds as well as central office support. As shown in Figure 2, the \$3.5 million in charter start-up funds, based on a per-pupil basis, are 12 times as great

as the direct transition support given to receiving schools.<sup>2</sup>

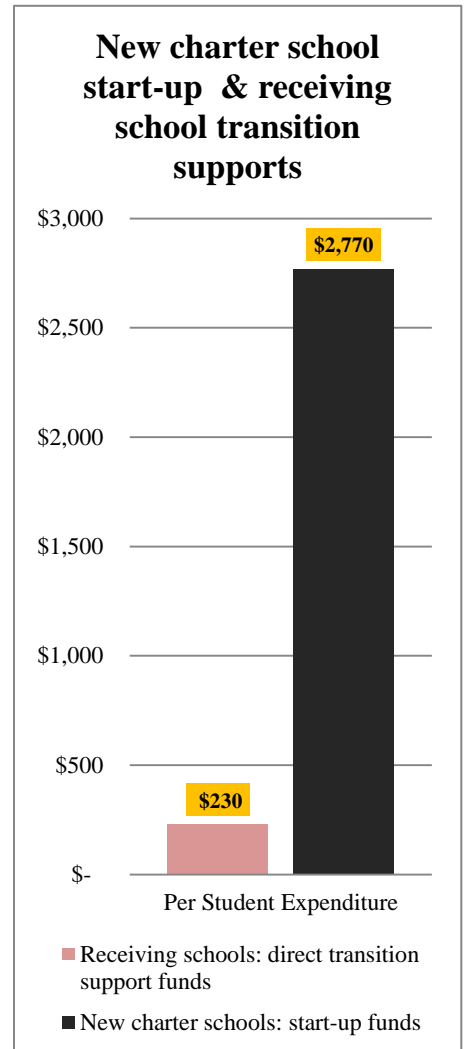


Figure 2. Charter start-up vs Receiving schools transition funding

At the same time as CPS expanded charters, with millions spent on their start-up funds, opened new programs, and increased selective en-

<sup>2</sup> Start-up funds for charters are retrieved from the CPS Interactive Budget, reported under Program Name “New School Openings Other”. Start-up funds are usually found allocated in the fiscal year prior to opening. Per-pupil basis is constructed using the Fall 2014 20<sup>th</sup> day enrollments. Direct school transition funds are retrieved from the CPS Interactive Budget, reported under Fund Grant Name “School Transitions”. Per-pupil basis for transition funds are constructed by dividing the total given to welcoming schools by the number of students that were anticipated to be affected, 40,411.

rollment schools, neighborhood schools are seeing their budgets slashed and their capacity to provide even basic resources, not to mention enhanced electives and successful programs, steadily diminish.

## More Resources?

Among the many shifting CPS narratives about the closures, one of the reasons given was that underutilized schools did not have adequate resources for students. Under-resourcing is due to inadequate budgets or improper priorities, not the result of students and staff enjoying an abundance of physical space. Schools with small enrollments (and those with larger enrollments as well) struggle to have enough funds to hire all desired staff. However, this is a feature of funding decisions, not primarily school size.

Purportedly, the ‘savings’ that accrue to the *overall* CPS budget by the *efficiencies* achieved by consolidating over 100 schools would be distributed to receiving schools, as well as to all other schools to increase funds going to the classroom.

This is patently false. To offset criticism of the largest ever school closings, CPS directed over \$80 million in additional operational dollars to help students transition through the chaos caused by the consolidations. However, as detailed in the section **Funds for Receiving Schools** (pg. 10), only 10% went directly to the schools.

**Simultaneously, for the 2014 fiscal year, CPS cut \$68 million directly out of money designated for classrooms across the district. So there is no money from the *efficiencies* to address the underlying resource inadequacies in *any* school, much less the needs of the 50 new-**

**ly consolidated schools, many of which are still under-resourced.**

BOE Vice President Jesse Ruiz claimed that the closings would increase resources to schools, “Even though we’re facing a billion-dollar deficit, we want to take those savings and reinvest it [sic] in the schools that do need those critical supports, that do need wrap-around services.”<sup>7</sup>

Instead of closing/turning around 55 schools, CPS could have spent the money used on transitions directly for the classrooms of under-resourced schools. The capital expenditures could have been prioritized for schools with the greatest need. A planning process could have been implemented to consolidate the smallest schools where the least disruption would occur, and where the conditions of buildings most justified moving students and concentrating resources. Furthermore, a conversation about solving overcrowding and addressing segregation simultaneously with the under-enrolled schools would have expanded possibilities for using currently existing buildings to bring equity to education in CPS. Instead, 55 schools were dismantled and students are no better off as a result.

