

**April 28, 2021 Board Meeting Written Comments**  
**Received between Monday, April 26<sup>th</sup> and Thursday, April 28<sup>th</sup>**  
**Submitted via Written Comments Form**

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1 See attached

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2 4/28/2021

Chicago Board of Education

1 N. Dearborn, Suite 950

Chicago, IL 60602

Dear Members of the Board of Education:

My name is Chya Hughes, and I am a parent at IAMS. I'm here to highlight the need for retributive measures to be taken concerning the urgent situation involving Dr. Bylaitis, and the damage her actions have caused.

Last month, 3 mothers spoke to the board, each detailing acts of negligence committed either directly at the hands of Bylaitis or by administration. One mother, a black CPS teacher spoke on having DCFS called, and a false case of neglect filed against her. Despite the case being unfounded, the false reporting resulted in a negative marking on the mother's employment file. In addition to the emotional and psychological trauma experienced by her son.

While DCFS was discriminately called on one mother, Bylaitis failed to notify DCFS when a 5-year-old female student was the victim of a suspected case of child grooming involving the school custodian. Despite this employee having had 4 previous incidents of misconduct involving children, no report with DCFS was ever filed.

On April 8th, parents organized a townhall for other parents to come and voice their concerns. On April 12, the network hosted a meeting as well. More alarming and repeat instances of malfeasance and policy violations were reported. Acts of racist microaggressions being committed against their black children at IAMS and instances where physical and emotional abuse against their children were reported directly to the principal but met with indifference or blatant dismissal. 3 IAMS parent speakers will speak on these incidents in today's meeting.

Families are hurting. Many have reached out to the district, looking for guidance and resolution, only to be met with silence. The climate Bylaitis has created within IAMS is one of division and distrust fueled by an intense fear of retaliation and punitive measures. These sentiments are shared by parents, students, and staff alike. This is unacceptable and will not be tolerated any longer.

Yesterday, Bylaitis announced her resignation. She has taken from our community, and I fear that she will continue to rob and cause detriment to other schools. Her involvement around children should not be taken lightly. Her tenure at IAMS has already shown the

devastation of her wanton disregard for policy and the safety of our children. Board members I am here today to demand that a complete top-down investigation into Byalitis multiple policy violations and negligence be conducted immediately with the findings of that investigation made public. I am also requesting that all IAMS staff be re-trained on Title IX policies, and reporting as it pertains to explicit bias and negligence. Finally, no retaliatory acts against students, parents, nor staff should be tolerated. This should be reflective in all language and punitive measures taken against those perpetrators of these acts in any form. Thank you.

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3 To: Sam Mathias, Director of School Development, Office of Innovation & Incubation  
Cc: Bing Howell, Chief Portfolio Officer, Office of Portfolio Management  
From: Fernando E. Grillo, Chief Executive Officer, Aspira of Illinois  
Re: Aspira's 2021 Charter and Contract School Application for Amendment  
Date: April 5, 2021

On February 10, 2021, Aspira timely submitted an application for the relocation of its Aspira Early College High School (AEC) in response to Chicago Public Schools (CPS) 2021 Charter and Contract School Application for Amendment. We recognize your office is conducting a review of our application and we remain available to answer any questions that may arise during this process.

During the CPS board meeting on March 24, 2021, several statements were made during the public hearing portion of the meeting that inaccurately represented Aspira's proposal. These statements presented data that claimed Aspira's relocation would have a negative impact on a neighboring CPS high school's enrollment, Roosevelt High School. Additionally, these statements further claimed a greater need for elementary seats in the area we are seeking to relocate AEC as justification for not needing a high-quality high school option.

We maintain these statements are inaccurate, and to both these claims, we are providing to your office data sourced from CPS's website that fairly and accurately represents our proposal's impact. See Tables #1 and #2.

We believe the data indicates that, on the contrary, Roosevelt has achieved something remarkable. It has achieved stable enrollment over the last five school years in spite of the fact that students who reside in Roosevelt's boundary continue to enroll into other large, overcrowded, nearby high schools such as Von Steuben, Amundsen, Mather and Lane. Roosevelt High School, together with the other top destination high schools for Albany Park-area rising 9th graders, are all large schools with declining Latinx enrollment.