## Staff Vacancies in Receiving Schools

Another problem at receiving schools is the timely staffing of budgeted positions. When teaching and support staff positions remain unfilled, students lose instructional time and expertise, not to mention content knowledge. This is especially damaging during a time when they will be tested on mastery of standards for which they are receiving no instruction. Students with special needs lose required

instructional and support minutes in their IEPs, and other teachers become over-burdened as they take over multiple duties and assist with other classrooms, often not even in their area of certification or expertise.

Position vacancies are an issue across all CPS schools, but the data indicate that the receiving schools this year were especially prone to have position vacancies at higher rates, and to have them for longer than other elementary schools.

With the large increases in enrollments at receiving schools, CPS should have concentrated their efforts in making sure all positions at these schools were filled quickly. No positions, especially those addressing special education needs, should go unfilled for weeks. It is inexcusable that CPS would undertake large-scale school actions without making necessary preparations to staff all positions. The disparity between receiving schools and other schools shows CPS’ complete failure in this regard.

## Special Education Classroom Assistants

Over a third of receiving schools had at least one vacancy in the Special Education Classroom Assistant (SECA) position as of December 2013.<sup>3</sup> Across other elementary schools, SECA vacancies existed at one out of five schools.

## Paraprofessionals

An even more disparate trend is apparent in paraprofessional (PSRP) positions, shown in Figure 4.<sup>4</sup> A

<sup>3</sup> Data based on CPS December Position File.

<sup>4</sup> Paraprofessional refers to all Educational Support Personnel in the CTU.

higher proportion of receiving schools, as opposed to all other schools, had at least one vacancy across PSRP positions over the first three-quarters of the school year: 58% of receiving schools compared to 28% of others.

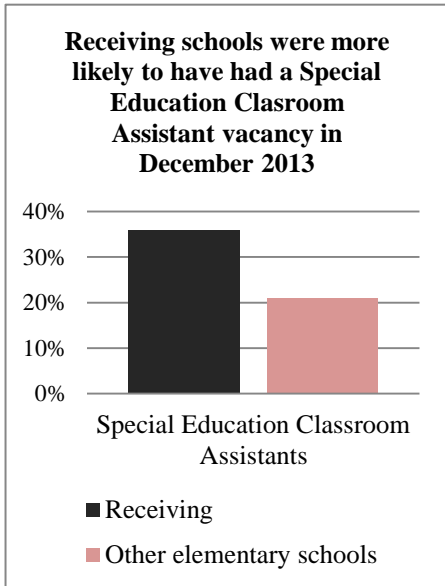


Figure 3. Comparison of Special Education Classroom Assistant vacancies

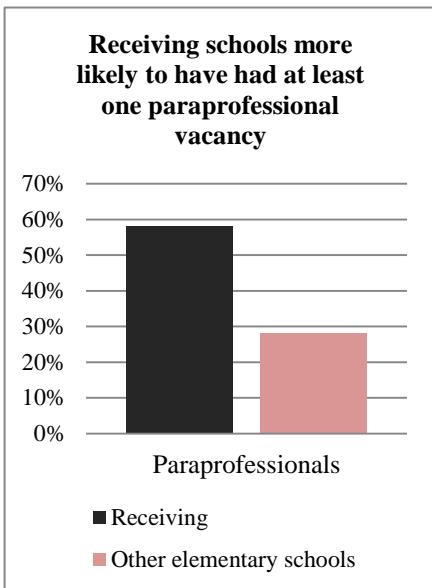


Figure 4. Comparison of Paraprofessional vacancies

### Teachers

Receiving schools were also more likely to have a teaching position vacant with 46 out of 50, 92%, having at least one teaching vacancy at some point through the first three quarters of the school year.<sup>5</sup> Other elementary schools had a lower rate, with 80% having at least one teacher vacancy over that period.

The total number of teaching vacancies per school across receiving schools amounted to 5.5, whereas the rate across other elementary schools was 3 per school. The average duration of these vacancies was 15 weeks.<sup>6</sup>

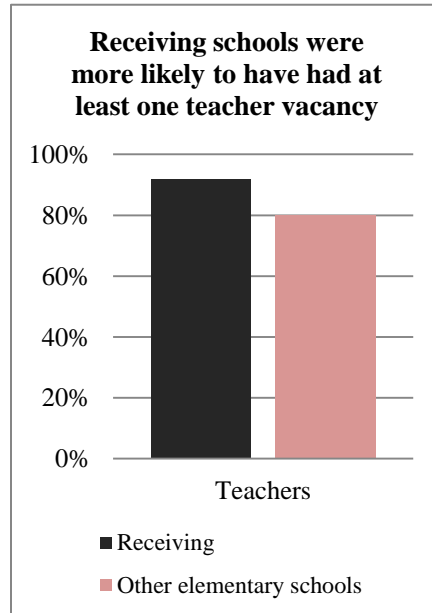


Figure 5. Comparison of teacher vacancies

<sup>5</sup> Vacancy data on all teacher and paraprofessional positions based on monthly data received from CPS. Vacancies are counted only between the dates of September 6<sup>th</sup> through April 1<sup>st</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> Durations of vacancies were estimated by using the earliest confirmed date of a position's vacancy, and counting the duration until the latest confirmed date of a position remaining vacant. The vacancy lists used are monthly snapshots. Vacancies that disappear between two report dates were considered to have been filled at the earlier date, so the duration of the vacancies reported here are underestimates.

### Special Education Teachers

The prevalence of vacancies is even worse with special education teacher positions. 56% of receiving schools had at least one special education teacher vacancy over the first three quarters. The proportion of other elementary schools with vacancies was 47%.

The duration of the special education vacancies were longer than for all teacher types, and were also substantially longer at receiving schools than others. At receiving schools, special education teacher vacancies remained vacant for an average of 22 weeks. At other elementary schools the duration averaged 14 weeks.

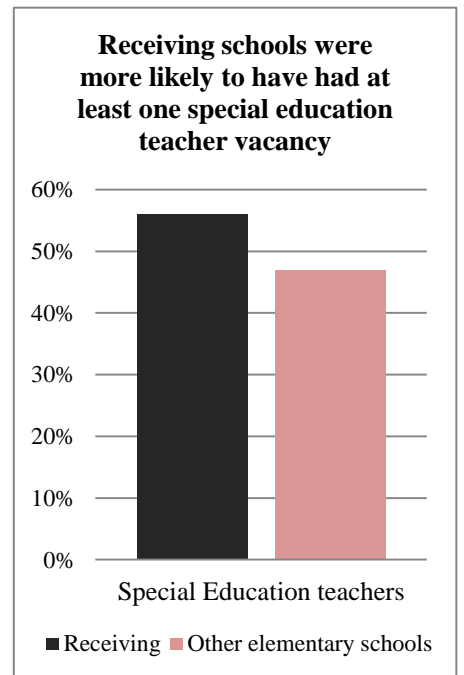


Figure 6. Comparison of special education teacher vacancies

### Class Sizes

One of the ways that under-resourcing directly manifests itself is in the composition of the classroom: the number of students, and whether students from different

grades are combined into one room when resources are inadequate. Parent organizations, communities, and CTU have been pushing against excessive class sizes for years. CPS made the claim that consolidation would bring additional resources to students and free up resources to reduce the prevalence of large class sizes.

Despite this claim, average class sizes in affected schools haven't changed. The average class size across the closed and receiving schools last year is no different than for the receiving schools this year, hovering around 24.<sup>7</sup> There are many schools where class sizes increased, some substantially. Twenty of the affected schools have an increase in average class size of two or more students. Six of these had increases of four or more.

### Special Education Needs: Social Workers

Access to social work support was one of the promises of CPS CEO Bennett on the eve of the school closing announcements last spring. And yet, the lack of social workers is one of the most glaring deficiencies in the supports that CPS offers. CPS elementary school social workers are allocated across the district through the Office of Diverse Learner Supports, based on the needs of special education students. Very few schools are allocated a social worker full-time or more, most schools only have access to a social worker once or twice a week, often for just half a day at a time. The ratio of special education students to social workers across CPS elementary schools shows that the vast majority of schools are well

above the recommended ratio of 50 students to 1 social worker.<sup>8</sup> The majority of consolidated schools have higher ratios of special education students to social workers than they did before.<sup>9</sup> In fact, several schools with cluster programs (concentrations of special education students in one building) have had the largest increases in ratios:

- Stewart and Brenneman both had students in cluster classrooms. The social worker allocation in the newly consolidated Brenneman is only 0.6 FTE<sup>10</sup> per week, or just over a half-time social worker. There are 108 special education students at Brenneman this year, more than double the number last year. Last year, Stewart's ratio of special education students to social workers was 92 to 1, and Brenneman's was 125 to 1. The ratio at Brenneman this year is 180 to 1.
- In the Owens and Gompers consolidation, the number of special education students doubled, but the social worker allocation didn't change.
- McPherson and McCutcheon are the designated receiving schools for special education students from Trumbull Elementary. McCutcheon's special education population increased substantially; however, the social worker allotment decreased from a 0.5 to a 0.4 allocation.

<sup>8</sup> The National Association of Social Workers recommends one school social worker for every 50 students with intensive needs. The Illinois State Board of Education Student Service Providers Advisory Board recommends a ratio of 1 to 50 when social workers primarily serve special education students.

<sup>9</sup> Based on clinician schedule data received from CPS.

<sup>10</sup> FTE means full-time equivalent and is a unit of measurement of a staffing position. 1 FTE equals one full-time position.

For McCutcheon, the consolidation led to a doubling of the special education student to social worker ratio. For students from Trumbull, the move led to decreased access to social work services, as the ratio of students to social workers climbed by 20% at both McPherson and McCutcheon.

The same problem persists with nurse positions. CPS' clinician system does not allot clinician positions to schools based only on the number of special education students. However, it should be obvious that when there are large increases in the population needing services, especially in the case of special education cluster classrooms, more resources need to be allocated. While CPS may have incurred costs to support students' transitions, they made no sustained investment in getting additional clinician supports into the receiving schools throughout the school year.

More efficient scheduling of clinicians, who are typically assigned to multiple schools, might be an expected benefit of a decreased number of CPS schools. If there are fewer schools to split their services among, clinicians should be able to spend more time at schools that need them. However, the lack of increased social/emotional supports in the newly consolidated schools shows how the underlying problem of CPS is one of resource inadequacy, not facilities. Shuffling students does not change the fact that CPS has far too few clinicians and other staff on hand to appropriately support and advance the learning of all students.

### Integration into Receiving Schools

<sup>7</sup> Based on Class Size data received from CPS.



CPS plans for a smooth transition from closed to receiving schools were at best, unevenly implemented. At many schools, unaddressed problems remain. For example, a teacher at Dett, the receiving school for Victor Herbert, said that "there were a good amount of Dett kids that transferred out due to altercations with Victor kids." A teacher at Chopin School said "many Chopin parents plan on pulling their kids out because of the changes." CPS has not done enough to provide the necessary supports to integrate students from closed schools into receiving schools. A teacher at Courtenay reported that "there have been verbal altercations" and that there "should have been more outreach to the parents of the Stockton students."

Fermi students, who were absorbed by South Shore Fine Arts, "don't understand why they lost their school and there's been a lot of teasing of the Fermi students because of that", according to a South Shore teacher. "Many of the students are resentful" says a Nicholson teacher of Bontemps students, and "it has been a pretty tough transition."

One south-side teacher reported that "some of the kids have been angry and hostile" towards the entire process and many of the seventh and eighth graders have rebelled by wearing their old school shirts and refusing to wear their new school uniforms. Other teachers have reported that tensions have been high because "the students have been pitted against each other," and there is constant comparing of the two staffs and sets of students. A teacher at Dett explained that she hasn't had any time to notice the effects of the integration because there are so many kids in her classroom that she is not able to carry on the same rela-

tionships she once had with her students.

## Special Supports

Interviewed teachers reported little to no special support for English Learners, students with Individual Education Plans, or homeless students. "Here at Courtenay Language and Arts Center there is a big homeless student population and a lot of IEPs. Homeless students and parents in the past have stayed at the Cornerstone shelter which is nearby, but the new principal hasn't been over there once," said one Courtenay teacher. As of December, 2013, Courtenay had 44 identified homeless students, compared to six the previous December. Closed school Stockton, whose students were assigned to Courtenay, had a history supporting homeless students, having roughly 30 homeless students in each of the last several years.<sup>11</sup>

## CPS Schools Consolidation Report

In a report touting the success of the 2013 closings, CPS seemed to be grasping at straws.<sup>8</sup> They publicized minute improvements in attendance, on-track to graduate rates, and grade-point averages among students from closed schools. These "improvements" could easily have been part of the normal ups and downs seen in statistical analyses. Furthermore, students from closed schools have made less progress on the measures listed in the report than other students throughout the city. Even if the minor "improvements" seen in CPS statistics are real, there is no reason to think they were due

to school consolidations, since students from other schools improved in these criteria even more. For example, the on-track rate for students who did not experience school actions last year was up 2% from last year. Students from closed schools, however, saw an increase of only 0.3%.