ASPIRA believes strongly—and the ARA data reinforces—that there is a need for a high-quality high school option for students and families looking for a small, culturally responsive college prep option. The claim for the need of elementary seats isn't supported by the data as well. In the ten elementary schools within a two-mile radius of Roosevelt, there are just over 2,700 available elementary seats in existing facilities.

We respectfully ask the Office of Portfolio Management to provide answers to the questions provided below.

- When students who live in the Roosevelt HS boundary are granted admission in a

Chicago public high school other than Roosevelt HS, which high schools are they choosing?

- Specifically, how many high school students residing in Roosevelt High School's boundary are enrolled in the ten high schools provided in Table #1.

Additionally, CPS's Portfolio Office possesses two datasets that are central to the question of Roosevelt High School's past, present and future projected enrollment and what (if any) impact ASPIRA's change of address request might have on Roosevelt's enrollment.

The first dataset is commonly referred to as the "Residing and Attending" report for Roosevelt High School's attendance boundary.

For each of the five school years indicated, can your office please provide the following data and consider it as part of your application review?

- How many 9-12th grade public high school students reside in the Roosevelt HS attendance boundary and which high schools are these students enrolled in?

The second dataset is commonly referred to as the "GoCPS High School Rankings #1-#2-#3" report, which provides answers to the following questions. Among the eighth-grade applicants enrolled at nearby elementary schools:

- How many of these applicants ranked Roosevelt High School either #1, #2 or #3;
- How many of these applicants ranked ASPIRA-Early College High School either #1, #2 or #3; and
- How many of these applicants included both Roosevelt HS and ASPIRA-Early College HS among their top three rankings?"

We believe an analysis of these datasets and responses to these questions will provide your office a thorough and balanced view of Aspira's impact in the area.

Finally, we request a meeting with you and your team to discuss this data, our application, and further information that may come from this process.

Table #1: High School Enrollment and Facility Utilization

High School Name

Distance from Roosevelt HS

5-yr Enrollment Change (FY16-21) Current Enrollment

Current Utilization

Von Steuben HS

0.6 miles

+17 or + 1.0%

1,674

127% (overcrowded)

Amundsen HS 2.5 miles +318 or + 2.7% 1,459 127% (overcrowded)

Mather HS 2.3 miles +41 or + 2.6% 1,617 126% (overcrowded)

Lane Tech HS 2.4 miles +373 or + 9.2% 4,428 114% (overcrowded)

Jones HS 8.9 miles +294 or +17.6% 1,964 106% (overcrowded)

Northside CP HS 1.4 miles +3 or + 0.3% 1,059 103%  
 Lincoln Park HS 5.7 miles +3 or + 0.1% 2,117 100%  
 Lake View HS 3.0 miles +64 or + 5.0% 1,353 88%  
 Disney II HS 1.3 miles +150 or + 23.6% 785 69%  
 Senn HS 3.9 miles +182 or + 13.3% 1,547 63%  
 Avg = 3.2 miles +1,445 or + 8.7% 18,003

Table #2: Elementary School Enrollment and Available Seats

Elementary School Name Distance to  
 Roosevelt HS 2020-21  
 enrollment Utilization  
 % and Status Ideal Capacity  
 (IC) Available Seats  
 (IC – Enrollment)

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Haugan	0.6 miles	893	71%			
		Efficient			1,260	367
Hibbard	0.6 miles	875	65%	Underutilized	1,350	475
Edison/Albany Park	0.7 miles	493	75%			
		Efficient			660	167
North River	0.8 miles	276	71%			
		Efficient			390	114
Volta	0.9 miles	724	75%			
		Efficient			960	236
Murphy	1.2 miles	546	101%			
		Efficient			540	-6
Bateman	1.3 miles	887	78%			
		Efficient			1,140	253
Waters	1.4 miles	647	77%			
		Efficient			840	193
Belding	1.5 miles	545	83%			
		Efficient			660	115
Cleveland	1.5 miles	524	67%			
		Efficient			780	256
Budlong	1.6 miles	647	70%			
		Efficient			930	283
					7,572	10,290
						2,718

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4 Good Afternoon President Del Valle, Members of the Board, and CEO Dr. Jackson,

I am Fernando E. Grillo, from ASPIRA Illinois. As an ASPIRANTE (as ASPIRA alums are known) and now serve as CEO, I come before you seeking a fair consideration of our application for relocation of our ASPIRA Early college campus.