## Cost Savings

Students at closed schools are not better off, but did the closings at least save money? This was a major objective of CPS, as indicated by this statement from Tom Tyrell, CPS Chief Operating Officer, at the February 2013 Chicago Educational Facilities Task Force hearing (from notes taken by CTU):

"As long as schools come off the books as a financial liability, we'll have been successful."

Were there cost savings from closings to pass on to other district schools, thereby benefiting all students? According to CPS, Chicago, or at least pockets of it, has lost population since 2000, which resulted in an "under-utilization crisis" that created massive inefficiencies. The district was broke, they claimed, and that explained why schools were in disrepair and lacked libraries, playgrounds, science labs and computer labs. Once the district consolidated its resources – because it was "stretched too thin" with half-empty schools – it would be able to fund much-needed programs, they claimed. Despite public and media pushback, CPS refused to acknowledge that charter proliferation and facility expansion was the main cause of under-utilization in

<sup>11</sup> Based on STLS data received from the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless.

neighborhood schools as well as a drain on the district budget.<sup>12</sup>

CPS has not released updated information on how much it has spent or saved on the closings, although the Chicago Educational Facilities Task Force (CEFTF) and the CTU Budget Committee have repeatedly requested this information. As best as can be estimated from publicly accessible information, *CPS has spent a minimum of \$285 million on costs related to these school closings.* This amount does not include the portion of CPS Central Office staff time and resources devoted to this process, with the exception of the Office of Strategy Management whose entire budget is included in this total. According to the FY14 CPS Budget Book the main work of the office this past year has been to “manage and implement school actions and turnarounds, including execution of transitions”.<sup>9</sup> More than a quarter billion dollars was spent by CPS to close and consolidate schools this year, so how much was saved?

CPS originally claimed they would save \$43,000,000 annually in operations costs (staff to teach and run the building, utilities and maintenance) at the closed buildings. They also claimed they would save \$413,911,089 over ten years in capital cost avoidance (down from \$586,511,000 when CPS first announced school closings). In the CPS “School Consolidation Report” from March 2014, however, there is no mention of any cost savings as a result of the massive school closings. Furthermore, now that CPS is trying to sell the closed schools, they have again reduced the “cost to maintain” (now called “Maintenance Cost”) to \$107,243,410, over ten years, for all 47 properties for sale.<sup>10</sup>

The Chicago Tribune reported that CPS spent \$100 million on capital improvements to schools they subsequently closed.<sup>11</sup> For example, since 2001, CPS spent about \$4.6 million on Trumbull Elementary, but then closed it in 2013. This debt is just the tip of the iceberg. For years into the future, CPS will continue to be saddled with debt service

payments (principal plus interest). Annual debt payments were more than \$322 million in 2012. According to the Tribune article, “during the past three years [CPS] used \$366 million in borrowed funds to push debt payments into the future, a maneuver called ‘scoop and toss’ that will cost more in the long run.”

Shortly after the 2013-2014 school year began, before CPS had assessed the effects of the school closings on the approximately 30,000

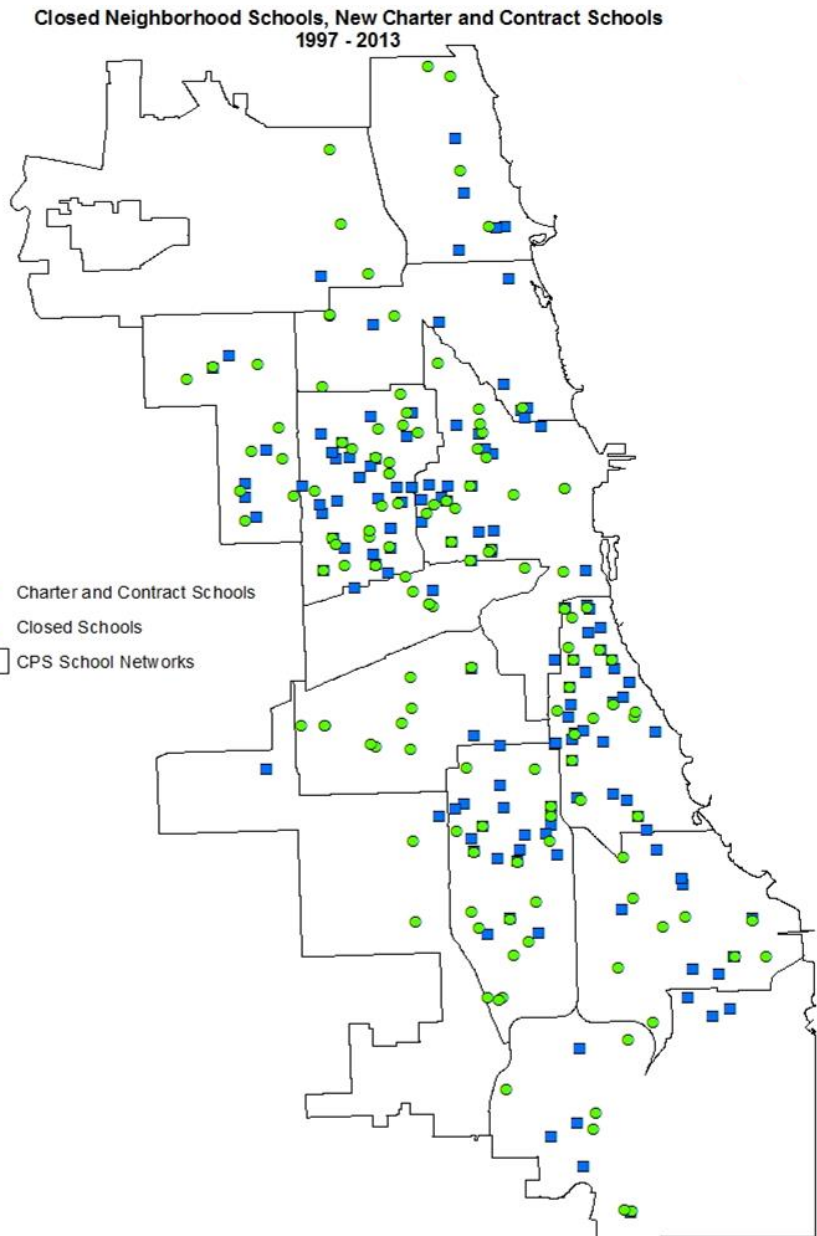


Figure 7. A decade and a half of charter expansion and school closings

<sup>12</sup> See Chicago Teachers Union (2013) for a more detailed explanation of this point.

students impacted, they announced plans to build new schools and additions to existing schools to relieve overcrowding. CPS also continues to open about 10 charter schools annually, as it has since 2004, as shown in Figure 5.

The bottom line is that CPS went deeply into debt fixing up buildings that it later closed “to save money”, while during the same period building new schools, opening charters and selective citywide schools, and putting the district even further into debt.

**CPS cannot come up with money to fund smaller classes, adequate wrap around services, or a full curriculum for all students, but is able to use public tax money to help enrich banks and construction companies.**

The CPS claim that fewer students require fewer buildings might be more believable had they opened new schools in crowded neighborhoods, instead of ones with shrinking populations.

### Funds for Receiving Schools

The total price tag for all operating expenditures related to school transitions<sup>12</sup> was \$15.2 million in 2013 and \$68.3 million in 2014 for a combined total of \$83.5 million. Figure 7 shows the total amounts allocated for school transitions at the school-level and from CPS Central Office.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Obtained from the CPS interactive budget. “School-based” refers to the combined totals for FY13 and FY14 for closing and receiving schools – both official and unofficial (unofficial receiving schools are those that were not initially designated as receiving schools but ended up taking in at least 25 students from a closed school).

As shown in Figure 8, only 10% of the transition budget was actually given directly to schools to manage their transitions. Tom Tyrell, the former army sergeant hired to oversee the transition, stated at the February, 2013, CEFTF hearing that welcoming school principals could use the transition funds however they chose. They could, for example, hire an extra social worker, security person, librarian, teachers, or instructional coach. Receiving schools were also encouraged to use some of the funds to host events over the summer at which the families from the closed and welcoming schools could get to know each other and the school staff. Many communities reported that their schools did not host such events<sup>13</sup>.