ASPIRA is consistently focused on ways to improve and elevate the student experience in its schools. Community engagement is a core value at ASPIRA.

During the CPS board meeting on March 24, 2021, several statements were made in the public hearing portion of the meeting that inaccurately represented Aspira’s proposal.

These statements presented data that claimed Aspira's relocation would have a negative impact on a neighboring CPS high school's enrollment, Roosevelt High School. Additionally, these statements further claimed a greater need for elementary seats in the area we are seeking to relocate AEC as justification for not needing a high-quality high school option.

We maintain these statements are inaccurate as to both these claims. We have submitted the relevant data to CPS staff and will be included as part of my presentation for the record.

We believe the data indicates that Roosevelt has achieved something remarkable. It has achieved stable enrollment over the last five school years in spite of the fact that students who reside in Roosevelt's boundary continue to enroll into other large, overcrowded, nearby high schools such as Von Steuben, Amundsen, Mather, and Lane. Roosevelt High School, together with the other top destination high schools for Albany Park-area rising 9th graders, are all large schools with declining Latinx enrollment. We are once again seeing the same impact of gentrification, in Albany Park which we saw in Humboldt Park and Logan Square over the last twenty years.

ASPIRA believes strongly—and the ARA data reinforces—that there is a need for a high-quality high school option for students and families looking for a small, culturally responsive college prep option. The claim for the need for elementary seats isn't supported by the data as well. In the ten elementary schools within a two-mile radius of Roosevelt, there are just over 2,700 available elementary seats in existing facilities.

We are planning to relocate AEC to the Haugan campus in Fall 2021. What we are NOT doing:

ASPIRA is NOT expanding, but is relocating one school to another campus. We are moving from one facility to another.

We are not "moving in Albany Park to poach Roosevelt students". In fact ASPIRA has served students in Albany Park for the last fifteen years. To those peddling that narrative, I ask, how does that bring us together? How long must one be in a community before we are deemed to be part of that community?

Here is what our plan does do:

This relocation allows us to enhance the academic offering and supports we provide our students including enrichment programs and workforce development opportunities. It strengthens the dual credit program and other partnerships we have with Northeastern Illinois University, Wilbur Wright College, St. Augustine College, and other community partners.

Aspira is not only four schools. We operate a youth center incubating future community leaders and a community center serving the neediest of families in our neighboring communities.

Finally, the relocation provides much needed classroom space in a regular high school setting to our students in our Antonia Pantoja High School, which serves our alternative school students.

Aspira views our relocation as complimentary, not as competition for students, with Roosevelt High School. We know that Aspira's students come to us because of our high-quality instruction and support systems in a small high school setting. The relocation would allow us to provide continued service to students from Aspira Haugan Middle

Schools who are feeders to our Aspira Early College. We will continue to work with the community engaging in dialogue with and inclusion of our stakeholders, and Albany Park neighbors. This is one of our core values as a truly community-based organization that has served students and families in Chicago Public Schools since 1968.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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5 Good Morning Honorable President DelValle and Members of the Board,

I am Felix Cardona, Alderman of the Thirty-First Ward. I come to speak in favor of the relocation of ASPIRA's Early College.

I attended the public hearing hosted by ASPIRA in early February. There were over one hundred participants including six or seven of my city council colleagues, three state legislators, and other community partners who testified and or wrote letters in support of the relocation.

The proposed move offers benefits to students from my and neighboring wards. From an equity perspective, it aligns with the equity principles CPS has committed to. Equity mandates that ALL CPS students are provided the support needed. No communities nor schools should be pitted against each other over the use of any one facility. ASPIRA's proposed relocation is about equity. It provides students much needed spaces for the 6-12 college pipeline, the dual college enrollment, the alternative school, and workforce development programs.

Today, our community schools are citywide schools. Children from all of our city neighborhoods attend schools throughout our city. The notion that a school belongs to any one ward or neighborhood is not supported by the data.

ASPIRA's relocation plan impacts over three hundred students who attend all four ASPIRA schools. I have worked closely with ASPIRA's leadership and teachers and have seen their dedication to serving their students in a smaller school model which honors their diverse cultures and affirms their humanity. I have seen first hand the quality of students who have worked for me as summer interns. ASPIRA should be given the opportunity to enhance their college prep academic offering and to have the same facilities as gyms, and green and community spaces as selective enrollment schools and academic centers enjoy. Equity mandates it.