Total Operation Investments for School Closings (millions)

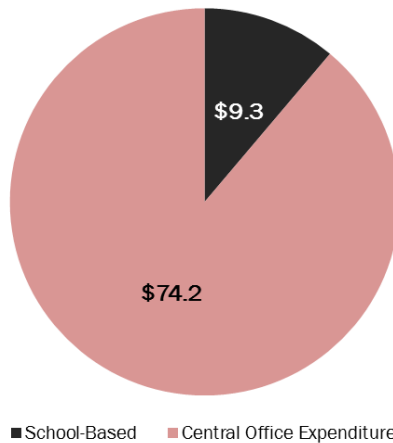


Figure 8. Transition Funding for school closings

Instead of going directly to receiving schools, a large portion of the transition budgets allocated through central office went to management costs, such as logistics, human resources, building monitoring, and safe passage programs implemented to address safety concerns.

Schools received less than what was budgeted for moving logistics alone.

However the moving cost budget proved to be a serious underestimate. At the April, 2013, CPS board meeting, a logistics company from Ohio, Global Workplace Solutions, was hired<sup>14</sup> to move all the furniture, catalogue what was reusable, and start decommissioning the schools. The company was initially chosen through a bid process in which it came in with the lowest bid of \$14,200,000. By the time the Board of Education amended the contract for the third time, in December 2013<sup>15</sup>, the price of work had doubled to \$30,900,000.

CPS also spent money on programmatic changes at the “welcoming” schools. Eleven schools were converted into Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics (STEM) schools and seven to International Baccalaureate Schools (IB for All). There is no substantiated research on the academic benefits of IB for All or STEM in Chicago, and, according to *Catalyst-Chicago*, “it will take years before the promised new educational programs fully emerge and there’s a chance they won’t.”<sup>16</sup> Parents did not ask for IB or STEM. Parents asked CPS to keep their schools open and enhance resources. These programs may or may not be successful, but many studies have shown the harmful effects of school closings on students, and that what schools really need are lower class sizes, wrap around services, and stability in their schools.

Safe Passage routes cost the district about \$16,000,000. The City also requires other departments to cover the Safe Passage routes, including police and firefighters<sup>17</sup>.

It is not known if any of these additional resources have had a positive impact on the students because CPS has not evaluated any of them.

The majority of transition operating costs - such as for moving, ensuring safety, covering contractual obligations - were investments made necessary due to the large-scale nature of the closures. Less than half the transition investments actually represent additional resources to schools, as shown in the table below.

Expenditure type	Cost (millions)
Welcoming School Renovations	\$145
iPads	\$10
School Transition Funds (includes original estimate of Logistics cost, and outlay budgeted to Office of Strategy Management)	\$83.5
Logistics Company (cost above initial budget)	\$16.7
Office of Strategy Management (cost of entire department above cited transition costs)	\$11.7
Estimated Demolition Costs	\$18.7
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>\$285.6</b>

Figure 9. School action related expenditures for FY14, including funds expended at the end of FY13.

## Conclusion

One year after massive school closings in Chicago, what has changed for the students? Have they gotten the supports they need? Do they have smaller classes? Do they attend integrated schools in greater numbers? The tragic answer to these questions is “NO”. School closings have done nothing to improve the education of CPS students, nor have they saved money, but the same pol-

icies that led to massive closures continue to be implemented. More charter schools are opening, despite evidence that their students perform no better than students at CPS-run schools. More money is being spent for selective enrollment schools, attended disproportionately by White students. Adequate supports for schools facing challenging circumstances are not forthcoming. CPS claims it does not have money for basic necessities but squander money on schemes like school closings and on loan re-payments and interest to banks.

CPS made many promises to quash the worries and protests of parents, students, teachers, and community. Board members and administrators said they would do everything in their power to create a smooth transition from closed to receiving schools, but the transition has been anything but smooth. The closings have disrupted students, families, and communities by creating unnecessary stress for people who already have to face incredible hardships. These students, in many cases, have been pulled out of what they called home and forced into unwelcoming environments with false promises of better resources and facilities. One of the interviewed teachers summed up the situation this way: "give a kid an iPad... and you can close as many schools as you want."

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