Again, I ask for your support for ASPIRA's application to relocate their AEC campus. I will be submitting a letter in support of the relocation for the record.

Thank you for your service to our great city during these most difficult times.

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6 Good Morning President Del Valle and Members of the Board,

I am Dinorah Jimenez. I serve as the Parent Board Member at ASPIRA. This has been a wonderful opportunity for personal growth and to contribute to my children's school. With it comes the duty to speak on behalf of the parents I represent. I am here to express their support of ASPIRA's relocation application.

I am the single mother of four children. Over the last ten years, two have graduated from ASPIRA schools. My youngest son is currently enrolled as a seventh grader at ASPIRA

Haugan Middle School and I have a five year old at Lloyd. I intend on keeping my children enrolled in ASPIRA schools. I could not think of a better, safer place for them.

We have seen our parents become engaged and empowered to have their voices heard. We have heard their voices during the community engagement effort over the last few months. Our parents are clearly in support of this move.

The idea to relocate AEC was not the administration's or board's. It was initiated by students who came before the ASPIRA Board and advocated for a gym, green spaces, and additional spaces for instruction, as well as for advanced placement classes. This application is the response to student voice and to parent advocacy.

The relocation of AEC will provide my child and other students the college prep environment and spaces that are not only available at selective enrollment and academic centers that are not open to my child. With all the gentrification going on, it is important to support and protect the legacy of organizations like ASPIRA. ASPIRA is different. ASPIRA is special.

I am here this morning asking you and the board to look favorably on ASPIRA's application to move ASPIRA Early College to the Leland location.

I will send a letter for the record.

Thank you. Gracias.

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7 | ok

# ATTACHMENTS



April 28, 2021

Chicago Board of Education  
42 W. Madison St.  
Chicago, IL 60602

Re: CPS Collaborating with Out-of-School Time Programs

Dear Chicago Board of Education Members:

Thank you for your leadership during this difficult time. Your action has helped ensure the safety of our youth, families, and communities. Our coalition offers the following comments to strengthen the usage of out-of-school time (OST) programs in Chicago Public Schools (CPS). Afterschool for Children and Teens Now (ACT Now) is a statewide coalition that works to ensure that young people in Illinois have access to quality, affordable afterschool, community school, and youth development programs. ACT Now includes over 1,900 members, giving voice to Illinois families, educators, business leaders, community advocates, youth organizations, and policymakers.

Afterschool and summer learning programs have long provided supplemental education and support to help close academic and opportunity gaps among students most in need. Studies show that afterschool programs are sparking students' interest in school leading to better school attendance, grades, standardized test scores, and behavior.<sup>1</sup> Further, Chicago is a national leader in the community schools movement. Community schools are public schools that partner with families and community organizations to provide well-rounded educational opportunities and supports for students' school success.<sup>2</sup>

**OST programs both afterschool and during the summer will be an essential strategy in helping to combat learning loss and addressing the social and emotional needs of students. Programs have received limited guidance from the district and have been largely left out of the planning process for reopening.** Given the historic funding available for education and the opportunity provided by afterschool programs, we request that Chicago consider the following for collaborating with OST programs:

1. **COLLABORATION:** Hold a meeting with CPS and OST and community school programs to have a collaborative discussion about how these programs can support the district. OST and community school programs are essential to rebuilding our communities. The City and District must actively collaborate with these groups to pursue learning renewal. We strongly encourage CPS to immediately gather a group of stakeholders as advisors in this work.

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<sup>1</sup> Durlak, J.A. & Weissberg R.P. (2010). *Afterschool programs that follow evidence-based practices to promote social and emotional development are effective*. Retrieved from [http://www.expandinglearning.org/docs/Durlak&Weissberg\\_Final.pdf](http://www.expandinglearning.org/docs/Durlak&Weissberg_Final.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> Partnership for the Future of Learning. (n.d.). *Community school playbook*. Retrieved from <https://communityschools.futureforlearning.org/assets/downloads/community-schools-playbook.pdf>.



2. **FACILITIES:** Issue a formal statement encouraging principals to work closely with their community-based partners, including allowing them to use school facilities where possible.
  - a. Many OST programs are struggling to serve youth as schools have not prioritized these services. A formal statement about collaboration from leadership could go a long way in ensuring youth obtain the services they need.
3. **FUNDING:**
  - a. Use federal COVID relief funding to support the rising costs of current OST programs and expand OST opportunities. Existing programs need support to fund increased costs not covered by their grants (food, air purification systems, mental and physical health supports, etc...) and have a need to expand to serve more youth in their schools. We encourage CPS to fund these needs.
  - b. Utilize the ISBE After School Programs funding to support OST and community schools in Chicago and make this plan public. The purpose of the After School Programs funding is to: improve academic outcomes for students; provide opportunities for enrichment activities in a safe and healthy environment; and to provide opportunities to strengthen public, private, and philanthropic partnerships so that quality support services are more durable for students facing the greatest challenges. These goals strongly align with Community School Initiative at CPS; however; that program has never received access to these funds. We encourage CPS to allocate this funding to CSI moving forward.
  - c. Ensure schools have a plan to utilize their 21st Century Community Learning Center (21st CCLC) funding fully. Many 21st CCLC programs have surplus funding from last year they are trying to spend down. We encourage principals to work with their programs to see if there is a way to collaborate on using this funding.
4. **COMMUNICATIONS:** There are several CPS policies that make it difficult for community-based organizations to collaborate with families and youth. We request the CPS collaborate with community-based organizations to mitigate these issues and ensure programs can effectively serve youth and families.

We stand ready to collaborate to address these issues and appreciate a response to these concerns.

Sincerely,

The ACT Now Coalition

Chya Hughes

IAMS Parent

4/28/2021

My name is Chya Hughes, and I am a parent at IAMS. I'm here to highlight the need for retributive measures to be taken concerning the urgent situation involving Dr. Bylaitis, and the damage her actions have caused.

Last month, 3 mothers spoke to the board, each detailing acts of negligence committed either directly at the hands of Bylaitis or by administration. One mother, a black CPS teacher spoke on having DCFS called, and a false case of neglect filed against her. Despite the case being unfounded, the false reporting resulted in a negative marking on the mother's employment file. In addition to the emotional and psychological trauma experienced by her son.

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3013 North Monticello Avenue  
Chicago, Illinois 60618  
(773) 252-0970  
www.aspirail.org

**To:** Sam Mathias, Director of School Development, Office of Innovation & Incubation  
**Cc:** Bing Howell, Chief Portfolio Officer, Office of Portfolio Management  
**From:** Fernando E. Grillo, Chief Executive Officer, Aspira of Illinois  
**Re:** Aspira's 2021 Charter and Contract School Application for Amendment  
**Date:** April 5, 2021

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ASPIRA believes strongly—and the ARA data reinforces—that there is a need for a high-quality high school option for students and families looking for a small, culturally responsive college prep option. The claim for the need of elementary seats isn't supported by the data as well. In the ten elementary schools within a two-mile radius of Roosevelt, there are just over 2,700 available elementary seats in existing facilities.

We respectfully ask the Office of Portfolio Management to provide answers to the questions provided below.

*To empower the Puerto Rican and Latino community through advocacy and the education and leadership development of its youth.*

- When students who live in the Roosevelt HS boundary are granted admission in a Chicago public high school other than Roosevelt HS, which high schools are they choosing?
- Specifically, how many high school students residing in Roosevelt High School’s boundary are enrolled in the ten high schools provided in Table #1.

Additionally, CPS’s Portfolio Office possesses two datasets that are central to the question of Roosevelt High School’s past, present and future projected enrollment and what (if any) impact ASPIRA’s change of address request might have on Roosevelt’s enrollment.

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Finally, we request a meeting with you and your team to discuss this data, our application, and further information that may come from this process.

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**Table #2: Elementary School Enrollment and Available Seats**

Elementary School Name	Distance to Roosevelt HS	2020-21 enrollment	Utilization % and Status	Ideal Capacity (IC)	Available Seats (IC – Enrollment)
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		7,572		10,290	2,718



CITY OF CHICAGO



FELIX CARDONA, JR.  
ALDERMAN, 31ST WARD

Good Morning Honorable President DeValle and Members of the Board,

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